



HENRY MOSLER'S "JEWISH" BRETONS AND HIS QUEST FOR COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

ALBERT BOIME

IN THIS STUDY I will argue for a close connection between the complexities of Henry Mosler's identity and the thematic and even stylistic structures of his work. Although the word "identity" is one of the most frequently used and abused terms in contemporary private and public discourse, I intend to use it here as a dynamic concept embedded in a web of complex social and political relations. Mosler played so many different roles in his lifetime and revealed so many identities that it would be folly to constitute a single transcendent identity as an objective phenomenon. My task is to decode his many identities and discover their relationships under changing historical circumstances. I mean to avoid the reductive pitfall of essentialist thinking (identity as an immutable natural essence) and ground my discussion in the social structure of Mosler's specific milieu and the options it made available to him. The choices he had to make within given cultural constraints helped him construct and reconstruct his sense of inner self.

Mosler's identity can be understood as a mosaic of several broad categories of social attributes: he was German by birth and American by citizenship, Jewish by ethnicity and religion, petit bourgeois by class, artist by profession, a Freemason by voluntary association, and an expatriate who lived in France for almost twenty years. My paper presupposes that all these individual and collective identifications exerted a crucial bearing upon the trajectory of his career. Although his affiliations and cultural commitments attested to his upward mobility and ever-expanding participation in the game of life, they also defined him in fundamental ways. Mosler's life and career suggest a persistent attempt to reduce the complexity of his social figurations, to arrive at a fairly lucid constellation that permitted a comfortable sense of a coherent self.

Mosler's sociocultural constellation depended upon two crucial factors that served as a source of personal stability amidst the social chaos of his time. The first was his membership in Freemasonry, which in his chronic perambulations provided a cohesive social network. Lodges and other secret fraternal societies served as islands of rest in a rapidly changing and increasingly heterogeneous world.¹ By 1879 the fraternity could claim 550,000 members in the United States as well as dozens of imitating organizations. At this time, the order was dedicated to the ideals of fraternity, charity, and self-improvement and offered sociability, relief in times of distress, and a protective network throughout the world.

The second unifying force in Mosler's life was his work, which, like Masonry, could be practiced wherever he traveled. Indeed, his constant shifting from one location to another was inevitably motivated by his desire for self-improvement in his art. Even during much of his mature professional career he eagerly sought out the advice of masters in Germany, Italy, France, and the United States, persistently attempting to align his aesthetic activity with what he considered to be the most important work of his time. His relentless pictorial labors, and the professional recognition he gained from them, constituted the other pole of his identity orientation.

The subjects and thematic vehicles of expression whereby he communicated and fixed certain values of social, religious, and cultural life were central to his work as identity stabilizer. Throughout his career he demonstrated an obsessive interest in the peasant life-style of Brittany, and although he shared this interest with an international body of artists of every stylistic persuasion, the evolution of his painting and artistic reputation was so intimately connected with Breton references that their overriding importance for his career should not be underestimated. It is symptomatic that in the United States exhibit of fine arts at the Paris 1889 Exposition Universelle, which the expatriate American painters considered a symbolic test of strength

Plate 30

Le Retour, 1879

In 1879 Mosler submitted this painting, also known as *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, to the Salon in Paris where it received an Honorable Mention and was the first work by an American artist to be purchased by the French government. It was his first painting to focus on Breton life, and because of its success, was certainly influential in his continuing to plumb the subject until almost the end of his career.

in the international scene, all six of Mosler's entries (*Le Retour*, already owned by the French government, was listed in the catalogue but shown at the Luxembourg Gallery) portrayed Breton subjects.² In addition to his representations, Mosler compulsively collected Breton furniture, clothing, and artifacts of every description with which he surrounded himself wherever he worked. Critics often remarked on the enormous Breton *lit clos* (closet bed) in his studio that served him as an essential prop for several of his paintings. It seems he always took a little bit of Brittany with him to accompany him on his journey through life, and it constituted one of the unifying threads of his artistic and intellectual identity.

The broad trajectory of Mosler's life and career shows a familiar pattern of conflict between tradition and progress. A child of working class background, he learned to fend for himself early in life; the family's lack of financial resources is seen in the fact that he was apprenticed to a wood engraver when only ten years of age. As a result, he received a minimum formal education, and even in the arts his formal instruction was fragmentary and uneven. His insecurity here may be glimpsed in his disruptive departures for Europe at various stages of his professional career to enhance his work through study with representatives of schools in vogue at any given time—Paris, Düsseldorf, Munich, and New York. Naturally endowed with abundant talent, however, and motivated by Jacksonian ideals, Mosler eventually managed to transcend the barrier between working and middle class status and gain international fame. But he evidently paid a price for his desire for respectability; his work seems always aimed at a popular market and reveals a minimum of risk-taking strategies. He invented himself as the consummate visual raconteur, choosing to appeal to a broad audience through ingeniously staged anecdotal and historical scenes but rarely displaying qualities of originality. As one reviewer at the turn of the century put it, the great feature of Mosler's paintings "is that before you start studying the color and technique, you are in the grip of the story they tell. Properly summed up, Henry Mosler is a story-teller in colors."³

Mosler's conventional position is revealed in the catalogue introduction for his 1896 exhibition, where the artist's profession of faith is spelled out:

Believing that art is expression, he believes that it should express something and express it in an intelligible manner. Above all he does not believe that a picture is a work of art in the proper sense of the term if it exhibits mere technique, nor does it fail it to be a work of art if it contains and illustrates an idea.⁴

No doubt he conceived of a major part of his work as an important record of a certain passing culture, which might explain the intensity of his descriptive detail. Yet the best encomium that could be given Mosler by Richard Muther—writing at the end of the nineteenth century—was that he painted "good *genre* pictures."⁵

Painting such pictures was Mosler's means of merging with a wider community, so to speak, his way of participating in an international movement that glorified a vanishing village life and its values. He very likely would have agreed with his friend Moses Jacob Ezekiel, the Jewish sculptor and fellow Freemason from Virginia, who rejected the notion of a "Jewish art"—arriving at an early formulation of what has since become an intense debate on the social role of the artist and the struggle for minority group expression:

I must acknowledge that the tendency of the Israelites to stamp everything they undertake with such an emphasis is not sympathetic with my taste. Artists belong to no country and to no sect—their individual religious opinions are matters of conscience and belong to their households and not to the public. In reference to myself, this is my standpoint. Everybody who knows me knows that I am a Jew—I never wanted it otherwise. But I would prefer as an artist to gain first a name and a reputation upon an equal footing with all others in art circles. It is a matter of absolute indifference to the world whether a *good artist* is a Jew or Gentile and in my career I do not want to be stamped with the title of "Jewish sculptor."⁶

Like Mosler, Ezekiel traveled abroad for his artistic training and identified himself with a wholly traditionalist point of view. Ezekiel pursued and achieved a scrupulous realism, but his work is empty of innovative or imaginative forms of representation. He wanted his work to be as easily read and comprehended as a rabbinical sermon on Sabbath morning. Finally, Ezekiel rejected the new industrial age and urban world for the cozy world of his antebellum home in Richmond and his "old Negro mammies."

Similarly, Mosler realized his goals in breaking free from the delimitations of social and ethnic stereotypes, achieving status as a universally acclaimed artist, distinguished citizen of the world, and Freemason. His ambivalence toward modernization and its destruction of tradition is seen in both his expatriate and cosmopolitan life-style and in his obsession with unchanging Breton customs and the feel and textures of rural living. It would seem that, once he had achieved a certain privileged existence, he resisted further social transformation for himself and for others. Breton culture may have awakened in him childhood memories of a distant communal world that he had been forced to abandon, and his mature attempts to find new grounds for sociability and community may be directly linked to this early rupture. At the same time, the drastic break with his bucolic childhood paradise imposed a limitation on his view of progress.

We can only surmise the pain Mosler felt as he experienced the late nineteenth-century wave of French anti-Semitism promoted by reactionaries hostile to modernity and to the accelerating process of urbanization and industrialization. This antagonism intensified just at the moment of the approaching centennial celebration of the French Revolution.⁷ The newly consolidated French Republic planned to celebrate the technical and social progress of the nation made possible by that event, including the commemoration of Jewish political and social emancipation. This very association in the 1880s could be exploited by the conservatives; the Jewish "other" assumed for the Right the blood-and-flesh embodiment of this changing world. Those who felt the erosion of, or the threat to, their privileges in the context of this transformation imagined or invented a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy to voice their fears and sound the alarm to maintain their dominance. Ironically, Mosler himself was involved in preserving and disseminating the virtues and values of the world that the feudalistic-minded reactionaries were loathe to surrender. Although he viewed the rustic Breton environment with an urbane eye and a cosmopolitan detachment, his work nevertheless celebrated the persistence of tradition. In this sense, his example also contradicted the anti-Semites who would blame modernity on the Jews—a people whose very capacity to endure into the present as an identifiable body was inseparable from their ability to cling to tradition.

THE ROLE OF FREEMASONRY IN ADVANCING CIVIL RIGHTS

Yet in the process of advancing their own civil rights and freedom of opportunity, Jews had to find ways of collaborating with their fellow citizens in advancing the cause of social justice for all. Mosler took a characteristically moderate action in joining Freemasonry, an essentially philanthropic and charitable channel for collaboration. Freemasonry's doors in principle were open to all law-abiding citizens who believed in God. Although in practice the way was often barred to Jews, Muslims, blacks, and females, there were many more opportunities for the egalitarian mixing of classes and the embracing of ethnic diversity within the lodges than in other conventional institutional structures. In nineteenth-century France especially, the lodges acted more liberally than the government: in 1869 the most prominent leader of French Jewry, Adolphe Crémieux, was elected head of the Scottish Rite, and the Grand Orient passed a resolution that neither race nor religion should disqualify a person for initiation (which caused most of America's Grand Lodges to sever friendly relations with France). Thirteen years later the radical feminist, Maria Deraismes, joined a dissident lodge and in 1893 founded a mixed order.

Mosler was buried with Masonic rites and evidently had a long history of participation in Freemasonry.⁸ He probably received his Blue Lodge degrees in Cincinnati, but we know that around the turn of the century he was a member of the Margaretville Lodge No. 389 in Margaretville, New York, (where he had purchased a large tract of land in 1897),⁹ and as late as 1911 he was affiliated with two other lodges, the Centennial Lodge No. 763 in New York City and the Hanselmann Lodge No. 208 (comprising mainly German nationals) in Cincinnati, Ohio.¹⁰ His active membership in the movement is indisputable, and this opens up an exciting prospect on the life and career of this American-Jewish painter. Wherever in the world the Mason might happen to be, his membership in one lodge opened the doors of all the others to him, including those of other countries, an incentive that would have been especially attractive to Jews. Freemasonry offered a framework within which Jews and Christians could communi-

cate with each other and even become united. Given Mosler's peripatetic career, it is most likely that he made contacts with other professional artists as well as prospective patrons through the Masonic network.

The Moslers immigrated from Troplowitz, Prussian Silesia, in 1849, and the coincidence of the date and the counterrevolution suggests that Henry's father, Gustave, had been involved in radical politics. An early article stated that the elder Mosler had been a "Silesian lithographer... forced to leave his country on account of his republican convictions..."¹¹ The date 1849 is significant, a period when many disillusioned German liberals and radicals such as Carl Schurz, who had also taken part in the liberal reform movement of 1848, left Germany to escape the consequences of the counterrevolution. Gustave's father, Moses Mosler, was a master linenweaver—thus belonging to one of the most radical and well organized artisanal guilds in Silesia. As early as 1844, in the midst of economic crisis, thousands of Silesian linenweavers rose in protest against the ruthlessness of the entrepreneurs who sought every pretext to pay starvation prices, rejected the workers' petition for fixed wages in favor of a supply and demand strategy, and increasingly relied on machines. The weavers' rebellion, which sparked a series of strikes throughout the region, was brutally suppressed, but it set the stage for the insurgency of 1848.¹²

Freemasons throughout the world supported the liberal movements of 1848, and it is possible that the Moslers held a connection with the fraternal order before arriving in the United States. Masonic membership was usually handed down from one generation to the next, and we know that Gustave also belonged to the Hanselmann Lodge No. 208 in Cincinnati. German lodges generally never freely admitted Jews until 1848, although Masons in France, England, Holland, and the United States rejected any restriction based on religion. In these countries, the sole requirement was that the initiate be law-abiding and believe in God. Masonic religious toleration in principle dates from its modern inception in the eighteenth century, but the principle proved to be infinitely malleable depending on the environment. The rise of Masonry and the emergence of the newly emancipated Jew with civil rights eager for full membership in gentile society coincide, as is evident from the large number of Jews seeking entry to the lodges late in the eighteenth century. The lodges that opened their doors to Jews claimed that there was only one religion common to all humankind, here manifesting the radical Enlightenment ideal.

The Jewish artist Moritz Oppenheim belonged to the Morgenröthe lodge in Frankfurt, whose composition was predominantly Jewish.¹³ Although lacking recognition from the rest of the German lodges, it was authorized by the Mother Lodge of London. The French Grand Orient in 1832 authorized a Jewish lodge in Frankfurt, Zum Frankfurter Adler, but German lodges in general refused membership to Jewish Masons. The revolutionary events of 1848 temporarily broke the stalemate, and henceforth no male candidate (women could only form auxiliary organizations) would be asked whether he acknowledged Christian dogmas; instead the candidate would be asked whether he accepted the more inclusive principles of love of God and brotherhood.

That Jews had been involved in German fraternal orders is seen in the founding of the first B'nai B'rith lodge in New York as early as 1843 by German Jews who based it on the model of Freemasonry.¹⁴ In the later seventies and eighties, attendant on the rising tide of the new political anti-Semitism in Germany, former Jewish Masons resigned from lodges to protest the manifestations of prejudice. They wanted to follow the American B'nai B'rith and become an independent Jewish order. The American B'nai B'rith leaders, former German immigrants, heartily approved of the spread of their organization into the land of their birth.

Prussian lodges were the last in Germany to take down the bar to Jewish Masons.¹⁵ In 1848 two Cologne lodges, the Minerva and the Agrippina, decided to admit Jews without waiting for authorization from Berlin. The population of the Rhine district and of Cologne especially had been torchbearers of the 1848 revolution, and the principle of equality had become the order of the day.¹⁶ Cologne independence pressured Berlin lodges into acknowledging during the revolution that the freedom to organize applied in full to the Freemasons. But the reaction soon set in with the counterrevolution, and the Prince of Prussia ruled that no Masonic lodge could operate in Prussia unless it was an affiliate of the local Mother Lodges.

The foremost scholar of the relation between Jews and Freemasons, Jacob Katz, has pointed out the negative exploitation of the connection by fearful conservatives desperate to maintain their traditional hold on social and economic power. Freemasonry was actually one of the ways that former ghetto-dwellers could find their way into the social circles of their gentile neighbors, but anti-Semites combined Judaism and Freemasonry in a popular slogan (later reactionaries did much the same with the names Marxist-Leninist). Ultimately, a special notoriety was achieved by the brochure *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which purported to contain the proceedings of a session of the Jewish elders who plotted with the Masonic lodges to seize control of nothing less than the world itself. The forgery only appeared late in Mosler's life, but it was symptomatic of the hateful propaganda that linked the lodges with Jewish ascendance. It was mainly in Germany that the spurious Jewish-Masonic plot took root and became a point of departure in a campaign to destroy both.

Lodges were not conspiratorial cells, as their enemies alleged them to be in ascribing to them all the acts which led to the overthrow of the old order in Europe, from the French Revolution to the destruction of the temporal power of the Catholic Church. The nineteenth-century Freemasons, like their twentieth-century counterparts, were for the most part peaceful individuals, who cherished human dignity and civil tranquillity as much as anyone else. Nevertheless, because prominent individuals in the lodges held overlapping social, economic, and political views it was inevitable that they exercised a marked influence on their respective communities. Once the group had banded together in the intimate contact of lodge life, members undoubtedly worked together outside the lodge with a certain unity of purpose. This is what one would expect from a minority organization, whose members depend on one another, assist one another, and demonstrate their ability to work together beyond the confines of their formal association.

The nineteenth-century Masons rapidly became bourgeois, financially and culturally independent persons. They could no longer be suspected of harboring designs for change and revolution except by perverse imaginations. At this time the main function of the lodges consisted in providing peaceful citizens with the opportunity to cultivate social and spiritual values in retreats far removed from the surrounding reality. Masonic membership was now evidence of a secure and recognized status in the group constituting the central pillar of society as a whole. Here is the key to why Jews flocked so eagerly to the Freemasons in the nineteenth century: it was a badge that exchanged one form of minority status for another more broadly based. The chief importance of Freemasonry for Jews lay in its opening a path for Jewish integration into the non-Jewish social environment, although Jews may also have felt a special affinity with Freemasonry for its own tenuous but elite place in the social order.

EMANCIPATION OF THE JEWS AND FREEMASONRY IN FRANCE

The process of secularization in France produced two unrelated outcomes: the pioneer emancipation of the Jews, and the renewing of the Masonic movement within a secular framework. Conservatives—defenders of the old order—placed Jews and Masons together in the secularist camp. The conservatives saw every step toward modernization as a threat to their hegemony, and they pointed to Jewish capitalists as the culprits. True, from the 1840s onward, many Jews, the Rothschilds and Pereires most notably among them, had aided the emergence of a modern French capitalist economy with its industry, railroads, and credit institutions.

Ironically, however, Mosler, who himself had spent his early childhood in a rural enclave, shared some of the idyllic, premodern ideals of the anti-progressives. Liberal in his social convictions, he nonetheless in helping to perpetuate Breton life and culture as signifiers of stable, unchanging values, threw his talents on the side of the recalcitrant forces of history. That is, he joined hands with such odd bedfellows as Emile Bernard and Paul Gauguin and other painters of pious peasants. These artists looked to the rural folk as a bulwark against the corruption of modern urban life, closely associated in the minds of so many conservatives with the rise of Freemasonry and the emancipation of Jewry.

It is legendary to what extent Breton Masons were instrumental in providing leadership and organizational talents for drastic political change during the first stages of the French Revolution.¹⁷ The "Club Breton" provided the backbone for the most radical of the revolution-

ary factions, exemplifying the collaborative social aspects of Masonry in bringing together nobles and middle classes in behalf of a common cause. Lodges in great numbers then existed in Quimper, Saint-Brieuc, Lorient, Brest, Nantes, Vannes, and Rennes and remained active through the period of Napoleon. Yet in the literature Masonry suddenly seems to have vanished from Brittany in the later nineteenth century, a curious gap in the Masonic historiography. In fact, however, Masonry continued to be operational in Brittany even after Napoleon's fall. During the Bourbon Restoration, when the atmosphere was most hostile due to papal bulls denouncing the Masonic Craft, some diehard Breton republicans even organized at Paris the lodge *Les Amis de l'Armorique* (the ancient name for Brittany), presided over by an atheist named Denis Legal.¹⁸ Although many lodges in Brittany were either suspended or became defunct during the Restoration, they slowly revived and persisted throughout the century.¹⁹ Indeed, the pressure on Catholics to quit the movement led to more intensive recruiting among bourgeois freethinkers, Protestants, Jews, and foreigners.²⁰ Lodges in Brittany would have constituted an easy network of correspondence for Mosler, who always traveled with his family and his cumbersome equipment.

Jews in Brittany seem to be even scarcer than Freemasons, and it is easy to understand why. As far back as 1236 Jews in Brittany were massacred by Crusaders, and the remainder were expelled by decree in April 1240 by the duke, Jean Le Roux, who declared a moratorium on all debts owed to Jews and ordered them to return all pledges of chattels and lands.²¹ The duke bound himself and his successors to uphold the decree in perpetuity. For centuries thereafter it was mainly converted Jews who took up residence in Brittany; however, a Hebrew tombstone dated 1574, which was discovered in Quimperlé, indicates that not all Jews avoided the area. During the seventeenth century, numerous Marranos settled in Brittany, mainly in Nantes where an underground synagogue may even have existed at one time. In the following century, Jewish traders and peddlars from Bordeaux and from Alsace-Lorraine began visiting the fairs and markets. After the French Revolution, a sprinkling of Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe took up residence in Nantes, Vannes, Brest, and Rennes. The Jewish community in Nantes gradually developed and established a synagogue in 1870.

But Nantes remained the exception. In the nineteenth century, Jewish families resided throughout Brittany, but never in numbers sufficiently large to comprise a community. The Jewish presence there sometimes took a curious twist, as in the case of Sarah Bernhardt, the daughter of a Jewish mother and a father of probable Breton descent. As an unwanted child, Bernhardt was shipped off to a farm near Quimperlé where she was cared for by a peasant wet nurse. For the first four years of her life she understood only the Breton language, and the childhood trauma of rupture and accident which befell her remained indelibly inscribed in her imagination. Years later she relished portraying the role of a young Breton girl in the play *Jean-Marie*, and she frequently traveled to Brittany for escape and romantic interludes. Eventually, she purchased an old Breton fort on the desolate Belle-Ile-en-Mer, just off the southern coast of Brittany, that she converted into a summer residence.²²

Another singular case is the family Jacob of Quimper, most recently celebrated in the fiftieth-anniversary commemoration of the death of Max Jacob, the well-known poet and painter.²³ Max Jacob's grandfather, Samuel, was born in Offenbach in the Prussian Rhineland, and made his way to Brittany in the wake of the French Revolution. He had a cousin who was a tailor in Lorient and with whom he entered into a partnership, but eventually he struck out on his own and opened up his own business in Quimper. His two sons, including Lazare, the father of Max, founded the shop *Jacob frères* on 8, rue du Parc in Quimper sometime in the 1870s. They specialized in making the Breton costume, inventing creative modifications with embroidered cloth and lace (*costumes brodés*), turning out variations of the two-piece cap known as the *bigouden*, and successfully exploiting the Breton vogue that swept over the world in the nineteenth century.

Tailoring was a trade considered lowly by the Breton peasantry and thus perhaps one of the few that a Jew in Brittany could profitably practice.²⁴ Considering, however, the great demands in Brittany for traditional dress and the degree to which costume signified regional and social status within the growing nouveau-riche peasantry, the tailor would have been a valuable participant in the Breton renaissance.²⁵ The artists needed the tailor as well to guarantee pictorial authenticity; Mosler, for example, systematically collected the main elements of female and male Breton dress (some from the eighteenth century) such as skirts, bodices, fes-

tive aprons, collars, leggings, and vests as well as a number of examples of the *coiffe* (head-dresses).²⁶ Ironically, then, Jewish tailors like the Jacobs and artists like Mosler were indispensable in promoting Breton popular culture in the nineteenth century.

Despite the sparse number of Jews in Brittany, anti-Semitism, preserved in the image of Jewish deicide in church catechism and liturgy, lay discreetly underground waiting to be tapped during moments of crisis in the body politic. When the trial of Dreyfus was reviewed at Rennes in 1899, there were ugly manifestations of anti-Dreyfusard and anti-Jewish hatred in some of the local papers and in public demonstrations.²⁷ During the rise of fascism in the 1930s, the rightwing Breton nationalist movement, Breiz Atao, spouted the kind of spurious drivel found in *Der Stürmer* and with the same disastrous effects.²⁸ The case of the poet and painter Max Jacob and his brother, who had spent their youths in Quimper and were murdered at Auschwitz in 1944, appears in retrospect as an updated version of the medieval horrors inflicted on an isolated Jewish minority.

MOSLER'S EXPATRIATE STATUS

Mosler's participation in academies, schools, ateliers, and art colonies abroad is characteristic of a vast number of American artists during the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁹ But Mosler's several peregrinations abroad deviate from the norm, and his twenty-year residence in France went way beyond the time slot traditionally allocated for apprenticeship and cultural polish. During this time, Mosler did not simply enter the European context to improve his *métier*, but produced works for the French Salons and actively participated in the expatriate colonies in Paris and Brittany. Of course, the expatriate label operated dialectically in conferring upon its specimen such beneficial traits as continental polish, cultural refinement, and international recognition, which played a major role in establishing a negotiable reputation for American art institutions and patronage.

Mosler's expatriate status and European-influenced painting nevertheless defined him as outside the American mainstream and in opposition to the National Academy of Design, the dominant art institution in the United States. The 1870s were a critical period of transition for American art, as the native Hudson River School, whose practitioners were solidly represented in the National Academy, began to collide with fresh artistic currents inspired by European modes. Works sent from Paris and Munich in this period, for example, were seen as competition by the jury members and officers of the National Academy and were systematically excluded. Excluded independents in New York, together with the artists abroad in 1877, founded a new organization, the Society of American Artists, to combat the Academy's protectionist impulse. In the 1880s and 1890s, the alternative exhibition spaces and even more liberalized academic display facilities in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia pressured the National Academy to reform its policies. In fact, Mosler had a solo exhibit at the National Academy in 1885. Mosler won awards and sold pictures in these alternative exhibition spaces, and then in 1895 (having returned to New York) was elected Associate of the National Academy, and the following year won the coveted Thomas B. Clarke Prize at the National Academy's annual.

Mosler's expatriate status may also be understood as an expression of his ecumenical or universalistic outlook, consistent with his Masonic involvement. One of the most controversial issues of the art market during Mosler's prime was the American tax on works of art imported from abroad.³⁰ America's protectionist policy branded the nation as a cultural pariah, then an anomaly in the Western world. In 1883 these duties had been raised from 10 to 30 percent, and by the late years of the decade the United States government transformed its tariff into an active instrument of foreign policy to gain leverage in the international market. The Congress justified the tariff on art, as it did other tariffs, by pointing out its benefit for indigenous producers. But since the vogue in the 1880s greatly favored the French, French-trained Americans—who often studied in the free ateliers of the state-sponsored Ecole des Beaux-Arts—to whom the tariff was not applied, disapproved of the tariff on their masters.

In the draft of a letter to the "Sunday Editor" of the *New York Herald*, Mosler happily responded to the opportunity to state his opinion on the art tax, a question that had preoccupied him "for a long time." He took a strong stand on the issue, characterizing the tariff on art

as a “fundamental evil” and blaming the United States government for using it to foster prejudice against the American school. He prefaced his remarks with a general statement on the need for liberty in art practice: “Art is a beautiful plant that can only thrive in liberty—warmed by the sun and exposed to the breezes from all clime[s], to stimulate its growth and inspire its beauty.” But the tariff impeded art’s growth at home, and “is unworthy of a *Great Nation* which prides itself in many ways to be leading the world. This country of *Liberty*.”

What especially irked Mosler was the demeaning implication of the tariff for the home-grown artist, who appears on the global horizon as “a pitiful subject who requires protection.” And he reiterated his central theme:

Let art be free. We court competition; many of us have fought on the foreign battlefields of Art and have come out victorious. Why should we fear competition here? What object has our government in trying to destroy the atmosphere of Art instead of encouraging the influx of Art?

Mosler declared that the policy was backfiring, that in the end it cheapened homegrown art and added luster to European painters. The effect of the tariff was to damage the credibility of the local producers and “directly and indirectly it impresses the public that *American Art* must have protection.” In the end, it simply reaffirmed the naive American notion that “only that which is foreign is good.”³¹

Mosler’s assertions attest to his broad grasp of the global art market and of Franco-American relations gleaned from his experiences abroad. The years 1877-1894 represented a crucial period for the Third Republic in consolidating itself in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. It was an epoch of recovery from the disasters of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune when France, seeking world-power status to compensate its losses, expanded and consolidated its colonial holdings in West and Central Africa and Indo-China. It was in this period that Mosler took up residence in France—a period of transition from the conservative regime of the post-Commune years to the authentic Republic and from the fragmented nation to major global power. It would seem that his particular success at the French Salon was predicated upon his ability to satisfy official taste in this period. It may not be coincidental that Mosler returned home at the point the Republic’s success reached its high point and the reaction generated a social crisis expressed in the form of the Dreyfus Affair.³² Indeed, after he left France in 1894 Mosler exhibited only one more time at the Salon, sending the painting *A Young Breton Girl Reading* from New York in 1897.

Mosler’s identity was somehow bound up with France’s consolidation as nation-state and the opportunities it afforded gifted foreigners who could validate its cultural supremacy. Antonin Proust, Commissioner-General of Fine Arts for the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889, wrote that in the American rooms one could imagine oneself “in an excellent French gallery. Messieurs Sargent, Dannat, Melchers, Gay, Knight, Chase, Vail, Davis, Bridgman, Boggs, MacEwen, and Mosler almost invariably attach themselves to one of our famous masters.”³³

At the same time, the rewards for expatriate status also constituted a certificate of legitimation for those eventually hoping for successful careers in the home country. Francophile American patrons all but required evidence of recognition abroad and identification with the expatriate art community. Mosler certainly socialized with his expatriate peers, who elected him to the Paris-American jury to select works by American artists working abroad for the American display in the World’s Fair of 1889.³⁴ Individuals who may not have fraternized at home were brought together as “Americans” abroad, where social and class differences were nullified by their common isolation as a national entity. Sometimes this could be carried to seemingly absurd lengths—as in the case of the Americans in Pont-Aven challenging their compatriots in Concarneau to a series of baseball games!³⁵

The connections between Americans, independent of the prejudices that may have divided them at home, would have become deeper and more meaningful in the face of a foreign culture. Once divorced from their origins, expatriates can never be fully at home in any other country, and it is this sense of estrangement that they hold in common as they search for their separate identities. Simultaneously, Mosler’s immersion in Breton culture and French techniques could be exploited by the French need for self-aggrandizement in the postwar period of recovery and consolidation.

The central question for the expatriate, whatever the immediate reasons for taking up residence in another country, always gravitated around the issue of personal identity. There was an endeavor by expatriates to wed the vision of the Old World with that of the New to reconcile a sense of split allegiances. Restrictive labels—for American Jews like Mosler or African Americans like Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937), who painted in Pont-Aven and Concarneau in 1891–1892—drove individuals to escape from menacing or irritating social forces into exile. While confrontation with a new culture allows for a certain freedom from local conventions and prejudices, it also interiorizes the forces from which the expatriate tried to escape in the first instance. Ironically, for most of these expatriates it was clear that the legacy of Europe was a critical part of their identity and part of their inheritance. Now they had more in common with each other than with the most knowledgeable European, and it is within this fissure that that their separate identities could be realized.

The American artist in exile was freed from having to apologize for pursuing a queer profession. Having to prove one's "normality" is always stressful, while in Europe artists were viewed with less suspicion than they encountered at home. There the artist's choice of vocation was part of a long and honorable tradition and represented no cause for alarm among family and friends. The Salon was a key meeting ground for expatriates living in Paris, where they could show in international company and hobnob at the *vernissage* with the stars in the various arts, as well as with the French aristocrats and other resident foreigners.³⁶ Mosler not only submitted regularly to Salons in these years but eventually established himself as a popular teacher, running a coeducational school on the rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré and a separate studio for women on the fashionable rue Washington.³⁷ He earned more formal recognition from abroad than he did at home, including in 1879 the honor of being the first American artist to sell a painting (*Le Retour*, Plate 30) to the French government and in 1892 the award of Chevalier in the Légion d'honneur. (In contrast, after having been passed over by the National Academy of Design in New York for full membership, he resigned his associateship in 1915.)

MOSLER'S GENRE PAINTING

Mosler became a painter of French village life, anti-modern and anti-urban, following the path taken in the second half of the nineteenth century by an international school of genre painters, including Benjamin Vautier in Germany, Jules Breton in France, and Mihaly Munkácsy in Hungary. While they appealed to an expanding bourgeois market, there was more to it than that. In the case of Mosler, it is especially intriguing because he was raised in the major midwestern town of Cincinnati and he was Jewish. The taste for rural scenes of artists like Ludwig Knaus and Benjamin Vautier, for example, carried with it anti-modern and anti-Semitic implications. (Knaus's exhibit in the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1878, *A Good Deal*, depicting a youth smirking at the spectator while putting a coin in his purse, was explicitly anti-Jewish.) That Mosler would participate in this tradition must mean that in some way he identified with its wider social and political implications.

It is probably not accidental that Mosler is often erroneously listed in literature as having been born in New York: working and painting in France in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, he himself is likely to have disguised his true birthplace for fear of alienating his Gallic neighbors. In the French Salon catalogues he listed himself as the student of Hébert only, when in fact he had studied with several masters both in Germany and France. (He also would take France's side during World War I and, despite failing health, wanted to live long enough "to see France emerge victorious from the war."³⁸) This fear of exposing his German heritage—one of his multiple identities—may have been reinforced by the increasing anti-Semitic scapegoating that accompanied the anti-German rhetoric among the French Right, and which eventually exploded in the Dreyfus Affair.

MOSLER'S BEGINNINGS

Before systematically exploring his work, I want briefly to recapitulate Mosler's early development for the light it may throw on his evolving social status. Young Henry was apprenticed to a wood engraver in Cincinnati at the age of ten, thus following in the footsteps of his

artisanal ancestors. Five years later he set up shop for himself, working on a free-lance basis for a number of publishers and subcontracting for other local engravers. He must have gained proficiency in drawing at this time, and it is likely that for some clients he transferred his own drawings onto wood for reproduction.

Probably for economic reasons, the family moved in 1858 to Richmond, Indiana, where his father opened a cigar shop. In Richmond, Mosler had his first training in painting with a hatmaker who taught art on the side. The Moslers subsequently returned to Cincinnati in 1859 where they settled permanently. In 1863 Gustave Mosler went to work for a manufacturer of safes and eventually bought out one of the partners. The Mosler-Bahmann Safe Company would become one of the largest firms of its kind in the country and lay the foundations of the family fortune. In the early 1860s, Henry actually painted the doors of several of the safes—a number of which are still to be seen in Cincinnati banks. At the same time, he received his first systematic art instruction from a local genre and portrait painter, James H. Beard.

His early formation follows the familiar pattern of nineteenth-century American artists, who had to justify pursuing art as a profession through reproductive outlets. Mosler lent his skills as a cartoonist to the humorous Cincinnati weekly called *Omnibus* and from 1861 to 1863 served as a reportorial illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*. He had actively sought an assignment with *Harper's*, submitting a sketch he did of Major Robert Anderson, the commanding officer of Fort Sumter given a hero's reception in Cincinnati. Although the drawing was not used, on the strength of this submission *Harper's* hired him to act as correspondent with the Union armies in the West.³⁹ From the end of 1861 to the end of 1862, he doggedly followed the armies under the command of Generals Don Carlos Buell and William Nelson and recorded such battles as the bloody, decisive confrontation at Perryville, Kentucky, on October 8, 1862, when the Union forces drove General Braxton Bragg out of the state. As his printed letters describing the subjects of his illustrations demonstrate, his reportorial experience was decisive in training him to grasp landscape details and material textures carefully and accurately.⁴⁰ In addition to scenes of the front, Mosler found time to practice painting by executing portraits of the officers and enlisted men. After the war, he embarked on a major work entitled *Lost Cause*, showing the return of a weary, disillusioned Confederate veteran to his deserted cottage, which had become a dilapidated shack overgrown with tall weeds and vines. Chromolithographed for mass distribution, the work enjoyed a huge popular success in the North and South. The theme of the futility of the Confederate enterprise is balanced by a sense of empathy for the individual participant. Thus it is perhaps not surprising to learn that the original painting's first owner was Colonel Albert S. Berry of Newport, Kentucky, a former officer in the Confederate army.⁴¹

Raised in the border town of Cincinnati, Mosler may have developed a perspective sympathetic to both sides of the war. Here he reveals an equivocal position also present in the writings of his early patron, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise. Although opposed to slavery, Wise nevertheless did not regard the issue important enough to warrant dividing the Union; he envisioned a "gradualist" line, but, insisting on peace and unity at any cost, repudiated the abolitionists, including the Freemason Rabbi David Einhorn, of Baltimore.⁴² Wise had made friends in the South and, like many prominent Cincinnati businessmen who had strong commercial ties across the border, refused to see Southerners as enemies and abolitionists as allies. Although Ohio was a free state, there was only the river separating it from slavery. Morally opposed to slavery as they were, neither Mosler nor Wise seemed able to take a definite stand on the political question of states' rights.

As a graphic reporter, Mosler's representations of blacks were never viciously caricatured, unlike many other illustrations published in *Harper's*; on the other hand, they occasionally verge on the stereotype and are almost always less individualized than those of the whites.⁴³ There are also at least two major painted representations of blacks, including a work of a manacled quadroon girl, exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1878 with the title *A Slave—Quadroon* (Plate 9), which was inspired by a Longfellow poem, and a portrait of an African-American sailor entitled *A Symphony in Black and White* (date unknown). The theme of the suffering quadroon girl had been commonplace in both art and literature, a type persistently exploited by Northern abolitionists in their discussion of the issues of miscegenation and social isolation. Longfellow's protagonist, a saintly and innocent adolescent, is sold as chattel by her white father to another slaver, and the poem concludes:

The Slaver led her from the door,
He led her by the hand,
To be his slave and paramour
In a strange and distant land!⁴⁴

At the tail end of the Reconstruction period, Mosler's late rendition of the theme catches the eroticism and pathos of the source but, lacking the antebellum social context that informed the original, may strike some viewers as a titillating potboiler. The portrait of the African-American male is a serious character study, but the title objectifies the subject and subsumes him to an aesthetic pattern. Whereas Whistler might treat even his mother and other women as formal patterns, in the case of an inveterate story-teller like Mosler, the title *A Symphony in Black and White* might have a humorous and, hence—even if inadvertent—degrading implication.

Mosler seems to have been even less sympathetic to Indians, whose once-powerful presence in Ohio still left vivid historical memories. Mosler's lurid nocturnal presentation of *The White Captive* (Figure 17), which he exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1888, focuses on a bare-breasted white female about to be burned at the stake by a frenzied tribe of Indians. A prominent display of scalps, menacing brutes, and hideous hags drawing their stilettos completes the visual nightmare. One of the many stereotyped female captivity themes that entertained a wide audience in the late nineteenth century, its histrionic composition is steeped in the popular prejudice of the period. Contrary to the popular belief, Apache raiders took few adult captives and tortured fewer still, had little interest in acquiring scalps as trophies, and treated the elderly and the infirm with the deepest consideration.⁴⁵ Mosler manipulates the light effect to dramatize racial difference as well as to signal the contrast between sexually vulnerable victim and barbarous, unfeeling oppressor. As one reviewer described the condition of the captive: "Her robe has slipped from her bosom, which is so young and white and sweet, one would fancy it would move pity in any heart."⁴⁶

Abandoned, its monumental counterpart, depicts renegade Mescalero Apaches abandoning to their death two elderly squaws and a sickly younger woman who were unable to keep up with the highly mobile tribe on its relentless marches across the prairie and up the mountains during the hunt or on the warpath. Mosler hinted at the harshness of the pace by showing a long file of Indians already ascending a narrow ravine of a rocky, pine-covered hill. Near the crown of the hill the chief on horseback turns as if to signal the stragglers to hurry, while at the rear a young woman carries a papoose, accompanied by a briskly running child with bow and arrow who symbolizes the renewal of the race.

These two canvases were commissioned by H. H. Warner, a self-made millionaire of Rochester, New York, who made his fortune from having taken over a branch of the Mosler safe company and then going into business for himself as a manufacturer of patent medicine on a global scale. A conservative Republican who supported Blaine for the presidency in 1884, Warner dreamed of a commercial empire—a dream that overlapped the national goals of Manifest Destiny. Warner's high fee covered the expenses of Mosler's travels in 1886 to New Mexico and Arizona (with fellow artist C. T. Webber, of Cincinnati) to document the Mescalero Apaches "in their uncivilized state ... to depict them in a correct light."⁴⁷ A congratulatory letter to Mosler from fellow artist Peter Cameron, of Rochester, also preparing for a western expedition, offered to help Mosler find "Indians in their aboriginal state."⁴⁸

These statements allude to the remnant of hunting and gathering tribes unwilling to surrender their freedom for the closeted, supervised life of the reservation created by executive order in 1873. The Mescalero Apache depicted by Mosler once covered a large section of Northern Mexico and the American Southwest, but had been subjected to centuries of cruelty and dispossession of their land, first by the Spanish, then by the Mexicans, and finally by the North Americans. By the mid-1880s, the largest segment had already been pacified and reconciled to reservation life along the eastern slopes of the White and Sacramento mountains in southern New Mexico.⁴⁹ Those Mosler wanted to thematize in his paintings were a desperate bunch who had left the reservation in small bands and survived by raids on neighboring Indian tribes and white settlements.

Mosler solicited letters in his behalf to military commanders in the region from his Civil War acquaintance, General Philip Sheridan—who permitted himself the comment, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead"—and then Secretary of the Interior Lucius Q. C.

Lamar.⁵⁰ The government, then in the process of eradicating the last vestiges of Indian resistance in the West, gladly cooperated with Mosler. President Cleveland had ordered Sheridan in 1886 to proceed to the area around Santa Fe and to head off potential “disorder and depredation by the Indians.” He also requested Sheridan to “invite a statement on their part, as to any real or fancied injury or injustice towards them, or any other causes that may have led to discontent, and to inform yourself generally as to their condition.” In effect, Cleveland was inviting Sheridan to come up with a pretext to justify suppression of the Mescalero Apache in retaliation for “outrages upon our settlers.”⁵¹

Cleveland’s harsh attitude was echoed by the head of the U. S. Geographical Survey west of the one-hundredth meridian, who warned in 1889 that ceaseless vigilance must be kept over “these red-skinned assassins”:

Unfortunately, the bones of murdered citizens cannot rise to cry out and attest the atrocious murders of the far-spreading and wide-extending border lands of the Great West, and while the fate of the Indian is sealed, the interval during which their extermination as a race is to be consummated will doubtless be marked in addition to Indian outbreaks, with still many more murderous ambushes and massacres.⁵²

This is hardly conciliatory and constructs the situation as if there is no other alternative to mass destruction, analogous to the representations of the finality of Indian intransigence and of the “hopeless” condition of their victims in Mosler’s two pictures. This attitude was played out in reality the following year in the so-called “Battle” of Wounded Knee, when government troops mercilessly mowed down nearly three hundred Dakota men, women, and children who had assembled for a Ghost Dance Ceremony—the tragic climax to the Indian wars.⁵³

Although reformers and humanitarians ultimately won their fight against the policy of total annihilation of the Indians, they wound up substituting their own policy of relentless attacks on Indian society, customs, religion, and tribal unity, justified as necessary to “civilize” the Red Man and integrate him into white society. In 1884 the Department of the Interior passed a criminal code outlawing Indian religious practice, and in 1887 under President Cleveland the Dawes Act struck at tribal authority and organization by breaking up reservation land into small family or individual holdings, with the prime land usually sold to the whites.

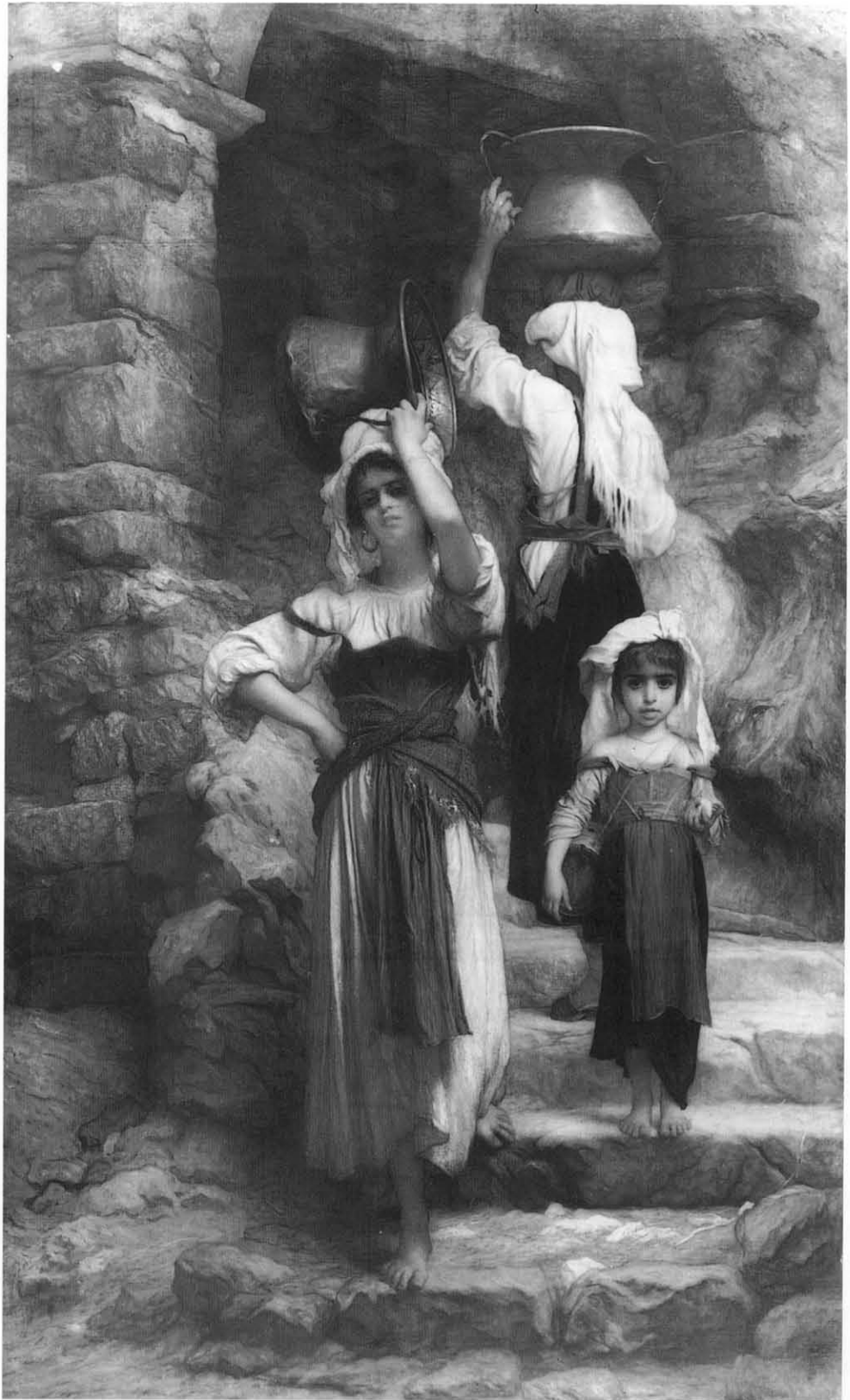
The United States’ Indian policy was the classic instance of our society’s racial, cultural, and religious bigotry. Virtually imprisoned and pauperized on their reservations, the Indian peoples were constantly kept on the verge of starvation to compel them to abandon their tribal customs and loyalties. In this case, it is clear Mosler reflected the dominant view and provided a visual apologetic for the consummation of the government’s expansionist program. As a professional artist, Mosler was attempting to fulfill his commission by satisfying the patron’s taste as much as reflecting popular prejudice. Warner’s astonishing fee of \$25,000 per picture, moreover, constituted an offer that few artists of the period could have refused.

Nevertheless, Mosler’s portrayal of Native Americans corresponds to the pervasive insensitivity of his time, which led him to examine Indian culture in bit and pieces, selecting only the worst traits to visualize. Mosler may not have understood that Indian abandonment of the old and the sick on the trail was never done without regret, but in nomadic societies it could mean survival. If unable to follow the game in season or move swiftly on the warpath, the Indians were doomed to perish. The brutal treatment of white captives was usually done in retaliation for white cruelty, or, to put it another way, when it came to sadism neither of the parties held a monopoly. But here, as in all other aspects of their conflict, the whites had the numerical superiority and an inexhaustible supply of matériel.

Mosler painted these works at the height of his reputation for portrayals of the Breton peasantry. It is significant that, when it came to painting the “savages” of Western France, Mosler only hinted at their rigidities, narrow prejudices, and superstitious beliefs and practices and preferred to idealize Bretons in their more conventional ritualistic moments. They were Europeans, and he could tolerate their independence and singular customs as well as their resistance to integration into the mainstream, all traits that he rejected in the case of the American Indian. Mosler’s generation could not conceptualize the Indians as a community with a set of internally consistent cultural, religious, and social customs. At any rate, it was not a community Mosler could imagine inhabiting. Hence he constructed Indian life-style as the polar oppo-

Figure 24
Ernest Hébert
Les Cervarolles, 1858
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Symbolizing three generations of life, these Italian peasants transcend their humble activity and rustic setting through their melancholic beauty and precarious charm. As one of the first painters to emphasize setting as a characterization of his figures, Hébert also profoundly affected Mosler's paintings of Breton life.



site of his ideal community, peasant Brittany, which was based more on his desire and longing than on the actualities of life in Western France.

That three of Mosler's paintings of African Americans and Native Americans were accepted at the Salon suggests that these subjects appealed to the colonializing imagination of the French jurors. Scenes of barbaric cruelty may be used to justify colonial encroachment ("Buffalo Bill" Cody was to exploit this disposition with his Wild West Show at the Universal Exposition of 1889), while the manacled *Quadroon* could tap the erotic potential of the imperialist mentality and, by way of cruel contrast to French methods, suggests the missionary and "civilizing" impulses of the colonializing process.

In 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, Mosler took his first trip to Europe. He seems to have followed the path of other American genre painters like Eastman Johnson (1824–1906) and Enoch Wood Perry (1831–1915) who first went to Düsseldorf Academy—then important for its school of genre painting—and then to Paris. (It was also the time of a temporary decline in anti-Semitism in Germany; Eduard Bendemann (1811–1889), a converted German Jew, was then director of the Düsseldorf Academy.) In Düsseldorf Mosler studied with Heinrich Mücke (1806–1891) and Albert Kindler (1833–1876) and got embroiled in the conflict between the more traditional academic history painters and the younger artists who preferred to do scenes from everyday life. This conflict is seen in the career of the younger Mücke, the same age as Mosler, who went in a new direction with genre scenes of familiar life as opposed to the declamatory historical style of his father. The idea of doing genre scenes in that period was considered advanced thinking. While in Düsseldorf, Mosler joined the radical artists' club known as the "Malkasten" or paint box, where all the colors of the rainbow were represented. Mosler never made scenes of explicit political commentary, but he clearly sympathized with country folk in France and America. It was in Düsseldorf where he first became exposed to anecdotal genre and the depiction of ethnic types with their picturesque costumes.

After studying for nearly two years in Düsseldorf, Mosler traveled to Paris where he studied for six months with Ernest Hébert (1817–1908).⁵⁴ Many American artists in Paris tried to balance the uniform course of instruction and dry execution of the Düsseldorf School with the more informal training of the Paris atelier system. Hébert had gained his reputation in the 1850s with a series of picturesque scenes of Italian peasants whose backgrounds and accessories were painted somewhat more casually than other academicians (Figure 24). Hébert was a *juste-milieu* painter like his fellow-student and colleague Thomas Couture (1815–1879), who had attracted academically trained artists trying to break somewhat from the rigid routine without thereby sacrificing the solid draftsmanship they had learned. Mosler and so many of his American peers made the trek from Düsseldorf to Paris for the most current training. Mosler always considered Hébert his most important teacher and he developed a close relationship with him based on mutual respect; Hébert's presence on the Salon jury of 1879 was probably decisive in the acceptance and subsequent state purchase of Mosler's entry that year.

Mosler returned to Cincinnati at the end of the Civil War; now a seasoned artist, he received commissions for numerous portraits. He also became involved in the Jewish community of Cincinnati, the oldest west of the Allegheny Mountains. The first congregation was organized in 1824, and its synagogue was built in the next decade. The influx of young German Jews, mainly from Bavaria, in the 1830s and 1840s infused the largely English-derived community with fresh energy, and they formed a second congregation. Although almost exclusively engaged in trade, many of them were men and women of culture and familiar with classical German literature. Eventually they helped organize the *Allemania*, a local Jewish social and literary society, for which Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise often lectured. (One talk in the 1854 season was entitled "The Fine Arts and Their Influence on Society."⁵⁵) We do not know the extent of Jewish observance in Mosler's family, but it would seem that they were more secular than traditional minded. Mosler's father Gustave, who operated a cigar and lithography shop at 177 West 5th Street in Cincinnati between 1851 and 1854,⁵⁶ printed a *Mizrah* tablet (Figure 10) which would be hung on the eastern walls of observant Jewish homes to indicate the direction to face during prayer. Certain aspects of Gustave Mosler's design could suggest Masonic elements as well: the cardinal compass point east held special significance for Masons; the Hebrew letters for Jehovah at the top appear in the same location in Masonic documents and emblems; and the familiar words of Psalm 113:3 above the Ten Commandments—"From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof, the Lord's name is to be praised"—also carry special Masonic

associations. The inscription and commandments are surrounded by eleven biblical scenes, two of them inspired by Eduard Bendemann, the director of the Düsseldorf Academy, who specialized in Old Testament themes.

Although it is not known whether Henry Mosler was an observant Jew, he kept the faith by marrying in the community and his sons were circumcised by a mohel in a proper ceremony.⁵⁷ In 1866 he painted a building portrait of the new Plum Street Temple (Plate 2) in Cincinnati, which was dedicated on 24 August. The house of worship of the K. K. Bene Yeshurun congregation of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the prime organizer of Reform Judaism in America, was one of the first built in the neo-Moorish style and is one of the oldest Jewish temples in the United States.⁵⁸ Mosler also painted portraits of Wise's wife Theresa, as well as a pair of portraits of a local Orthodox rabbi and his wife.

Although late in life he spoke out against revisionism, like most American Jews belonging to Freemasonry, young Mosler was sympathetic to Reform Judaism. Indeed, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise himself was a member of the Hanselmann Lodge—the same lodge to which Mosler and his father belonged. Wise's favorite biblical text, which adorned both the masthead of his paper *The Israelite* and the windows at the eastern end of the Plum Street Temple, was "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3), a canonical Masonic text as well.⁵⁹ Perhaps the most conclusive evidence of Wise's union of Masonic and Jewish symbolism are the two minarets—neatly silhouetted against the lighter sky in Mosler's painting—surmounting the Plum Street Temple, which Wise designated as "Boaz and Joachin."⁶⁰ The columns of Boaz and Joachin are well-known Masonic metaphors, evoking the construction of the Temple of Solomon, the base of the symbolism of three first Masonic degrees and central to all Masonic ritual. Although Wise claimed in his *Reminiscences* that he found certain features of the fraternal societies childish, he admitted that he was attracted to them for their charitable work "and the cosmo-political principle upon which they were based."⁶¹ Wise also affiliated with the Union Lodge of Perfection in Louisville, Kentucky, and was a member of the Scottish Rite, evidence of his deep commitment to Masonry.⁶² Mosler's connection to Wise and his family suggests an early involvement in the Reform movement as well as a shared interest in the secret fraternal order.

Mosler's later argument against Reform was related to his perception that "the beauties of ancient Judaism [were being] trampled under foot by the philistine."⁶³ But when asked by the reviewer whether he belonged to a synagogue,

Mr. Mosler at first shook his head, muttering something to the effect that he never had any time to think of it; then he added right fervently, as if by a sudden glow of inspiration: "I am an eternal worshipper of the Creator. When I transfer a beautiful model to the canvas, I am engaged in an act of divine worship. When I go out for a breath in the Park and look at the trees and flowers, I am worshipping; when at night I see the stars, I am worshipping again. God is great, mighty and good, and beautiful."⁶⁴

Mosler's rhetoric, which documents his lack of active participation in the Jewish community, may not explain his hostility to Reform, but helps us understand his rationale for artistic creation. He constantly used narrative in his painting, just as he used pictorial efforts to express his appreciation of divine manifestation. In the same way, Mosler's contemporary, Van Gogh, expressed his longings for a godhead outside of religious orthodoxy by painting trees, flowers, and stars. Although stylistically opposites, Mosler and Van Gogh shared their inherent sense of themselves as belonging to a religious community apart from the "philistine" majority. Both as well had to go to great lengths to overcome the suspicions of their respective bourgeois cultures about their choice of vocation.

Shortly after Mosler's marriage to Sarah Cahn in 1869, the couple moved to New York for a year. Mosler was always restless and forever feeling in need of rejuvenating his style: in 1874, at age thirty-three, he took his wife and son to Europe, residing in Munich from 1875 until 1877 where he studied with Alexander von Wagner and Karl von Piloty. Piloty then enjoyed an international reputation as the prophet of a stylistic revolution and was a logical choice for foreign students.⁶⁵ He produced melodramatic historical and genre scenes in the mood of his French master Paul Delaroche, fetishizing illusionistic detail in costumes and accessories. When he assumed the directorship of the Academy in 1874, he established historical and genre realism as the dominant direction of the school. It is probably not coincidental that in Munich Mosler revealed for the first time what would become his life-long interest in eigh-

teenth-century dress and genre. He also likely came into contact with Frank Duveneck, a compatriot from Cincinnati who returned to Munich in 1875 to further develop the realistic genre approach he had previously assimilated there. Duveneck had come under the influence of Wilhelm Leibl (1844–1900), a former student of Piloty's who also innovated a rural genre style. It would seem that it was there among the genre painters of rural life that Mosler laid the groundwork for his mature style and content. In any event, Mosler did well enough in Munich to win a medal from the Royal Academy in 1875.

Nearly all the Masonic lodges in Prussia were then receiving Jewish visitors who had been previously initiated elsewhere. Indeed, the sixties constituted a period of noticeable decline in German anti-Semitism. The generation growing up after the revolution of 1848 was finding its way into adult society and, even though full emancipation had not been achieved, saw no reason to fight over it. The crowning episodes in the history of German expansion occurred as a result of an internal, political struggle—the union of the northern provinces in 1866, and the German Unification of 1871. Public opinion at that time was focused primarily on political and military events; attention was diverted from social affairs, and so from the Jewish problem as well. Thus Mosler's return to Germany in 1875 coincided with a brief time of progress for the Jewish community, then finding it easier to mix with people of high social standing and cultural achievement. But this abatement of social tension proved to be of short duration; it came to an abrupt halt in 1875–1876 when a new wave of anti-Semitism emerged with Bismarck's establishment of the new German Empire.⁶⁶

This change in the social and political climate may have prompted Mosler's departure from Munich. In post-1848 France all barriers against Jews with regard to Masonry had been removed. In 1848 the question was raised in one of the French lodges whether a Jew was eligible for elevation to the fourth degree, the name of which was in some way associated with a Christian symbol. The case was referred to the Grand Orient, which ruled that a Mason's religion was in no way connected with his Masonic rights and that no prospective Jewish member was ever to be asked about his religion. Jews were certainly represented in the French Masonic leadership, as the case of Adolphe Crémieux noted previously, confirms. Crémieux had by the end of the sixties become head of the Scottish Rite⁶⁷ and one of the founders of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, whose goal was to organize world Jewry for the advancement of their rights and their culture. Crémieux's prominence made him fair game for the anti-Semites, who hoped to demonstrate common goals of Jews and Freemasons for a world union under their hegemony, but from Mosler's perspective, Crémieux's prestige and leadership in the 1870s may have signaled the kind of openness in French society he was craving when he arrived in France.

Mosler returned to the United States for a prolonged visit during 1885–1886 to carry out a commission, but coincidentally that period witnessed a momentary anti-Semitic insurrection in France when the slogan of Jews and Freemasons was chanted once again by the foes of the Third Republic.⁶⁸ Edouard Drumont's *La France Juive devant l'opinion*, which appeared in 1886, addressed its tissue of outright lies and distortions to the emotions of the masses, not to the calm reflection of the thinker; and the book achieved a vast circulation—a hundred printings in a single year. Drumont presented the Jews as the principal participants in the show of greed, lust for pleasure, and craving for power over others that he saw exemplified in modern commerce, social life, legislation, and politics. Drumont himself had little to do with business life and had no real involvement in law or politics. In all these matters, this member of the petit bourgeoisie relied almost totally on hearsay, except for his own particular contribution—the claim that the Jews were responsible for everything. Drumont liberally scattered the designation *Franc-Maçonnerie juive* throughout the entire book, and since it became one of the most widely read texts in France, it must be regarded as an important factor in impressing this combination on the minds of a large segment of the French public.

When Mosler returned to Paris from Munich in 1877, he undoubtedly had more than one motive for doing so. As he did in the 1860s, he journeyed to Paris for his “unfinishing” school. (Although a direct style of painting was taught at the Munich Academy by teachers like Wilhelm Diez—who influenced Duveneck—Mosler's pictorial techniques more closely follow the French methods.) Mosler arrived at Paris in 1877 just when the Third Republic was consolidating itself; beginning in 1878, his works were selected for the annual Salon where he continued to submit his works during his residence in Paris until 1894 and once again in 1897. In 1879 his painting *Le Retour* was awarded an Honorable Mention by the Salon jury,

Figure 25
Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-
Bouvert
The Pardon in Brittany, 1887
The Metropolitan Museum of
Art, Gift of George F. Baker, 1931

French genre painter Dagnan-
Bouvert's later works often
concentrated on the theme of
Breton peasants and festivals. In
this realistically painted scene of
a *pardon*, peasants dressed in
traditional Breton costume
solemnly carry candles in honor
of their local saint.



and he received a unique honor when the French government purchased it for the Luxembourg Gallery, the first time an American would be represented in the official collection of contemporary artists.

THE FASCINATION FOR BRITANY

*L*e Retour was an updated version of the theme of the Prodigal Son, played out in Breton costume and accessories. Mosler delights in the contrast between the ceiling-height, handsome ancestral oak bedstead, the *lit clos* with its carved panels, and the dirt and squalor of the prodigal and his belongings on the earthen floor. The work would inaugurate a whole series of Breton themes and align him with a growing body of French and international painters who would turn to Brittany for inspiration from authentic folk life and religious sentiment. Mosler's work appealed to both the anti-modern forces in French life, then under attack by the con-

vatives, and to the moderate Republicans, themselves anxious to show that modernity and anticlericalism did not necessarily mean atheism or lack of religious feeling.

Brittany became the Mecca for an entire generation of painters looking for authenticity in folk life and religion.⁶⁹ Yet even there authenticity had become so relativized that it was necessary to assign to Finistère the label *Breton bretonnante*.⁷⁰ Out of this region crystallized the stereotype of the “primitive” rural Breton, exclusive of the noble or middle class culture in Brittany, embedded in a discursive field encompassing a set of legends, superstitions, and peculiar customs.⁷¹ The archaistic, pious, and socially conservative components of the stereotype served governments deep into the nineteenth century until the anticlerical Third Republic reworked them to signify more universal traits of durability and hardiness of the French people. The coded image of Breton men and women with their singular costumes became a metonym for a timeless French peasantry consistently serving the nation’s needs.⁷²

One persistent theme of unimpeachable pedigree, treated by many writers and artists, is that of the unique Brittany *pardons*, or pilgrimages, annual religious events honoring a local saint held in many of the small villages, in which the entire populace turns out in traditional Sunday costume (Figure 25).⁷³ Although marked by the devotional exercises and liturgical objects that usually accompanied major Catholic rituals, *pardons* also offer the opportunity for festive diversion and convivial escape from the routine of Breton village life. Usually held near an ancient chapel, the practice suggests an historical continuity with the past, as if time stood still in these remote corners of the world, but the rituals were continually modified by incremental changes barely noticed by those who eagerly grasped at the stereotype. Artists from everywhere in the world poured into these areas to rediscover and record these traditional features and expressions of mystical piety that seemed to have persisted in these isolated regions.

The Church itself was not entirely comfortable with the Breton *pardon*, in which the impoverished, the homeless, the blind, the lame, and the diseased begged for alms and sought miraculous cures. On the eve of the festival, noisy ritualistic clan battles with the *penn-baz* (the Breton laborer’s wooden club) took place in some churches for control of the parish pilgrimage banner and the effigy of the saint. When vespers were over toward evening of the *pardon*, the ensuing drunken sprees, wrestling matches, regional dancing, and occasional scandals were deemed incompatible with the strictly religious nature of the ritual. Yet the unique character of the *pardon* may be traced to its formation as an event where local traditions and pagan superstitions converged with Catholic rituals and religious beliefs.⁷⁴

Like the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (in French “*le jour du pardon*”), the *pardon* was the annual threshold of repentance and redemption for the sinner. During the pilgrimage, the Bretons held in their hands a scroll on which was inscribed their wrongs, their grievances, and their hopes for forgiveness. They could even liken their holiday rites to Old Testament themes of revelation and contrition. Anatole Le Braz, witness to the nineteenth-century festivals, described the culminating bonfire of the *pardon* of Saint-Jean-du-Doigt—which coincided with the summer solstice and was celebrated on a sacred hillside—as the “Breton Horeb... soon to be crowned by its flaming Bush!”⁷⁵ In this context, it should not seem so surprising that Paul Gauguin chose an Old Testament theme (Genesis 32: 23-31) for his breakthrough picture, *The Vision After the Sermon*, 1888 (Figure 26), to express the imaginative projection of the Breton peasantry’s “great rustic and superstitious simplicity” (Figure 26).⁷⁶ Gauguin’s title suggests a Sunday event, and the work shares many visual traits with scenes of *pardons*, which were almost always held on Sundays (except in Pont-Aven where it took place on the third Saturday and Sunday of September). His composition included a cluster of Breton women (one connotation of *pardon* is “assembly”⁷⁷) in their large, starched *coiffes* with prominent lappets around an open-air service and the image of the wrestling match.⁷⁸ Despite the biblical potential of the *pardon*, however, it was a subject whose syncretic mix of pagan and Christian practices did not appeal to Mosler.

Mosler became friendly with many of the artists who colonized Brittany, including the French Jules Breton, who first visited the province in 1865 and frequented the area at regular intervals during the next three decades.⁷⁹ Breton claimed to have felt profoundly moved by the rugged agrarian, coastal, and religious life of Finistère. As he explained:

The melancholy of the wastes, the worn earnestness of the outcroppings of granite corroded by mosses that were raised up in the solitary corners of the crossroads; the dark and pitted roads whose eternal night could neither be dissipated by the blue glimmers of the sky nor the

Figure 26
Paul Gauguin
The Vision After the Sermon,
1888

National Galleries of Scotland,
Edinburgh

With the use of line and flat planes of intense color, Gauguin created his first religious painting with a subject from Genesis, Jacob wrestling with the Angel. The diagonal tree separates the real world of Breton women from their imaginary, visionary world. Although stylistically composed after Émile Bernard's *Breton Women in the Meadow*, this painting later earned Gauguin the title, "Founder of Symbolism."



subdued rays of the sun crossing the thick canopy of vegetation, where there seemed to writhe like nests of serpents the entanglements of a thousand roots; the pallid light of overcast skies and the leaden twilights that were reflected in the weatherbeaten, lean faces of the peasantry, with their wild eyes setting off their tall heights, their curved backs under their long tangled hair; the women who resembled holy virgins with their caps shaped like mitres, their ruffs from which emerged their frail, sloping necks, their fustian skirts braided with gold and silver; the whole monastic rusticity, all this mystical savagery seemed to evoke in me some unexplainably confused and distant memories older than those of my native Artois.⁸⁰

The painter concluded, "And I felt that I must have descended from these Bretons."⁸¹ Here Breton no doubt enjoyed playing on his name, but at the same time he imaginatively evokes an atmosphere and longing that was shared with his contemporaries. The American Arthur Hoeber, describing his trip to Quimperlé in the early 1880s, recalled: "Near the horizon was a band of brilliant light, while above there still lingered ominous dark clouds, sullen, leaden, and full of suggestion, regular Brittany weather ... [T]he queer stunted oaks along the roadside, as we drove by in the diligence [stagecoach], seemed to take on weird shapes, and looked uncanny in the uncertain light of the closing day."⁸² The opening paragraph of Blanche Willis Howard's novel, *Guenn*, growing out of her contacts with the American colony in Concarneau in 1881, affirms:

From the nearest railway-station to this region of ignorance, superstition, and picturesque beauty, endless white roads stretched away between *fossés*—or embankments of granite and turf—six feet high, luxuriantly overgrown with moss and vines, and crowned by the great mutilated oak-trunks which distinctively mark the Breton landscape.⁸³

Breton observed that the village churches displayed a "savage faith," especially captured in the deformed, barbaric sculptures, "mystical visions" embodied by some obscure village artisan whose force of expression could rarely be equaled in the refined arts. And all of this "granitic art" harmonized with the desolate terrain. Breton admired these "simple believers," but at the same time moved in their company with a sense of superiority and sophistication. His attitude was akin to the colonizers who admired the "primitive" simplicity of indigenous peoples but who also saw them as quaint throwbacks to the past, inseparable from the peculiar geography and geology of their indigenous habitat. The Breton peasant is conceptualized as one with his or her environment, ahistorical, and subject to the ebb and flow of natural cycle.⁸⁴

Hence the depictions of the “*pardons*” take the form of mysterious rituals that show both the naive faith as well as the superior cultural vantage point of the spectator.

Curiously, the avant-garde painter of Brittany, Paul Gauguin, expressed similar sentiments. In March 1888 he wrote to his friend Emile Schuffenecker, “I love Brittany; I find there the savage, the primitive. When my clogs resound on the granitic soil, I hear the muffled, dull, powerful tone which I seek in my painting.”⁸⁵ Later the same year he wrote Van Gogh describing the effect of “rustic and superstitious simplicity” that he had carried off in his figures—surely a reference to his imagined ability to channel the “primitive” qualities of the local culture.⁸⁶

Ironically, however, from the late 1850s through the 1880s Brittany was undergoing a rapid economic transformation. Hundreds of thousands of wastelands came under cultivation and the population grew steadily. Rennes emerged as a major railroad hub and industrial zone. Napoleon III opened up inland vehicular traffic between coastal towns of Brittany with modern engineered roads even admired by American tourists. The first sardine cannery and processing plant was founded at Douarnenez in 1854, thanks to which other fishing ports along the coast, such as Camaret and Concarneau, tripled their populations in the next fifteen years. By the 1870s, thousands of boats were operating out of Concarneau’s harbor, and thousands of men and women were employed in processing the vast quantities of fish. Brittany’s abundant potato crop was shipped across the English Channel and into Germany, bringing its agriculture into the world market. Another major resource was seaweed, extensively used for fertilizer and for the production of kelp for iodine. Finally, tourism—always one of the most important sources of wealth for Brittany—was vastly expanded by the railroads, although the vacationing artists and writers who wished to cling to the old myths stubbornly refused to acknowledge it.⁸⁷

The more economically advanced instances of life in Brittany are never, in fact, treated in the contemporary works of art; instead, the artists provide a mythical reading that resonates with their own desires and needs. Gauguin once summed up Brittany as “simple superstition and desolation.”⁸⁸ One American wrote that the “peasants dance all day long. Every day seems a fête day...”⁸⁹ (Here the Bretons are reduced to the same status as blacks in an apology for slavery.) As Howard describes the attitude of Everett Hamor, the painter-protagonist of the novel *Guenn*, toward his Breton subjects: “No psychological problems occupied him, no benevolent probings into sufferings, experiences, and possibilities. He was simply and greatly pleased with their colors and contours.”⁹⁰ In this sense, the avant-garde painters acted no differently from their academic counterparts, who similarly viewed Breton peasants less as individuals than as formal elements in a composition.⁹¹

Mosler was never so simplistic or reductive, but he does empty out the Breton landscape of overt signs of labor. The act of labor is implied but not explicitly represented; rather Mosler prefers to depict the peasantry pausing in their exertions or returning from them at the end of the day. Even, for example, in the *Return of the Shrimp Fishers* (Plate 13), shown at the 1881 Salon, where he untypically shows the weary bodies of fisherwomen trudging back to shore, he emphasizes more the pathos of their rugged existence than the grinding routine of work itself. More characteristic is his *The Spinning Girl* (Salon of 1883), set in a tranquil rustic interior, where domestic labor is associated with the rural female’s leisure.⁹² Wearing the regional costume and seated by a *lit clos* to which are attached a rosary and crucifix, the Breton female is positioned firmly within a traditional religious and patriarchal family structure. This image of the passive and pious Breton woman as an eternal bulwark of conservative values would have had widespread appeal in almost all sectors of French society during the late years of the century.

Mosler’s series of Breton subjects are rendered in close-up anecdotal detail, but scrupulously avoid the influences of cultural and social rupture. He was not interested in the land division of the peasantry or their agricultural labors—the heart and soul of daily Breton life in this period—but in their festivals, secular rites of passage, and off-day activities. He occasionally shows instances of indoor and sedentary artisanal labor, for examples, *Mending the Net*, the *Umbrella Mender*, and the *Village Clockmaker* (Salon of 1884), which mainly provide a pretext for displaying Breton material culture, especially the kind of quaint Breton curios he himself loved to collect. The protagonist of these last two is the kindly old village tinkerer whose work is more the stuff of folklore and fairy tale than of the region’s economic realities. One exception is the *Forging of the Cross*, a work which takes us into a

Figure 27
Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)
Breton Girls Dancing, Pont-Aven, 1888

National Gallery of Art,
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

The Round Dance, traditionally performed after haymaking, was a popular subject matter among the Pont-Aven painters in Brittany. Only a fourteen-hour train ride from Paris, Brittany represented a culture reminiscent of the Middle Ages. Artists such as Gauguin and Mosler became intrigued by the quaint costumes, picturesque landscape, and primitive life-style of the people so steeped in tradition and superstitious Catholicism.



blacksmith's shop while muscular smithies are in the process of preparing a cross for a church steeple just glimpsed through the doorway. In this case, the scene of manual labor is justified by the religious association and vice-versa. A priest and a group of women wearing their local *coiffes* watch the process with rapt interest, again alluding to the Breton female's vigilant support for conservative religious and social values. This is the rural world perceived from the urban point of view. Of course, this perspective implied an element of protest as well, since those who romanticized the region hated to see it go the way of the suburbs of Paris.

This longing to preserve a traditional life-style was a common meeting ground for the avant-garde artist and the Salon painter whose presentations of Breton subjects often overlap. There is a resemblance, for example, between Mosler's *Harvest Festival* (Plate 11), shown in the Salon of 1888, and Gauguin's *Breton Girls Dancing, Pont-Aven* (Figure 27), done the same year at Pont-Aven. The coincidence of the date and of the theme of the harvest-time *gavotte* (hand-to-hand dancing in a serpentine line), joined to the similar figural arrangements and pattern of aprons, *coiffes*, and collars, makes a comparison of these two works intriguing to say the least; I suspect that Gauguin saw a reproduction of Mosler's Salon exhibit (Gauguin began his in mid-June, more than a month after the official show opened) and then went ahead and did his own version. In any event, they exemplify the shared sensibility of a Jesuit-trained Catholic and a Jew such as Mosler mining the festivals in Brittany for a peek into an uncomplicated and stable life-style. Typically, both focus on the female and her headdress as the central motif through which the "essential" Brittany is processed and defined. One difference that should be noted is the conspicuous presence of the church of Pont-Aven in the Gauguin, and the more rustic ambience of Mosler's dancers and spectators.

The crucial Breton signifier, of course, was the distinctive costume, but whereas Mosler and his fellow artists focused on Breton dress as signs of unchanging difference and strangeness, for the Bretons themselves the public display on special occasions of their costume and fête-day cap signified regional, clan, and class status.⁹³ The enormous amount of time and labor expended in the washing, ironing, and starching of these *coiffes*—whose depiction is conspicuously absent from the visual and textual record of popular culture in Brittany—is alone evidence of their symbolic significance. Even the avant-garde painter Gauguin is careful in showing the difference between the plain costume worn by the peasant women in *Vision After the Sermon* and the elaborate dress worn by Marie-Angélique Satre—the wife of

an entrepreneur and future mayor of Pont-Aven—for *La Belle Angèle* (Figure 28). Mosler, however, delighted in playing with the “timeless” character of the costume, sometimes locating his protagonists in the eighteenth century, and in the end helped sustain the illusion that every day was a holiday in Brittany. As late as 1932, Mosler’s paintings could be used locally to illustrate the traditional Breton *coiffes* and the traditional baggy breeches of the males.⁹⁴

In Breton’s recollection of his attempt to capture on canvas the *pardon* at Sainte-Anne-la-Palud on the Breton coast near Pont-Aven, he may have betrayed the ideals of many of his artist contemporaries who visited Brittany in the second half of the nineteenth century:

I tried to paint this crowd of a former age, flowing in and around their tents, gathering around the gin shops and the chapels, mixing piety with drunkenness under the surveillance of the gendarmes, whose bicorn hats seemed as out of place as if they were participating in the cortege of *La Juive*.⁹⁵

Why did this scene recall the processional in *La Juive*, a popular opera by Fromental Halévy based on a specifically Jewish motif? Breton saw this event as sordid and bizarre, but he accepted it as authentic, even though it was clear from his description that it was alien to him. Most of the artists who were attracted to the area were likewise drawn through fascination to a cultural and religious time warp that was as hypnotic in its rituals as it was repugnant in its excesses. Breton’s ambivalent attitude toward the peasants reveals that to him they represented part throwback to some earlier age and part spectacle, but that he found it difficult to divest them completely of the haunting sense of melodrama that pervaded the ritual. Thus he wonders how he should render this “strange existence, and these rascals who swarm behind the apse of the church, ranting and groaning in unrestrained cries; foul groups and chorus, maniacal shaking and swaying of hideous monsters, absolute color of the earth, like those toads that bustle in the dryness of the sun, and, as if that were not enough, here and there, on the horrible, sordid tatters and straw mattresses, something red which is an ulcer exposed.”⁹⁶

Halévy’s contemporary, Giacomo Meyerbeer, who was both a Jew and a Freemason, wrote an opera entitled *Le Pardon de Ploërmel (Dinorah)* that premiered at the Paris Opéra Comique on 4 April 1859. This tale of Breton superstition was set in the remote town where the edict expelling the Jews from Brittany was issued in 1240.⁹⁷ Meyerbeer wanted to capture with his music the mood of Brittany’s landscape and its mythical associations. Despite the opera’s title and the fact that it ends with a pilgrimage, the theme functions less as a signifier of piety than as a framing device (in the form of a sacred chorus) for a wedding ritual and various representations of Breton superstitions. The huge success of the opening night indicated the attraction of both the score and the libretto; the Emperor and Empress called Meyerbeer to their box between the acts to voice their enthusiasm.⁹⁸

His success is further evidence that the Breton image appealed beyond the conventional sectarian identification. Depending on the religious perspective of the artist, the appeal could be expressed in varying ways. On the one hand, for the Catholic Jules Breton, the merging of local superstition and church practices in the *pardons* evoked childhood memories of grotesque and deformed beggars, weatherworn effigies of saints, and regional folklore that mingled images of the Holy Virgin and Christ with ogres, sorcerers, and devils.⁹⁹ Among these vivid recollections were books of engravings, tucked away in the attic, representing “abominable clusters of Jews bristling with spears, with Jesus in the middle, his head lowered in dejection... old men with beards and large turbans... frightened women and children, rascals covered with tatters, horribly maimed and crippled; the whole crowd swarming on each page...”¹⁰⁰ (Breton later admitted that the grotesque representations of Jews in the engravings instilled in him a profound fear—evidently a common experience of European children.¹⁰¹)

Even more militant in his Catholicism and anti-Semitism was Émile Bernard, who in collaboration with Gauguin in Pont-Aven in the late summer of 1888, grafted experimental techniques on to images of Brittany. As he described his spiritual conversion:

I became a Catholic, ready to fight for the Church, the upholder of all traditions and the generous symbol of the most noble sentiments...I became intoxicated with incense, with organ music, prayers...and I returned to the past, isolating myself more and more from my own period whose preoccupations with industrialism disgusted me. Little by little, I became a man of the Middle Ages; I only loved Brittany.¹⁰²

Figure 28
Paul Gauguin
La Belle Angèle, 1889
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

An acknowledged Breton beauty and wife of a prominent entrepreneur in Pont-Aven, Marie-Angelique Satre was horrified by this portrait which she considered unflattering. She is dressed in elaborate, traditional, Breton costume, but her placement in the composition was inspired by the burgeoning influence of asymmetry and simplicity of Japanese prints in Gauguin's Synthetist style.



On the other hand, for the Jews Meyerbeer and Mosler, it was the integrity of folk customs and persistence of traditions that seem to have resonated with their personal sense of ethnic identity. It may be recalled that Mosler protested against Reform Judaism because he felt that it led to a loss of “the beauties of ancient Judaism.”¹⁰³ Thus he may have seen in the traditional custom of the Bretons that persistence of tradition that he wished to see retained in his own religious imagination. At the same time, the Bretons, with their distinctive appearance, culture, and language, felt themselves somehow apart from the rest of France, like a nationality within a nationality, and this sensibility—so close to what many ethnic and minority groups experience—may have intrigued Mosler. As one observer noted, the inhabitants of Brittany stand apart “from the rest of France, preserving their own customs and traditions, speaking their own language, singing their own songs, and dancing their own dances in the streets in 1879.”¹⁰⁴ Like Freemasons, they had their own unique handshake and coded sign language that signaled relations among them.¹⁰⁵ Howard wrote in *Guenn* that Bretons looked upon the “polyglot” artists’ colony as total outsiders, even the natives of France: “To them, the painters were all foreigners—a genuine Breton having no more in common with a Parisian than with a Norwegian or a Greek.”¹⁰⁶ Thus what might have been for his non-Jewish colleagues a pictur-

esque otherness, may have been for Mosler something with which he could closely identify not only as a Jew but also as a Freemason.

Artists were drawn to Brittany because life there was less expensive than at Paris and offered a sort of retreat from the frenetic pace of the capital. Perhaps it also provided a safe haven from the slights and slurs that a Jew would have had to endure from the media and the diehard reactionaries who were gearing up for a final showdown with the nascent Third Republic.

That Mosler was obsessed with Brittany is seen in the article on him in the Jewish journal, *The Federation Review*:

Brittany has been Mosler's favorite field; and there is scarcely a phase in the life of that picturesque people which he has not transcribed with his brush. Even to this hour, in the ripeness of his age, he is still busy every day in his fine studio at Carnegie Hall upon scenes from his beloved Brittany.¹⁰⁷

Mosler's empathy for Breton peasant life was probably closely tied to his sense of Jewish identity. Ironically, according to Breton legend the grandmother of Jesus, Saint Anne (the same celebrated in the *pardon* of Sainte-Anne-la-Palud), was a native of Brittany who sailed to the coast of Judaea to fulfill God's will by giving birth to a daughter.¹⁰⁸ Thus if Bretons could conceive of Jews like Mary and Jesus as having descended from a Breton-Jewish woman, then it is not inconceivable that Mosler could seize on the Breton peasantry as a site for projection of his nostalgia for a glorious Jewish past suffused with the idealized memory of a world in harmony with nature.¹⁰⁹

Through the Breton imagery Mosler could displace and metaphorically convert all the negative vestiges of medieval oppression in Jewish history: from being confined to the ghetto the Jews in Breton guise now enjoyed the peaceful communal existence of village life; from being forbidden to own or till land they could now work their family farm; from being excluded from any number of trades and guilds they could now labor freely as artisans and tradespersons (including Mosler himself within the rural commune); from being forced to look conspicuous by wearing distinctive garments or badges of shame they could now proudly celebrate them as signs of difference and hardy custom; from living in incessant terror of banishment or of deadly slander they could now indulge in self-imposed exile and idle village gossip.

MOSLER'S THEMATICS

Although the *pardon* was perhaps the most popular Breton theme, it is interesting that Mosler never painted the sacred rituals of the Bretons; rather he preferred to depict them in non-religious situations. His many images of Breton marriage customs focus on the secular and non-liturgical moments of the bride's preparation for the ceremony or the wedding banquet after the ceremony. Even his presentation of themes of death, inevitably accompanied by religious symbols, are visual anecdotes meant to construct the central role of the traditional nuclear family in Breton society.¹¹⁰ Mosler's depictions of mourning, as in *Last Moments* (Figure 4) and *Last Sacraments*, were for him a pretext to represent metaphorically the closeness and unity of the peasant family. *Last Moments* shows a family collapsing in emotional spasms as the grandfather is on the verge of death, with two members of the medical profession off to the side meditating on the futility of their efforts to save him. Mosler ingeniously organizes the figural groupings to establish a tightly knit linear bond circulating around the dying man, while keeping the doctors at bay. In *Last Sacraments*, a priest accompanied by two young acolytes clad in white supplices descends a flight of stone stairs leading to a cottage where he has been delivering divine unction. They leave behind at the top of the steps a young girl kneeling against the wall with her hands overhead clasped in despair. The stark environment, consisting mainly of the gray-green walls of the house and the adjoining buildings, establishes a lugubrious backdrop for the scene. Mosler gleaned from the human side of Breton life the kind of universal moral lesson that could be read positively by both conservatives as well as by the moderate liberal and anticlerical Republicans.

The strength of family ties and the tragedy of their rupture is also the theme of *Le Retour* (Plate 30), the signature piece of Mosler's series on Brittany. A melodramatic updated version of the prodigal son story, based on Greuze's *The Son Punished*, it is charged with local material culture and picturesque detail. The work depicts the ragged wayward son, kneeling beside the bier of his deceased mother whose life he has prematurely shortened, wringing his

hands in histrionic anguish. A priest, standing next to him, holding a breviary that he used in administering the last rites, meditates on the significance of the situation. Although playing an important role in the narrative, the priest functions here less as a representative of the Church than as a stage prompter who cues the spectator toward contemplation of correct ethical choices.

The breathtaking realism of the work reveals the lavish attention Mosler gave to recreating the interior of a traditional peasant household in Brittany. The typical monstrous *lit clos*, or cupboard bedstead, in Breton cottages was one of his favorite accessories and a studio prop that he took with him back to America.¹¹¹ Here he deploys it dramatically, with two lit tapers on either side of the prodigal's deceased mother, and the intricately carved cornice decorated with popular images, and the familiar ceramic *bénitier*, or holy-water vessel, and a rosary hanging on the side—all convincing enough to please even a native of Brittany.¹¹² The precious framed wood engraving of the equestrian rider belongs to a series of monarchist propaganda images produced in Nantes in the post-Napoleonic era.¹¹³ As his *pièce de résistance*, Mosler throws in the wide leather belt with large silver buckle and knee breeches characteristically worn by fashionable Breton males, to constitute the anguished protagonist's former status. The picture earned Mosler an Honorable Mention from the Salon jury in 1879, and was purchased by the French government for the Luxembourg gallery of contemporary art.

Mosler does not miss the mudcaked feet of the prodigal reduced to poverty, a touch of realism that clashes with the impeccable neatness of the interior. Yet as another American artist who lived in Brittany from 1881 to 1886 recalled, "All the Breton peasants I ever saw washed below the chin only twice in their lives—once when they were born and once when married."¹¹⁴ Although the dirt here is consistent with the prodigal theme, nevertheless one has the sneaking suspicion that like other members of the foreign colonies Mosler brought all of his American biases with him to his Breton subjects.

Nowhere does the lofty disdain of the "colonializing" mindset of the touring artists reveal itself more succinctly than in this passage by a British writer, describing his recollections of a visit in 1879:

Brittany is essentially the land of the painter. It would be strange indeed if a country sprinkled with white caps, and set thickly in summer with the brightest blossoms of the fields, should not attract artists in search of picturesque costume and scenes of pastoral life.... Nowhere in France are there finer peasantry; nowhere do we see more dignity of aspect in field labour, more nobility of feature amongst men and women; nowhere more picturesque ruins; nowhere such primitive habitations and, it must be added, such dirt.¹¹⁵

It was in this way that the painters inadvertently implicated themselves in maintaining social relations in the countryside; while the conservatives fought to retain power relations in the countryside, the bourgeois artist inadvertently sustained them by privileging certain picturesque life-styles in their imaginative constructions.

Mosler's depictions of humble life in Brittany avoid the obvious religious themes and typically seek out the ritual practices in secular Breton existence. These include *Visit of the Marquise*, set into an eighteenth-century context, *Discussion of the Marriage Contract*, *Buying the Wedding Trousseau* (Plate 12), *The Morning of the Wedding*, and *The Wedding Feast* (Figure 29), while *Approaching Storm* (Plate 10) and *The Chimney Corner* (Plate 19) depict contemporary situations involving courtship and its strains. These events furnished the occasion for him to depict the variety of traditional costumes, rustic furniture, and bibelots in the region, as well as to produce the type of theme within a specific insular cultural setting whose meaning would be accessible to a large general audience while simultaneously appealing to the folklorists, ethnographers, and tourists.

In *Visit of the Marquise* (Plate 4), a scene that takes place in the humble interior of a Breton farm house, Mosler confronts a haughty French aristocrat and the poor Breton peasantry as a richly attired Marquise and her entourage (including a black valet) take shelter from a passing storm in the rustic cottage. The contrast between the Breton woman humbly dusting a rude seat with her apron for her grand visitors and the other surveying her with amused contempt through her pince-nez would seem an obvious satire, but Mosler's sympathies—expressed through gestures, physiognomies, and his meticulous replication of their costumes and accessories—are clearly on the side of the Breton peasantry. His breathtaking execution of the textures of wood and fabric, angled perspective, and ingenious placement of the over-



Figure 29
The Wedding Feast

One of a series of paintings in which Mosler recorded the customs surrounding Breton Marriage, Mosler carefully delineated the Breton wedding accoutrements such as the elaborate butter mold inserted with twigs holding coins for the newlywed couple and the sheet hanging behind the wedding party that was spun and decorated by the bride. The feast took place in the humble Breton home and was attended by family members, close friends, and the local priest.

turned child's bench and animals in the foreground create an almost stereoscopic illusion. The ambiguous positioning of the classes (with the valet standing off to the side) suggests that while Mosler's affections are on the side of the peasantry, he also has an eye on his prospective patron who lives on a scale with the aristocrat. For nouveau-riche Americans it is possible that the potential appeal of such a work stemmed from their sense of having graduated from one stage to the other, and they could now proclaim indirectly through the image of not only remembering their origins but even of treating their servants with decorum.

As in the case of *Le Retour*, *Discussion of the Marriage Contract* attests to his admiration for the works of the eighteenth-century painter of peasant life, Jean-Baptiste Greuze. But if Mosler seems to have conceived of the theme of the Breton nuptial rites in the form of a series modeled on the work of the eighteenth-century master, his handling of the protagonists is more attuned to nineteenth-century psychology. One of Mosler's close French friends wrote him that, "with your Breton [wedding] scenes you could compose a complete poem, from the preludes of marriage right up to its consummation. This would make a pretty album!"¹¹⁶ Indeed, it is Mosler's preoccupation with every detail of the nuptial process, its elaborate preparations and embellishments that suggests that he may have been tapping into his Jewish roots for inspiration. Breton marriage customs—including the role of matchmakers (in Breton the *bazvalan*) and agents, ritual separation and union, the meal with its first course of soup and large wedding loaf divided into chunks for the guests, the festive music and dancing—are all the more intriguing for the parallels with older forms of Jewish marriage practices.¹¹⁷

In the nineteenth century, marriages in both Breton and European-Jewish society were still being decided by the families of the future bride and groom. That the daughter of a Breton family was generally asked for her consent was more a matter of form than of actual



Figure 30
Henry Mosler in his Paris study
at work on *The Wedding Feast*.

significance. There was romantic love, of course, but it was always subject to close control by the families. This is what is implied about Breton peasant society in Mosler's satiric *Approaching Storm*, where the local gossip (here the painter Mosler would have been thinking of the Yiddish *yenta*), broom in hand, peers from behind a corner upon a pair of happy lovers whose relationship she will soon report to the respective families. Direct expressions of love, however, were rare in the courting stage, and in Brittany the suitor rarely spoke the words, "Je t'aime." The interaction took the form of indirect but coded exchange in which two lovers revealed their mutual interests. Mosler clearly captures this coded ritual in *The Chimney Corner*, where a young man and woman are having a quiet chat on the hearth. The young man is telling the woman some amusing anecdote about himself, and she smiles out of deference. (The large phallic umbrella between his legs, however, makes the male appear somewhat absurd.)

The request for marriage was never made by the suitor directly, but by an agent (traditionally a tailor) who enumerated the excellent moral traits and abundant material possessions of the would-be groom. Each family informed itself on the property and number of animals belonging to the other, as well as on the specific details of the dowry that the daughter would bring to the marriage. The conditions of the marriage settlement were then negotiated face to face by the families before a lawyer, and the betrothal agreement ratified by both parties. In Mosler's *Discussion of the Marriage Contract*, the lawyer and both sets of parents are gathered around the table heatedly negotiating the marriage contract, with one woman rising and gesturing with outstretched arms toward the male at the opposite side. But it seems clear that in this instance, no matter what the outcome of the division over the question of land, animals, and cash, the close young couple exchanging pleasantries in the corner by the armoire have decided that their marriage plans will not be deterred by their disputing parents.

Buying the Wedding Trousseau centers on the concern of an entire family to help their bride-to-be select her gown. She is being measured for her wedding finery, and everyone involved is deeply fascinated. The store, with its groceries, dry goods, candles, and other commodities resembles a typical country store in the United States, with the exception of the Breton costumes. Zeroing in even further, the special emphasis on the kneeling village tailor—considered a lowly occupation in Brittany—measuring for the bridal dress while the mother of the bride haggles with the saleswoman who selects the goods, suggests a link with an unpretentious Jewish milieu in Mosler's hometown of Cincinnati. (It may also be recalled that the father of Max Jacob, Lazare Jacob, owned a tailor's shop in Quimper where he catered to the local population's need for Breton costumes.)

This work was purchased by Edmond Turquet (who also had signed the order for the purchase of *Le Retour*), Under-Secretary of State for the Fine Arts whose office had temporarily absorbed the functions of the Director of Beaux-Arts, for his private collection and once again attests to Mosler's appeal to the official art taste of the period. A Breton proverb has it that Brittany was "the land of good priests, good soldiers, and good servants," and the Opportunist Republicans put stress on the last two. In 1882 Turquet invited Mosler to send him a drawing of a Breton military subject to reproduce in his illustrated journal, *Le Drapeau*, and suggested as one possibility a Breton soldier returning from the wars and embracing his mother.¹¹⁸

Turquet represented the recently consolidated Opportunist government of 1879, liberal-to-moderate republicans (many of whom, such as Jules Ferry, Antonin Proust, and Edward Lockroy, were Freemasons) who had to fight off charges of anticlericalism.¹¹⁹ Turquet took an active role in reforming the Salon selection process, accusing certain artists of acting out of narrow partisan purposes and of selfishly maintaining their places at the expense of their fellow artists.¹²⁰ Although the state appointed the jury of admission to the Salon, by default much of the power had passed to the members of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Turquet himself oversaw the transferring of control of the Salon juries to the general body of artists in 1880–1881, leaving the running of the Salon to a society whose only requirement was having previously had a work accepted at the annual state-sponsored show.

Acting liberally in the domain of culture to open the field to the wider community of artists, the Opportunist Republicans also redefined the nature of state patronage as a form of education. Not only did it act to reform art instruction in the schools, but it stressed its role in diffusing culture through judicious patronage and overcoming the elitism and narrow appeal of so-called "fine" arts.¹²¹ The genre-style of Mosler fit the regime's need for a highly crafted work with a didactic theme that could appeal to a mass audience. Although Brittany remained for the most part a bastion of the monarchist and clerical Right—diehard Tories there referred to the Opportunists contemptuously as "Freemasons"¹²²—it was contested ground for both the nascent Republic and its conservative opponents. As the Third Republic unfolded, the Right in Brittany was forced to make several concessions while the minority of Republicans extended their political influence.¹²³ The realist depictions of Brittany could be appropriated for the political strategies of both camps, with the conservatives stressing the cross-the-board piety in themes like the *pardons*, and the Republicans lauding less the religiosity than the external signs of ritual, custom, and dress that revealed more the hardiness and persistence of the people than their submission to clerical domination.¹²⁴ This was part of a long-range strategy to "de-Bretonize" them by emphasizing their Frenchness and modernizing their society.

Morning of the Wedding, exhibited at the Salon of 1883, is organized around a group of adoring women in Breton costume who gaze in admiration on a rustic bride. The mother is pinning the finishing touches to the elaborate toilette, brilliant in scarlet cashmere, gold lace, striped silk apron, and high square ruff. A horseshoe suspended from the ceiling—a sign of Breton superstition—is balanced by the crucifix worn by the bride. The rest of the picturesque interior is filled with merry peasants just emerging out of graduated degrees of shadow. They include the bridegroom and his friends just entering the space to the music of the *biniou* (the small Breton bagpipe) and clarinets. The characteristic gift of butter, shaped like a cake (*moche de beurre*) and decorated with ribbons and flowers, into which the guests insert twigs with coins attached as bridal gifts, sits on the upper staircase. This scene could be just as easily transposed to other ethnic groups and still be easily understood, including the richly embroidered and ornamented costume and the emotional gesture of the admiring mother at the left.

The Wedding Feast (Figure 29) depicts the extended families of the couple with pre-

cise anecdotal detail. A detailed description of the ritual cloth backdrop behind the married pair by Mosler's Breton protégé and friend from Le Faouët, the painter Louis-Auguste Le Leuxhe (1847–1896), attests to Mosler's need for historical and ethnographic precision.¹²⁵ Mosler's reworking of the countrified scenes of Bruegel and Greuze anticipated the Jewish-American folk singers who would vocalize with a Southern or Western drawl to add authenticity to the delivery. The young bridegroom occupies the central position of the composition, behind a long table, greeting the crowd of villagers who have come in to wish him and his bride well and to share in the bounties of the banquet. On the bench before the table is the caked-shape mound of butter into which the guests stick their gifts of twigs with pieces of gold and silver attached. Conspicuously hanging in the background is a white linen sheet quilted with lace flowers—an accessory carefully researched by Mosler.

Le Leuxhe's prescriptive letter, mentioned above, made it clear that the cloth (2.50 x 2.00 meters) had an embracive significance at Breton weddings: "The sheet which serves as the backdrop is hung athwart and behind the newlyweds." Traditionally spun and woven by the bride herself for use on festive occasions, the cloth's noticeable function as backdrop behind the bride and groom conjures up the image of the wedding canopy or *huppah* elevated above the couple at Jewish weddings. Mosler's consultant further reminded him that the wedding banquet often took place in the open country under tents "formed of wooden pickets covered with sheets." Some of this surely rang a bell for Mosler, who may have known that the *huppah*—the modern portable canopy—originally referred to the tent or chamber of the groom where, at the end of the betrothal period, the bride was brought in festive procession for the marital union. The *huppah* later assumed a more general meaning as the bridal canopy and even came to symbolize more generally the wedding itself. In France, moreover, the Jewish groom covered his and his bride's head by spreading over and behind them his large *tallit*—the ceremonial cloth traditionally worn by male Jews while praying.¹²⁶ Of course, the *huppah-tallit* was used during the actual ceremonial rites while the Breton *drap* showed up after the wedding, but the shared symbolic meaning of the cloth as a shelter for the couple would have been recognized by Mosler.

The Wedding Feast was purchased by the well-known financier and philanthropist Jacob H. Schiff, who, like Mosler, was born in Germany and had gravitated early to the Reform movement. He supported the institutions founded in Cincinnati by Isaac Mayer Wise and took part in the memorial fund created for Wise after his death. Unlike Wise, however, Schiff harked back to orthodox customs and tradition, refraining from work and even walking to the temple on the Sabbath.¹²⁷ Ironically, however, as head of Kuhn, Loeb & Company—one of the most powerful private investment banking houses in the country—Schiff played a major role in the consolidation and expansion of the new industrial society, including the development of the American railroad system, and helped to finance such future corporate giants as Westinghouse Electric, U. S. Rubber, and American Telephone and Telegraph. Like many other fortunate self-made entrepreneurs of the period, Schiff revealed a lifelong nostalgia for the simpler life in which he was raised—the womblike coziness of the maternal residence as over and against the frantic urban rush to which his dizzying climb up the ladder of success propelled him. It is perhaps in this sense that Mosler's scenes of bucolic Brittany and its traditional customs could have attracted Schiff.

OTHER JEWISH ARTISTS IN BRITTANY

In addition to Mosler, many other artists of Jewish descent painted in Brittany including Jules Adler and Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer, but aside from Max Jacob (who also painted), perhaps the most interesting is the Dutch Meijer de Haan, recorded for history mainly through his relations with Van Gogh, Gauguin, and the School of Pont-Aven. The son of the owner of a matzo factory (French sources call it "une fabrique de biscuits," which in turn has been translated into English as a "cookie factory"),¹²⁸ Meijer de Haan began in a period genre style steeped in the tradition of Rembrandt and similar to the realist genre practiced by Mosler. In 1878 Meijer de Haan executed *The Disputation*, depicting three rabbis debating a difficult passage in the Talmud. His most important early work, *Uriël da Costa*, begun in 1880 but developed over several years, also represents a specifically Jewish theme, the scene of a brilliant seventeenth-century Jewish scholar being excommunicated for his heretical beliefs.¹²⁹

Meijer de Haan's hero had been born into a Portuguese Marrano family, and his personal study of the Bible led him back to his ancestral faith. But after fleeing to Amsterdam to escape the Inquisition, he discovered that his version of Judaism ran counter to that of the local Jewish community. Eventually he was excommunicated twice and reconciled twice before committing suicide in 1640. As the embodiment of the freethinker opposing religious orthodoxy, Uriel da Costa could very well have served as the persona of Meijer de Haan (his prize possession was an enormous antique Dutch Bible), whose choice of profession placed him in a tenuous relationship with the Amsterdam Jewish community as well as with his own family. A non-Jewish Dutch critic claimed that the *Uriël* was great "because its maker has suffered so much." And then he used a Christian metaphor to justify the need of artists to sacrifice all for their art: "Yes, yes, there is only one way to heaven... Golgotha."¹³⁰ Discouraged by the cool reception of his magnum opus, which he exhibited in 1887, Meijer de Haan arranged to yield up his share in the family's matzo business in return for being allowed to pursue an artist's career in self-imposed exile. Soon after coming to Paris, however, and falling under the spell of Gauguin, he found his subjects of preference in Brittany where he could distance himself from his own tradition while yet dealing with an historically isolated and time-bound culture.

Meijer de Haan and Gauguin arrived at Le Pouldu on the Breton coast in 1889, where they took up residence in the inn managed by Marie Henry. The unmarried and independent Henry was an outcast from the rigid Breton society, having given birth to a child only a few months before the arrival of her eccentric guests. She and Meijer de Haan, whose religious struggles and physical deformities (he was a dwarf and hunchbacked) made him uncomfortable in regular society, hit it off immediately. In this congenial environment, and under Gauguin's influence, Meijer de Haan's work brightened up and his handling became more impastoed; one of his most remarkable works from the period is his *Self-Portrait in Breton Costume* (Figure 31), in which he depicts himself in a Breton skull-cap and blue vest embroidered in yellow braids. Here is a dramatic case study of the identification of the Jewish artist with the Breton subject. Meijer de Haan left this portrait with the rest of his collection to Marie Henry, the love of his life with whom he had a daughter named Ida. He thus merged not only Jewish and Breton identities metaphorically but together they also gave birth to a quasi "Jewish" Breton.¹³¹

Bitterly jealous of his rival for Marie Henry's affections, Gauguin portrayed Meijer de Haan on more than one occasion as the devil incarnate.¹³² In his 1889 portrait of Meijer de Haan (Private Collection), Gauguin bestialized the features of the hunchbacked artist to conform to a foxlike physiognomy, and he has given him a cloven hand on which to rest his demonized head. Meijer de Haan's lozenge-shaped eyes peer down upon two books on the table, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. The Miltonic link is obvious, and the central figure of *Sartor Resartus* (a book whose emphasis on the symbolic character of clothes would have made it "must" reading for painters in Brittany!) is named Teufelsdröckh, or "Devil's Shit." Furthermore, Carlyle's anti-Semitism is revealed in the chapter on "Old Clothes," where Teufelsdröckh is quoted on the occasion of a visit to the Jewish quarter in Monmouth Street. There one hawker of old clothes, "that bearded Jewish High-priest" is likened to an "Angel of Doom" summoning the population to Purgatory. Thus to put the "wannabe" Breton in his place, Gauguin exploits a stereotypical anti-Semitic slur, calling forth the very atavistic superstitious fears of medieval Brittany that he himself derided.¹³³

Yet it was Meijer de Haan who subsidized Gauguin's work in Brittany in this period, making it possible for him to form the nucleus of a fraternal minicommunity that would one day be called "The School of Pont-Aven." The Nabis, the Rose+Croix groups that sprang from this group resembled fraternal orders in their coded communications and meetings and were perhaps inspired by Masonic models. Most of the Nabis were immersed in theosophy, whose Cabbalistic sources overlapped with Masonry. Although Gauguin himself strenuously denied any links with Freemasonry, he admitted their utility:

I have never wanted to be a Freemason, not wishing to belong to any society, either out of an instinctive desire for freedom or lack of sociability. However, I do recognize the usefulness of that institution where sailors are concerned; for in this very same spot near Iquique [a harbor in Peru] I saw a trading brig being driven on the rocks by a very strong tidal wave. She hoisted her Freemason's pennant to the top of the mast, and immediately a great many of the neighboring ships sent out boats to tow her in by the bowline. As a result she was saved.¹³⁴

Figure 31
Isaac Meijer de Haan (1852–95)
Self-Portrait, 1889–90
Private collection, Paris.

A good friend and financial supporter of Paul Gauguin, Meijer de Haan followed Gauguin to Brittany in 1889. De Haan was from a wealthy Dutch-Jewish family that operated a matzo factory in Amsterdam, yet depicts himself as a distinguished gentleman in contemporary Breton clothing.



Gauguin's denial of his interest in fraternal societies is betrayed by the many attempts he made to organize such communal relations among artists (if only to exploit them for narrow purposes), including Van Gogh, Emile Schuffenecker, Meijer de Haan, and the Circle of Pont-Aven whose focus were Breton themes. It is especially intriguing to consider that the group, Gauguin inspired, *Les Nabis* ("nabi" is the Hebrew word for "prophet"), were fascinated by Breton mysticism, caught up in the writings of Theosophy and Rosicrucianism, and calculatedly developed a fraternal association with meetings, joint projects, and coded verbal signage analogous to Freemasonry.¹³⁵ It is also curious to see that an early work of 1888 by Paul Sérusier, the leader of the Nabis, entitled *Breton Interior*, bears a close resemblance, stylistically and compositionally, to Mosler's *Le Retour* (Plate 30), which could have been seen and studied in the Luxembourg Gallery.¹³⁶

Gauguin's ambivalence about community identity is inseparable from his own need to imagine an immutable Breton world and unsullied Tahitian paradise. Similarly, the projection of a stable, unchanging Brittany within his expatriate existence resonated with Mosler's



Figure 32
Paul Sérusier (1863–1888)
Breton Interior in Pont-Aven
Private collection

Sérusier, who went on to become a Nabi theorist, studied at the Académie Julien under Jules Lefèvre, one of Mosler's good Parisian friends.

sense of exiled self within the cluster of his manifold identities. Like all Diasporan persons, Mosler had to seek alternative community relations and hospitable social environments. Freemasonry constituted one such solution and “sketching trips” to Brittany another. As a privileged male, he sought out a brotherhood under the aegis of the Divine Architect of the Universe and a sturdy patriarchal system in rural enclaves. The stereotype of the Breton peasant became the means for constructing his vision of a harmonious world, which he pursued in his ceaseless wandering and compulsive work. Brittany furnished the site for the displacing of both his Freemasonic and Jewish sympathies. It was in this way that Mosler solved for himself the problem of participating in a non-Jewish social environment without surrendering his sense of distinctive identity and claims to a harmonious and vigorous ancestral past.

Once again I have ventured into unexplored territory and needed the help of expert guides and the generous aid of indigenous residents to avoid getting stranded. I wish to express my gratitude to the following people for their precious and timely assistance: Arnold Band, Marielle Baudry, Bibliothèque municipale, Quimper, Monica Billet, Caroline Boyle-Turner, Director of the Pont-Aven School of Art, André Carriou, Conservateur en Chef du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Quimper, Myra Boime, Stephanie Cassidy, Michèle Coïc, Directeur de la Bibliothèque municipale, Quimper, H. Glorennec, Archives municipales, Quimper, Dara Jones, Christina Kim, Margarete Le Guellec, Musée Départemental Breton, Quimper, Yannie Guin, David Hirsch, Philippe Le Stum, Le Conservateur du Musée Départemental Breton, Quimper, Michel Marechal, Le Conservateur en Chef des Services d'Archives, Rennes, Sjoerd Meihuizen, William Moore, Livingston Masonic Library, David Myers, Michael Orwicz, Catherine Puget, Conservateur du Musée de Pont-Aven, Debora Silverman, Jill Weisbord, and Clayton D. Werden Jr. I am especially grateful to Daniel Le Meste, who generally placed at my disposal his own meticulous and lifelong research on artists in Brittany, and, finally, to Barbara Gilbert, who unstintingly shared with me her rich documentation and made my project possible.

1. Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture 1880–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), xii-xiii; Marc C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 2-3.
2. Mosler and his fellow artists in Paris stated their aim to make their showing at the Exposition "the equal of any foreign Art Department there." Printed minutes of the meeting of "American Artists, Residents in Paris," 7 April 1888 (Hawkins Scrapbook 13, Annmary Brown Memorial Library, Brown University). Annette Blaugrund, "Behind the Scenes: The Organization of the American Paintings," *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition* (New York: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, in association with H. N. Abrams, 1989), 21.
3. "New York Jews in Art. No. 11.—Henry Mosler," *The Federation Review* 4 (March 1910), 75.
4. John I. Covington, "Henry Mosler," *A Collection of Choice Paintings by Henry Mosler, at the Avery Galleries*, New York, 1896, 3.
5. Richard Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, 3 vols. (London: Henry and Co., 1896), III, 462. At the same time, Muther puts him on a par with Benjamin Vautier and Jules Breton, major representatives of the contemporary German and French genre schools. At home, the critic Royal Cortissoz, wrote, "His art is not a brilliant one, but it is sound." Royal Cortissoz, "Mr. Henry Mosler," *Harper's Weekly* 39 (11 May 1895), 437.
6. Moses Jacob Ezekiel, *Memoirs from the Baths of Diocletian*, eds. Joseph Gutmann and Stanley F. Chyet (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 21. For his first meeting with Mosler see *ibid.*, 130.
7. Béatrice Philippe, *Etre juif dans la société française du Moyen-Age à nos jours* (Paris: Editions Montalba, 1979), 171.
8. "Henry Mosler Dies; Famous Painter," *The New York Times*, 22 April 1920.
9. Spencer H. Coon, "Philip Martiny, Henry Mosler," *Metropolitan Magazine* 7 (March 1898), 247.
10. See Mosler's registry card in records of Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Mason of the State of New York. I am grateful to William Moore for this information.
11. "The Return," *Harper's Bazaar* 16 (October 13, 1883), 650.
12. Albert Boime, "Social Identity and Political Authority in the Response of Two Prussian Painters to the Revolution of 1848," *Art History* 13 (September 1990), 346, 348.
13. Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723–1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 82.
14. Daniel Béresniak, *Juifs & Francs-Maçons* (Paris: Bibliophane, 1989), 255-258.
15. For the Masonic emancipation in Prussia see Katz, *Jews and Freemasons*, 96-114.
16. *Ibid.*, 129.
17. See especially Charles Kuhlmann, *Influence of the Breton Deputation and the Breton Club on the French Revolution*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1903; René Maurice, "La création d'une Loge militaire à Lorient en 1776," *Les Cahiers de l'Iroise*, (October-December 1954), 13-18; Eugène Ruault and Daniel Bernard, "Les Loges maçonniques de Quimper au XVIIIe siècle," *Les Cahiers de l'Iroise* (October-December 1958), 212-217; Eugène Ruault, "La Franc-Maçonnerie en Bretagne au 18e siècle," *Les Cahiers de l'Iroise* (July-September 1956), 27-30; Eugène Ruault, "Les Loges maçonniques brestoises au XVIIIe siècle," *Les Cahiers de l'Iroise* (April-June, 1957), 27-31; Jacques Brengues, "Les loges maçonniques bretonnes à l'aube de la Révolution," *La Bretagne: Une province à l'aube de la Révolution: Actes du Colloque de Brest, 28-30 September 1988, Bulletin de la Société du Finistère* (1989), 325-333.
18. Béresniak, *Juifs & Francs-Maçons*, 177.
19. See Jean-André Faucher and Achille Ricker, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie en France* (Paris: Nouvelles editions latines, 1968).
20. Paul Naudon, *Histoire générale de la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Fribourg: Office du livre, 1981), 97.
21. Y. Castel, O. Castel, Y.-P. Castel, L. Toudic, "Essai de mise en relation d'observations médicales récentes avec les données de l'histoire et de l'onomastique: Le problème des juifs en Bretagne," *Bulletin de la société archéologique du Finistère* 109, (1981), 109, 232-236.
22. Sarah Bernhardt, *Memories of My Life* (New York: D. Appleton, 1907), 1, 234; Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *The Divine Sarah: A Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 10-11, 14, 267.

23. "Le précurseur du surréalisme était né le 12 juillet 1876 à Quimper: 1944-1994: le cinquantenaire de la mort de Max Jacob," *Ouest-France*, 16 June 1994.
24. Katharine S. Macquoid, *Through Brittany* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1881), 234; Anatole Le Braz, *The Land of Pardons*, tr. Frances M. Gosling (London: R.M. McBride, 1924), 99.
25. Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, "Les données bretonnantes: La prairie de représentation," *Art History* 3 (September 1980), 327.
26. *Catalogue of the Furniture, Numerous Costumes and Other Studio Effects of the Late Henry Mosler* (New York: American Art Galleries, Dec. 13, 1921), Nos. 36-78.
27. Prosper Jardin, "L'Affaire Dreyfus, à Rennes," *Bulletin et mémoires de la Société archéologique du département d'Ille-et-Vilaine* 81 (1979), 51-83.
28. Pierre-Jean Simon, "Racisme et antisémitisme dans le mouvement breton des années trente," *Pluriel* 18 (1979), 29-38.
29. See Lois Fink, "American Artists in France, 1850-1876," *American Art Journal* 5 (1973), 32-49. For a general exposition of the issues of expatriation see Ernest Earnest, *Expatriates and Patriots* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1968), 3-12.
30. Albert Boime, "The Chocolate Venus, 'Tainted' Pork, the Wine Blight, and the Tariff: Franco-American Stew at the Fair," in Annette Blaugrund, ed., *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition*, 79-85.
31. Mosler's draft of a letter, 20 January 1898, "To the Sunday Editor New York Herald," Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frames 1071-1076, Archives of American Art.
32. Dreyfus was arrested on 15 October 1894, and the Moslers departed toward the end of the month, too soon to posit a causal connection. But a detailed letter from J. Carter Beard, the son of Mosler's early teacher James H. Beard, shows how sensitive Mosler was to the conditions of Jewry throughout the world. Beard, writing Mosler in response to the recent pogrom in Kishinev in Bessarabia at Eastertime 1903 and the ongoing Dreyfus controversy in which appeals to reopen the case rekindled the reaction, declared: "I cannot withhold the expression of my indignation and my sympathy. The unparalleled outrage offered to the most law-abiding people in the world, the undeserved suffering inflicted upon them makes me doubt if the world has advanced much since the dark ages. I have ever found the Hebrews honest, true and gentle. Sometimes, as in your case, something more than this." Beard to Mosler, 12 May 1903, Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frames 1173-1174, Archives of American Art. See also April-May 1903-articles in *The New York Times*: "In Foreign Lands," (10 May); "Denunciation of Russia," (11 May); "Dreyfus Appeals for New Hearing," (23 April); "Dreyfus Redivivus," (25 April); "Chinese Help for Jews," (12 May).
33. Emile Monod, *Exposition universelle de 1889. Grand ouvrage illustré historique, encyclopédique, descriptif publié sous le patronage de M. le Ministre du Commerce, de l'Industrie et des Colonies*, 3 vols., (Paris, 1890), I, 607.
34. The warm congratulatory messages for Mosler's French official awards from such artists as George P. A. Healy, Frederic Arthur Bridgman, Daniel Ridgway Knight, Elizabeth Jane Gardner, Anna Elizabeth Klumpke, Charles Sprague Pearce, Alexander Harrison, and a host of others attest to his active participation in the community of exiles.
35. Howard Russell Butler Papers, 24 May 1885, Archives of American Art; quoted in Sellin, 48-49.
36. Ishbel Ross, *The Expatriates* (New York: Crowell, 1970), 169.
37. H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 218, 226.
38. "Henry Mosler dies; Famous Painter," *The New York Times*, 22 April 1920.
39. Henry Mosler Papers, Roll No. 4284, frame 0192, Archives of American Art, Letter from John Bonner, editor of *Harper's*, to Mosler, dated 23 May 1861: "We are unable to use the sketch of Major Anderson's reception which you so kindly sent us. Our space is fully occupied with war pictures. We shall be glad to receive any sketches from you, and for such as we may use, will pay you at the rate of twenty-five dollars per page."
40. "The War in Kentucky," *Harper's Weekly* 6 (11 October 1862), 655; "The Army of the Ohio," *ibid.*, (22 November 1862), 746.
41. Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frame 0013, typed sheet, Archives of American Art, "Henry Mosler, Genre Painter."
42. Béresniak, *Juifs & Francs-Maçons*, 256.
43. See his *War Scenes on Green River, Kentucky* (especially the vignette of "Tent Life"), *Harper's Weekly* 6 (1 February 1862), 69; *Negroes Building Stockades Under the Recent Act of Congress*, *ibid.*, (30 August 1862), 549; and for comparison, *Preparations for Defense at Cincinnati—Citizens in the Trenches*, *ibid.*, (20 September 1862), 597; *Return of the Cincinnati Militia After the Retreat of the Rebels*, *ibid.*, (4 October 1862), 637.
44. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poetical Works*, 6 vols., (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), I, 109-111, lines 29-32.
45. Morris E. Oppler, "The Apachean Culture Pattern and Its Origins," *Handbook of North American Indians: Southwest*, (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 373, 375, 379, 406.
46. Anonymously written brochure, "Abandoned," (Rochester, 1887), 8.
47. Letter from Lieut. Gen. P. H. Sheridan to Col. R. E. Crofton, Fort Wingate, N. M., Dec. 17, 1885. Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frames 0336-0337, Archives of American Art.
48. Letter from Cameron to Mosler, 18 November 1885, Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frame 0330, Archives of American Art
49. Morris E. Oppler, "Mescalero Apache," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 419-439.
50. Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frames 0336-0342, Archives of American Art, letters from P. H. Sheridan to Colonel R. E. A. Crofton, Commanding Officer of Fort Wingate, New Mexico, and Lamar to "Indian Agents" and David W. Wear, Superintendent Yellowstone National Park dated 18 December 1885.
51. Robert McElroy, *Grover Cleveland, The Man and the Statesman*, 2 vols. (New York and London: Harper and Bros., 1923), I, 228-230.
52. George M. Wheeler, *Report upon the United States Geographical Surveys West of the One-Hundredth Meridian* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 35.
53. Harold E. Driver, *Indians of North America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 490.

54. For a recent study of Hébert, see René Patris d'Uckermann, *Ernest Hébert, 1817–1908* (Paris: Ministère de la culture, 1982). According to the author, young Hébert was attracted to “secret societies.” Hébert also began his instruction under the sculptor David d'Angers, who was a Freemason. *Ibid.*, 19, 20-23.
55. James G. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise, His Life, Work and Thought* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregation, 1965), 264-265.
56. Joseph Guttmann, “Jewish Participation in the Visual Arts of Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century America,” *American Jewish Archives* 15 (April 1963), 30.
57. As late as 1888, one of his Cincinnati friends could congratulate him on the news of his Salon medal with a hearty “Mazel Tov!” See the telegram from M. E. Moch, Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frame 0434, Archives of American Art. The telegrapher spelled it “Messeltof.”
58. For the dedication ceremonies see Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, 379-383. It is now called the Isaac Mayer Wise Temple.
59. *Ibid.*, 267-268.
60. Quoted in Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Center for Study of the Jewish American Experience, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 55.
61. Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 264-265.
62. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, 263, 444.
63. “Henry Mosler,” *The Federation Review*, 77.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Michael Quick, “Munich and American Realism,” in *Munich & American Realism in the 19th Century* (Sacramento: E. B. Crocker Art Gallery, 1978), 24.
66. Béresniak, *Juifs & Francs-Maçons*, 162-163.
67. Katz, *Jews and Freemasons*, 152-153; Béresniak, *Juifs & Francs-Maçons*, 178-183.
68. For this resurgence of anti-Semitism prior to the Dreyfus Affair see Nelly Wilson, *Bernard-Lazare: Antisemitism and the Problem of Jewish Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 66-89.
69. The best general study remains Denise Delouche, *Peintres de la Bretagne: Découverte d'une province* (Mayenne: Klincksieck, 1977). For the American perspective see David Sellin, *Americans in Brittany and Normandy 1860–1910* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1982).
70. Katharine S. Macquoid, *Through Brittany* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1881), 4, 6.
71. Catherine Bertho, “L'Invention de la Bretagne: genèse sociale d'un stéréotype,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 35 (November 1980), 45-62.
72. The major analysis of these issues is Michael R. Orwicz, “The Representation of the Breton: Art Criticism, Politics and Ideology in Paris, 1885–1889,” doctoral dissertation, UCLA, 1989.
73. Yann Brekilien, *La Vie quotidienne des paysans en Bretagne au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1978), 203-212; Gabriel Weisberg, “Vestiges of the Past: The Brittany ‘Pardons’ of Late Nineteenth-Century Painters,” *Arts Magazine* 55 (November 1980), 134-138.
74. Le Braz, *Land of Pardons*, xv-xxv, 103-104, 142, 179.
75. *Ibid.*, 141.
76. Quoted in Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Gauguin's Religious Themes* (New York and London: Garland, 1985), 42. See also Matthew Herban, “The Origin of Paul Gauguin's Vision after the Sermon, Jacob Wrestling with the Angel (1888),” *Art Bulletin* 59 (September 1977), 415-420; Mary Mathews Gedo, *Looking at Art From the Inside Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 56-86.
77. Enfant Perdu, “Rash Steps,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 12 October 1866.
78. For the Breton wrestling scenes see Brekilien, *La Vie quotidienne des paysans en Bretagne*, 209-211; Denise Delouche, “Gauguin et le thème de la lutte,” *Gauguin: Actes de colloque Gauguin, Musée d'Orsay, 11-13 janvier 1989* (Paris, 1991), 157-171.
79. Jules Breton, *La Vie d'un artiste* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1890), 297-311.
80. *Ibid.*, 297.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Arthur Hoeber, “A Summer in Brittany,” *Quarterly Illustrator* 4 (April-June 1895), 74-76.
83. Blanche Willis Howard, *Guenn, A Wave on the Breton Coast* (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1884), 1.
84. See the excellent discussion in Orwicz, “The Representation of the Breton,” 143-144.
85. Maurice Malingue, ed., *Lettres de Gauguin à sa femme et à ses amis* (Paris: Saturn Press, 1946), 322.
86. Quoted in Orton and Pollock, “Les données bretonnantes,” 216.
87. Henry Blackburn, *Breton Folk, An Artistic Tour in Brittany* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1880), 156.
88. Quoted in Marla Prather and Charles F. Stuckey, *Gauguin, A Retrospective* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 108.
89. Edward Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy: Memoirs of a Painter and a Yankee* (New York and London: Harper, 1922), 142.
90. Howard, *Guenn*, 8.
91. Caroline Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin & His Circle in Brittany* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1986), 59; Claire Frèches-Thory, “Brittany, 1886–1890,” in *The Art of Paul Gauguin* (Washington, D. C.: National Gallery of Art, 1988), 53.
92. Orwicz, “The Representation of the Breton,” 28.
93. Anne Douglas Sedgwick, *A Childhood in Brittany Eighty Years Ago* (New York: The Century Co., 1919), 15-16, 201-203.
94. O.-L. Aubert, “En Arcadie Bretonne (Costumes Bretons V),” *Bretagne* 3 (September-October 1932), 216. The author reproduces Mosler's *The Wedding Trousseau*. This is part of an informative series on regional Breton costumes, overlooked in the literature. The other articles are “Les Costumes Bretons,” (January-February 1932), 5-20; “Au Pays Glazik (Costumes Bretons II),” (March-April 1932), 45-60; “Le Gentil peuple féminin du pays de Quimper (Costumes Bretons III),” (May-June 1932), 85-100; “Bigoudens et Douarnenistes (Costumes Bretons IV),” (July-August 1932), 125-140; “Au coeur de la race (Costumes Bretons VI),” (November-December 1932), 233-248.

95. Breton, *La vie d'un artiste*, 310.
96. Ibid.
97. Heinz and Gudrun Becker, eds., *Giacomo Meyerbeer, A Life in Letters* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1983), 162, 164. Meyerbeer's opera was known to the American colony in Brittany; Howard based her character Hoël in the first chapter on Hoël the Goatherd. For the general dissemination of Meyerbeer's opera see Blackburn, *Breton Folk*, 2.
98. Heinz and Gudrun Becker, eds., *Giacomo Meyerbeer*, 164.
99. Breton, *La vie d'un artiste*, 17-18, 23, 30.
100. Ibid, 39-40.
101. Ibid, 55.
102. Emile Bernard, "Introduction," *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Emile Bernard*, ed. Pierre Caillier (Geneva: P. Cailler, 1954), 38.
103. "Henry Mosler," *The Federation Review*, 77.
104. Blackburn, *Breton Folk*, 3.
105. Brekilien, *La Vie quotidienne des paysans en Bretagne*, 88-89.
106. Howard, *Guenn*, 67. For a contemporary restatement of Breton identity and its slippage see Maryon McDonald, *'We are not French!' Language, Culture, and Identity in Brittany* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 20-23.
107. "Henry Mosler," *The Federation Review*, 75.
108. Le Braz, *The Land of Pardons*, 196-198.
109. One clue to Mosler's imaginative cultural projections and transferences is seen in his 1903 reworking of an earlier Breton theme, *The Forging of the Cross*, into *The Light of the Cross*, where he transformed the Bretons into Puritans. This occurred when he began to conceptualize a series of paintings on American history. See his application for a copyright to the Library of Congress, 13 October 1903, Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4285, frame 0119, Archives of American Art.
110. This was not unusual; see Orwicz, "The Representation of the Breton," 35.
111. An excellent description of the lit clos is found in Brekilien, *La Vie quotidienne des paysans en Bretagne*, 72-74.
112. Jean Lorédan, "Les peintres du Faouët," *La Pensée Bretonne* (15 May 1918).
113. I owe this observation to Philippe Le Stum, Conservateur of the Musée Départemental Breton, Quimper. See his catalogue, *L'imagerie populaire bretonne*, Musée Départemental Breton, Quimper, 1992, No. 102.
114. Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 142.
115. Blackburn, *Breton Folk*, 3.
116. Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frame 0619, Archives of American Art, Letter from François Fertault to Mosler, 27 May 1892.
117. Brekilien, *La Vie quotidienne des paysans en Bretagne*, 155-170. Naturally, there are an infinite number of permutations in Jewish marriage customs according to tradition and country, and other cultures may follow a similar ceremonial pattern, but my concern here is with Mosler and the parallels he may have detected on the basis of his Jewish heritage.
118. Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frame 0252, Archives of American Art, Edmond Turquet's letter to Mosler, 29 March 1882, with letterhead "Le Drapeau."
119. For the connection between the Republicans and Freemasonry see Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848-1945*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973-1977), I, 125, II, 1032.
120. Paris, Archives Nationales F21 535, "Petition to Sous-Secrétaire d'Etat," 24 May 1880, signed by among others, Bonnat, Henner, Puvis de Chavannes, Harpignies, Jules Breton, and Jules Laurens, and Paul Baudry's resignation from the 1880 jury, 23 May 1880.
121. Nicholas Green, "All the Flowers of the Field": the State, Liberalism and Art in France Under the Early Third Republic," *Oxford Art Journal* 10 (1987), 75.
122. There was always a close relationship between the moderate Republican reformers and Freemasonry: see Katherine Auspitz, *The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'enseignement and the Origins of the Third Republic 1866-1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 135.
123. Auguste Dupouy, *Histoire de Bretagne* (Paris: Boivin, 1932), 412.
124. Michael Orwicz, "Criticism and Representation of Brittany in the Early Third Republic," *The Art Journal*, 46, (Winter 1987), 291-298.
125. Henry Mosler Papers, Roll No. 4284, frames 0126-0128, Archives of American Art, letter that begins, "Bon et bien cher Monsieur Mosler," ca. 1891-1892. For Louis-Auguste Le Leuxhe's relationship with Mosler see "Noël breton à Notre-Dame de Bonne Nouvel," *La Liberté du Morbihan*, 23-24 December 1979. I am grateful to Daniel Le Meste for this reference. Mosler introduced Le Leuxhe to Hébert and Jules Lefebvre as well as to Comte Albert de Mun, deputy from Morbihan, with the aim of advancing the young painter's career. See Henry Mosler papers, Roll 4284, Frames 0095-0096, 0256, 0279, 0683-0684, Archives of American Art. Writing from Lorient in 1892 to congratulate Mosler on his Légion d'Honneur, Le Leuxhe added that the parish priest of Le Faouët and the priest of Notre-Dame de Bonne Nouvel, the Abbé Schliebusch, also sent their congratulations and the latter invited Mosler to visit him in Lorient. This would indicate that Mosler had a well-established reputation in Brittany.
126. See the article "Marriage," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 11 (Jerusalem, 1971), 1039-1042.
127. Cyrus Adler, *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters*, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1928), II, 44-45, 47, 50-51.
128. I owe this information to Caroline Boyle-Turner, director of the The Pont-Aven School of Art, who is preparing a monograph on Meijer de Haan. She has also informed me that the artist's name recorded on the birth certificate reads only "Meijer de Haan," and not "Jacob Meijer de Haan," as is often registered in the literature. Thus far the best text on the artist is Wladyslawa Jaworska, *Paul Gauguin et l'Ecole de Pont-Aven* (Neuchâtel: Editions Ides et Calendes, 1971), 95-106.
129. Jan Zürcher, *Meijer de Haan's Uriel Acosta* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1888), 1-16. Uriel Acosta was well known in the nineteenth century, and is referred to by Lazare in his study of anti-Semitism: Bernard Lazare, *Antisemitism, Its History and Causes* (New York: The International Library Publishing Co., 1903), 144.
130. Ibid, 15.

131. Fernand Dauchot, "Meyer de Haan en Bretagne," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, sér. 6, vol. 40 (July-December 1952), 355-358.
132. Wladyslawa Jaworska, "Jacob Meyer de Haan 1852-1895," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 18 (1967), 209-212; Frèches-Thory, "Brittany, 1886-1890," 167-171.
133. Gauguin's personal anti-Semitism is revealed in *Avant et après* in a vicious anecdote implying Jewish duplicity—this despite his own merciless exploitation of the Jews Camille Pissarro and Meijer de Haan who encouraged and supported his artistic ambitions. See *Paul Gauguin's Intimate Journals*, trans. Van Wyck Brooks (Liveright and New York: Crown Publishers, 1949), 68.
134. Paul Gauguin, *The Writings of a Savage*, ed. Daniel Guérin (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 234.
135. Charles Chassé, *Les Nabis et leurs temps* (Lausanne and Paris: La Bibliothèque des arts, 1960), 16; Caroline Boyle-Turner, *Paul Sérusier* (Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1983), 36-38. The Nabis called their meeting place the "Temple," referring to the Temple of Solomon, an idea that coincides with their reading of Edouard Schuré's Masonic-inspired *Les Grands Initiés*, published in 1889. It may also be noted that Masons called their place of meeting "Temple," designating the physical housing of the lodge. French Masons use interchangeably the expressions "aller au Temple" and "aller à la loge." See Daniel Ligou, ed., *Dictionnaire de la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987), 1165.
136. For a reproduction and description see Caroline Boyle-Turner, "Sérusier et la Bretagne," in *Paul Sérusier et la Bretagne*, Musée de Pont-Aven, (1991), 8. It may not be coincidental that Sérusier's teacher at the Académie Julian at the time he did this painting was Jules Lefebvre, one of Mosler's good friends in Paris. See Boyle-Turner, *Paul Sérusier* (1983), 7; Archives of American Art, Henry Mosler Papers, Roll 4284, frames 0133-0135, 1109, 1139.