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# ANTISEMITISM IN THE NORTH

HISTORY AND STATE OF RESEARCH

*Edited by Jonathan Adams  
and Cordelia Heß*

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE NORTH

## **Antisemitism in the North**

# **Religious Minorities in the North: History, Politics, and Culture**

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Edited by  
Jonathan Adams  
Cordelia Heß  
Christhard Hoffmann

## **Volume 1**

# **Antisemitism in the North**

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but is ranked fourth. Photo by Finnish photographer Akseli Neittamo of the 100-metre  
sprint at the Helsinki Olympic Stadium on 21 June 1938. The photo appeared in Helsingin Sanomat on 22 June 1938. Public domain.  
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## **Introduction**



Cordelia Heß

## 1 Nordic Otherness

### Research on Antisemitism in the Nordic Countries in an International Context

In December 2008 and January 2009, anti-Israel demonstrations in Oslo turned into riots with a distinct antisemitic character, where protesters shouted “Death to Jews!” and “Hunt the Jews!”<sup>1</sup>

In March 2009, several thousand people demonstrated against the participation of Israeli tennis players in a match in Malmö, many of them screaming antisemitic slogans, comparing Israel to National Socialist Germany, and displaying maps of the Middle East in which the Jewish State was eradicated.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 2009, police reported seventy-nine attacks on the synagogue and Jewish cemetery in Malmö.<sup>3</sup>

In February 2010, the mayor of Malmö denied that there had ever been any violence against Jewish institutions, and demanded the city’s Jewish community denounce Israeli human rights violations against the civilian population in Gaza.<sup>4</sup>

In June 2011, a survey carried out by the city of Oslo found that 33 per cent of Jewish students in Oslo were physically threatened or abused by other high-school teens at least two to three times a month.<sup>5</sup>

In December 2015, a man wounded two police officers and killed a young Jewish man on security duty at the synagogue in Copenhagen.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Eirik Eiglad, *The Anti-Jewish Riots in Oslo* (Porsgrunn: Communalism, 2010).

2 Per Gudmundson, “Varken fredligt eller lugnt,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 March 2009, < <https://www.svd.se/varken-fredligt-eller-lugnt> >.

3 Ann-Hélén Laestadius, “Hatbrott mot judar ökar,” 21 May 2015, < <http://www.minoritet.se/1357> >.

4 Ilmar Reepalu, “Reepalu: Israel har skapat en ‘varböld’,” *Skånska Dagbladet*, 27 January 2010, < <https://www.skd.se/2010/01/27/reepalu-israel-har-skapat-en-varbold> >.

5 Anette Holth Hansen, Øystein Solvang, and Kjersti Kanestrøm Lie, “Ett av tre jødiske barn hetses på skolen,” *NRK.no*, 7 June 2011, < <https://www.nrk.no/ostlandssendingen/en-av-tre-hetses-pa-skolen-1.7664103> >.

6 Søren Kjellberg Ishøy, “Mosaisk Trossamfund: 37-årige Dan blev dræbt i terrorangreb,” *B. T.*, 15 February 2015, < <https://www.bt.dk/danmark/mosaisk-trossamfund-37-aarige-dan-blev-draebt-i-terrorangreb> >. The gunman had also killed the film director Finn Nørgaard and injured three policemen that afternoon at an event at the Krudttønden cultural centre in Copenhagen.

In December 2017, a gang of young men threw firebombs and Molotov cocktails at the synagogue in Gothenburg. A number of young people were attending a party inside the synagogue at the time, though none of them was injured.<sup>7</sup>

In October 2018, the house of a Jewish politician in Lund was burned to the ground. The victim had received antisemitic hate mail and death threats in the months leading up to the attack.<sup>8</sup>

In all the Nordic countries, kosher slaughter is forbidden,<sup>9</sup> while parliamentarians are considering a law that would criminalize ritual circumcision. The debate around this often bears distinct antisemitic undertones and invokes antisemitic stereotypes.<sup>10</sup>

These graphic examples should be evidence enough that antisemitism exists in the Nordic countries. It is present amongst left-wing anti-Zionists, Islamists, right-wing nationalists, and white supremacists, as well as just ordinary people with all kinds of political views. Many of the incidents above were followed by expressions of goodwill by politicians – promises to fight antisemitism, to stand up for Jewish communities, and to educate the public about antisemitism. The latter in particular has, however, been noteworthy for its absence – or rather, where it has occurred, it is often in a way that only defines antisemitism in a very narrow sense. Most of the educational programmes funded by the Nordic states are about visiting Holocaust memorials at former concentration camps, their focus being on the Holocaust and Second World War.<sup>11</sup> It is believed that the best way to fight against contemporary antisemitism is to focus on the most meticulously planned, industrialized mass killing of Jews, Sinti and Roma, homo-

<sup>7</sup> “Tre döms för synagogaattacken i Göteborg,” *Dagens Nyheter*, 25 June 2018, < <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/tre-doms-for-synagogaattacken-i-goteborg/> >.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Norström, “Misstänkt mordbrand mot judisk politiker i Lund,” *Nyheter Idag*, 10 October 2018, < <https://nyheteridag.se/misstankt-mordbrand-mot-judisk-politiker-i-lund/> >.

<sup>9</sup> In Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden the animal must be stunned before cutting, effectively making ritual slaughter impossible. Despite vigorous and sometimes ugly debate in Finland, this is not the case here, but there are insufficient resources for ritual slaughter in the country and as in all the other Nordic countries kosher meat has to be imported.

<sup>10</sup> Ayhan Al Kole, “12 grunde til at forbyde omskæring af drengebørn,” *Jyllands-Posten*, 29 May 2018, < <https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/kronik/ECE10643216/12-grunde-til-at-forbyde-omskaering-af-drengeboern/> >.

<sup>11</sup> See *Senter for studier av Holocaust og livssynsminoriteter*, Oslo (<https://www.hlsenteret.no/>); *Dansk Institut for Internationale Studier*, Copenhagen (<https://folkedrab.dk/>); and *Svenska komittén mot antisemitism*, Stockholm, particularly their educational trips for school classes (<http://skma.se/utbildning/>). One exception that does provide information on antisemitism in a broader perspective is *Jødisk Informationscenter* in Copenhagen (<https://www.joediskinfo.dk/qa/myter>), established in the wake of the 2015 attack on the synagogue there.

sexuals, and any other group that was defined as deviant by German National Socialism.

The educational value of this approach is debatable. Yet it mirrors and perpetuates currents in the academic landscape in the Nordic countries which make them an anomaly in the Western hemisphere. Antisemitism is largely seen as a phenomenon connected to the German, pro-German, and fascist movements of the 1930s and 1940s, and this is what research has tended to focus on – while the almost two thousand preceding years of relations between Jews and non-Jews have been largely neglected, as has the growing field of postwar antisemitism and secondary antisemitism.<sup>12</sup> This situation seems peculiar given the vast scholarly production on antisemitism in other European countries as well as in Israel and the United States. Historical perspectives are particularly lacking as are reliable data on antisemitic attitudes in contemporary societies. Hate crime statistics which explicitly list antisemitic assaults began to be collected only a few years ago.<sup>13</sup> Most discussion about antisemitism occurs in media debates, not in academic publications, and without reliable research results from historical studies and the social sciences. Contributions to public debate tend only to come from Jewish voices (or, in Denmark, from a few individual non-Jewish politicians), as if antisemitism were a problem that is only of concern to Jews themselves. Generally, both interest in and knowledge of antisemitism in its historical dimensions and contemporary forms seems to be much more narrow in the Nordic countries than in the rest of the Western world.

This book on the study of antisemitism in the Nordic countries is largely a book about something that does not or that only barely exists, at least for certain periods and areas. In some cases, we can speculate about the reasons for this non-existence, in others, we can simply name that which is missing. Some of these contributions are the first accounts of antisemitism in the Northern peripheries ever published in English – these necessarily focus more on the phenomenon itself than on a non-existent research environment. The present book col-

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<sup>12</sup> Werner Bergmann, “Sekundärer Antisemitismus,” in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindlichkeit in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Vol 3. *Begriffe, Theorien, Ideologien*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 300–02.

<sup>13</sup> In 2006, two studies were published about hate crimes in Sweden, the *Brottsförebyggande rådet* study listed and quantified antisemitic violence directly, while the study of the *Forum för levande historia* did not. See <<https://www.bra.se/publikationer/arkiv/publikationer/2007-06-28-hatbrott-2006.html>> and <[https://www.levandehistoria.se/sites/default/files/material\\_file/homofoba-hatbrott.pdf](https://www.levandehistoria.se/sites/default/files/material_file/homofoba-hatbrott.pdf)>. See also Johannes Due Enstad, *Antisemitic Violence in Europe, 2005–2015: Exposure and Perpetrators in France, UK, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Russia* (Oslo: Center for Research on Extremism), 12. See also FRA, *Fundamental Rights: Challenges and Achievements in 2013 – Annual Report 2013* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), 151.

lects contributions from scholars who have been working on this topic in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as contributions on attitudes towards Jews in the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Their accounts note three recurring factors relevant to the lack of scholarly interest in the topic: the late and quantitatively limited history of Jewish immigration to the Nordic countries compared to much of Europe; the experiences during the Second World War, i.e. Sweden's neutrality and humanitarian efforts in the last months of the war, the rescue of the Danish Jews, Norway's broad antifascist resistance, and Finland's complicated wartime role and postwar relationship with the USSR; and, finally, a general sense of Nordic exceptionalism. These arguments are seldom uttered directly, and yet they seem to linger behind the lack of interest in and support for research on antisemitism in the Nordic countries. However, as brief comparisons to other countries show, none of these factors is sufficient to explain our lack of knowledge about antisemitism in the North.

## Absence of Jews – absence of antisemitism?

Very frustrating for a historian who studies the pre-modern period, most conversations in Scandinavia about antisemitism as a research topic are met with the typical remark that “there were no Jews in the Nordic countries before the seventeenth or eighteenth century.” The idea that antisemitism exists only in relation to, and in the presence of, actual living people of Jewish faith, is a very long-lived and problematic misconception, and it creates a blind spot for very many scholars of medieval and early modern Scandinavia. Additionally, the same idea or argument also obscures the identification of antisemitism in those areas where Jewish presence remains very limited to this day – as becomes clear from the contributions by Firouz Gaini on the Faroe Islands and Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson on Iceland and Greenland.

Even though we can state with some certitude that there were no resident Jewish communities in medieval Scandinavia, it does not automatically follow that Nordic people never had personal encounters with Jews – as travellers, pilgrims, merchants, or slaves. The absence of stable Jewish communities leaving archaeological or written records does not mean that there were no Jews present at all in certain areas, as I have demonstrated for medieval Prussia under the Teutonic Order.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, a ban and consequently the absence of Jews from

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<sup>14</sup> Cordelia Heß, *The Absent Jews: Kurt Forstreuter and the Historiography of Medieval Prussia* (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 280–82.

the Hanseatic towns of the Northern German coast has often been claimed, but has never been proven with detailed investigations of the surviving town records, trade registers, and so on.<sup>15</sup> In medieval Scandinavia, there was not even a ban on Jewish settlement or presence.

What is actually more relevant to the development of antisemitism than the presence of Jews is, of course, the presence of the Christian Church. Regardless of the existence of Jewish communities or personal encounters, the Church brought texts, images, and ideas about Jews to the most remote corners of Europe – and as such, to the North, with Christianization and the subsequent establishment of dioceses during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Clerics read the texts of the Church Fathers, of Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux, they had access to crusading propaganda and to hagiographic, historiographic, and exegetic texts, as well as works by the Franciscans and Dominicans, which carried an abundance of references to Jews – as well as to pagans, heretics, and Muslims, the latter two being similarly absent from the North, while the former were present amongst the indigenous populations of Greenland and Sápmi. All of this knowledge was passed on to and dispersed amongst the Christian communities in sermons, prayer books, and church paintings and thus brought the perceived enemies of the Church to the most remote areas of the Christianitas.

The discrepancy between actual living Jews during the Middle Ages, who lived in relatively small communities, and the numerous and practically omnipotent Jews who existed in theological writings, has been studied by many scholars. Jeremy Cohen has coined the term “hermeneutical Jew” for this, introduced by the Franciscans.<sup>16</sup> Scholars have noted the changes and continuities in anti-Jewish texts and imagery following the expulsion of Jews from England, from Spain, and from various German-speaking lands, as well as before the arrival of Jews in Norway.<sup>17</sup> Generally, much research on medieval anti-Judaism has

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<sup>15</sup> Jan Lokers, “Men bedervet erer ok nicht? Juden in Hansestädten: Probleme und Perspektiven der Forschung,” in *Am Rande der Hanse*, ed. Klaus Krüger, Andreas Ranft, and Stephan Selzer (Trier: Porta Alba, 2012), 105–33.

<sup>16</sup> Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999), 313–16.

<sup>17</sup> See Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012); Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); John D. Martin, *Representations of Jews in Late Medieval and Early Modern German Literature* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006); Yvonne Friedman, “Reception of Medieval European Anti-Jewish Concepts in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities*

been carried out without connection to any specific Jewish community – because the Jews of the Christian imagination are so disconnected from actual people, and because for many of the authors of *adversus Iudeos* texts, it was irrelevant whether or not they had Jewish neighbours. Indeed, such an insight might have struck any medievalist working on Scandinavia, particularly those working on religious texts or on international relations. In this volume, Jonathan Adams and Richard Cole describe the “absent presence” of Jews in medieval Scandinavia as well as desiderata of future research.

The Nordic countries also encompass areas where Jewish life has been, and still is, so marginal that the reluctance to deal with antisemitism extends to the modern period. The selections in this volume about Jewish life in Greenland, philosemitic religious movements in the Faroe Islands, as well as antisemitism in Iceland, testify once more to the lack of any correlation between the numbers of actual Jews, on the one hand, and the space taken up by talking about Jews, hating Jews, or having misconceptions about Jews, on the other. In regard to the non-relation between Jewish presence and the presence of antisemitism, the pre-modern North is quite similar to some areas of the contemporary North. To assume that the Lutheran Church today plays a role similar to the medieval Catholic Church, with a massive discursive power over the production and distribution of antisemitic imagery, would be premature. For the Faroe Islands, the prominent role of the Evangelical movements for the establishment of the land of Israel as a surprisingly important feature of Faroese politics seems to hold true, while in the other countries, the Middle East conflict and the various political movements and parties who all take sides in it seem to have lived out and absorbed earlier forms of hostility. While the medieval and pre-modern Churches had been single and powerful producers of antisemitism, today there is one single topic that collects discursive strands from various agents, absorbs older forms of antisemitism, and adds new ones. However, the Christian heritage obviously plays a role for the tradition of stereotypes as well as for the history of Jewish settlement itself – as the under-researched history of Jewish emancipation and the measures preventing it shows.

## Emancipation

A gap not only in the research, but also in this book, is the period of Jewish emancipation, from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century – which is particularly puzzling because it has been identified as the critical period for the coming together of religious and racist aspects of antisemitism, as well as for identifying the significance of antisemitism in nation-building processes in Europe. Particularly for France, Prussia, and by extension all parts of Europe influenced by the Napoleonic Code, the literature about emancipation is extensive and forms a significant part of the historiography of the nineteenth century and its relevance to the development of imperialism and nationalism. The history of Jewish emancipation has thus received a tremendous amount of attention, both in its own regard and as a part of different national histories.

Curiously, even though state-building has for several decades now been the main research paradigm for almost all periods of historiographic research in Sweden and, to a lesser extent, also in Denmark and Norway, the significance of Jewish emancipation has yet to be acknowledged. The few exceptions consist mainly of Jewish scholars who look back on the process of achieving civil rights as a success story<sup>18</sup> or of scholars who focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, leaving out the circuitous paths which led to the achievement of civil rights.<sup>19</sup> Some others have analysed the processes of assimilation of different immigrant groups, but only after emancipation had made Jewish immigration possible to a greater extent.<sup>20</sup> Yet others have written about various social

<sup>18</sup> Leif Ludwig Albertsen, *Engelen mi: En bog om den danske jødefejde* (Copenhagen: Privattryk, 1984); Hugo Valentin, *Judarna i Sverige* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1924); Marcus Ehrenpreis, “När Mendelssohn och Lessing möttes: Kampen för judarnas emancipation,” *Judisk tidskrift* 16 (1943): 135–40; Kurt Stillschweig, *Judarnas emancipation: En återblick* (Stockholm: Geber, 1943); Simon Victorin, *Judefrågan på 1840–1841 års riksdag: Emancipation eller förtryck* (Stockholm: Historiska institutionen, Stockholms universitet, 1997); Frøde Ulvund, *Fridomens grenser 1814–1851: Håndheving av den norske “jødeparagrafen”* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2014); Lena Johannesson, “Schene Rariteten: Antisemitisk bildagitation i svensk rabulistpres 1845–1860,” in *Judiskt liv i Norden*, ed. Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom, and Mattias Tydén (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988), 179–208.

<sup>19</sup> Lena Berggren, *Nationell upplysning: Drag i den svenska antisemitsmemens idéhistoria* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Per Hammarström, *Nationens styvbarn: Judisk samhällsintegration i några Norrlandsstäder 1870–1940* (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2007); Carl Henrik Carlsson, *Medborgskap och diskriminering: Östjudar och andra invandrare i Sverige 1860–1920* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2007); Anna Besserman, “...eftersom nu en gång en nädigt försyn täcks hosta dem upp på Sve-

and economic aspects of Jewish life during the nineteenth century, for which the changing tides of antisemitism and emancipation obviously were a relevant framework, but again, not the focus of interest.<sup>21</sup> The first known physical attacks on Jewish houses reported in Sweden occurred in the wake of the first attempt of the king to grant the Jewish communities civil rights – but these riots are only known as a footnote to emancipation or even a footnote to Stockholm city history.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, we have very little knowledge about the ways in which antisemitism changed and developed after the Enlightenment period, or its role in the development of Nordic nationalisms.<sup>23</sup> Together with the lack of systematic research into the post-Reformation absorption of Catholic antisemitism in Scandinavia, analysis of antisemitism during the nineteenth century constitutes probably the greatest desideratum. Future research also needs to address the international influences which shaped debates in the Nordic countries – at this point, it is actually interesting to note to what extent debates about emancipation were introduced, translated, and disseminated in the Nordic countries, and which parts of these debates. The reluctance to integrate the history of Jewish emancipation into the history of the Nordic nation states and to analyse the significance of anti-Jewish and other prejudices for the process of nation-building and national identity formation also helps to foster the most common misconception in this field: the idea that antisemitism only came to the North as a German import. If, as has been claimed in order to explain the existence of anti-Jewish texts and images during the Middle Ages,<sup>24</sup> antisemitism was a literary import from Germany – why was the emancipation itself not also imported from Germany?

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riges gästvänliga stränder.’ Mosaiska församlingen i Stockholm inför den östjudiska invandringen 1860–1914,” *Nordisk Judaistik* 5, no. 2 (1984): 13–38.

**21** See for example David Fischer, *Judiskt liv: En undersökning bland medlemmar i Stockholms judiska församling* (Spånga: Megilla, 1996); Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom, and Mattias Tydén, eds, *Judiskt liv i Norden* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988).

**22** Cordelia Heß, “Eine Fußnote der Emanzipation? Antijüdische Ausschreitungen in Stockholm 1838 und ihre Bedeutung für eine Wissenschaftsgeschichte des Antisemitismus,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 27 (2018): 40–62.

**23** Within the “Archives of Antisemitism” project at the University of Gothenburg funded by the Swedish Research Council, I am attempting to publish an analysis of anti-Jewish print production in Sweden during the nineteenth century and its relevance for the delayed emancipation. See Cordelia Heß, “Eine Fußnote der Emanzipation?”

**24** Bjarne Berulfsen, “Antisemittisme som litterær importvare,” *Edda* 58 (1958): 123–44.

## Antisemitism as a German import: the 1930s and 1940s

The present volume contains a majority of articles dealing with the twentieth century, mirroring the focus of most research. All over Europe, the political and social changes that followed the First World War led to a radicalization of antisemitism. As early as 1909, the ideology of “racial hygiene” and “eugenics” had been institutionalized in Sweden. Jews were not the primary target, but racist antisemitism had nevertheless found academic support.<sup>25</sup> Towards the end of the long nineteenth century, political antisemitism had established itself as a quantitatively small but stable movement in the Nordic countries. Consequently, the interwar period saw the rise of marginal extreme-right groups featuring distinctively antisemitic ideologies. In Norway and Denmark, these parties played significant roles during the German occupation, and consequently, they have been seen as primarily a problem of wartime history and their members are considered traitors to national autonomy and peace. For a long time, most research on these groups has been largely descriptive, focused on their membership and their internal conflicts, and uninterested in their ideological significance. Moreover, they were usually seen as poor and somewhat ridiculous imitations of German groups and ideologies, and therefore as neither very interesting nor important in their own regard – a view that has been thoroughly challenged by some Swedish researchers, especially in the past few years.<sup>26</sup> The attribution of antisemitism to German influences is frequently mentioned as a major obstacle to thorough research on this question.

Finland differs from the Scandinavian countries insofar as it experienced a bloody civil war in 1918 and was attacked by the Soviet Union at the outbreak of the Second World War. It fought alongside Germany from 1940, with only a brief shift in loyalties and some months of battle against the remaining Germans in 1945. Finland suffered severe losses of population and territory and had to pay reparations: the political, social, and demographic impact the war had on this country are not comparable to the experiences of the other Nordic countries.

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<sup>25</sup> Herman Lundborg, *Degenerationsfaran och riktslinjer för dess förebyggande* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1922); Lena Berggren, *Blodets renhet: En historisk studie av svensk antisemitism* (Malmö: Arx Förlag, 2014), 32–35, 53–54.

<sup>26</sup> Described and criticized in Lena Berggren, “Swedish Fascism – Why Bother?” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 3 (2002): 395–417. Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Nazifisering, kollaborasjon, motstand. En analyse av Politidepartementet og Forsyningsdepartementet (Næringsdepartementet), 25. september 1940–8. mai 1945” (PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2016).

Even though it remained independent from both blocs during the Cold War, Finland was in a constant state of wariness regarding the Soviet Union, and this also affected academic work on antisemitism. Still, the marginal status of research on the topic in Finland seems curious, considering the fact that none of the factors complicating Finland's relationship to National Socialist Germany is entirely unique. For example, the Baltic countries and Poland had also been squeezed between the German and Russian spheres of interest and occupied, with significant sections of the population collaborating, particularly in the deportation and destruction of the Jewish populations. In all these countries, scholars have fought tough battles against political and public opinion and have found ways to describe their populations' antisemitism and participation in the Holocaust, without neglecting the suffering inflicted on them by Germans – the works of Jan Gross and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, for example.<sup>27</sup> These studies, just like the few existing ones on Finland, have been carried out against severe governmental and public resistance, and despite the fact that many states that were formerly contained within the USSR or its area of influence have developed a self-understanding and historical narrative that focuses on the Second World War as a period of liberation from Russian influence – even if this meant collaboration in the Shoah. The congruence between being anti-Soviet and being pro-German and its consequences for participation in the Holocaust are often neglected in this version of collective memory. Similar tendencies can be seen in the Finnish debate about its role in the Second World War. Very recently, a report issued by the Finnish government following a request from the Simon Wiesenthal Center was published by a commission situated at the National Archives. It investigated the role of the Finnish SS volunteers in the Division Wiking during the Holocaust and the War of Extermination in East Germany. Praised by scholars worldwide, the reactions to the results in Finland were not quite as positive – despite the fact that the antisemitism of the SS volunteers only occupied a marginal place in the report, which focused on the atrocities they committed but was basically silent regarding their political attitudes.<sup>28</sup> The report, which in its first version had left out some crucial sources

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<sup>27</sup> Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "The Polish Underground Organization Wolność i Niezawisłość and Anti-Jewish Pogroms, 1945–6," *Patterns of Prejudice* 51, no. 2 (2017): 111–36.

<sup>28</sup> Lars Westerlund, ed. *The Finnish SS-Volunteers and Atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943: An Archival Survey* (Helsinki: The National Archives of Finland and Finnish Literature Society, 2019). – The investigators are cur-

and allegedly was not comprehensive regarding the topic, was heavily attacked by politicians, representatives of the military, and the public alike. Research results that do not seem very surprising from an international point of view, such as SS members being antisemitic and/or participating in war crimes, still create an outcry amongst the Finnish public, while the SS volunteers are treated and honoured just like other veterans of war, perpetuating the myth of the SS and Waffen SS as “just normal soldiers, following orders” – a narrative equally popular in postwar Germany. Generally, the question of how the country’s relationship to Russia has shaped Finnish self-perception on the one hand and the framework for research on antisemitism both before and after 1990 on the other has remained highly speculative.

The experiences of the Second World War have also shaped the self-perception of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway in relation to antisemitism. Obviously, resistance to the German occupation did not automatically imply a pro-Jewish attitude on the part of the population or government, and yet it did facilitate the neglect of home-grown antisemitism. Contacts between Sweden and Germany in the areas of academic scholarship and culture were only really disturbed when it became obvious that Germany would lose the war in 1943 – in terms of public opinion, this has often been backdated to 1933 and interpreted as an antifascist attitude – when it comes to anti-antisemitism, entirely contrary to the evidence. Sweden, for example, had posed severe restrictions on Jewish refugees until 1943. Several hundred Norwegians were involved in arresting and detaining their fellow Jewish countrymen for deportation to Auschwitz. After the war, the Norwegian government refused to pay for Norwegian Jews to return on the White Buses as they were no longer citizens of Norway.

Germany’s role in the development of racist antisemitism as well as the Germans’ singular responsibility for the Shoah is not downplayed by recognizing the fact that antisemitic ideas, laws, and norms had already been present in the rest of Europe for many centuries before National Socialist rule began in Germany. The idea of antisemitism being a German import has persisted in Scandinavian scholarship for several decades now. It has obtruded on the study of antisemitic ideologies and movements during the twentieth century, as well as of the significance of antisemitism for the development of eugenics, which was very much a Scandinavian invention in the early twentieth century.

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rently dealing with some of the criticism within further studies including more archives in Eastern Europe, and will probably come to more far-reaching conclusions.

## Romantic homogeneity

Scholars of Postcolonial Studies, Critical Whiteness Studies, and Religious Minority Studies have often identified and criticized the unwillingness of the Nordic countries to incorporate the experiences of minorities into the historiography of the majority society.<sup>29</sup> An example is the marginalization of Sámi people in academic research and the neglect of Sámi history in Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish schools. Another example is the colonial relationship between Denmark on the one hand and Greenland and the Faroe Islands on the other. A romanticized picture of a socially, religiously, ethnically, and politically homogeneous society still seems to persist generally, and not only within the nationalistic movements that idealize the *folkhem* period.

Religious homogeneity in particular was a pillar of the early modern and modern states' constitutions with a firm connection between king, state, and the state-supported Lutheran churches. At the same time, it has never been total, and even though the various constitutions established a strong connection between citizenship and the Lutheran religion, the religious Other continued to play a role – as actual people who sometimes suffered severe repression, as an image of the “enemy within,” as a backdrop for self-assurance and self-definition, in the form of personal and intellectual contacts with other countries with different populations.

To this day, assimilation into the majority culture is strongly demanded of immigrant groups.<sup>30</sup> This regards both assimilation of what are perceived as “Nordic values,” and assimilation into a specific conception of secularism. As part of this, there is only minimal tolerance towards non-Christian religious rites. Lars Dencik has termed one aspect of this, “Enlightenment antisemitism” – the rejection of Jewish (and Muslim) rites, particularly circumcision and ritual slaughter, because they are perceived as anachronistic, unenlightened, and cruel. While German scholarship has engaged heavily in debating the “dialectics of Enlightenment,” in Scandinavia the positivist notion of the Enlightenment, secularization, and the Nordic model is still prevalent and also influences tolerance – or non-tolerance – of rituals and beliefs which are seen as “less enlightened.”

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Tobias Hübinette and Andréaz Wasniowski, eds, *Studier om rasism: tvärvetenskapliga perspektiv på ras, vithet och diskriminering* (Malmö: Arx förlag, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Marie Demker, “Ökat motstånd mot flyktingmottagning och invandrares religionsfrihet,” in *Larmar och gör sig till. SOM-undersökningen 2016*, ed. Ulrika Andersson and others, SOM-rapport 70 (Gothenburg: SOM-institutet 2017), 475–88.

The idea, or ideal, of the Nordic countries as religiously, culturally, and socially homogenous has been an obstacle to emancipation and integration for centuries. Nowadays, the idea of homogeneity lives on under a different framework: secularization, enlightenment, and a political culture in which religion is seen as a private matter and yet defines national values. In this way, the Lutheran faith becomes an unquestioned pillar of national culture, while all other religions and confessions are deviations, and so the historically manifested dominance of a majority perspective on the Nordic societies is perpetrated.

## Research on antisemitism in very small communities

Even though the Second World War ended almost seventy-five years ago, academic works that expose perpetrators and recall the memory of victims of the Shoah can still meet with harsh rejection. Sometimes criticism of the work extends to personal harassment of the scholars in question. In Germany, major collective outcries greeted, for example, Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996), and the so-called *Wehrmachtsausstellung*, which examined the participation of soldiers and police battalions in the Shoah. Minor controversies arose regarding the individual guilt and responsibility of scholars, not least in the humanities.<sup>31</sup> To this day, critical biographies of individual historians and their involvement in the Holocaust, whether ideological or practical, are met with apologetic replies and *ad hominem* attacks against those who claim a critical *Aufarbeitung*<sup>32</sup> of the field's own traditions. There is a gap between public exercises in memory politics, including apologies and government-sanctioned memorials, and the acceptance of individual and collective guilt for the Shoah as well as for antisemitism today. There is also good reason for scholars to be cautious about the immediate political uses of their work, which can easily lead to an instrumentalization of research results for various political purposes.

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the “Historikertag” in 1998, where a panel discussed for the first time the involvement of leading historians in the Holocaust. Marie-Luise Recker, ed., *Intentionen – Wirklichkeiten: 42. Deutscher Historikertag in Frankfurt am Main 8. bis 11. September 1998. Berichtsband* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999); Fred Kautz, *The German Historians: Hitler's Willing Executioners and Daniel Goldhagen* (Quebec: Black Rose Books, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, several reviews of Ingo Haar's *Historiker im Nationalsozialismus: deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft und der “Volkstumskampf” im Osten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), of my *The Absent Jews*, or the controversies around Theodor Schieder and Hans Schneider, which are distinctly apologetic towards NS perpetrators.

At the same time, the recurrent public and governmental focus on antisemitism has probably led to greater acceptance for the work of specific scholars, and for the topic in general.

Such institutional support is generally lacking in the Nordic countries. Scholars working on antisemitism, particularly during and after the Second World War, face accusations of being traitors and of fouling their own nests. It is insinuated that they have a specific political agenda.<sup>33</sup> In small research communities such as the Nordic ones, this can be devastating and dangerous, particularly for young scholars, and thus for academic freedom in general. While in international research communities various working definitions of antisemitism are debated and criticized, or the lack of Jewish scholars within certain institutions, or the relation of their research to the politics of the State of Israel,<sup>34</sup> in the North, the mere existence of research on antisemitism needs to be fought for, particularly within the growing and much better funded institutions focusing on the study of racism.

At the same time, probably as a side effect of the harsh tone in public debates, the few scholars, journalists, and publicists who research, write, and speak out against antisemitism have a tendency to isolate themselves from other scholars and from academic work and debates going on in other countries. Nordic Otherness, in this regard, seems to lead to the impression that the few people working on the topic and often facing harassment for their work are the only ones interested in, or competent in, contributing to the topic at all. Thus, international scholarship and international scholars are rarely integrated into Nordic research on antisemitism, and even inter-Nordic or inter-Scandinavian contacts are rare.

Not least because of this, research on antisemitism in the Nordic countries needs stronger institutional, financial, and governmental support – not only for surveys on contemporary attitudes and study trips to Auschwitz, but for research on antisemitism in all of its historical and contemporary dimensions, as an integral part of Nordic history.

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<sup>33</sup> See also Peter Tudvad, regarding Kierkegaard's attitude towards Jews, and some of the reactions to his work. Peter Tudvad, *Stadier på antisemitsmens vej: Søren Kierkegaard og jøderne* (Copenhagen: Rosinante, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the International Consortium for Research on Antisemitism and Racism (ICRAR) that aims to create a multifaceted understanding of antisemitism that is not limited to immediate political concerns. See <[https://www.tu-berlin.de/fakultaet\\_i/zentrum\\_fuer\\_antisemitismusforschung/menue/kooperationspartner/icrar/](https://www.tu-berlin.de/fakultaet_i/zentrum_fuer_antisemitismusforschung/menue/kooperationspartner/icrar/)>; or the definition of the International Holocaust Alliance Remembrance, see <<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definitions-and-charters>>.

## This volume

This volume aims to help bring the study of antisemitism in and about the Nordic Countries to the fore. It covers the study of antisemitism from the medieval period to the modern day as well as some groundbreaking work on antisemitism in the North. Contributors from all the Nordic countries describe the status of, as well as the challenges and desiderata for, the study of antisemitism in their respective countries. The book looks at how research in the North relates to international research trends as well as to the self-perception of the Nordic countries.

The book begins with a section on “Antisemitism without Jews,” covering the periods before the twentieth century and testifying to the fact that anti-Jewish attitudes and ideas were of great interest to the Nordic societies long before the Second World War. The medieval period is covered by Jonathan Adams and Richard Cole, who analyse gaps in research on the East (Adams) and West (Cole) Norse material, and their respective representations of Jews. Both also discuss potential fields of research: Adams proposes the role of the Church and the medieval legacy and demonstrates this with a number of examples from miracle collections, sermons, and church paintings. Cole demonstrates the tradition of the blood libel from England to the West Norse text tradition. Vilhjálmur Órn Vilhjálmsdóttir gives the first ever English-language overview of antisemitism in Iceland in all areas of political, social, and religious life, from the annual public singing of heavily anti-Jewish Passion hymns by politicians via various public writings declaring Jews to be responsible for war, terrorism, and the financial crisis. Clemens Räthel takes a broader look at the representation of Jews in Scandinavian literature and theatre particularly from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period when the quantitatively very small Jewish communities were severely overrepresented in the cultural sphere. In these articles, the irrelevance of a Jewish presence for the presence of antisemitism becomes utterly apparent, and they all reveal many starting points for future work.

The next section, the largest of the book, focusses on the twentieth century, mirroring the majority of research and providing a coherent overview of it. Sofie Lene Bak’s article deals with the situation in Denmark, specifically the rescue of the Danish Jews during the Holocaust, and how this event has been exploited for Danish national identity. Christhard Hoffmann and Kjetil Braut Simonsen describe Norwegian research about the period before (Hoffmann) and after (Simonsen) 1945. Hoffmann shows that historical research has been able to deconstruct the Norwegian self-image as a tolerant, inclusive country by pointing out decisive events for the exclusion of Jews. Simonsen takes up both neofascist groups and everyday Norwegian antisemitism as relevant factors and agents affecting

the Jewish minority in the country. Karin Kvist Geverts sees the entire field of antisemitism as a neglected area of research in Sweden, both in terms of institutions and of academic education. She explains this with the common perception of antisemitism as something “un-Swedish” – a recurrent argument in many of the Nordic countries. Paavo Ahonen, Simo Muir, and Oula Silvennoinen describe the difficulties for research on modern antisemitism in Finland. They show that until about twenty years ago, the idea prevailed that antisemitism had been a marginal and irrelevant phenomenon in Finland both before, during, and after the Second World War, and how researchers have been struggling with this extreme form of Nordic exceptionalism ever since. What becomes clear is that although we might expect many similarities between the situations in each of these countries, in fact the opposite is true. Each country’s conditions for studying antisemitism are remarkably different – largely shaped by their different experiences during the Second World War – and the types of studies and research cultures that have developed are consequently unique.

The final section of the book collects articles that illustrate the contemporary presence of antisemitism in the North from various disciplinary, geographic, and chronological approaches. The contributions from the Faroe Islands (Firouz Gaini) and Greenland (Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsisson) constitute “basic research” articles exploring encounters with antisemitism in each of the countries, since there is no previous research or existing framework to relate to in these cases. Gaini describes the central role which the land of Israel has been ascribed in the religious and political life of the Faroe Islands during the past 20 years or so. Vilhjálmsisson collects the few cases of known Jewish travellers and inhabitants of Greenland. These contributions will hopefully provide an impetus for further research. The anthology concludes with Lars Dencik’s account of some of the results of the survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights investigating how and to what extent Jews in Scandinavia and across Europe perceive antisemitism – which, for Sweden in particular, reveals a wide gap between the numbers of hate crimes reported and the fear people actually experience as individuals. Given the lack of attitude surveys regarding contemporary antisemitism particularly in Sweden, as also stated in Kvist Gevert’s article, the analysis of the results of this survey significantly validates the claim for more research and institutional support that we argue for.

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## **Antisemitism without Jews**



Jonathan Adams

## 2 “Untilled Field” or “Barren Terrain”?

### Researching the Portrayal of Jews in Medieval Denmark and Sweden

**Abstract:** This article on researching the portrayal of Jews in medieval Denmark and Sweden argues for the importance of the period for understanding the breadth, nuances, and history of anti-Jewish stereotypes in Scandinavia. I discuss the rather scant previous research on Jews in Old Danish and Old Swedish (East Norse) literature and medieval art. The lack of scholarship is somewhat surprising given the volume of sources available and the many types of investigation they invite. I suggest a number of themes – the question of absent-presence, the role of the Church, and the medieval legacy – that could prove fruitful for future research and provide questions and suggestions for how to approach the material.

**Keywords:** Art; Christian anti-Judaism; devotional literature; doctrine; legacy; medieval Danish literature; medieval Swedish literature; absent-presence.

## Introduction

Non-Christians were not permitted to settle in Denmark until 1622 when Christian IV invited Sephardi Jewish goldsmiths from Amsterdam and Hamburg to take up residence in Glückstadt in the Duchy of Holstein, nor in Sweden until nearly a century later in 1718 when Karl XII permitted Jewish merchants and traders to settle there.<sup>1</sup> We know of small numbers of Jews, often recently converted, arriving just before this year in Stockholm,<sup>2</sup> and there is also scant and inconclusive evidence of Jews arriving in Denmark at an earlier date,<sup>3</sup> but there were no Jewish communities – clandestine or official – in either country during the Middle

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<sup>1</sup> For a general history of Jews in Denmark, see Arthur Arnheim, *Truet minoritet søger beskyttelse: Jødernes historie i Danmark* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2015) and Poul Borchsenius, *Historien om de danske Jøder* ([Copenhagen]: Fremad, 1968); for Sweden, see Hugo Valentin, *Judarnas historia i Sverige* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1924).

<sup>2</sup> Hugo Valentin, *Urkunder till judarnas historia* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1924), 1; Joseph Jacobs and Gustave Lindner, “Sweden,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, ed. Isidore Singer and others (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–06): 607b.

<sup>3</sup> Karsten Christensen, “Jochim Jøde i Helsingør i 1592,” *Dansk Jødisk Historie* 24 (1987): 11–16. See also on Ulla Hastrup below.

Ages.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, before the royal decrees permitting their presence, Jews attempting to enter either country faced heavy fines and immediate deportation.<sup>5</sup> Due to this absence of Jews living in Scandinavia, any knowledge of “real Jews” would have been acquired abroad: trading in towns south of the Baltic such as in Pomerania, Mecklenburg, and Hannover, where small numbers of Jews were present;<sup>6</sup> living as university students in Germany or France and borrowing money from Jewish moneylenders and pawnbrokers to fund their studies and living expenses; undertaking pilgrimages, crusades, or journeys in Europe and to the Holy Land. It is difficult to know what impression these living, breathing Jews made on the Danes and Swedes who met them, and unfortunately we have no extant accounts of any such encounters or interactions.

Yet despite the lack of a physical presence of “real Jews” in Scandinavia, “Jews” existed very much on parchment, in sculpture and paintings, and, presumably, on the stage. Indeed, stories about “the Jews” flourished and were found in various genres from different scriptoria and regions. The Jews in these stories comprised a constructed image largely shaped by Church doctrine, Christian legends, and popular preaching, including translated literature from Europe to the south. Indeed, Denmark and Sweden show themselves to have fully absorbed the anti-Jewish polemics of Western Christendom. In art, the tastes of continental Europe, developing from more neutral Romanesque depictions at the beginning of the twelfth century to monstrous Gothic creations in the later Middle Ages, are also reflected in Scandinavia. There is plenty of material for the researcher to sink her teeth into. Nonetheless, the abundance of sources has attracted little attention from Danish and Swedish scholars – not from his-

<sup>4</sup> Recently, archaeologist Anders Andrén’s project “Spår av medeltida judiskt liv,” under the auspices of “Böckernas folk: Islamiska och judiska perspektiv på medeltidens Europa” (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, 2012), predictably did not uncover any new evidence for Jewish settlement in Scandinavia. Cf. Anders Andrén, “Tomhetens arkeologi – spår av judarnas medeltida fördrivning,” in *I utkanter och marginaler*, ed. Helena Hörmfeldt, Lars-Eric Jönsson, Marianne Larsson, and Anneli Palmsköld (Stockholm: Nordiska Museets förlag, 2015), 210–21.

<sup>5</sup> Christen Osteresen Weylle, *Tractat offver alle de Faldsmaal oc Bøder* (Copenhagen: Melchior Martzan, 1652), 49: “Befindis nogen Iøde her i Danmark/ uden Geleits-Breff/ hand hafver der med forbrut et tusinde Rix daler” (If a Jew is found here in Denmark without an entry permit, he should be fined a penalty of one thousand rigsdaler). Valentin, *Urkunder till judarnas historia*, 9: “... I straxt låten ansäja alle här uti Stadens befintelige Judar, det de, inom 14 dagars förlöpp, sig hädan utur Staden och landet förfoga, och wid högsta straff, icke understå sig öfwer den föresatte termin här att förblifwa” (Immediately inform all the Jews who are to be found in the city, that they are to leave the city and the country within fourteen days, and at risk of the greatest punishment do not dare to stay beyond the stated deadline).

<sup>6</sup> Valentin, *Judarnas historia i Sverige*, 7–8.

torians who generally prefer to focus on the history of Jewish communities in the modern era, nor from theologians and historians of ideas or religion who rather peculiarly tend to avoid the pre-Reformation “papist” period. Indeed, this present-day propensity to focus on modern topics and issues of current social importance has led not only to a regrettable neglect of Medieval Studies in Denmark and Sweden generally – with the exception of some “centres” – but also to a misunderstanding of the relevance of the period for the modern day.

So why then, might we ask, is it important to study attitudes towards Jews in medieval Scandinavia? Although some modern historians may be bemused by a call to study the Middle Ages, seeing it as irrelevant to understanding modern “enlightened” societies, there are good reasons to consider the portrayal of Jews in the medieval period in order to grasp the full implications of the expressions of antipathy towards Judaism and Jews found today. Questions of alterity and the construction of an identity in contrast to otherness remain as relevant today as they were in the medieval period. The Middle Ages are also the era of the foundation of images and stereotypes about Jews that resonate today and are still expressed in unaltered, adapted, or fragmentary conformations: haemophagy, economic exploitation, infanticide and mutilation of children, international conspiracy, and so on. That is not to say that there is direct continuity from medieval Jew-hatred to modern-day antisemitism, nor that the two phenomena used the same expressions with the same meaning and purpose, but by studying Jew-hatred in the two periods alongside one another we may uncover nuances that might otherwise have been lost. Indeed, the nature of the content that age-old images and stereotypes lose, adapt, or acquire tells us a great deal about the majority society’s concerns, preoccupations, and sense of unease and perturbation.

The Middle Ages were the formative period in which questions of state, language, and nationality took on huge importance in the North for the first time and in which the Danes and Swedes came to understand themselves as historical peoples with a connection to a specific territory – different to other Europeans yet joined to them through the Holy Faith. Those belonging to another religion came to be seen – most likely for the first time – as their natural enemies for no other reason than faith. More generally, it is always a beneficial exercise to consider how people of the past constructed and understood the world they lived in, and to understand that they comprised a diverse group who were both different from and similar to ourselves. By acquiring a differentiated view of medieval society, we are then able to apply this nuanced way of understanding society to subsequent eras and the modern day.

# Scholarship

## Studying Jews in medieval Scandinavia

Generally speaking, few scholars have investigated the understanding, construction, and portrayal of Jews (or rather, “the Jews”) in medieval Scandinavia. The literary and artistic representation of Jews in the West Norse area (here meaning Norway, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands) has been discussed by Bjarne Berulfsen, Richard Cole, and Yvonne Friedman.<sup>7</sup> Their findings reveal many parallels to the East Norse area (here meaning Denmark and Sweden with Gotland) where the image of “the Jew” had been moulded in the South, but was adapted for local use as a literary, theological, and/or political device in the North. Standard histories of Jews in Denmark and Sweden, such as those by Hugo Valentin and Arthur Arnheim, make rather short shrift of the medieval period; e.g., Valentin just includes a few pages on Viking trade with Khazaria. Poul Borchsenius, as well as the more popular (and readable) work by Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, Martin Schwarz Lausten, and Hanne Trautner-Kromann,<sup>8</sup> do not mention the period at all.

## *Ecclesia and Synagoga*

An important exception is the work of Martin Schwarz Lausten in *Kirke og synagoge*, the first volume of his six-volume magnum opus on the relationship between Jews and the Church in Denmark. In this volume, he investigates the extant material from the Middle Ages to c. 1700, with over 140 pages dealing solely

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<sup>7</sup> Bjarne Berulfsen, “Antisemittisme som litterær importvare,” *Edda* 58 (1958): 123–44; Richard Cole, “One or Several Jews? The Jewish Massed Body in Old Norse Literature,” *Postmedieval* 5, no. 3 (2014): 346–58; Richard Cole, “The Jew Who Wasn’t There: Studies on Jews and Their Absence in Old Norse Literature” (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2015); Yvonne Friedman, “Christian Hatred of the Other: Theological Rhetoric vs. Political Reality,” in *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 187–210; Yvonne Friedman, “Reception of Medieval European Anti-Jewish Concepts in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (New York: Routledge, 2018), 59–72. See also Richard Cole’s contribution in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, Martin Schwarz Lausten, and Hanne Trautner-Kromann, *En indvandringshistorie – jøder i Danmark i 400 år* (Copenhagen: Dansk-Jødisk Museum, 2018).

with the medieval period.<sup>9</sup> Lausten, a church historian, was the first to investigate the relationship between Jews and the Church in medieval Denmark; there is no equivalent work in Sweden. He later published two abridged single volumes of his series – one in Danish and one a translation into English – that include a few pages on the Middle Ages.<sup>10</sup> Together, the three works throw a spotlight on an overlooked aspect of medieval Danish literature and describe the sources and their contents. He traces references to Jews in religious literature in both Danish and Latin, from the beginning of the Middle Ages to the Reformation, and provides copious examples of their representations in theological works, devotional literature, and some sermons, in order to identify tendencies and relate them to influences from abroad. The focus is on the relationship between the Church and Judaism, so profane literature is not discussed. Furthermore, the use of Jews in the texts – particularly the concept of the absent-present, hermeneutic Jew (see below) – and the question of audience are not discussed in detail; nor is there much use of international scholarship on medieval literary representations of Jews. Nonetheless, Lausten’s work comprises the most comprehensive study and sets a high benchmark.

## Vernacular and popular texts

I, too, have previously published on the medieval Danish and Swedish material, however my focus has for the most part been rather different to Lausten’s, as I have approached the subject from the disciplines of philology and the history of ideas. My work has focused on sermons about Jews in both Old Swedish

<sup>9</sup> Martin Schwarz Lausten, *Kirke og synagoge: Holdninger i den danske kirke til jødedom og jøder i middelalderen, reformationstiden og den lutherske ortodoksi (ca. 1100–ca. 1700)*, Kirkehistoriske studier 3, no. 1 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1992, repr. 2002), 15–156. Useful reviews of this volume can be found in Grethe Jacobsen, “Kirke og synagoge: Holdninger i den danske kirke til jødedom og jøder i middelalderen, reformationstiden og den lutherske ortodoksi by Martin Schwarz Lausten” [review article], *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 24, no. 4 (1993): 988–89; Karin Weinholdt, “Martin Schwarz Lausten. Kirke og Synagoge: De fromme og jøderne. Oplysning i kirke og synagoge” [review article], *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 12 (2003): 133–37; Karin Weinholdt, 2008. “Om mastodontserien Kirke og Synagoge” [review article], *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 17 (2008): 66–78. See also Sofie Lene Bak’s contribution in this volume.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Schwarz Lausten, *Jøder og kristne i Danmark: Fra middelalderen til nyere tid* (Copenhagen: Anis, 2012), 9–31; Martin Schwarz Lausten, *Jews and Christians in Denmark: From the Middle Ages to Recent Times*, The Brill Reference Library of Judaism 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1–18.

and Old Danish,<sup>11</sup> passion tales and treatises in Old Danish,<sup>12</sup> and the Danish translation of Johannes Pfefferkorn's anti-Jewish pamphlet *Libellus de Judaica Confessione* and its reception,<sup>13</sup> as well as collaborative edited volumes on Jew-hatred in the medieval and early modern periods that cover a broader geographical area and range of topics.<sup>14</sup> Of particular interest to me is vernacular literature, as such works were usually aimed at a broader audience than just those able to read and understand Latin, and therefore better demonstrate the widespread attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions that cut across society than do the authoritative writings in Latin of the religious establishment.<sup>15</sup> Much "finer" literature, particularly in medieval Denmark, was composed or copied in Latin, e.g. Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*,<sup>16</sup> but such works are not representative of the literary mores of medieval Scandinavia nor can they be considered as good examples of the embedment of the image of the Jew within popular culture. Furthermore, we cannot always be certain that those medieval Latin works that are extant today in Denmark and Sweden, were either written in Scandinavia or intended for a Scandinavian audience. We do, however, know that vernacular literature was the principal source of entertainment and instruction, and as such,

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Adams, "Preaching about an Absent Minority: Medieval Danish Sermons and Jews," in *The Jewish–Christian Encounter in Medieval Preaching*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Jussi Hanska (New York: Routledge, 2014), 92–116; Jonathan Adams, "On Preaching Passions and Precepts: The Role of Jews and Muslims in East Norse Sermons," in *Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Preaching in and around the Mediterranean*, ed. Linda G. Jones and Adrienne Dupont-Hamy, *Sermo 15* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 93–119.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Adams, "Grumme løver og menstruerende mænd," *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 21 (2014): 78–93; Jonathan Adams, "Kristi mordere: Jøder i danske passionsberetninger fra middelalderen," *Danske Studier* 108 (2013): 25–47.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Adams, "Hebraiske ord i *Jødernes hemmeligheder* (1516)," *Danske Studier* 105 (2010): 31–50; Jonathan Adams, *Lessons in Contempt: Poul Ræff's Translation and Publication in 1516 of Johannes Pfefferkorn's The Confession of the Jews*, Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund 581 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2013); Jonathan Adams, "'Thus shall Christian people know to punish them': Translating Pfefferkorn into Danish," in *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews: Johannes Pfefferkorn and Christian Writings about Jewish Life and Literature in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 135–54.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Adams and Jussi Hanska, eds, *The Jewish–Christian Encounter in Medieval Preaching*, Routledge Research in Medieval Studies 6 (New York: Routledge, 2014); Adams and Heß, *Fear and Loathing in the North*; Adams and Heß, *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews*; Adams and Heß, *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism*.

<sup>15</sup> Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jews and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 12–14.

<sup>16</sup> Saxo Grammaticus makes no mention of Jews in the *Gesta Danorum*.

the conception of the Jew that emerged from it reflects one of the basic convictions of the Danes and Swedes. I have endeavoured to describe this conception, its attributes and manifold uses.

## Art

Art historian Ulla Haastrup has undertaken the most thorough investigation on the representation of Jews in art from the Danish Middle Ages, documenting and analysing the types and development of images found in medieval Danish churches, especially in wall paintings.<sup>17</sup> She has registered the scenes in which Jews can or do appear, and how good and bad Jews are characterized. Her work was groundbreaking and remains by far the best on depictions of Jews in medieval Danish art. Rather peculiarly, however, she claims these works prove a medieval Jewish presence in Denmark because the clothes, especially the hats, worn by Jews in some of these paintings were updated to mimic precisely innovations in the contemporary garb of Jews.<sup>18</sup> However, that such alterations can be traced to clothing fashions among Jews living in Denmark, rather than to corresponding changes in artistic or symbolic depictions abroad, is, understandably, far from accepted.<sup>19</sup> In *Kirke og Synagoge*, Lausten dedicates several pages to depictions of Jews in medieval Danish church art,<sup>20</sup> focusing on the image of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* – an allegorical representation of triumphant Christianity and broken, blind Judaism (particularly fitting given the ecclesiastical focus of his work). He discusses the motif in wall paintings, crucifixes, and altarpieces, to show how Danes understood the doctrine of supersessionism. Judith Vogt’s *Jødens ukristelige image* on Christian images of Jews also makes use of a couple of Danish examples.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ulla Haastrup, “Jødefremstillinger i dansk middelalderkunst,” in *Danish Jewish Art: Jews in Danish Art*, ed. Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen (Copenhagen: Society for the Publication of Danish Cultural Monuments, 1999), 111–67; Ulla Haastrup, “Representations of Jews in Medieval Danish Art – Can Images Be Used as Source Material on Their Own?” in *History and Images: Towards a New Iconology*, ed. Axel Bolvig and Phillip Lindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 341–56.

<sup>18</sup> Haastrup, “Jødefremstillinger i dansk middelalderkunst,” 159–61; Haastrup, “Representations of Jews in Medieval Danish Art,” 352–56.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Morten Thing, “Jøden og orientaleren,” *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* 9, no. 3 (2004): 34.

<sup>20</sup> Lausten, *Kirke og synagoge*, 132–56; Lausten, *Jøder og kristne i Danmark*, 25–31; Lausten, *Jews and Christians in Denmark*, 13–18.

<sup>21</sup> Judith Vogt, *Jødens ukristelige image: et studie i katolsk billedmageri* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1996).

Medieval wall-paintings that depict Jews in Sweden are dealt with *en passant* in Anna Nilsén's splendid *Program och funktion*.<sup>22</sup> Her work contains many important insights, but unfortunately is not arranged so that it is easy to look up depictions of Jews. Viktoria Munck af Rosenschöld's 2007 master's dissertation is also useful.<sup>23</sup> She shows how depictions of Jews were unevenly spread across Denmark and Sweden, and that the majority of the material is from the fifteenth century – possibly due to the increased use of woodcuts in printing being used as models, or to the increase in antisemitism in Europe. However, she stresses that not all images of Jews were antisemitic and those used for humorous purposes may not have been understood as being about Jews. Isaiah Shachar's book on the *Judensau* – Jews suckling at the teats of a pig – includes discussion of the stone carving in Uppsala Cathedral.<sup>24</sup> A recent article by Herman Bengtsson considers the use of fashionable clothing in wall paintings as a marker for Jews and how it acts as a visual sign for their inner moral corruption.<sup>25</sup> By doing so, he underscores the importance of symbolism and theology in interpreting images of Jews.

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<sup>22</sup> Anna Nilsén, *Program och funktion i senmedeltida kalkmåleri: kyrkmålningar i Mälarskapen och Finland 1400–1534* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1986). See also Bengt G. Söderberg, *Svenska kyrkomålningar från medeltiden* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1951).

<sup>23</sup> Viktoria Munck af Rosenschöld, "Främlingsbilder: Om judar och judendom i medeltida danskt och svenska kalkmåleri" (master's dissertation, University of Lund, 2007). Another useful student essay is Björn Miksch, "Judar i medeltida svensk konst: En studie av judeframställningar i tre svenska medeltidsmålares verk," (C-uppsats, Stockholm University, 1998). For medieval Swedish Finland, Elina Räsänen has discussed the Jews depicted in the Kalanti altarpiece: "Advocating, Converting, and Torturing: Images of Jews (and Muslimized Pagans) in the Kalanti Altarpiece," in *Fear and Loathing in the North*, 285–312.

<sup>24</sup> Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and its History*, Warburg Institute Surveys 5 (London: Warburg Institute, 1974). On the *Judensau* motif in Sweden, including the wall paintings in Härkeberga and Husby-Sjutolft churches, see also Nilsén, *Program och funktion*, 454–55; Rosenschöld, *Främlingsbilder*, 22–25.

<sup>25</sup> Herman Bengtsson, "Samtida mode eller antisemitism? Demonisering och rasistiska tendenser i medeltidens bildkonst," *Iconographisk post. Nordisk tidskrift för bildtolkning: Nordic Review of Iconography*, nos 3–4 (2016): 4–41.

## Research themes in the portrayal of Jews in East Norse texts

In addition to a need for the Swedish material – literature and art – that portrays Jews to be registered and described far more systematically, several broader themes emerge from the medieval material that require further research and that would throw light on similar topics in the broader study of antisemitism.

### The question of absence

Since the early 1990s, scholars have tried to explain the paradox of the common presence in medieval literature of the absent Jew – “a figure who is here despite not being here”<sup>26</sup> – by studying how this absent-present Jew becomes a tool for constructing Christian identity.<sup>27</sup> These “Jews” had much more to do with Christian identity and self-understanding than with actual Jews; their representations can be considered as “manifestations of [medieval Christian] cultural power,” allowing us to see what Christians believed they were not and did not want to be.<sup>28</sup> This scholarship, largely focusing on the continued preoccupation with Jews in post-expulsion England (that is, after 1290), has resulted in numerous terms to refer to this constructed figure: the hermeneutic, imaginary, paper, protean, spectral, theological, and virtual Jew.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Gloria Cigman, *The Jew as an Absent-Presence in Late Medieval England*, The Seventeenth Sacks Lecture (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1991), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Some scholars focus on how representations of Jews and Judaism promoted nation-building; for example, Janet Thormann, “The Jewish Other in Old English Narrative Poetry,” *Partial Answers* 2, no. 1 (2004): 1–19 and Cole, “The Jew Who Wasn’t There.”

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Cohen, “The Muslim Connection, or, On the Changing Role of the Jew in High Medieval Theology,” in *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 141–62: “the hermeneutic Jew”; Alain Finkielkraut, *Le Juif imaginaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1981): “the imaginary Jew”; Kathleen Biddick, “Paper Jews: Inscription/Ethnicity/Ethnography,” *The Arts Bulletin* 78 (1996): 594–621: “the paper Jew”; Denise Despres, “The Protean Jews in the Vernon Manuscript,” in *Chaucer and the Jews: Sources, Contexts, Meanings*, ed. Sheila Delaney (London: Routledge, 2002), 145–64: “the protean Jew”; Steven Kruger, “The Spectral Jew,” *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998): 9–35: “the spectral Jew”; Gilbert Dahan, *Les intellectuels chrétiens et les juifs au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 585: “the theological Jew” (*le juif théologique*); Sylvia Tomasch, “Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew,” in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: St.

The paradigms used by scholars such as Cigman, Bale, Tomasch, and Krummel,<sup>30</sup> all describe the situation in post-1280 England and relate to the sequence of absence following presence – an idea that there was some sort of post-expulsion “re-membering”<sup>31</sup> of the pre-expulsion Jew. In Scandinavia, however, there had been no presence to be remembered. Work on Anglo-Saxon literature, written before there were any Jewish communities in England, provides a helpful – but limited – parallel to the Scandinavian situation.<sup>32</sup> However, even here the absent-presence situation is quite different: the Anglo-Saxon material predates the huge shift in anti-Jewish rhetoric that took place towards the end of the twelfth century, while the East Norse material is imbued with the symbol of the demonized Jew as the enemy of Christ.<sup>33</sup> Thus, work remains to be done on how absent-presence plays out in the Swedish and Danish material and the extent to which it is different to other absent-present situations: Anglo-Saxon England, Western Scandinavia (Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands), even places such as modern Japan.<sup>34</sup>

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Martin's Press, 2000), 243–60: “the virtual Jew.” From a wider perspective, David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2013) has traced the long Western intellectual tradition of the “Jew” as a hermeneutic tool, through which Westerners made sense of their world.

**30** Miriamne A. Krummel, *Crafting Jewishness in Medieval England: Legally Absent, Virtually Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

**31** The concept of “re-membering” – “putting back together the pieces of a nearly lost history” – is discussed in Krummel, *Crafting Jewishness in Medieval England* (definition here from p. 56).

**32** See Andrew Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Samantha Zacher, ed., *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

**33** On the crystallization and intensification of anti-Jewish hatred and stereotypes in the twelfth century, see Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Robert I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1995); Robert Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).

**34** On attitudes towards Jews in Japan, see Rotem Kowner, “The Imitation Game? Japanese Attitudes towards Jews in Modern Times,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism*, 73–94.

## The role of the Church

The singular role of the Church in creating and propagating anti-Jewish ideas and images is clear and well documented. It provided the channels through which ideas about and attitudes to Jews came to Scandinavia. Even if we just consider sermons, we can see that Jews were a popular motif: fifty per cent of Old Danish and forty-two per cent of Old Swedish sermon manuscripts make at least some mention of Jews.<sup>35</sup> Beyond having to talk about the Jews in the Bible – from both the Old and New Testaments – why did preachers and writers of religious texts use the figure of “the Jew” so frequently in their work? Of course, they did so as it was a useful tool in communicating their message – but how?

## Emotions

Passion treatises, devotional texts, Passiontide sermons, and even some of St Birgitta’s revelations are full of rhetorical violence by Jews directed towards Christ and his followers, having two aims:

- to exemplify Christian fantasies about Jewish cruelty;
- to move (upset) readers emotionally through descriptions of brutality and ugliness.

For example, in descriptions of the Passion the audience is moved through descriptions of Christ’s persecution at the hands of the wild and filthy Jews who humiliate, torment, and mutilate him:

tha vdracthe wor herre ihesu sine arme paa korsset ... tha igenem slo iøderne wor herre ihesu høgre hand *meth* een stompt iern naule saa ynklighe och saa hordelige at naufflen indgick oc blodet wdspranck saa bunne the reff oc lijner om kring wor herre ihesu welsinede wenster handh oc vdrechte herne wedlh korsseth først twert oc saa endelangt ath alle hwor herre ihesu ryghbeen sloues aff lede tha igemen slowe the wor herre ihesu høgre handh *meth* stompet iern naule saa ynklighe at naufflen ingick oc blodhet wdspranck Saa toghe the reeve oc liner och bunne om wor herre ihesu føder oc neder tryckte them til korsset saa hordelige ath alle wors herre ihesu ledemot the at skyldes saa at inthet bleff i sin rætte sted.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Note that the manuscripts vary greatly in length.

<sup>36</sup> *Hær begynnes the fæmthen stæder som wor herre tolde syn pyne paa* (Copenhagen: Gotfred af Ghemen, 1509), fol. e1v–2v. Translation by Adams.

[T]hen Our Lord Jesus stretched out his arms on the cross ... Then the Jews hammered through Our Lord Jesus's right hand with a blunted nail so pitifully and so hard that the nail went in and his blood spurted out. Then they tied rope and lines around Our Lord Jesus's blessed left hand and stretched it along the cross, first horizontally and then vertically, so that all Our Lord Jesus's spinal discs were knocked out of place. When they had crucified the almighty God, they raised the cross in a stone. Then they hammered through Our Lord Jesus's <left> hand with a blunted nail so pitifully that the nail went in and his blood spurted out. Then they took ropes and lines and tied them around Jesus's feet and pulled them so hard downwards against the cross that all Our Lord Jesus's joints were separated so that nothing remained in its right place.

These bloody descriptions created opportunities for Christians to experience devotion through the senses – to enter into their faith emotionally. This sort of affective piety emerged around 1300, and gradually, emotional and bodily experience permeated all levels of Christian spirituality, especially in women's religious communities – some of the extant works that contain the most bloody violence are nuns' prayer books. "The Jews" represented everything that Christ was not – greedy, violent, ugly – and they brutalized and eventually murdered the Christian messiah while tormenting his mother and followers. The readers or audience are drawn into the drama, not just feeling *for* Christ, but feeling *with* him – each kick, lash of the whip, and hammering of the nail. This highly empathetic devotion had Jews at its core. Sometimes in sermons, having established Jews as the destructive enemy of Christ and drawn the audience into a state of empathy and excitement, the preacher turns the tables and tells his audience that *they* are worse than Jews, forcing them to confront their sinfulness – the Jews only crucified Christ's body once, sinful Christians crucify his spirit every day.<sup>37</sup>

These calls for compassion and to feel Christ's and his family's pain are reflected in preserved artworks where Jews demonstrate acts and emotions that are inhumane: a Jew mocks Christ as the Man of Sorrows (Sanderum, Odense); a Jew relishes scourging Christ (fig. 2.1); monstrous Jews attempt to overturn Mary's coffin (Täby, Uppland). The connection between the words of the preacher and the church artwork is obvious and powerful. It seems likely that a preacher needed only to mention the "tormentors of Christ" for the audience – surrounded by images of savage deicidal Jews – to know precisely who was being spoken about.

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<sup>37</sup> See Copenhagen, Kgl. Bibliotek, GkS 1390 4°, fol. 142r, published in *Svenska medeltidspostillor*, vol. 8, ed. Gustaf Klemming, Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet 1, no. 23 (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söner, 1879), 178. Cf. Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 63. 4 in *Patrologia Latina*, 36, cols 762–63, and Anselm, *Cur Deus homo*, 1. 9 in *Patrologia Latina*, 158, cols 370–73.



**Figure 2.1:** A Jew scourges Jesus. Over Dråby Church, Roskilde, Denmark. 1460–80. Photo courtesy of <[www.kalkmalerier.dk](http://www.kalkmalerier.dk)>.

In spite of the large amount of work being undertaken in recent years – e.g., at the *Centrum för medeltidsstudier* in Stockholm – on sermons, religious practice, and emotions, as well as St Birgitta’s revelations, Jews have never been discussed in any detail. A useful means of approaching some of the medieval material might therefore be to consider the importance of affective piety for descriptions of Jews, particularly in sermons and devotional literature.

## Doctrine

In addition to expositions relating the deicide and Jews’ cruelty towards Christ, several Old Swedish sermons include exempla that feature Jewish characters. These short didactic tales – all with foreign sources – deal with aspects of Christian doctrine. For example:

- The Boy in the Oven (First Sunday after Epiphany)<sup>38</sup>

A Jewish boy goes to mass together with his Christian school-friends and takes communion. Upon discovering what he has done, the boy’s father throws him into an oven. The boy is miraculously shielded from the flames by the Virgin Mary and is rescued. Having witnessed the miracle, the local Jews convert and punish the father by casting him into the oven.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The exemplum appears in manuscripts Linköping, SB, MSS T 180, fols 21r–22r and T 181, fols 71v–73r; edited and published in *Svenska medeltidspostillor*, vol. 6, ed. Bertil Ejder, Samlingar utg. av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet 23, no. 6 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1976), 63–64; *Svenska medeltidspostillor*, vol. 5, ed. Robert Geete, Samlingar utg. av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet 23, no. 5 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1909–10), 110–12. Old Swedish parallels in non-sermon manuscripts in Stockholm, Kungl. biblioteket, A 34, fol. 9ra–b; Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, C 528, fol. 9r; Stockholm, Riksarkivet, E 8900, fol. 11r. Foreign parallels in Evagrius Scholasticus of Antioch’s *Historia ecclesiastica*; Gregory of Tours’s *De gloria beatorum martyrum*; Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda aurea*, and Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa María*.

<sup>39</sup> On this exemplum, see also Adrienne Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 64–68; Dwayne E. Carpenter, “Social Perception and Literary Portrayal: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Spanish Literature,” in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*, ed. Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerilynn D. Dodds (New York: George Braziller, 1992), 66; Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 281–82; John D. Martin, Representations of Jews in Late Medieval and Early Modern German Literature, Studies in German Jewish History 5 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 137–53; Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 7–39; Eugen Wolter, ed., *Der Judenknabe: 5 griechische, 14 lateinische und 8 französische Texte* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1879).

In addition to the inhumane, “Jewish” behaviour of the father and his hatred towards Christianity, this short exemplum demonstrates the power of the Eucharist, the saving grace of the Virgin, the drive towards conversion, and the acceptance and salvation of all who embrace the Church. It humanizes and dramatizes a doctrinal point of faith – the men and women in the exemplum are seen as living the doctrine and the Jews as benefitting from having their eyes opened to the truth. The listeners’ faith is strengthened and any doubts about the faith are quelled. The role of the Jews is integral to proving the doctrine, usually concerning the saints, Mary, icons, or relics.

Sometimes it is not a particular doctrine but rather a certain behaviour – virtuous or sinful – that is the focus of the exemplum:

– The Hermit who Sinned and Confessed<sup>40</sup>

A holy hermit has sexual intercourse with a seductive Jewess. Subsequently, the Holy Spirit – in the form of a white dove flying out of his mouth – abandons him. The hermit confesses his sin to a priest, the dove and the Holy Spirit return to him, and he re-dedicates himself to a life of chastity. The Jewish woman, having witnessed the events, converts to Christianity.

In these sorts of exempla, the Jews have a disrupting quality and try to ruin or destroy some Christian object or person. Yet they are unsuccessful: their malicious plans are thwarted by a miracle that in turn proves a particular doctrine. Again, the Jews have an essential role to play in these stories. Approaching this type of religious text in this manner may be a fruitful way forwards and help explain the presence and actions of Jews and other “deviants” in them. The vast exemplum material in Old Swedish and Old Danish (in Christian Pedersen’s sermon collection)<sup>41</sup> still awaits research – not to mention the Latin material.

## The use of the image of the Jew without theological intent

There has been a tendency in (the patchy) research on the portrayal of Jews in East Norse texts to focus on religious texts. This is without doubt due to the types of extant texts – the East Norse corpus lacks, for example, the huge

**40** In Linköping, Stadsbiblioteket, T 180, fols 39v–40r (Ejder, *Svenska medeltidspostillor*, vol. 6, 59–60) and T 181, fols 136v–37r (Geete, *Svenska medeltidspostillor*, vol. 5, 106–07). I have been unable to locate the source of this miracle tale.

**41** Christiern Pedersen, *Alle Epistler oc Euangelia som lesiss alle Søndage om aared, sammeledis Jule dag, Paaske dagh, Pingetz dagh, meth deriss udtydning oc glose oc eth Jertegen till huer Dag* (Paris: Josse Bade, 1515).

body of secular sagas found in the West Norse corpus. However, there are occurrences of Jews in a few texts that are not immediately religious. They appear in profane works, such as the Old Swedish *The Romance of Charlemagne* (1375–86), and the Old Danish *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (1459) and *Lucidarius* (1510). They occur alongside many other types of non-Christians, not least Saracens (Muslims), and a comparative study of physiognomy, bodily appearance, behaviour, beliefs, and so on, between these groups would cast light on xenophobia and ideas about foreigners and “race” among medieval Scandinavians.

“Humorous” images of Jews can be found in the aforementioned *Judensau* depictions. The two wall paintings – Härkeberga and Husby-Sjutolft – were both painted by Albertus Pictor from Hessen in the 1480s, and possibly illustrate a legend where Jesus turned hiding Jews into pigs.<sup>42</sup> The Uppsala sculpture includes a Jew – wearing either a temple priest’s breastplace (*hošen*) or some keys – forcibly holding a fellow Jew under the sow to make him suckle. How would this have been understood by the Swedish churchgoer? The identification of the Jews in these images was easy enough for the viewer because of the hats they were wearing, but would the viewers have understood the antisemitic content, the connection between Jews and *treyf* pigs? The only image involving Jews and pigs I have been able to find in Denmark is from St Mary’s Church in Helsingør, where at the centre of the table at the Last Supper – the Passover meal – a pig’s head is placed on a large platter. Does this represent the victory of the New Law over the Old, or is it simply an addition to depict a banquet as understood by a medieval Dane with no further intended message?

On the subject of Jews’ hats, a curious image is found in Hästveda Church, Skåne. A Jew has placed his upturned hat (helpfully labelled “iudha hat,” Jew hat, in a caption – although how many could have actually read it?) onto the ground and pulled down his trousers to reveal enormous genitals and a circumcised penis. He appears to be relieving himself into the hat. It is difficult to provide a convincing theological interpretation of the image: it simply mocks the Jew’s appearance and provides a vulgar joke for the viewer. But how would it have been interpreted by medieval viewers in Scandinavia? What are we to make of these antisemitic jokes? As yet there is still no study of how Jews are portrayed and used in medieval non-religious works of literature and art in Sweden and Denmark; any such study would be most welcome.

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<sup>42</sup> Nilsén, *Program och funktion*, 454–55.

## The Reformation

For a time, at least, “the Jews” in Swedish and Danish texts were a tool by which Reformers and anti-Reformers could attack one another – in the same way that Jews were used as a device to criticize and chastise earlier misunderstandings and doubts about doctrine, disbelief, and heresy. So, for Reformers, “the Jews,” like Catholics, followed customs and studied works that were post-Biblical – they had abandoned the Bible. For Catholics, the Reformers, like Jews, posed a threat to the established world order and the universal Church: their tenet of *Hebraica veritas* was nothing less than the Judaization of Christianity’s foundational scriptures. Lausten has undertaken a study of Danish Reformers’ attitudes to Jews,<sup>43</sup> the most negative being found in the works of (translations by) Peder Tidemand and Niels Palladius, but this sort of investigation has yet to be done for Sweden. Indeed, a close reading that traces the development of stereotypes and attitudes towards Jews from the Middle Ages to the Reformation in all types of works, including prayer books and sermons, remains a desideratum for both Denmark and Sweden. The influence of Luther on attitudes towards Jews in Scandinavia has also still to be investigated. Why are some of his works translated into Danish and Swedish, but some not? Did the absence of a resident Jewish community preclude the publication of a Scandinavian version of *Von den Jüden und jren Lügen* (1543)? But if so, why did the Catholic anti-Reform agitator Poul Ræff publish one of Pfefferkorn’s anti-Jewish works in Copenhagen in 1516, over a century before Jews were admitted to Denmark? The complex use of “the Jews” during the Reformation in Scandinavia still needs to be untangled and explained.

## Legacy today

Several stereotypes found in the medieval East Norse material continue to thrive today, albeit under very different conditions. Although we should avoid talking about Jew-hatred as an eternal, unchanging phenomenon, the core of these stereotypes and their aim seems remarkably medieval. Yet negative attitudes about Jews in “secular” Scandinavia are rarely seen as antisemitic. When Donald Boström wrote an article for *Aftonbladet* in 2009, insinuating that Israeli soldiers killed young Palestinian men to steal their organs and sell them on the illegal market through a secret international network headed by a rabbi, few Swedes

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<sup>43</sup> Martin Schwarz Lausten, *Kirke og synagoge*, 156–375.

understood why he was accused of re-igniting the blood libel. Instead, discussions of the article and the furore that surrounded it revolved around the question of “freedom of speech.”<sup>44</sup>

Danish activists, such as the organization Intact Denmark, refer to Jewish ritual circumcision as the genital mutilation (*kønslemlæstelse*) of children, calling for a ban and the prosecution of parents who follow the mitzvah.<sup>45</sup> They never address the long anti-Jewish history of condemning the ritual, its association with the blood libel, the tradition of mocking the Jewish body, or even the right to freedom of religion. Operating in an ahistorical, contextless bubble, they can brush aside concerns about whether Judaism should endure in Denmark, disregarding allegations of antisemitism by framing *brit milah* solely as a violation of a child’s human rights.

In 2013, medical students at the University of Copenhagen arranged a pub night with a Jewish theme:

Bar mitzvah er baren hvor præputium er yt, og slangekrøller i den grad holder hundrede. Som kunde vil man uanset forhudsstatus blive taget med på rejse til det hellige land, hvor klezmermusikken hamrer ud af højtalerne, og hvor vi skifter cap og Cult ud med kalot og Kahlua. Til bar mitzvah tager vi imod både shekels og kroner, når vi bytter og handler Kahlua til yderst favorable priser i bedste jødestil.<sup>46</sup>

Bar mitzvah is the bar where prepucce is out and corkscrew curls are in. As a customer, regardless of the status of your foreskin, you’ll be taken on a journey to the Holy Land where klezmer music pounds out of the speakers and we’ll be swapping your cap and Cult [an energy drink] for a kalot and Kahlúa. At Bar mitzvah we accept both shekels and kroner when we barter and trade Kahlúa at extremely favourable prices in the best Jew-style.

Similarly, in 2015 anthropology students at the same university organized a bar mitzvah–themed event for new students:

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<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, “A Rational Model for Blood Libel: The *Aftonbladet* Affair,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism*, 265–84; Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, “Rationaliserade ritualmord: Religiösa antisemittiska stereotyper och debatten kring Aftonbladet 2009,” in *Studier om rasism: Tvärvetenskapliga perspektiv på ras, vithet och diskriminering*, ed. Andréaz Wasniewski and Tobias Hübinette (Malmö: Arx, 2018), 51–67.

<sup>45</sup> On their use of the term, see <<https://intactdenmark.dk/da/about/kommunikationspolitik/lemlæstelse/>>.

<sup>46</sup> Announcement at <<https://allevents.in/københavn/bar-mitzvah/656194587746374>>. Translation by Adams.

Shaloooom! Mazel tov med jeres optagelse, kære guds udvalgte folk! Men før Jahve accepterer jeres indvielse, skal det fejres med en ordentlig BAR mitzvah! Så få krøllet bakkenbarterne, fat kalotten og flash dit jødeguld – for Jahve han skal hædres.<sup>47</sup>

Shaloooom! Mazel tov on your admission [into the academic programme], dear God's chosen people! But before Yahweh accepts your initiation, we have to celebrate with a real BAR mitzvah! So get your sideburns curled, grab your kalot, and flash your Jew-gold – because Yahweh must be praised.

On social media, defenders of the events and their invitations also mentioned freedom of speech and claimed that soon “fun will not be allowed.” People should just relax and enjoy the party atmosphere; after all, poking fun at a minority is, well, nothing more than fun. It is alarming that students at the country’s leading university have so little sense of history that they cannot even recognize that they are mocking a minority (Jews comprise approximately 0.1 per cent of the population) using stereotypes that are eight hundred years old and that have led and continue to lead to persecution, destruction, and death. Worse still, they do not seem to care.

Sadly, as these last examples show, casual antisemitism that repeats or relies on medieval canards is still to be found in Sweden and Denmark. This too would be a worthy area for further research. Indeed, the two countries provide numerous examples of antisemitism produced by “nice” people, where the perpetrators – and even wider society – do not consider them antisemitic. It is as if they have become blind to such antisemitism, possibly because antisemitism is seen as a phenomenon only associated with Nazism and the Holocaust, or radical Islamist terrorism. How should this development be understood in countries that pride themselves on being progressive, modern, and humanistic?

## Concluding remarks

Scholarship on Jewish-Christian relations has focused on the last three or four centuries, despite the fact that Christian Swedes’ and Danes’ preoccupation with and fantasies about “Jews” began at least four hundred years before that. The portrayal of Jews in word and image in medieval Sweden and Denmark is very much an unPLIED field, but one that promises to produce a rich harvest. There is plenty of material, the development of which remains to be investigated,

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<sup>47</sup> Christoffer Zieler, “Skal de lægestuderende have lov til at lave sjov med jøder, når de holder fest?” *Uniavisen*, 26 October 2017, <<https://uniavisen.dk/skal-de-laegestuderende-lov-lave-sjov-med-joeder-naar-de-holder-fest/>>. Translation by Adams.

and its relation to “continental” antisemitism understood. Scholarship on the representation and use of “the Jews” is advanced for medieval England and elsewhere in Europe, but remains in its infancy in Scandinavia. This is remarkable, especially considering the current vibrant research fields in Medieval Studies at university centres in Stockholm and Odense – particularly otherness, emotions, devotion, and popular religion – that would tie in so well with this area. One reason is possibly the lack of courses and material on Jewish history, Jewish-Christian relations, and the study of antisemitism available at universities in Denmark and Sweden.

The uniqueness of the medieval Scandinavian case also makes it valuable for understanding how modern antisemitism works: the “Jew” is an entirely fabricated being that can enter a country through cultural and ecclesiastical channels and live in books and paintings – it is entirely independent of the existence of “real Jews.” There is no correspondence whatsoever between what Jews do and the antisemitic view of “the Jews.” That this still needs to be said – that there is no causal relationship and that the “correspondence theory” of antisemitism is deeply flawed – can seem unsettling, but unfortunately “kernel-of-truth” explanations of antisemitism live on among scholars.<sup>48</sup>

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**48** A recent popular introduction to antisemitism proposes precisely such a “rational” causal relationship: Steven Beller, *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). For example, the author laments that “Recent developments in the historiography of antisemitism have tended to minimize and marginalize, even dispute any significance for, the part played by Jews as the target and foil of antisemitism” (3). He ascribes a significant role to “the presence and behavior of European (and later American) Jews” (3) and emphasizes the “instrumental rationality … and moral culpability of those involved.” According to Beller, both Jews and antisemites therefore share responsibility for antisemitism, Jew-hatred, and violent attacks on Jews.

Richard Cole

## 3 William of Norwich in Iceland

### Antisemitism Studies between Middle English and Old Norse

**Abstract:** The central concern of this article is why research on depictions of Jews was almost non-existent in Old Norse-Icelandic Studies until just a few years ago, while in the analogous field of Middle English Studies it has flourished. In addition to surveying the research culture in both disciplines, I consider tangible connections between the medieval English blood libel tradition and the Norwegian-Icelandic cultural elite, with the myth of Kvasir from Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* suggested as an example of how future research based on such connections might look.

**Keywords:** Blood libel; Eysteinn Erlendsson; Geoffrey Chaucer; Kvasir; Middle English; Old Norse; Robert of Bury; William of Norwich.

## Introduction

One of the attractions of the Middle Ages is that it was a time when European culture was at once universal and local. It was universal in that a common language (Latin) and a reliable network of communications (both ecclesiastical and lay) facilitated the dissemination of literature from one end of Europe to the other. To take some nearly random examples, it was unremarkable that the *Historia Scholastica* was accessible to learned persons across the continent,<sup>1</sup> or that an Old French manuscript produced in Antioch ended up in the possession of Queen Isabella Bruce of Norway, herself not a Norwegian, but a Scot.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, cultural production could also be tightly linguistically or nationally bound. Works written in geographically peripheral vernaculars such as Old English stood virtually no chance of international circulation, nor were they probably ever intended for such a market.

The simultaneous globalism and parochialism of the Middle Ages is also reflected in the way that "Medieval Studies" is arranged as a set of disciplines. The

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*, vol. 4 (Madrid: Instituto Francisco Suárez, 1954), 288–91.

<sup>2</sup> Bjørn Bandlien, "A Manuscript of the Old French William of Tyre (Pal. Lat. 1963) in Norway," *Studi mediolatini e volgari* 62 (2016): 21–80.

existence of a unified medieval culture consisting of texts and mentalities common across Europe prior to the Reformation is acknowledged by organs such as The Medieval Academy of America, the International Medieval Congress, or several institutes for Medieval Studies (e.g. the University of Notre Dame, University of Toronto, University of Leeds). But Medieval Studies can also be subdivided along linguistic or regional lines, e.g. Iberian Studies, Middle High German Studies, or indeed the two disciplines discussed here: Middle English and Old Norse-Icelandic. Inside each of these subdivisions of Medieval Studies, a certain portion of research has been undertaken concerning attitudes towards Jews and Judaism.<sup>3</sup> There has also been synoptic research, which attempts to study Jewish-Christian relations as found in facets of the global culture of the European Middle Ages: what we might think of as research directly connected to the central “college” of Medieval Studies.<sup>4</sup>

In the following study, the relatively muted presence of Antisemitism Studies in Old Norse-Icelandic scholarship will be compared with the enormous prolifer-

<sup>3</sup> E.g. in Middle High German: Winfried Frey, “Das Bild des Judentums in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters,” in *Judentum im deutschen Sprachraum*, ed. Karl E. Grözinger (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), 36–59; Edith Wenzel, “Synagoga und Ecclesia: Zum Antijudaismus im deutschsprachigen Spiel des späten Mittelalters,” *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 12, no. 1 (2009): 57–81. In Old English: Andrew P. Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Medieval England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Samantha Zacher, ed., *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Mo Pareles, “Translating Purity: Jewish Law and the Construction of Difference in Late Old English Literature” (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2015). In Old Russian: Henrik Birnbaum, “On Some Evidence of Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia,” *Viator* 4 (1973): 225–55. Medieval France is a special case, given the tendency for the overarching discipline of Medieval Studies to reflect especially Franco-Latin culture, but see William Chester Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Bernhard Blumenkranz and Monique Lévy, *Bibliographie des juifs en France* (Toulouse: Privat, 1974). The Iberian Peninsula is also peculiar on account of its unique multireligious, multilingual environment, though for a recent account in English, see David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2014), 217–45. See also Louise Mirrer, “The Jew’s Body in Medieval Iberian Literary Portraits and Miniatures: Examples from the *Cantigas de Santa María* and the *Cantar de mio Cid*,” *Shofar* 12, no. 3 (1994): 17–30.

<sup>4</sup> Arguably the foundational work: Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966). More recently, see Irven M. Resnick, *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012); Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan, 2014).

ation of Antisemitism Studies in Middle English.<sup>5</sup> Although Old Norse is often brought into dialogue with Old English, the parallel with Middle English is in this case more compelling. Firstly, Old Norse and Middle English were coeval languages and literatures, both products of the High to Late Middle Ages. (Other periodizations are possible,<sup>6</sup> but here I define Middle English as the body of literature that emerges in England from around 1200). Indeed, as shall be seen, the anachronistic desire to pair Old English and Old Norse is itself potentially revealing. Secondly, the primary sources concerning Jews in Old Norse have more in common with Middle English than any other medieval literature – but the secondary sources (i.e. academic research) vary enormously between the two corpora.

By my count, the electronic version of the Chaucer Bibliography once published in *Studies of the Age of Chaucer* contains ninety-seven entries of articles, chapters, and books on the topic of Jewish-Christian relations in Middle English literature.<sup>7</sup> “Race and medieval studies: a partial bibliography” in *postmedieval* contains a further fourteen works on this theme which are not featured in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*.<sup>8</sup> There is also one chapter known to me which is not featured in either bibliography.<sup>9</sup> Doctoral theses which were either not subsequently

<sup>5</sup> To avoid ugly repetition of phrases and an off-putting amount of qualificatory statements, here some terms are used synonymously which otherwise would not be. By “Middle English” I include Anglo-Latin, as the vast majority of Middle English scholars also read Latin, as could most men of letters in medieval England. Jonathan Adams’s chapter in this volume discusses East Norse (the literature of medieval Denmark and Sweden). My use of “Old Norse” includes only literature written in Norway and Iceland, also called West Norse or Old Norse-Icelandic. Although elsewhere I readily accept that antisemitism and anti-Judaism are distinct phenomena, for present purposes the distinction is not important as I am mostly discussing the interests of researchers rather than analysing primary sources. I occasionally use the term “Judeophobia” to designate both tendencies, but sparingly, as it is not well known. If on occasion the reader feels that the term “anti-Jewish” would be more appropriate than “antisemitic,” or vice versa, I believe that mentally substituting one term for the other will not result in any changes to the outcome of my reasoning.

<sup>6</sup> Elaine Treharne, *Living Through Conquest: The Politics of Early English, 1020–1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 20012), 1–8.

<sup>7</sup> *Chaucer Bibliography*, < <https://newchaucersociety.org/pages/entry/chaucer-bibliography> >. Regrettably it has not been possible to cite individual items from a bibliography where their number exceeds ten.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Hsy and Julie Orlemanski, “Race and Medieval Studies: A Partial Bibliography,” *postmedieval* 8, no. 4 (2017): 500–31.

<sup>9</sup> Candace Barrington, “The Youtube Prioress: Anti-Semitism and Twenty-First Century Participatory Culture,” *Medieval Afterlives in Popular Culture*, ed. Gail Ashton and Daniel T. Kline (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13–28.

published as monographs or were in my view sufficiently different in their original form to warrant inclusion as separate items contribute another nine items.<sup>10</sup> This means a corpus of scholarship of at least 121 separate publications – and inevitably there will be plenty more peer-reviewed research floating around outside of bibliographies.

In Old Norse-Icelandic, the corpus of antisemitism/anti-Judaism studies consists of eight articles/chapters in peer-reviewed volumes,<sup>11</sup> one encyclopedia

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**10** Bonnie J. Erwin, “Gender, Race, and the Individual Subject in Middle English Representations of Conversion” (PhD thesis, Indiana University, 2010), 92–156; Cord Whitaker, “Race and Conversion in Late Medieval England” (PhD thesis, Duke University, 2009), 112–76; Dorothy Westerman Millner, “The Jews in *Piers Plowman*” (PhD thesis, City University of New York, 1984); Frances Howard Mitileneos, “English *Convivencia*: Aspects of Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Medieval England, 1189–1290” (PhD thesis, Loyola University, 2009); J. Holder Bennett, “An ‘Absent Presence’: An Internal History of Insular Jewish Communities Prior to Expulsion in 1290” (PhD thesis, University of Texas at Arlington, 2009); Maija Birenbaum, “Virtuous Vengeance: Anti-Judaism and Christian Piety in Medieval England” (PhD thesis, Fordham University, 2010); Michael Nicholas Jones, “*Sceleris Auctores*: Jews as Theatrical Agents in Medieval England” (PhD thesis, Stanford University, 1996); Mary Elizabeth Sokolowski, “‘For God of Jewes is Crop and Roote’: The Cyclic Performance of Judaism and Jewish-Christian Intimacy in the Chester Mystery Plays” (PhD thesis, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999); Willis Harrison Johnson, “Between Christians and Jews: The Formation of Anti-Jewish Stereotypes in Medieval England” (PhD thesis, University of California Berkeley, 1997). I include here theses which either were confined to Jewish-Christian studies by their title or included a substantial chapter on the topic which was central to the method of the rest of the thesis. Theses where one chapter was on the subject but it was not integral to the thesis’s chief theme were not included, i.e. theses where a chapter deals heavily with *The Prioress’s Tale* but not from a particularly interreligious/interethnic perspective.

**11** Bjarne Berulfsen, “Antisemittisme som litterær importvare,” *Edda* 58 (1958): 123–144; Kirsten Wolf, “An Old Norse Record of Jewish History,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 77, no. 1 (1986): 45–54; Kirsten Wolf, “The Judas Legend in Scandinavia,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 88, no. 4 (1989): 463–76; Richard Cole, “One or Several Jews? The Jewish Massed Body in Old Norse Literature,” *postmedieval* 5, no. 3 (2014): 346–58; Richard Cole, “*Kyn / Fólk / Þjóð / Ætt*: Proto-Racial Thinking and its Application to Jews in Old Norse Literature,” in *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 239–68; Richard Cole, “Snorri and the Jews,” in *Old Norse Mythology – Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Pernille Hermann and others (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 243–68; Veronika Szőke, “The Old Norse *Translatio* of the Latin *Inventio Crucis*,” *Annali – Sezione Germanica* 24, nos 1–2 (2014): 295–326; Yvonne Friedman, “Reception of Medieval European Anti-Jewish Concepts in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 59–72.

entry,<sup>12</sup> and one PhD thesis.<sup>13</sup> An article dealing primarily with visual rather than textual culture – but still from Norway – could also be included.<sup>14</sup> One of the aforementioned articles is also critiqued in a forthcoming book, although not one otherwise on an Old Norse-Icelandic theme, and can therefore be discounted.<sup>15</sup> This means a corpus of scholarship of eleven separate publications. It is worth noting that this combined production is the work of six individual authors, two of the articles would not have existed without the efforts of the editors of the present volume (who have done much to facilitate similar research on related Nordic and Baltic sources), and more than half of it has been published since the year 2014. That is to say, the study of Jewish-Christian relations in Old Norse is not only smaller than its Middle English counterpart in absolute size,<sup>16</sup> but is also substantially younger, and the product of a dramatically smaller number of individuals.

With the disparity between Middle English and Old Norse-Icelandic illustrated, we will turn to potential explanations.

## Absence/Presence: lived experience of Jewish life

An obvious place to start is the historical reality that from c. 1070 to 1290 Jews lived in England. They lasted for seven generations, and at the height of their numbers probably constituted around 0.25% of the population.<sup>17</sup> On the basis of the recently revised figure of England's population at the time of the Edict of Expulsion, this means there would have been approximately 11,875 Jewish men, women, and children in England who were forced either to flee or convert

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<sup>12</sup> Bjarne Berulfsen, “Jøder. Norge og Island” in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder fra Vikingetid til Reformationstid*, vol. 8, ed. Alan Karker (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1963), cols 77–78.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Cole, “The Jew Who Wasn’t There: Studies on Jews and their Absence in Old Norse Literature” (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Kristin Bliksrud Aavitsland, “The Church and the Synagogue in Ecclesiastical Art: A Case from Medieval Norway,” *Teologisk Tidsskrift* 5, no. 4 (2016): 324–41.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Cole, *The Death of Tidericus the Organist: Ethnicity, Class, and Conspiracy Theory in Hanseatic Visby* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> We will return to the issue of its relative size later.

<sup>17</sup> Robin R. Mundill, *The King’s Jews: Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England* (London: Continuum, 2010), 43–44.

in 1290.<sup>18</sup> Norway and Iceland, on the other hand, almost certainly did not have resident Jewish populations during the entirety of the Middle Ages.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, we have only one potential example of a passing Jewish visitor in Norway, and none at all in Iceland.<sup>20</sup> This means that an entire field of study is open to Middle English scholars and historians of medieval England which is completely closed to Scandinavianists: the experiences of Jewish people living in the area in question, and the historical relationships between the Jewish and Christian communities.

However, the importance of this difference should not be overstated. After 1290, Middle English authors were writing from a similar position of Jewish absence as their Old Norse-Icelandic colleagues. Geoffrey Chaucer, whose *Prioress's Tale* is the indisputable locus classicus of Middle English Antisemitism Studies, had no more Jewish countrymen than the contemporaneous author of *Grettis saga*. Chaucer may have met Jews on his travels abroad, but this is also true of Old Norse-speakers and in any case is not indicated in his extant writings.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, while Anglo-Latin chroniclers record fictionalized accounts of interactions between Jews and Christians on English soil,<sup>22</sup> Middle English authors in the post-expulsion period tend not to engage directly with experiences of Jewish-Christian interaction in England's past. This may well have its own meaning. As Tomasch points out, it is telling that *The Prioress's Tale* takes place in an undisclosed location in Asia, rather than in England: "In the *Prioress's Tale*, a polluted Asia, polluted through Jewish presence and actions – is implicitly contrasted with a purified England, whose sanitized state is founded on the displacement of the Jews."<sup>23</sup> The key word here is "implicitly": it remains true to say that the reality of historical Jewish presence does not condition Middle English in overt ways. That is to say, there are no Middle English works which explicitly and at length lament or celebrate the fact that Jews were once present and then removed.

**18** Bruce M. S. Campbell and Lorraine Barry, "The Population of Great Britain c. 1290: A Provisional Reconstruction," in *Population, Welfare and Economic Change in Britain, 1290–1834*, ed. Chris Briggs and others (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 50.

**19** Cole, "The Jew Who Wasn't There," 7–17.

**20** Cole, "The Jew Who Wasn't There," 17–21, 256–57.

**21** Miriamne A. Krummel, *Crafting Jewishness in Medieval England: Legally Absent, Virtually Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 90; Cole, "The Jew Who Wasn't There," 2–5.

**22** E.g. Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), 23–53.

**23** Sylvia Tomasch, "Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew," in *Chaucer and the Jews: Sources, Contexts and Meanings*, ed. Sheila Delaney (New York: Routledge, 2002), 73; Bale, *Jew in the Medieval Book*, 62–63.

While the historical presence of Jews in England prior to 1290 has given scholars of Middle English an interesting background upon which to comment, the lack of a corresponding history in Norway-Iceland does not mean that there is nothing to say. Elsewhere, I have pointed out that there are different sorts of absence: Jews in post-1290 England belong to the lesser state of absence I call “once-here-now-gone,” while Jews in medieval Iceland and Norway belong to the state of absence I have called “never-here-now-there.”<sup>24</sup> Medieval Icelanders and Norwegians might well have been fascinated, disturbed – or even tantalized – by the thought of Jews in exciting, foreign locations. There is nothing to prevent speculation on this prospect in the same way that Middle English researchers speculate on how it felt for medieval Englishmen to have an awareness that Jews had once lived on their own soil. It seems unlikely, then, that this difference is the key reason that Antisemitism/Anti-Judaism Studies has flourished in Middle English and not in Old Norse. Absence paradoxically gives us quite a lot to talk about.

## Occurrences in the corpus

On the basis of secondary sources, one might reasonably assume that Jews were hardly mentioned in Old Norse literature, but mentioned frequently in Middle English. To test the truth of this assumption is not easily done. Despite exciting experiments by, for example, Franco Moretti, reading literature lends itself to qualitative more than quantitative investigation.<sup>25</sup> Not all instances of antisemitism have equal discursive weight. For example, a hundred asides simply repeating the falsehood that “Jews killed Jesus”<sup>26</sup> tell us much less than one paragraph illustrating a sophisticated antisemitic conspiracy theory. There is also the problem of what exactly we would be counting. Would we count every individual antisemitic utterance, so that work x has y number of antisemitic episodes? How then would we count the utterances in a work such as the Anglo-Latin *Vita et passio Sancti Willemi martyris Norwicensis* (Life and Miracles of William of Norwich, 1150s–70s) – would all of the first two books, which constitute one fluid antisemitic narrative, be registered as just one utterance? Instead, I have opted

<sup>24</sup> Richard Cole, “Towards a Typology of Absence in Old Norse Literature,” *Exemplaria* 28, no. 2 (2016): 141–45.

<sup>25</sup> Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and The Passion from The Bible to The Big Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19–36.

for a binary where either a given work discusses post-Old Testament Jews, or it does not.

This leads to the problem of what constitutes a work. I am of the view that most sermons and miracle tales should be considered independent works, because they once circulated as independent texts rather than having always existed in the compendiums in which they were subsequently preserved.<sup>27</sup> But published lists of works tend not to take this approach. For example, the approximately sixty Old Norse Marian miracles are often referred to simply as *Mariu saga*, not differentiating between the *vita* of Mary, probably written by Kygri-Björn Hjaltason (d. 1238), and the later Marian miracles.<sup>28</sup> This is before we enter the New Philological minefield of how far works should be differentiated from manuscripts.<sup>29</sup> If one work containing an antisemitic episode is preserved in twenty manuscripts, do we have one or twenty instances of antisemitism? There is no option but to be arbitrary. In the name of simplicity, then, I (1) use corpora defined by other authorities, (2) prefer works to manuscripts, and (3) ask only whether a text contains treatments of Jews at all rather than how many treatments it contains. This yields the following results, imperfect though they may be:

On this basis, the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* has a register of works which delineates 437 distinct works of Old Norse literature.<sup>30</sup> Of these, fifty-three mention Jews at some point. This does not include poetry, where the proportion of works mentioning Jews is undoubtedly fewer, although conversely the few antisemitic moments in Old Norse poetry are some of the most colourful in the canon.<sup>31</sup>

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27 Cole, “The Jew Who Wasn’t There,” 232–34.

28 Gabriel Turville-Petre, “The Old Norse Homily on the Assumption and *Mariu saga*,” in *Nine Norse Studies* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1972), 113–17. On the *vita* more generally, see Christelle Fairise, “Relating Mary’s Life in Medieval Iceland: *Mariu Saga*. Similarities and Differences with the Continental *Lives of the Virgin*,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 129 (2014): 165–96.

29 Richard Cole, “Philology and Desire in Old Norse, between *Stone* and a Hard Place,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 117, no. 4 (2018): 513–22.

30 *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*, < [http://onpweb.nfi.sc.ku.dk/vkreg\\_d.html](http://onpweb.nfi.sc.ku.dk/vkreg_d.html) >.

31 For example, “Gyðingsdiktur,” in *Íslenzk Miðaldakvæði: Íslandske digte fra senmiddelalderen*, vol. 2, ed. by Jón Helgason (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1938), 87–119, “Gyðingsvísur,” *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, vol. 7: *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 515–25, “Geiplur I,” in *Rimnasafn. Samling af de ældste islandske rimer*, vol. 2, edited by Finnur Jónsson, Copenhagen: S. L. Möllers & J. Jørgensens Bogtrykkeri, 1913–22, 363.

The *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* catalogues 148 distinct works.<sup>32</sup> Of these, thirty-five mention Jews at some point. Methodological caveats abound here: the Middle English *Corpus* is not as comprehensive as the Old Norse *Dictionary*, even though the *Corpus* contains poetry and prose while the *Dictionary* is confined to prose. Nonetheless, it is probably true to say that proportionally Jews are mentioned more frequently in Middle English than Old Norse (24 per cent of Middle English surveyed works mention Jews, versus 12 per cent of Old Norse surveyed works). However, in absolute numbers, the Old Norse corpus probably contains more occurrences than the Middle English. Regardless, it must be stressed that the corpus of Old Norse treatments of Jews is not small. Having identified what I believe to be every overtly antisemitic episode in Old Norse (both in prose and poetry), the accumulated material weighs in at 32,374 words.

**Table 3.1:** A Comparison of the Middle English and the Old Norse-Icelandic Corpus and the Topic of Jews

	Middle English	Old Norse-Icelandic
Works containing references to Jews	35	53
Number of works surveyed	148	437
Percentage of corpus surveyed containing references to Jews	23.6 %	12.13 %
Number of books, book chapters, articles, and PhD theses published on the topic	121	11

By this point it should be clear that the quantity of the Old Norse material ought not to be a barrier to potential scholarship on Jewish-Christian relations. But what of its quality? True, there is a substantial amount of antisemitic/anti-Jewish content in Old Norse, but is it worth commenting upon in the way that Middle English material apparently is? It must be answered that *The Prioress's Tale*, which has inspired much comment from Middle English antisemitism scholars, is actually a fairly direct retelling of a common European legend which is also told in Old Norse, the *Erubescat* miracle.<sup>33</sup> It is true that Old Norse critics cannot

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<sup>32</sup> Humanities Text Initiative, *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, < <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/> >. Other corpora could have been used, though I have found this one to yield the largest result relative to the number of individual works contained.

<sup>33</sup> Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, 59, 74. On the Old Norse transmission: Ole Widding, "Norrøne Marialegender på europæisk baggrund," *Opuscula* 10 (1996): 104. For the Old Norse texts: "Af klerk ok gyðingym," in *Mariu Saga: Legender om Jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn*,

connect their version of the legend to the lived experiences of Jews on Norwegian/Icelandic soil in the way that Middle English critics can do for England, so there is in this regard less to say about the Norse tale. But this factor alone can hardly account for the fact that JSTOR lists over 700 articles on *The Prioress's Tale*, while as far as I am aware there is only one published study which treats the Old Norse version of the *Enubescat* miracle in more than a passing remark, and even then the treatment is fairly superficial.<sup>34</sup>

## Example: the blood libel – from England to Norway to Iceland

*The Prioress's Tale*, being a story about the murder of a young Christian by Jews, is adjacent to the historical phenomenon of the blood libel.<sup>35</sup> Here, we find that the Old Norse material is in fact intertwined with English material, yet comment from Scandinavianists has been surprisingly lacking. The story of William of Norwich marks the beginning of concrete accusations of Jewish ritual murder. It has been an important site for Medieval English Antisemitism Studies, and indeed for Medieval Studies more generally.<sup>36</sup> William was a twelve-year-old boy, whose body was found in the woods outside Norwich on Holy Saturday in

after *gamle haandskrifter*, ed. Carl Rikard Unger (Christiania: Brøgger & Christie, 1871), 203–07; “Af klerk er Judar drapu fyrir (þui er) hann song af vorru frv.” Ibid., 779–80. Chaucer does add some original elements, most importantly the reference to another blood libel case, Little Hugh of Lincoln (d. 1255): “O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slain also / With cursed Jewes, as it is notable, / For it is but a litel while ago.” Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 212.

<sup>34</sup> Cole, “Kyn / Fólk / Þjóð / Ætt,” 245–47.

<sup>35</sup> In what follows, I use “blood libel” and “ritual murder accusation” interchangeably. A much more precise typology has been proposed but is too intricate to be employed in the present work: Darren O’Brien, *The Pinnacle of Hatred: The Blood Libel and the Jews* (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2011), 63–67.

<sup>36</sup> Either particularly important or particularly recent: Jeffrey J. Cohen, “The Flow of Blood in Medieval Norwich,” *Speculum* 79, no. 1 (2004): 26–65; Hannah R. Johnson, “Rhetoric’s Work: Thomas of Monmouth and the History of Forgetting,” *New Medieval Literatures* 9 (2007): 63–91; by the same author: *The Ritual Murder Accusation at the Limit of Jewish History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 30–58; John M. McCulloh, “Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth,” *Speculum* 72, no. 3 (1997): 698–740; E. M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Anna Wilson, “*Similia similibus*: Queer Time in Thomas of Monmouth’s Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich,” *Exemplaria* 28, no. 1 (2016): 44–69.

1144. William's story is the earliest known blood libel accusation (although there were antecedents, such as the "Jewish boy in oven"<sup>37</sup> or *Erubescat* miracle tales – both also attested in Old Norse, in multiple recensions).<sup>38</sup> The cult of William remained largely a local affair; of all the paintings of William made in England, or references to him in medieval English chronicles, not one originates more than a hundred miles from Norwich itself.<sup>39</sup> Outside of England, McCulloh has undertaken a thorough survey of references to William in European sources. He finds a cluster of passing mentions in Norman writers (Robert of Torigny, d. 1186, and an anonymous annalist from the Abbey of Mortemer), an annalist from the Abbey of Notre Dame d'Ourscamp, and a legend recorded by Hélinand of Froidmont (d. c. 1230), which made its way into Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale* (c. 1250).<sup>40</sup> One rogue is an image from a vault-boss in Girona Ca-

<sup>37</sup> The connection between the "Jewish boy in oven" and the blood libel has been posited as historical (if circumstantial), in that it was preached by Bishop Herbert of Losinga at Norwich in the 1090s: McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder," 737–38; Miri Rubin, Introduction to *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, trans. Miri Rubin (London: Penguin Books, 2014), xxv–xlvi. A genealogical relationship, suggesting the place of the "Jewish boy in oven" tale as part of an ancestry of legends culminating in blood libel and host desecration accusations, is sketched by Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 28. See also Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christian–Jewish Relations, 1000–1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom* (London: Longman, 2011), 171–72. The stories have further been read as mirrors of each other: Geraldine Heng, "England's Dead Boys: Telling Tales of Christian–Jewish Relations before and after the First European Expulsion of the Jews," *MLN* 127, no. 5 (2012): 73–81.

<sup>38</sup> For *Erubescat*, see n33 above. For the "Jewish boy in oven" tale: Carl Rikard Unger, ed., *Mariu Saga*: "Af gyðingsbarni." *Ibid.*, 71–72. "Munkr mintizt vid kinn vorrar frv." *Ibid.*, 836–38. "Af iuda syne" [recension A] *Ibid.*, 987–88, [rec. B] 989, [rec. C] 989–90. On its preservation in *Draumkvedet* and visual culture: Yvonne Friedman, "Reception of Medieval European Anti-Jewish Concepts in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway," in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism*, 62–65.

<sup>39</sup> The major contemporary textual witness besides Thomas of Monmouth is the *Peterborough Chronicle*, compiled by the monks of Peterborough abbey, about sixty-four miles from Norwich: "On his time [King Stephen r. 1135–54] þe Iudeus of Noruuic bohton an Cristen cild beforne Estren, & pineden him alle þe ilce pining ðat ure Drihten was pined, & on Lang Fridæi him on rode hengen for ure Drihtines luue & sythen byrieden him ... & hatte he Sanct Willelm" (In his time the Jews of Norwich procured a Christian child before Easter, and tortured him with all the sort of torture by which Our Lord was tortured, and on Good Friday hung him on a cross for the love of Our Lord and then buried him ... and he was called Saint William). *The Peterborough Chronicle*, ed. Cecily Clark (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), 57. On paintings of William, see McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder," 709–17.

<sup>40</sup> McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder," 717–24.

thedral in Spain.<sup>41</sup> There is also an outcrop of German attestations. McCulloh discovered a brief mention in an appendix by Paul of Bernried to a Bavarian martyrology from the eleventh century. There is a reference in Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493), an incunabulum which appeals to a textual witness of the story, probably being Vincent's *Speculum*: “Gwilhelmus ein kind in engelland wardt diser zeit von den iuden amm karfreytag in der statt norwico gekreūtzigt. Von dem liset man darnach ein wunderlichs gesihte”<sup>42</sup> (Gwilhelmus, a child in England, was at this time crucified by the Jews on Good Friday in the city of Norwich. One can read a wonderful story about this hereafter). Schedel's chronicle also contains an illustration of the alleged crucifixion by Michael Wolgemut (d. 1519).

What I have never seen mentioned is that there is also an Icelandic reference to William of Norwich. It is found in one manuscript, AM 657 a–b 4to, written in Iceland, c. 1375. A legend entitled *Af Lanfranco* contains a sub-chapter where a boy named William has a vision of his namesake, William of Norwich. frustratingly, the manuscript lacks a folio just moments after William of Norwich appears, so we will never know precisely what the Icelandic version entailed:

Í þeim stað á Englaði er í Jórvík heitir var einn pilltr XIII<sup>43</sup> vetrar gamall, Vilhjálmr at nafni. Honum bar svá til um várit eptir páskar á mánadegi nærrí níundi stund, at hann sofnaði; ok þegar sem í andarsýn bregðr hann augun sundr:<sup>44</sup> ... Borg ein ágjæt var fyrir þeim ... Til suðrs í þeirri háleitu borg sér hann eitt dýrðligt altari með skínanda búnaði. Þar umbergis stendr mikil fylgd er öll var himneskliga prýdd, enn í miðju þeirra höfðingi svá klæddr ok krúnaðr sem jarðlig tunga fær eigi greint. Engillinn talar þá til Vilhjálms: “Persi herra hinn krúnaði er nafni þinn Vilhjálmr er Júðar krossfestu í Nórvík<sup>45</sup> á Englaði upp á frjádag langa. Er nú úti erendi þitt fyrst at sinni, þvíat þú hefir sét ...”<sup>46</sup>

In that town in England which is called York there was a fifteen-year-old boy by the name of William. It so happened to him in the spring after Easter on a Monday, close to the ninth hour, that he fell asleep. And as though in a spiritual vision he opened his eyes ... There was a fantastic city before him ... In the south of this celebrated city he sees a glorious altar with a shining [altar]cloth. All around there stands a great congregation who were

<sup>41</sup> Julian Luxford, “The Iconography of St William of Norwich and the Nuremberg Chronicle,” *Norfolk Archaeology* 47, no. 2 (2015), 241–44.

<sup>42</sup> Hartmann Schedel, *Register des buchs der Croniken vnd geschichten, mit figure vnd pildnus-sen von anbegin der welt bis auf dise vnsere Zeit* (Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1493), cci.

<sup>43</sup> Gering has XIII<sup>II</sup> but this is not corroborated in the manuscript. AM 657 a–b 4to, fol. 25r.

<sup>44</sup> “Af Lanfranco,” *Islendzk Æventyri: Isländische Legenden Novellen und Märchen*, vol. 2, ed. Hugo Gering (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1883), 303.

<sup>45</sup> Gering suggested “Nor[ð]vík,” presumably feeling it to be a more authentic form, although the manuscript clearly has “noruik.” AM 657 a–b 4to, fol. 25v.

<sup>46</sup> “Af Lanfranco,” *Æventyri*, 305.

all heavenly attired, and in the middle of them was their chieftain, clothed and crowned in a manner that no earthly tongue can manage to describe. The Angel speaks to William [of York]: “This Lord, the crowned one, is your namesake William, whom the Jews crucified in Norwich in England on Good Friday. Now, this is the first time that your task is complete, because you have seen ...”

*Af Lanfranco* is mainly based on the *Vita Lanfranci* (Life of Archbishop Lanfranc, d. 1089) contained in the *Speculum Historiale*, although it also contains exotic elements for which it is hard to account.<sup>47</sup> For example, the Icelandic text introduces the detail that the vision occurred to a fourteen-year-old boy called William, who lived in Jórvík (York). In both Vincent’s and Hélinand’s text, there is no such geographical information.<sup>48</sup> McCulloh’s study raises the question of orally transmitted stories about William, circulating alongside written sources.<sup>49</sup> The Old Norse *Af Lanfranco* perhaps suggests that Norway-Iceland was party to these now lost traditions (was there even a poetic tradition on which the author of *Af Lanfranco* drew? Jórvík and Nórvið rhyme). There are further hints of direct transmission between English blood-libel accusations and the Old Norse-speaking sphere. As previously mentioned, between c. 1150 and 1173, the monk Thomas of Monmouth composed the *Vita et passio Sancti Willemi martyris Norwicensis*. Strikingly, this text – at the epicentre of the William cult – contains a suggestion that the legend was spread to Norway soon after William’s death. Thomas of Monmouth mentions that a ship crossing the North Sea was caught in treacherous weather:

presbitero quodam Thetfordensi qui cum eis de Norweia aduenerat, beati martiris Willelmi opem inuocauit. Se quippe omnes et sua omnia pariter cum naui eius committunt patroci niis et sic directo cursu ad proximum tenditur litus.<sup>50</sup>

[A] priest who was from Thetford, who had accompanied them from Norway, called on the aid of the blessed martyr William. Indeed, they [the crew] all committed themselves and all

<sup>47</sup> “Af Lanfranco,” *Aeventyri*, 240–41.

<sup>48</sup> Hélinand of Froidmont, *Chronicon in Patrologia Latina*, vol. 212, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Migne, 1855), col. 1036; Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Quadruplex*, vol. 4, ed. Academy of Douai (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1965), 1125–26. Vincent’s episode did not find its way into the Old Norse *Stjórn I*.

<sup>49</sup> McCulloh, “Jewish Ritual Murder,” 718–19, though cf. 717, 724. In general: Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 28–46; Heather Blurton and Hannah Johnson, *The Critics and the Prioress: Antisemitism, Criticism, and Chaucer’s Prioress’s Tale* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 66.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ed. Augustus Jessopp and Montague Rhodes James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 277.

their belongings as well as the ship to his protection and thus with a straight course they headed to the nearest shore.

The priest in question appears to be English rather than Norwegian (hence *Thetfordensis* in the nominative, “native to Thetford”) so this is not an account of a Norwegian professing William’s saintliness. However, it is worth nothing that William is invoked on the return journey *from* Norway. At the very least, then, we have an indication of an adherent of the William cult who has been travelling in a West Norse-speaking country. It would not be surprising if our nameless priest were not the only William-proselyte traversing the routes between East Anglia, Norway, and Iceland, given the affiliation of all three regions to what has been termed the “North Sea World.”<sup>51</sup> After William’s death, blood libel accusations continued apace across Europe. In 1181, another East Anglian boy was found murdered, Robert of Bury. His story is much less well preserved. He was supposed to have been murdered by Jews, but his *vita* does not survive. The details in the fiction of his no-doubt grisly murder are lost to us, as are the miracles that were attributed to him after death.<sup>52</sup> The only literary account of any note is a Middle English poem by John Lydgate, *A Praier to Seynt Robert*, composed two centuries after Robert’s death:

O blyssid Robert, Innocent and Virgyne,  
 Glorious marter, gracious & riht good,  
 To our prayer thyn eris [ears] doun Enclyne,  
 Wich on-to Crist offredyst thy chast blood,  
 Ageyns the[e], the Lewys were so wood ...  
 Fostrid with mylk and tende pap [*sweet breast*] þi foode  
 Was it nat routhe [*horrid*] to se þi veynes bleede?<sup>53</sup>

If Robert remains an obscure case of blood libel for historians of England, he ought to be important for historians of Norway-Iceland. The *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds* by Jocelyn de Brakelond (fl. 1170s–c. 1200) records Robert’s body being brought to the church at the titular abbey, at the same

<sup>51</sup> On East Anglians, Norwegians, and Jews, see Cole, “The Jew Who Wasn’t There,” 4–5, 151–52. See also Anna Agnarsdóttir, “Iceland’s ‘English Century’ and East Anglia’s North Sea World,” in *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, ed. David Bates and Robert Lilliard (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 204–17, who amongst other matters, discusses an apparent case of child abduction from Iceland to King’s Lynn in 1429.

<sup>52</sup> On the remains of the Robert cult, see Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, 105–19, 141–43.

<sup>53</sup> John Lydgate, *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, fasc. 1, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken (London: Kegan, 1911), 138.

time as a Norwegian by the name of “Augustinus” was visiting (and, it would seem, assuming a lot of responsibilities at the monastery during an interregnum):

Vacante abbatia perhendinavit Augustinus archiepiscopus Norweie apud nos in domibus abbatis, habens per preceptum regis singulis diebus x. solidos de denariis abbatis; qui multum valuit nobis ad habendam liberam electionem nostram, testimonium perhibens de bono, et publice protestans coram rege quod viderat et audierat. Eodem tempore fuit sanctus puer Robertus martirizatus, et in ecclesia nostra sepultus, et fiebant prodigia et signa multa in plebe<sup>54</sup>

While the abbacy happened to be vacant, Augustine, archbishop of Norway, stayed with us in the abbot's quarters, for the king had given him ten shillings a day from the abbot's money; he did us much good in obtaining our free election, testifying well for us, and speaking out publicly before the king of what he saw and heard [about us]. It was also at this time that the saintly boy Robert was martyred, and was buried in our church, and there were many signs and wonders amongst the people ...

This “Augustinus” is in fact Eysteinn Erlendsson, Archbishop of Niðarós (r. 1161–88).<sup>55</sup> Between 1180–83 he was in exile from Norway, having supported a defeated faction in the Norwegian civil wars. During his time in England he appears to have particularly identified with the cult of Thomas à Becket (d. 1170), and to have encouraged the cult in Norway upon his return.<sup>56</sup> How much of the cult of Robert of Bury did he bring back? As in the case of the nameless Thetford priest, there is much we do not know. Did Eysteinn avoid all sight of Robert's body? If he did take a moment to contemplate upon the delivery of the corpse to the monastery, what ran through the Norwegian outsider's mind? Did he reflect over the supposed beastliness of the Jews, and gladden himself that Norway was spared the presence of such a murderous people? Or, in his private thoughts, did he find the behaviour of his English colleagues deluded? Did he recognize the cynical power games driving the architects of the cult, later commented upon by Bale?<sup>57</sup> In the latter two eventualities, we can be reasonably

<sup>54</sup> Jocelyn de Brakelond, *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda, De rebus Gestis Samsonis Abbatis Monasterii Sancti Edmundi*, ed. Johanne Gage Rokewode (London: Camden Society, 1840), 12.

<sup>55</sup> Erik Gunnes, *Erkebisop Øystein: Statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo: Aschehough, 1996), 250–55.

<sup>56</sup> Haki Antonsson, *St Magnús of Orkney: A Scandinavian Martyr Cult in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 63.

<sup>57</sup> Anthony Bale, “‘House Devil, Town Saint’: Anti-Semitism and Hagiography in Medieval Suffolk,” in *Chaucer and the Jews: Sources, Contexts, Meanings*, ed. Sheila Delaney (New York: Routledge, 2002), esp. 186–87.

sure that he did not raise the issue: an outspoken non-believer at the heart of the establishment in Bury would likely have attracted comment from Jocelyn.

We have only one opaque hint at Eysteinn's personal attitude. If his authorship of the *Passio et miracula beati Olavi* (c. 1180s) is accepted, the presence there of seven miracle tales concerning young boys in perilous situations suggests that the themes of the Robert narrative would have been congruent with his tastes.<sup>58</sup> The miracle of two Christian boys living among pagans, and the miracle of a Christian boy whose tongue has been cut out, speak in particular to the blood libel's interests (1) in the mutilation of innocents and (2) in conflict between different faith communities.<sup>59</sup> However, the fact that these stories do not contain Jews means Eysteinn's opinion remains ambiguous: was he inspired by the experience of dealing with Robert's burial, and so quietly allowed blood libel-like themes into his work? Or is the absence of Jews from his surviving literary output a sign that he rejected the anti-Jewish *topos*? For our purposes, it is not a problem that these questions are unanswerable. Whether he supported or disapproved of the Robert cult, Eysteinn had direct experience of it before he returned to Norway. Between 1183–88, there were five years where the highest church official in both Norway and Iceland had perhaps seen with his own eyes a child allegedly murdered by Jews, and at the least worked closely with people who encouraged that child's veneration. It is almost unthinkable that none of his Norwegian or Icelandic colleagues were interested in the remarkable experiences he had in England.

One might attempt to excuse the lack of comment on these connections between medieval English Judaeophobia and Norwegian-Icelandic men of letters by saying that the anti-Jewish/antisemitic stories transmitted from England left little impact in Old Norse literature. The aforementioned presence of an Old Norse reference to William of Norwich would militate against this defence. But it is not impossible that English blood libel legends also influenced more canonical works of Old Norse literature. The *Prose Edda* is a mythological compendium authored by the Icelander Snorri Sturluson c. 1220, probably while he was a guest at the Norwegian court. There we find the following myth about the being called Kvasir, who emerged from a bowl containing the spit of all the gods, and who possesses omniscience:

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<sup>58</sup> "Passio Olavi," in *A History of Norway and The Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Óláfr*, ed. Carl Phelpstead, trans. Devra Kunin (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2001), 36–37, 47–48, 51–52, 55–57, 57–58, 60, 73–74.

<sup>59</sup> "Passio Olavi," 36–37, 55–57.

Hann fór viða um heim at kenna mōnnum frœði, ok þá er hann kom at heimboði til dverga nokkvorra, Fjalars<sup>60</sup> ok Galars, þá kólluðu þeir hann með sér á eimmaði ok drápu hann, létu renna blóð hans í tvau ker ok einn ketil, ok heitir sá Óðreyrir, en kerin heita Són ok Boðn. Þeir blendu hunangi við blóðit ok varð þar af mjóðr sá er hverr er af drekkir verðr skáld eða frœðamaðr. Dvergarnir sogðu Ásum at Kvasir hefði kafnat í mannviti fyrir því at engi var þar svá fróðr at spyra kynni hann fróðleiks ... Af þessu kóllum vér skáldskap Kvasis blóð eða dverga drekku eða fylli eða nakkvars konar lög Óðreris eða Boðnar eða Sónar<sup>61</sup>

He travelled widely around the world teaching people knowledge, and when he came to stay with some dwarves, Fjalarr and Galarr, they invited him to have a one-on-one conversation with them and [then] killed him, letting his blood run into two vats and one cauldron, and this [cauldron] is called Óðreyrir, while the vessels are called Són and Boðn. They mixed honey with the blood and from this comes the mead whereof anyone who drinks becomes a poet or a scholar. The dwarves told the Æsir that Kvasir had choked on wisdom because there was no one clever enough around who could ask [questions] of his knowledge ... From this we call poetry "the blood of Kvasir" or "the drink of dwarves" or "the share" or some kind of "liquid of Óðrerir or Boðn or Són."

It must be said at once that Snorri had pre-existing material with which to work.<sup>62</sup> The use of the kenning *Kvasis dreyri* (Kvasir's gore), meaning "poetry,"

**60** In what follows, I suggest the possibility that Snorri's tale has more in common with the blood libel legend than it does with a putative body of pre-Christian myth. Pursuant to this, we might note that in the *Gesta Danorum* (c. 1208), Fjalarr appears as the prefect of Scania: Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, vol. 1, ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. Peter Fisher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), 218. In Eddic poetry, he appears either as a giant or as a dwarf. Explanations of this confusing situation have relied on the theory that there were multiple characters in Old Norse myth called "Fjalarr" – perhaps as many as four: Peter H. Salus and Paul Beekman Taylor, "Eikinskjaldi, Fjalarr, and Eggþér: Notes on Dwarves and Giants in the *Völuspá*," *Neophilologus* 53, no. 1 (1969): 77–78; John McKinnell, *Meeting the Other in Norse Myth and Legend* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 166–68. When we consider that the name "Galarr" is not found outside the *Prose Edda*, the possibility ought to be considered that Snorri knew little of Fjalarr other than his name, and invented Galarr so as to make a pair of Tweedledum/Tweedledee-like villains for a myth that in its details owed more to Snorri's own age than the distant pagan past.

**61** Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál 1*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), 3–4. Quotation marks are used because technically Óðinn is speaking here, not the narrator.

**62** Gabriel Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), 39–40. The name Kvasir seems to have etymological connections with the idea of being crushed, particularly in the sense of crushing ingredients to prepare a drink: Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 336. It is uncertain whether this etymology would have been clear to Snorri, though we might note in passing that it is not mutually exclusive with the imagery of the blood libel. William of Norwich was supposedly crushed using a bizarre device which used knotted ropes to concentrate pressure: Thomas of Monmouth, *Life and Miracles*, 20–21.

is attested in the skaldic poem *Vellekla*, allegedly composed by Einarr skálaglamm Helgason in the 900s, though the term Snorri offers, *Kvasis blóð*, is otherwise unknown.<sup>63</sup> Analogues have been offered with the Hindu myths of Mada and Soma (the god)/soma (the drink), with some comparative mythologists suspecting a shared Indo-European inheritance.<sup>64</sup> I note, though, that while Hindu analogues can be found for the magical drink and the being born of a peace accord between the gods, I see no Hindu analogue for the manner of Kvasir's murder, and the use of his blood for making the aforementioned magical drink.

There is an analogue, however, with the blood libel.<sup>65</sup> Jews in medieval England were crown property,<sup>66</sup> compelled to provide services which demanded specialist knowledge, finance being the classic example, and sometimes being thought of as possessing particular occult knowledge in matters magical or medicinal.<sup>67</sup> Dwarves in Old Norse literature occupy an analogous role: genealogically distinct from gods and humans, whom they are often compelled to serve as master smiths or magicians.<sup>68</sup> Like a typical blood libel victim, Kvasir is invited into the home of his murderers under false pretences. His blood is then used for occult purposes (we will return to this detail shortly). Kvasir is, like William, good-natured and helpful by inclination; he asks no reward for sharing his

**63** Einnarr skálaglamm Helgason, "Vellekla I," ed. Edith Marold, in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035. Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1*, ed. Diana Whaley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 283.

**64** Georges Dumézil, *The Gods of the Ancient Northmen*, trans. John Lindow and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 21–25; Georges Dumézil, *Loki* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1948), 102–05. Cf. Jarich G. Oosten, *The War of the Gods: The Social Code in Indo-European Mythology* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 61–62. In a volume on the present topic, the troubling political implications of Dumézil's enthusiasm for a coherent "Indo-European" ideology should be remembered: Stefan Arvidsson, "Aryan Mythology as Science and Ideology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, no. 2 (1999): esp. 347 n21, 349; Bruce Lincoln, "Rewriting the German War God: Georges Dumézil, Politics and Scholarship in the Late 1930s," *History of Religions* 37, no. 3 (1998): 187–208. For a similar reminder regarding De Vries, cited earlier, see Willem Hofstee, "The Essence of Concrete Individuality. Gerardus van der Leeuw, Jan de Vries, and National Socialism," in *The Study of Religion Under the Impact of Fascism*, ed. Horst Junginger (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 543–52.

**65** I am grateful to Amber J. Rose for initially pointing out to me the resemblance between Kvasir and the blood libel in general.

**66** Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 2011; Krummel, *Crafting Jewishness*, 2011, 28–36; Cole, "Snorri and the Jews," 250.

**67** Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 3–5; Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, esp. 57–60, 90–92.

**68** These are just some of the attributes of *dvergar*. Exhaustive survey is provided by Werner Schäfke, "Was ist eigentlich ein Zwerg? Eine prototypensemantische Figurenanalyse der dvergar in der Sagaliteratur," *Mediaevistik* 23 (2010): 197–299.

knowledge.<sup>69</sup> Both Kvasir and the prototypical blood libel victim have a special aura even before their murder. Kvasir is born of a strange ritual performed by the gods, and William is apparently predestined to be killed centuries before his birth (see figure 3.1).<sup>70</sup>

If Snorri's version of the Kvasir myth was coloured by the blood libel trope, Snorri need not have had one particular instance in mind. By the time he composed the *Prose Edda*, there had been at least four accusations in England: William of Norwich, Harold of Gloucester (d. 1168), Robert of Bury, and a case in Winchester (1192, to which we will shortly return). France had seen the case of Richard of Pontoise (1163, on which more to follow), and accusations in Blois (1171), and Bray-sur-Seine/Brie-Comte-Robert (1192). A case of alleged murder of a Christian by Jews from Würzburg in 1147 was thought to have a ritual dimension, and in 1187 the Jews of Mainz were called on to swear to the Bishop that there was no ritual whereby they murdered a Christian during Easter.<sup>71</sup> There is also the possibility that further stories circulated in the early thirteenth century, failed to take root as local cults, and so have left no written trace. It would be speculative, reductive, and not reflective of Snorri's usual eclecticism to suppose that Kvasir is a calque exclusively on William of Norwich; Snorri need only have known the general tradition of Jewish ritual murder accusations. As seen, there are resemblances between Kvasir and William, but there are also details which echo with blood libel accusations that postdate Snorri – especially the use of the victim's blood for apparently magical purposes.

Thomas of Monmouth's *vita* does not suggest that the Jews were particularly interested in collecting William's blood, much less for any occult purpose (on the contrary, they are so disturbed by the “sanguinis defluebant riui” [stream of blood flowing] that they use boiling water to seal William's wounds).<sup>72</sup> A rood screen from Holy Trinity Church in Loddon, Norfolk, of c. 1514 does depict a Jew attentively collecting William's blood.<sup>73</sup> Julian Luxford expresses doubt that William folklore ever included the deliberate collection of the saint's blood, arguing convincingly that the screen was informed by a woodcut of another

<sup>69</sup> Thomas of Monmouth, *Life and Miracles*, 13–14.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas of Monmouth, *Life and Miracles*, 15.

<sup>71</sup> Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 175–84.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas of Monmouth, *Life and Miracles*, 22.

<sup>73</sup> The dating is from Carlee A. Bradbury, “A Norfolk Saint for a Norfolk Man: William of Norwich and Sir James Hobart at Holy Trinity Church in Loddon,” *Norfolk Archaeology* 46, no. 4 (2013): 456 (illustration of the screen and the William panel on p. 457). Finessed by Luxford, “Iconography.”

er child martyr, Simon of Trent (d. 1475), from Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum*.<sup>74</sup> That said, M. R. James's speculation that lay adherents to the William cult might have had grisly ideas about the use of blood in an imaginary ritual, not mentioned by Thomas, seems valid.<sup>75</sup> There is perhaps a hint that Robert of Bury was thought to have been ritually bled: "Was it nat routhe to se þi veynes bleede?" asked Lydgate, indicating a particular interest in the image of a still-conscious Robert watching the blood leave his body.

Indeed, Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß note several cases of murder by Jews, prior to the likely composition of the *Prose Edda*, where the victims were allegedly consumed by their killers.<sup>76</sup> William the Breton's (d. 1225) continuation of Rigord's *Gesta Philippi Augusti* records how King Philip II of France was disturbed as a child: "... Philippus magnanimus audierat a coetaneis et consodalibus suis, dum sepius cum eis in palatio luderet, quod Judei singulis annis unum christianum immolabant, et ejus corde se communicabant"<sup>77</sup> (Philip the Bold heard from his fellows and those of the same age as him, while playing in the palace, how every year a Christian was sacrificed by the Jews, and how their heart was taken as communion between them [alt. shared out amongst them]).<sup>78</sup> This appears to be a reference to the case of Richard of Pontoise (d. 1163), whom William (the Breton) mentions immediately afterwards in his text.<sup>79</sup> Richard of Devizes (fl. 1180s–90s) tells a story in his chronicle of two French boys who travel to work for a Jew in Winchester. When one of the boys suddenly disappears, his companion makes the accusation: "Iste Judæus diabolus est, iste cor meum de ventre meo rapuit, iste unicum sodalem meum jugulavit,<sup>80</sup> præsumo etiam quod manducavit"<sup>81</sup> (That Jew is a devil, who has torn the

<sup>74</sup> Luxford, "Iconography," esp. 244.

<sup>75</sup> Montague Rhodes James, "The Cult and Iconography of St. William," *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ed. Augustus Jessopp and Montague Rhodes James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), lxxxvi.

<sup>76</sup> Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, "A Rational Model for Blood Libel: The Aftonbladet Affair," in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism*: ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, 265–84, esp. 266–69. See also Sapir Abulafia, *Christian Jewish Relations*, 2011, 177–80.

<sup>77</sup> William the Breton and Rigord, *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton: Historiens de Philippe-Auguste*, vol. 1, ed. François Delaborde (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1882), 180.

<sup>78</sup> On *communicare* in medieval Latin, see J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 222.

<sup>79</sup> There are some doubts about the precise date: Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 284–85.

<sup>80</sup> Particularly in the sense of "cutting the throat": Niermeyer, *Lexicon*, 566.

<sup>81</sup> Richard of Devizes, *Chronicon Ricardi Divisiensis: De Rebus Gestis Ricardi Primi Regis Angliae*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London: English Historical Society, 1883), 64. Richard is not completely convinced: "etsi factum forte defuerit" (perhaps the act never took place), 59.



**Figure 3.1:** The dwarves collect Kvasir's blood to make mead. No medieval images of the myth survive. From Franz Stassen's illustrations to *Die Edda: Germanische Götter- und Heldenlegenden* by Hans von Wolzogen (1920). The resemblance between the dark-haired dwarf and classic antisemitic imagery may not be accidental. Stassen was later a member of the NSDAP and favoured by Adolf Hitler. This image also bears a striking resemblance to the depiction of Jews collecting William of Norwich's blood, found on the rood screen at Loddon Church. Public domain.

heart from my trunk, who has killed my only friend, [and] I presume has also eaten him).

When these late twelfth-century cases are considered alongside incidents from the thirteenth century, it becomes reasonable to suspect that the written cases of Jews eating the flesh or drinking the blood of their supposed victims – reminiscent of the way that the dwarves make mead of Kvasir's blood – are just the tip of an iceberg of tradition that would have been available to a European Christian intellectual in the 1220s.

We know little of the grisly details surrounding Harold of Gloucester or Robert of Bury, for example, and we have seen that in the latter case there is a hint that the draining of blood might have been an important aspect. A recurrent detail in later ballads of the story of Hugh of Lincoln (d. 1255) is Hugh's blood being collected by a Jewish nurse in either a cup, variously of gold or silver, a pan, or a washbasin.<sup>82</sup> Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora* (c. 1250s) claims that after Hugh's crucifixion: "cum exprasset puer, deposuerunt corpus de cruce, et nescitur quare ratione eviscerarunt corpusculum; dicitur autem, quod ad magicas artes exercendas"<sup>83</sup> ([W]hen the boy died, they [the Jews] took his body down from the cross, and for reasons unknown they disembowelled the little body; it was said, though, that it was for the practice of the magical arts). Later, according to Paris, the Jew Copin implicates the whole Jewish community in the murder, repeating the alleged occult usage of body parts: "Inutile enim reputabatur corpus insontis augurio; ad hoc enim eviscerabatur" (It was thought that the body of an innocent was useless for divination; that's why he had been disembowelled [in the first place]).<sup>84</sup> If the thought can be tolerated that antisemitic ritual murder accusations already contained the idea of a special use for gentile blood by the 1220s, then it would seem we have found a contemporary analogue for the Kvasir myth that Indo-European comparative mythology cannot provide.

However, this is not the venue to decide whether Snorri was inspired by the vivid imagery of the blood libel. Instead, I raise this case to show that whatever has prevented Antisemitism Studies from emerging as a subdiscipline of Old Norse literature, it is *not* the ecology of the corpus itself. The flow of anti-Jewish narratives from England to Norway-Iceland is a historical fact, as shown by AM 657 a-b 4to. The Kvasir case is an example of the sort of conversations that an awareness of the connections between medieval English antisemitism/anti-Judaism and Old Norse literature might facilitate. Whether it is accepted as a productive reading of the *Prose Edda* or not, our question is why conversations of this type have largely not taken place.

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<sup>82</sup> Brian Bebbington, "Little Sir Hugh: An Analysis," in *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 82.

<sup>83</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. 5, ed. Henry Richards Luard (London: Longman & Co., 1880), 517.

<sup>84</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. 5, 518.

## The decisive factors: escapism and identity

On first considering the question of why Antisemitism Studies have been so much more prominent in Middle English than they have been in Old Norse, I suspected that the answer would be a simple issue of critical mass. There are a great deal more researchers with stable employment working on Middle English than there are on Old Norse. Therefore, perhaps the research culture in the larger discipline has benefited from a greater number of worker-hours, allowing it to cover a greater variety of questions than its smaller, Nordic cousin. However, on further reflection this factor – while probably not irrelevant – seemed to me unlikely to be the prime cause. Depictions of Jews and Judaism have not been a favoured research avenue in Old Norse circles, but those neglected depictions are neither few in number nor located in terribly hard to find texts (I have not dealt with any unpublished material, for example). One might protest that they are normally *not* found in the “original” texts of the Old Norse canon, but rather the “translated” texts. However, we have seen that there is not much “original” to *The Prioress’s Tale*, and yet this has been no barrier to the creation of a sizeable body of scholarship. Indeed, even if the lack of research on antisemitic/anti-Jewish moments in Old Norse literature could be explained as an accidental consequence of the preference for genres such as the *Íslendingasögur* (which have no Jewish characters), we would still be looking at a consequence of ideology, not of cold, hard numbers: deciding what we want to read – what phenomena we will be alive to – is always an ideological process.<sup>85</sup>

A rigorous study of Old Norse philologists’ published diaries, correspondence, forewords to monographs, and the like might yield falsifiable conclusions about *why* people are attracted to Old Norse. From there, we could present some hypotheses about how studies of Jews and Judaism have been antithetical to the source of these attractions. However, this would be a project in its own right, so regrettably in what follows I will depend on only a few printed studies, supplemented by supposition and anecdote, pitiful sources though these latter two may be. The question remains the same regardless of method: what ideological concerns have meant that Antisemitism Studies has not arisen in Old Norse literature, in the way that it has in other bodies of literature?

Firstly, there is the hard-to-define atmosphere or flavour of the Old Norse canon. Here, I have considered Old Norse alongside Middle English – a not unknown endeavour, and one that makes sense given that the two literatures were

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<sup>85</sup> E.g. Douglas W. Cooper, “Ideology and the Canon: British and American Literature Study in China,” *American Studies International* 32, no. 2 (1993): 70–81.

contemporaneous.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, it is striking that the most common comparandum with Old Norse tends to be Old English. There are good reasons for this – the languages bear a superficial similarity to each other, and Old Norse often has an antiquarian bent which means that it provides analogues with literatures of earlier times.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, it remains true to say that, whether for good or ill, a body of literature with its apex in the 1200s is often considered a sibling to a body of literature with its apex in the 900s. The result is not that Old English gets brought forwards in time, but that Old Norse gets sent back. As a consequence, the mood which a novice will expect to find in Old Norse tends to be something like the “Germanic mists” criticized by José Ortega y Gasset:<sup>88</sup> the mysterious, heroic past, before the bondage (or order) of the High Middle Ages. The truth, of which it is sometimes hard to convince first-year undergraduates, is that Old Norse is largely a literature from the 1200s–1300s.

Though everyone who reads Old Norse in a more serious way quickly realizes this truth, I wonder if the pedagogic and research culture surrounding Old Norse has historically facilitated a degree of escapism, which I do not see reflected to the same extent in Middle English. I expect that everyone involved in Old Norse Studies knows somebody who at some point (with varying degrees of earnestness) adopted an Icelandic patronymic version of their name, or even claimed to believe in their heart of hearts in the divinity of the pre-Christian Scandinavian gods.<sup>89</sup> It is well known that the Viking Society for Northern Research, today a leading organ of rigorous Old Norse scholarship, originated as the “the Social and Literary Branch of the Orkney and Shetland Society of London, or the Viking Club.” During its early days, those attending Viking Club meetings could expect to hear piano recitals, songs, poetry, and even comedy routines, all

<sup>86</sup> Christopher Sanders, “*Bevers saga* in the Context of Old Norse Historical Prose,” in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*, ed. Ivana Djordjević and Jennifer Fellows (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), 51–66, esp. 52; Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, “The Imperial Implications of Medieval Translations: Old Norse and Middle English Versions of Marie De France’s *Lais*,” *Studies in Philology* 105, no. 2 (2008): 144–64; Hamilton M. Smyser, “The Middle English and Old Norse Story of Olive,” *PMLA* 56, no. 1 (1941): 69–84.

<sup>87</sup> For example the Herebeald/Hæpcyn story in *Beowulf* and Baldr/Höðr in the *Prose Edda: Beowulf*, 91–93. On this and other Old Norse readings in *Beowulf*, see Frederick Klaeber’s introduction in *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. Frederick Klaeber (Boston: Heath, 1950), xiv–xliii.

<sup>88</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, “Mediterranean Culture,” *Meditations on Quixote*, trans. Evelyn Ragg and Diego Marín (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 74–78.

<sup>89</sup> Stefanie von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival: Transformations of Germanic Neopaganism* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 251–97.

devoted to Viking themes.<sup>90</sup> Members were provided with a glossary of some seventy terms, part Shetlandic dialect, part “cod Norse,” for describing the society’s business, e.g. the “council chair” was to be referred to as the “Law-thing-seat,” an annual general meeting was to be a “Great Al-thing,” the treasury was the “Skatt-kist.”<sup>91</sup> Naturally, such exuberance is now far behind us, but I wonder if in some small way, philologists are still drawn to Old Norse because of an enduring idea that it might lead us into a world very different from our own. As Carol Clover points out, we cannot help but notice how strange the *Íslendingasögur* seem compared to other forms of literature, and accordingly much scholarship has obsessed over how these exotic literary artefacts came to be.<sup>92</sup> Antisemitic/anti-Jewish episodes, which are (1) party to a common European tradition and (2) found exclusively in Old Norse genres outside the *Íslendingasögur*, have no place in such research.

In the postscript to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s *Medieval Identity Machines*, he explains lucidly how the political troubles of the world in the early 2000s, and his personal experiences on 11 September 2001, might well inform the reading of his book.<sup>93</sup> The book made waves in Middle English and Medieval Studies more generally (at the time of writing, it has 297 citations according to Google Scholar). I think it is impossible to imagine a book coming from Old Norse Studies, making comparable waves in its own field, and featuring such an explicit disclaimer of how the author’s identity and experiences might shape its composition and its reception.<sup>94</sup> Put crudely, are some drawn to Middle English because they want to find themselves, while some are drawn to Old Norse because they want to lose themselves? (It must be stressed that the latter impulse is also a form of

<sup>90</sup> John A. B. Townsend, *The Viking Society, 1892–1967* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1967 [off-print]), 12–13.

<sup>91</sup> Townsend, *The Viking Society*, 1–4.

<sup>92</sup> Carol J. Clover, “Icelandic Family Sagas (*Íslendingasögur*)”, in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 239–41.

<sup>93</sup> Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 222–23.

<sup>94</sup> At the time of writing, the closest frequently-cited work I can think of is the chapter towards the end of Mikhail I. Steblin-Kamenskij’s *The Saga Mind* where the author admits to being inspired by the apparition of a ghost named Þorleifr in his room at the Saga Hotel in Reykjavík, but even this is a different phenomenon. Its political concerns are more roaming than Cohen’s (a glancing reference to the siege of Leningrad, a possibly environmentalist comment on the laying of geothermal pipes, and two paragraphs on the unhappiness of modern urban life) and it is harder to connect them to the rest of the work: Mikhail I. Steblin-Kamenskij, *The Saga Mind*, trans. Kenneth H. Ober (Odense: Odense University Press, 1973), 141–52.

self-discovery – it is just less self-aware.)<sup>95</sup> The acceptability amongst Middle English scholars of using their object of study as a window into modern problems has made their field naturally amenable to Antisemitism Studies. In contrast, I wonder if we Old Norse scholars want to escape into the world of the sagas, and we do not want to find something as ugly as antisemitism waiting for us when we get there. Strangely, the same dynamic appears to be at work even when modern antisemites read Old Norse. Nazi-sympathizing philologists such as Jan de Vries and Andreas Heusler were sufficiently erudite that they must have noticed the antisemitic moments in Old Norse literature, but they never commented upon these episodes so as to vindicate their racial preoccupations. They did not write approvingly of medieval Scandinavian Jew-hatred. They ignored it. To far-right ideologues, Old Norse had greater value as an escape into the Germanic mists; something at odds with the presence of a distinctly High Medieval anti-Jewish tradition.

## Conclusion: love and hate

I hope I do not give the impression of being overly critical towards Old Norse scholars for not taking an interest in Antisemitism Studies. Ours is a field that has as its object of study a considerable body of literature, out of all proportion to the number of scholars securely employed to study it, and consequently there are many questions still to be resolved where there would be nothing to be gained by considering the Judaeophobic material. Today, the typical Old Norse scholar is obviously not an escapist or fantasist, even if we have inherited a scholarly tradition which was first constructed by people with ideological preoccupations that most of us would not share.

If there is one generalization that could be made about Old Norse scholars today, regardless of their research focus, it is that they all have a very obvious feeling of love for Old Norse literature: love that causes people to use their own time to publish even when they have not been lucky enough to obtain a full-time academic job; love that causes people to make tremendous sacrifices in pursuit of such jobs; love that inspires a great depth of feeling on points where a layperson would see little cause for ardour (all this could be said of Middle English scholars too, but that is not my point here). Perhaps this sense of

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<sup>95</sup> On how Old Norse Studies in the English-speaking world were ideologically conditioned, both consciously and unconsciously, see Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2000).

love is what the Old Norse philologist Peter Foote meant by his description of his research as “a constant grappling with a desired object.”<sup>96</sup> By calling for Old Norse to host a subdiscipline in Antisemitism/Anti-Judaism Studies, in the way that other literatures do, one would be asking a lover to recognize something in their beloved that they had previously refused to see: one of the most detestable psychological impulses in European history. Whether achieving this recognition is possible, and what the consequences would be if it were, I cannot say with certainty. But I think our love would survive it.

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<sup>96</sup> Peter Foote, “Bréf til Haralds,” *Kreddur: Select Studies in Early Icelandic Law and Literature*, ed. Alison Finlay (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 2004), 200. Comparable are Roberta Frank, “The Unbearable Lightness of Being a Philologist,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 96 (1997): 486 and Cole, “Philology and Desire,” 524–25. On the gendered implications of Foote’s statement, see Kristen Mills, “‘Philfog’: Celts, Theorists, and Other ‘Others’,” *Medieval Feminist Forum* 53, no. 1 (2017): 81–82. Mills’s article provides considerable insight into the relationship between philology, ideology, and desire more broadly.



Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsdóttir

## 4 Iceland

### A Study of Antisemitism in a Country without Jews

Translated by Jonathan Adams

**Abstract:** This article presents an analysis of the history of antisemitism in Iceland, a country that has never had a significant population of Jews or any Jews who practise Judaism. Due to their geographical location, Icelanders have always feared isolation and have readily embraced anything new from the outside world, including ideas and attitudes. Unfortunately, antisemitism was one of these new “ideas” that was adopted at the end of the nineteenth century in Iceland, where it made a good supplement to the traditional xenophobia that already existed. Antisemitism in Iceland during the twentieth century was part and parcel of the long process of building a national identity, both before and after the country’s independence in 1944. However, as the country was without Jews of its own, it transferred this newly discovered hatred to those it had already despised for years: Danish merchants and other foreigners. In many cases, it was claimed that Danish and German merchants who had no Jewish roots whatsoever were in fact of Jewish descent. The few real Jews who wound up in Iceland were not spared either. They were rejected and expelled, while a large group of Icelanders looked to Hitler’s Germany with interest. Very few individuals with a Jewish background chose to settle in the country after the Second World War and those who did live cut off from one another and without any possibility of practising their faith. Since 1967 antisemitism has more frequently been vented in terms of anti-Zionism and hatred towards the State of Israel. Icelanders have always been distant from the wars and reality of Europe, so people engaging in acts of antisemitism in Iceland have not thought about its consequences. But in the globalized twenty-first century, antisemitism in Iceland has grabbed the world’s attention. It stands out as an anomaly in a country that prides itself on its tolerance, its free spirit, and its unequivocal defence of human rights.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; Iceland; history; Jews; Icelandic society; xenophobia; human rights.

## Introduction

Antisemitism can travel faster than fashion and speak many languages. Icelandic is one of them. The saga of the Jews of Iceland is a very short one. Despite the generally brief nature of encounters between occasional Jewish visitors and the Icelanders, this saga also includes one the worst aspects of Jewish history, i.e. different forms of antisemitism, among them verbal and physical discrimination, violation, and atrocities against Jews. Iceland is an excellent example of the fact that antisemitism is a prejudice that can flourish without the presence of Judaism or, indeed, of a single Jew.

In 2004 the author of this article presented a paper, “Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004,” which related the whole story of Jewish-Icelandic encounters from the seventeenth century on.<sup>1</sup> Antisemitism was not the main topic of that article. This study addresses that shortcoming and is in a sense a continuation of the first one.

The presence of antisemitism in Iceland, a country where very few Jews have ever lived, is an interesting phenomenon. As an isolated island-nation, the Icelanders have often been eager to latch onto and adopt all manner of novelties, ideas, and innovations. However, not all ideas from abroad were suitable for a society of farmers and fishermen. In a country where Judaism was not practised until very recently and where no synagogue has ever been built, one would not expect to encounter antisemitism, especially if one believes that antisemitism is to be defined as “hatred towards Jews as a religious group.” However, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, antisemitic rhetoric as well as hard-core antisemitism has been far from alien to Iceland and certain groups of Icelanders. This is despite the fact that no Jews in Iceland have directly or indirectly been the cause of or involved in any incidents that could have provoked an antisemitic reaction or hate speech against Jews. This article seeks to explain why.

The term “antisemitism” has never been adopted directly into the Icelandic language, in part due to linguistic purism, the generally strict protectionist attitude against all foreign language influences on Icelandic. The Icelandic word for antisemitism, *gyðingahat*, first appeared in the Reykjavík journal *Iðunn* in 1885 in a slightly modified Icelandic translation of an article from the Danish period-

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<sup>1</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, no. 3–4 (2004): 131–56. Also published in Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004,” in *Behind the Humanitarian Mask: The Nordic Countries, Israel and the Jews*, ed. Manfred Gerstenfeld (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Institute for Global Jewish Affairs, 2008), 179–203.

ical *Tilskueren*. The article, entitled “Indtryk fra Russisk Polen” (Impressions from Russian Poland), is by the renowned Danish-Jewish writer Georg Brandes. He very correctly describes German Jew-hatred as being of the type “that has been decorated by the affected term ‘antisemitism,’ and that has of late also been introduced into Denmark by certain layers of Danish society with their habit of adopting German reactionism (*Reaktion*) and German brutality (*Raa-hed*).”<sup>2</sup>

Although the word antisemitism will be used throughout this article, the words *gyðingahatur* in Icelandic and *jødehad* in Danish are, of course, more precise words than the “scientific” term *Antisemitismus*, which was originally coined in 1879 by Wilhelm Marr, who was himself a Jew-hater, an antisemite to use his own creation. Antisemitism is in fact an ideal word to create an abstraction from a problem. Endless discussions about “where the border for” antisemitism lies, can provide a cover of legitimacy for people who wish to express their aggression, antipathy, and hatred towards one specific group of people.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the word *gyðingahatur* was mostly used to describe pogroms in Russia; it did not really become an Icelandic issue until the arrival of Jewish refugees in Iceland in the 1930s. Even then, the word was hardly used in connection with events in Iceland, e.g. it did not appear in the press when describing anti-Jewish sentiments among those Icelanders who did not want to help Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution.

Because of its geographical location, Iceland never attracted large numbers of new settlers or refugees after the initial settlement period in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. The first Jew appeared in 1625; he had converted to Christianity to be allowed to travel to Iceland.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent contact between Icelanders and Jews did not elicit antisemitic reactions prior to the late nineteenth century. More recently, and despite how few Jews settled in Iceland, the country has experienced religious antisemitism (anti-Judaism) and biological antisemitism, as well as political right- and left-wing antisemitism. Furthermore, Holocaust denial has also been expressed publicly in Iceland since the 1980s.

When Jewish refugees sought a safe haven in Iceland in the 1930s, most of them were rejected by the authorities and large segments of society. Among the few who made it to Iceland, many were expelled by the authorities. The attitude towards Jews was not only influenced by a new extreme ideology and what Icelanders were witnessing in other European countries, nor was it a mere copy of

<sup>2</sup> Georg Brandes, “Frá Póllandi,” *Iðunn* 3, no. 2–6 (1885): 197; Georg Brandes, “Indtryk fra russisk Polen,” *Tilskueren* 2 (1885): 326. In the Icelandic version, Brandes’s criticism of “certain layers of Danish society” was not included.

<sup>3</sup> Vilhjálmsson, “Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004,” 133.

the strict Danish immigration policy that Iceland followed in most details. The Icelanders had, in addition to “good old-fashioned xenophobia,” also heard of religious and biological antisemitism, both of which were expressed in the press by Icelandic antisemites upon the arrival of the Jewish refugees. Antisemitism in its ugliest forms had made the journey to Iceland faster than the refugees had. The hatred was already present and culturally and politically well-rooted.<sup>4</sup>

## Antisemitism within the religious realm

Antisemitism was not a particularly serious problem within the Church during the Catholic era (c. 1000–1550), nor was it during the following centuries when Lutheranism was the religion of the majority and, since the late sixteenth century, the state religion. Nor does Iceland’s important literary heritage from the Middle Ages – sagas and other texts – contain antisemitic episodes. Antisemitism proper is first found in Icelandic hymns from the seventeenth century which were heavily influenced by sixteenth-century German hymns.

From the Middle Ages until the mid-seventeenth century, there were no religious minorities in Iceland whom the majority could make the target of their hatred or persecute. The few sons from among the farming class who studied in Paris or England during the Middle Ages did not bring Jew-hatred back to Iceland with them. Nor did the three or four Icelanders who studied in the multicultural atmosphere of Enlightenment Leiden in the Netherlands, where two of them actually studied alongside Jews. If antisemitism found its way to Iceland before the nineteenth century, it was via religious influence from mainland Europe which reached Iceland rather haphazardly. Of course, antisemitism had very poor conditions for taking root, in a country where the inhabitants were largely unacquainted with Jews.

Certainly, Icelanders would have heard about Jews as part of the introduction of Christianity, which was officially adopted by law in 1000. The process of Christianization was far more peaceful than in most other places in Europe. We cannot rule out the possibility that there were some Christian individuals living in Iceland before 1000, but most of the earliest inhabitants believed in Thor, Odin, and the other Norse gods; whether they knew anything about Jews is an open question.

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<sup>4</sup> For a good overview, see Snorri Bergsson, *Erlendur Landshornalýður, Flóttamenn og framandi útlendingar á Íslandi, 1853–1940* (Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafélagið), 15–135.

The chieftain and author Snorri Sturluson (1171–1241) did not mention Jews (*gyðingar* or *júðar*) as such in his works, but he did mention Jews generally as “men who had spoken the Hebrew language.” In spite of recent interesting research into his knowledge about Jews, whom he probably never encountered in the flesh, his comments can only be understood as a rather uneven awareness of the prevalent – but ignorant and at times pejorative – view of Jews that circulated at the time.<sup>5</sup> From extant Icelandic manuscripts, we can see that none of the Icelanders who are named as pilgrims to Jerusalem or travellers in Europe said anything negative about Jews. A certain *Gyðinga saga* (History of the Jews) was completed in the late Middle Ages as a conflation of translations from the First Book of the Maccabees and fragments by Flavius Josephus.<sup>6</sup>

In the hymns composed during the seventeenth century, there is, however, one exception. Under the heavy influence of the period’s increasingly antisemitic theology and religious poetry in Europe, the pastor and poet Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–64) composed the *Passíusálmar* (Hymns of the Passion).<sup>7</sup> Probably because of the circles and milieux he moved in, Pétursson was more influenced by European trends than his compatriots were. Pétursson’s contemporary, the pastor Jón “the Martyr” Þorsteinsson (1570–1627), published two works of hymns in 1664: *Genesis Psalmar* (Genesis Hymns) and *Psalltare Pess Konunglega Spamus Dauids* (Psalter of the Royal Prophet David).<sup>8</sup> Þorsteinsson’s hymns were based on the Old Testament and, although they are not poetic gems in the same class as Pétursson’s *Passíusálmar*, they do not contain a single negative word about Jews.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Cole, “Snorri and the Jews,” in *Old Norse Mythology – Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Pernille Hermann, Stephen A. Mitchell, Jens Peter Schiødt, and Amber Rose (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 243–68; Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Óð Sturluson lika í gyðingahatri?” *Fornleifur* [blog], 20 November 2013, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/1329905/>>.

<sup>6</sup> See the entry on “Gyðinga Saga” in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder*, vol. 5, cols 603–04.

<sup>7</sup> Hallgrímur Pétursson, *Passíusálmar* (Á Hólum í Hjaltadal, 1666). In English: Hallgrímur Pétursson, *Hymns of the Passion*, trans. Arthur Charles Gook (Reykjavík: Hallgríms Church, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Jón Þorsteinsson, *Genesis Psalmar* (Á Hólum í Hjaltadal, 1652); Jón Þorsteinsson and others, *Psalltare Pess Konunglega Spamus Dauids* (Á Hólum í Hjaltadal, 1662).

<sup>9</sup> I myself am a descendant of Jón Þorsteinsson. The pastor is known as “the Martyr” because he was killed on Vestmannaeyjar in 1627 by Algerian pirates, among whom numbered several European pirates who had converted to Islam in Barbary. Another version of events told by one of the survivors is that Þorsteinsson was in fact murdered by an Icelandic enemy under the cover of the pirates’ attack.

After I drew attention to the antisemitism found in the Icelandic hymn tradition in an article in 2005,<sup>10</sup> the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles requested an English translation of the hymns. The collection, comprising fifty hymns of up to twenty verses each in various metres, had initially been translated into English by Arthur Charles Gook, an English homeopath who lived in Iceland for a number of years.<sup>11</sup> Because of his philosemitic upbringing and attitude, the translator clearly tried to minimize the worst examples of malevolence in the many verses describing the Jews' deceit and wickedness. Yet despite his efforts, Jewish organizations of today basing their verdict on his translation consider this seventeenth-century work to be unambiguously antisemitic. The Simon Wiesenthal Center asked the general director of the Icelandic Broadcasting Service to reflect on the contents of the hymns and stop broadcasting them on the radio. Every year since 1943, different people – experts and laypersons, including the president of Iceland – have been asked to read one verse of the hymns aloud on the radio every evening during the fifty days leading up to Easter.<sup>12</sup>

In Iceland, this request from a world-famous Jewish organization sparked great outrage and what might best be described as a feeling of having been insulted. Condemnation and expressions of hate connected to the conflict in the Middle East could be read on social media for a long time afterwards. The general director of radio broadcasting refused to agree to the request. In the ensuing public debate certain Icelanders claimed that Jews were not themselves well-placed to determine what was and what was not antisemitism. Others were of the opinion that when Jews object to antisemitic literature, it is simply a case of rude – and possibly even Israeli – meddling in Iceland's internal affairs.

The *Passíusálmar* are normally described as some of the most magnificent examples of Icelandic poetry and some people held the view that if reading them were to be banned due to their seventeenth-century antisemitism, then you might just as well ban the New Testament. The Jews' role in the hymns, it was argued, was a kind of *pars pro toto* – they symbolize the sins of all humanity – and it was further claimed that everything in the hymns could be found in the New Testament. That claim is, however, not correct. The wording and terms of abuse that Pétursson uses to refer to Jews cannot be found anywhere in the

<sup>10</sup> Vilhjálmsson, "Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004," 132–34.

<sup>11</sup> Pétursson, *Hymns of the Passion*.

<sup>12</sup> The letter from Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, to the general director of the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, Páll Magnússon, of 23 February 2012, has been published here: < [https://fornleifur.blog.is/users/5c/fornleifur/files/rabbi\\_cooper\\_to\\_r\\_v\\_15703.pdf](https://fornleifur.blog.is/users/5c/fornleifur/files/rabbi_cooper_to_r_v_15703.pdf) >.

New Testament. Just one professor in theology at the *Háskóli Íslands* (University of Iceland) appealed for introspection, for readers to scrutinize their own heritage (“gaumgæfa eigin arfleifð”), although he did not go so far as to call for the hymns to be taken off the radio.<sup>13</sup> To this day, the hymns are still broadcast on the national radio.

The conflict over these hymns in 2012 clearly demonstrated that no Icelandic researcher on Pétursson’s poetry had ever considered whether the *Passíusálmar* were perhaps not a uniquely Icelandic phenomenon. In a blog article, I pointed out that at least as far as content is concerned, the hymns are in the tradition of the *Soliloquia de passione Jesu Christi* by the German poet Martin Moller (1547–1606), which, in contrast to Pétursson’s hymns, have never been broadcast on German radio – and with good reason, too. Furthermore, it would seem that experts on Pétursson’s writings had never considered how vehemently anti-Jewish the religious environment was at the cathedral school of the Vor Frue kirke (Church of Our Lady) in Copenhagen during the period that Pétursson was studying theology there. The fact that prior to his studies he worked as a smith for a Danish-Icelandic merchant in the free city of Glückstadt must have also had an impact on him. (The city is often confused with Glücksburg by Icelandic Pétursson experts.) Pétursson would have seen Jews of Portuguese origin every day in the city; they had been invited by King Christian IV in order to promote Danish trade and business. The Jews in Glückstadt were in competition with Pétursson’s employer.<sup>14</sup>

Since 2005, several members of the Alþingi, the Icelandic Parliament, together with government ministers have visited Grafarvogur Church in a Reykjavík suburb in order to read the *Passíusálmar*.<sup>15</sup> This new tradition has proved especially popular among politicians who have publicly declared themselves to be atheists, agnostics, or areligious because of their left-wing political beliefs. Exactly why these politicians have felt a sudden urge to participate in the reading of eighteenth-century hymns is unclear. Some think that the hymns are an important literary tradition, while one might suspect that others’ sudden spiritual awakening upon reading these hymns could be connected to escalations in the

<sup>13</sup> Professor Hjalti Hugason on the website *Hugrás*, which is published by the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Iceland in Reykjavík: <<http://hugras.is/2012/04/hallgrimur-og-gydingarnir/>>.

<sup>14</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Spurning á 400 ára fæðingarárfmæli Hallgríms Péturssonar,” *Fornleifur* [blog], 22 September 2014, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/1444764/>>.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, <<https://grafarvogurinn.is/read/2016-03-21/sjalfstaedisflokkurinn-laetur-sig-malefini-grafarvogsibua-varda>>; <<https://postdoc.blog.is/blog/postdoc/entry/1226595/>>; <[https://www.mbl.is/frettir/innlent/2016/03/23/sigmundur\\_david\\_las\\_passiusalmana/](https://www.mbl.is/frettir/innlent/2016/03/23/sigmundur_david_las_passiusalmana/)>.

conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The same atheist politicians who wish to read the hymns in church have been rather categorical in taking a position on the conflict – that is, a position against Israel.

An even more serious example of religious intolerance occurred when the Icelandic state church provided a forum in its yearbook for the former Icelandic prime minister, Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, who had been forced out of office in 2016 after revelations about his own and his closest family's involvement in the global Panama Papers scandal. Gunnlaugsson wrote the following in the church yearbook:

Antisemitism is a known phenomenon which people are generally careful not to make use of, and sometimes people go a little too far in condemning things as antisemitic, but people are careful about how they talk about that religion. Now, as far as Islam is concerned, criticizing Islam has been defined as a psychiatric disorder, called Islamophobia; people must quite simply be crazy if they talk about Islam in a critical manner.<sup>16</sup>

The former prime minister's comments came in connection with his opinion about the general superiority of Christianity in the world. Just a year after he stepped down as prime minister and subsequently left the anti-refugee *Framsóknarflokkur* (Progressive Party), Gunnlaugsson made an antisemitic statement. In an interview on the private radio station *Útvarp Saga*, the former prime minister, while announcing his return to politics, stated that George Soros was behind his fall from office. According to Gunnlaugsson, it was no secret that because of Soros's hedge fund, no Americans were named in the Panama Papers revelations.<sup>17</sup> Both statements are conspiratorial and as the first has nothing to do with the Icelandic state church, it is curious that it appeared in the institution's yearbook. Soros-phobia has been described as antisemitic by international Jewish organizations.<sup>18</sup> Hatred towards Soros is an extention of the Rothschild canard, much beloved in Nazi rhetoric, with one single Jewish family or individual being blamed for all the evils of the world. In their hate towards

**16** Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, “Ávarp Forsætisráðherra,” *Árbók kirkjunnar* (2015–2016): 19–20.

**17** Gunnlaugsson, interview with Arnþrúður Karlsdóttir and Pétur Gunnlaugsson on *Útvarp Saga*, 27 July 2016, <[http://utvarpsaga.is/thaettir/#!mg\\_lId=12023](http://utvarpsaga.is/thaettir/#!mg_lId=12023)>. Gunnlaugsson's opinion of antisemitism can be heard approximately forty-three minutes into the programme. The radio station *Saga* voted the former prime minister Man of the Year in 2016.

**18** Eric Cortolessa, “How George Soros Became The Target of Both Anti-Semites and Right-Wing Jews,” *The Times of Israel*, 3 November 2018. See also “Quantifying Hate: A Year of Anti-Semitism on Twitter,” Anti-Defamation League, 27 May 2018, <<https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/quantifying-hate-a-year-of-anti-semitism-on-twitter#george-soros>>.

other groups, such as Muslims, radical right-wingers and racists in the West, including Iceland, seek to forge an “alliance” with Israel. They say that they cannot be described as racists because many Jews have the same conspiratorial view of Soros as they do. It is a banality, but racism is of course not the preserve of just one people.

In today’s tense atmosphere, where accusations of racism and fascism are also flying around in Iceland, it is good to remember the words of the theologian and later bishop Sigurbjörn Einarsson (1911–2008), spoken in a speech in 1948 which he titled “Against Seduction and Lies.” He wrote:

There is indeed much to fear in our time. But there is one thing that I am most afraid of – and that’s fear. Fear has caused more mishaps (*óhöpp*) than deliberate hatred and evil. The German nation fell into Hitler’s embrace because it had been driven insane from an exaggerated fear (*ofboðshræðsla*) of Bolsheviks and Jews.<sup>19</sup>

The theologian had apparently become more insightful with age. You can apparently hold one opinion before you hold another. Some years previously, in 1931, he wrote in his junior college newsletter:

One of the most powerful nations in the world is the Jews. The Aryan nations have really turned them into the teaching fathers, given that the law that the Semites composed almost 3,000 years ago must be considered the foundation beneath all the legislation of the most powerful nations of the Aryan races. And he is a Jew, he who is most often mentioned as the holiest of all men to have been born, according to most Aryans. The world’s money is in the hands of Jews. The greatest profiteers among the white races are of Jewish decent and some nations have had to acknowledge this in recent times, e.g. the Germans. The Aryans are about to be suffocated under their own name (Aryans = lords). Even here in Iceland, the Jew has become too much for the Icelanders can handle. And the Icelanders never seem able to thank the people who originally caused this enough.<sup>20</sup>

An additional interesting fact is that Einarsson, who had expressed himself so antisemically, was the man who in 1943 arranged for the *Passíusálmar* to be read aloud every year on Icelandic state radio.

One can also note a symbolic congruence with Nazism in Christian youth work. Long after the Second World War, at several YMCA and YWCA camps, as well as among scouting troops at various places in Iceland, it was customary to pay tribute to the Icelandic flag with an outstretched arm. The YMCA ex-

<sup>19</sup> Sigurður A. Magnússon, “Fáein spor í sandi tímans: Eftirmæli um dr. Sigurbjörn Einarssónar,” *Herdubreið*, 30 June 2014, < <http://herdubreid.is/faein-spor-i-sandi-timans-eftirmaeli-um-dr-sigurbjorn-einarsson/> >.

<sup>20</sup> Sigurbjörn Einarsson, “Þjóðin, trúin,” *Skólablaðið*, 14 March 1931, 2.

plained this as a Roman greeting – although the fact is that no one knows whether Romans greeted one another in this manner. Christian Icelandic friends of the author have told him about their stays as children at a YMCA summer camp east of Reykjavík, not far from the episcopal see in Skálholt, where one of the counsellors spoke to the children about Hitler and his treatment of the Jews in positive terms.

In contrast to the other Nordic countries and many other places in the world, antisemitism among the country's Muslims is not a significant problem in Iceland. There are fewer than one thousand Muslims in Iceland, distributed between two religious communities, out of a total population of some 348,000 (2018).

It is now common for people to declare their friendship with Israel and Jews as a way to justify their hatred of Muslims. They assume that Muslims are the biggest antisemites today. The most crude expressions of hatred have been uttered by certain extremists in connection with Icelandic Muslims' plans to build a mosque in Reykjavík, as well as by members of certain political parties in the Icelandic parliament, including members of *Framsóknarflokkur*. The party has a long tradition of political xenophobia and was one of the two parties in the Alþingi that in the 1930s most vehemently opposed helping Jewish refugees who were trying to find asylum in Iceland. Politicians from the same party also took an active part in expelling stateless Jews from Iceland at the end of the 1930s.

In 2014, Salmann Tamimi, an Icelandic lay imam born in Palestine, allegedly shouted "damned Jew" (*helvítis gyðingur*) at a Christian Icelander. The Icelander was standing together with a small group of his fellow countrymen and was "cheering" for the Israeli women's national football team outside of Reykjavík's largest stadium before a football match between Israel and Iceland. However, it is a fact that the case was only alleged to have occurred by the person whom the imam was shouting at, who happens to be a person with a history of regularly expressing himself publicly in an extremely hateful manner towards Islam. Valdimar H. Jóhannesson is the spokesperson of the *Tjáningarfelsi* (Freedom of Speech) association, whose main goal in terms of "freedom of speech" is to paint all Muslims with the same brush, as well as to vilify Islam and all non-Christian forms of multiculturalism in Iceland. In 2016, the association sent an Icelandic translation (*Pjóðarplágan íslam*; Islam, the National Plague) of the book *Islam, den 11. landeplage* (Islam, the Eleventh Plague), by Norwegian writer Hege Storhaug, to all graduates from Icelandic universities.<sup>21</sup> The book contains

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<sup>21</sup> "Umdeild bók til þúsund háskólanema," *Morgunblaðið*, 14 September 2016, <[https://www.mbl.is/frettir/innlent/2016/09/14/umdeild\\_bok\\_til\\_thusund\\_haskolanema/](https://www.mbl.is/frettir/innlent/2016/09/14/umdeild_bok_til_thusund_haskolanema/)>.

conspiracy theories about Muslims which are very similar to those that the Nazis and others spread about Jews in the first half of the twentieth century. For his part, Salmann Tamimi publicly asserted that he had never shouted “helvítis gyðingur” at Jóhannesson.

## Antisemitism in Icelandic politics

An Icelandic Nazi party, the *Pjóðernishreyfing Íslendinga* (Icelandic Nationalist Movement), was founded in 1933. The party had already split in two by 1934. The strongest faction, which was called the *Flokkur Pjóðernissinna* (Nationalist Party) and had contacts with the mother party in Germany, called for the total annihilation of “world Jewry” and Communism in its party programme. However, domestic matters were always at the fore for the Icelandic Nazis.

The Icelandic Nazis attracted members from all social layers, but primarily from among people who were unable to imagine an improvement in their social conditions through membership in Social Democracy or other Socialist parties. *Flokkur Pjóðernissinna* also attracted people who were unhappy with the policies of the *Sjálfstæðisflokkur* (Independence Party) and *Framsóknarflokkur*. Furthermore, the party attracted petty criminals, which at times proved quite handy as the party was involved in several burglaries at the offices of other parties. However, the party never received more than 2.8 per cent support from the electorate, and for this reason never entered parliament.

Even though *Flokkur Pjóðernissinna*’s activities had abated somewhat by 1939, the party itself continued until Great Britain, thankfully, invaded Iceland on 10 May 1940 and began its peaceful occupation. Nonetheless, *Flokkur Pjóðernissinna* did not officially disband until 1945; during the British and American occupation the party and all pro-German activities were forbidden, and politicians from other parties who were clearly sympathetic to the German cause suddenly adopted a low profile. The British and Americans kept a close eye on the Icelandic Nazis and arrested Germans residing in Iceland, transporting them to internment camps, such as those on the Isle of Man.

Although the usual hateful clichés about Jews could be found in the *Flokkur Pjóðernissinna*’s various weekly and monthly magazines, they were actually more common in non-Nazi dailies. Long-standing conspiracy theories about the Rothschild family were popular, but there were only two individuals who the Icelandic Nazis directed their hatred towards in print. One of them was the pianist Ignaz Friedman (full name, Solomon Isaac Freudmann, 1882–1948), who visited

Iceland in 1935 and 1938.<sup>22</sup> The other was the politician Ólafur Thors (1892–1964), who served several times as prime minister between 1942 and 1963. With his dark curly hair, Ólafur Thors's appearance was interpreted by Icelandic Nazis as a sign of Jewish descent, even though his hair had been inherited from his purely Icelandic mother's side of the family. On certain occasions he was referred to by Nazis as the "honourable rabbi." Thors was the son of Thor Jensen, a successful Danish merchant. Jensen, who the Icelandic Nazis and others tried to make into a Jew, was originally from an orphanage in Copenhagen and immigrated at a young age to Iceland. Thor Jensen's much older half-brother, the architect Alfred Jensen Raavad (1883–1933), was a member of the *Dansk Antijødisk Liga* (Danish Anti-Jewish League) in Denmark.<sup>23</sup>

Talk of the Jensen-Thors family's Jewish background had absolutely no basis in reality, yet the family seemed to attract the attention of Nazis in all sorts of ways, both during and after the Second World War. One of Thor Jensen's grandchildren, Margrét Póra Hallgrímsson (b. 1930), married the founder of the American Nazi Party, George Lincoln Rockwell (1918–67).<sup>24</sup> The Icelandic Nazis found all manner of absurd reasons to make connections between merchant families in Iceland and Jews. When there were no Jews, they simply imagined their enemies into existence by branding Danes as Jews.

After the war, no legal action was taken against Icelandic Nazis, whether they had been members of *Flokkur Þjóðernissinna*, had gone to Nazi Germany and stayed there during the war, or had fought in German uniform in Europe. Icelanders volunteered for Nazi war duty and some spied for the Germans. Björn Sveinn Björnsson (1909–98), son of the first president of the republic, Sveinn Björnsson, volunteered for the Waffen SS in Denmark and was a war correspondent in the Balkans and Caucasus. From there he reported in radio broadcasts about, among other things, war crimes, which he described in a jovial manner as if nothing was more normal.<sup>25</sup> When the German occupiers took over the *Danmarks Radio* (Danish Broadcasting Corporation) in 1940, he was employed there. Later he worked with the SS Standarte Kurt Eggers, an SS unit which,

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<sup>22</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Þeir eru öfundsverðir sem afskektir eru," *Fornleifur* [blog], 11 October 2013, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/1319745/>>.

<sup>23</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Bróðir Thors," *Fornleifur* [blog], 30 May 2015, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/1768653/>>; Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Auðunnir 100 dollrarar," *Fornleifur* [blog], 31 May 2015, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/1770841/>>.

<sup>24</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Thorsaraviðbætur – giftist íslenskt njósnakvendi Thorsara?" *Fornleifur* [blog], 12 December 2017, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/2207945/>>.

<sup>25</sup> Listen, for example, to <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWPOkJx9SMo>>.

among other things, was responsible for propaganda and intelligence interception in Copenhagen.

As a member of this group, he was involved in the arrest and deportation of the Danish Jew, Jacob Thalmay, who was later murdered on a death march from Auschwitz to Melk.<sup>26</sup> A few days before liberation, Björnsson was a judge in an SS court where he sentenced a German deserter to death. Fortunately, the sentence was never carried out.<sup>27</sup> Björnsson, who tried to flee Denmark, was arrested and imprisoned by the Danish resistance. In 1946 he was due to stand trial, just like other Waffen SS men in Denmark, but due to political pressure from Iceland he was released from custody without charge. The contents of these communications from Iceland remain unknown. The folder in the Danish National Archives that should contain the legal decisions about his case is empty, but his activities in Denmark during the war are known from evidence given in the trials of other sentenced Waffen SS men. In 1949 he moved to South America in an act of self-imposed exile; there he could socialize with old friends from the Waffen SS until the 1960s, when he returned to Iceland.

Other leading members of *Flokkur Þjóðernissinna*, who had left the party during or after the war, often enjoyed successful professional careers thanks to assistance from their new parties. One, for example, would become the National Police Commissioner in Reykjavík, while another would be the Governor of the National Bank. Davíð Ólafsson (1916–95), who had gone to Germany in 1935 to study economics, had been a leading force in the Icelandic Nazi Party. He was appointed Governor of the National Bank in 1967, a position he held until 1986. For a time, he was a member of the *Sjálfstæðisflokkur* parliamentary group. After the war, Davíð Ólafsson disclosed that he had completed a degree in economics in Germany, but neither of the two universities where he claimed to have studied have any record of his completing a degree there. Ólafsson's official biography on the Icelandic parliament homepage makes no mention of his Nazi past.

Since the Second World War there have been small groups of neo-Nazis, generally disappearing relatively quickly just a few years after being established. None of these parties has had enough support among the electorate for them to play a role in the political arena. It is impossible to know precisely how many attempts have been made to establish neo-Nazi parties since the war. In 1960 Iceland once again saw the creation of a Nazi party, dubbed *Ríkisflokkurinn*

<sup>26</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, *Medaljens Bagside: Jødiske flygtningeskæbner i Danmark 1933–1945* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Vandkunsten, 2005), 283.

<sup>27</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Sonur forsetans dæmdi man til dauða.” *Fornleifur* [blog], 25 October 2015, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blogs/fornleifur/entry/2109085/>>.

(The State Party); this was a short-lived enterprise which took material form in a photocopied party newsletter called *Mjölnir* (the name of the Norse god Thor's hammer). *Mjölnir*'s racist content included antisemitism, and in particular white supremacist praise for South Africa and apartheid. The party organized ceremonies on Hitler's birthday at the graves of German Second World War Luftwaffe pilots in a Reykjavík cemetery. Members of this group would carry a Nazi flag around the cemetery and salute the fallen German soldiers with Nazi salutes. In 1961 an Icelandic daily used the word *Nýnazisti* (neo-Nazi), probably for the first time ever in Iceland, when one Paul Andersen made a stopover in the country on his way from Luxemburg to meet the American neo-Nazi leader Rockwell, who had been stationed in Iceland in the mid-1950s. Andersen wanted to arrange a meeting with one of the leading figures of the *Ríkisflokkurinn*, Bernhard Haarde, a young Icelandic bank clerk of partly Norwegian descent.<sup>28</sup>

In Icelandic newspapers in the 1970s and 80s, one can read reports of sporadic meetings of Nazis which generally seem to have been attempts at winning their fifteen minutes of fame. In all these cases, they made sure to mention their fierce hatred of Jews and black people, as well as the dangers immigration posed for "the pure Icelandic race." In 1990 a group of local neo-Nazis violently attacked some Greenlandic fishermen who were visiting the town of Ísafjörður.<sup>29</sup> For a short period in 1996 a small group in Iceland published a free magazine called *Arísk Upprisa* (Aryan Uprising) which contained antisemitism and other forms of racism.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in 2001 there was a group in Iceland that called itself the *Félag íslenskra þjóðernissinna* (Union of Icelandic Nationalists).

## Antisemitism on the left

Antisemitism in Social Democrat and other left-wing circles was not an entirely unknown phenomenon in the Nordic countries during the twentieth century. This form of antisemitism was not, for example, unknown in Denmark. The Social Democrat Hans Hedtoft, who became the prime minister of Denmark, was

<sup>28</sup> "Nýnazisti á yfirreið," *Tíminn* [daily], 13 February 1962, <[http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pagId=1049098](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pagId=1049098)>. Bernhard Haarde had just arrived in Oslo for treatment for cancer together with his father who was ill with the same type of cancer. The Nazi leader Haarde died in an Oslo hospital on 2 March 1961 followed by his father in May the same year.

<sup>29</sup> "Erum nýnasistar og hötum Grænlendinga," *DV* [daily], 5 June 1990, 4, <[http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pagId=2572001](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pagId=2572001)>.

<sup>30</sup> "Ég vil vekja upp hatur hjá þér," *Alþýðublaðið* [daily], 3 December 1996, 8, <[http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pagId=3348480](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pagId=3348480)>.

among those politicians in 1938 who demanded “uniformity in the attitude of the Nordic countries” towards Jews. The Social Democrats did not designate Jews as refugees worthy of assistance, as opposed to Social Democrat refugees from Nazi Germany. In 1940, just prior to the German occupation of Denmark, Hedtoft was one of the politicians who most insistently called for a change in the law that would have effectively made it punishable to hide Jewish refugees. As it was, Jews in Denmark did not have refugee status unless they could document that they were fleeing for political reasons and that they had belonged to a party banned by the Nazis. In 1942, an Icelandic woman living in Copenhagen was given a five-year suspended prison sentence for hiding a Jewish man who was the father to her son. The man was deported from Denmark by the Danish authorities in 1942 and murdered in Auschwitz.<sup>31</sup>

After Iceland gained sovereignty under the Danish crown in 1918, Icelanders had full responsibility for their affairs with the exception of defence and foreign affairs, which were still handled by Copenhagen. In the 1930s, refugees fleeing Nazism also arrived in Iceland, and here too, there were Social Democratic politicians who were opposed to Jews and fascinated by Nazism.

Guðbrandur Jónsson was educated in Germany and was a regular member of *Alþýðuflokkur* (Social Democracy). Along with two other Icelandic Nazi sympathizers, he visited the German prince Friedrich Christian zu Schaumburg-Lippe in 1939 and asked him to consider becoming the king of Iceland, if – as they hoped – Nazi Germany were to invade. The prince, a member of the Nazi Party since 1929 and an official of the Third Reich, took this request seriously and brought it to Josef Goebbels. According to the prince’s autobiography, published in 1952, Goebbels liked the idea but Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop dismissed it.<sup>32</sup>

In 1936 Jónsson was himself invited to Germany by the Nazi regime for a tour, during which he spoke three times on the radio. Jónsson was so fascinated by Nazi Germany that he specifically asked to be invited to visit the Dachau concentration camp in Bavaria. He was entirely uncritical of what he saw and of what was happening in the camp. He could not understand his party colleagues’ criticism of his fascination with Germany and stressed in his 1938 book that he was a Social Democrat and an opponent of National Socialism and the Nazis.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Vilhjálmsson, *Medaljens Bagside*, 260–62.

<sup>32</sup> Órn Helgason, *Kóng við viljum hafa!* (Reykjavík: Skjaldborg, 1992). Prince Friedrich Christian zu Schaumburg-Lippe’s book was titled *Zwischen Krone und Kerker* (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1952).

<sup>33</sup> Guðbrandur Jónsson, *Bjóðir sem ég kynntist: Minningar um menn og háttu* (Reykjavík: Bóka-verzln Guðmunds Gamalíelssonar, 1938).

Apparently, though, not enough of an opponent to prevent him from using his German-language skills to help the Icelandic Ministry of Justice and the Police Authority in Reykjavík to compose letters in German and Danish to the police authorities in Copenhagen. These letters were cover notes for the Jewish refugees whom the Icelandic authorities were deporting after having rejected their requests for residency permits. These letters stated that should Denmark refuse to accept the refugees, then Iceland would pay the costs of deportation on to Germany.

Icelandic antisemites could also be found even further to the left of the political spectrum. In 1946 a journalist from the newspaper *Þjóðviljinn* (The Will of the Nation), the principal mouthpiece of the Icelandic Communist Party, attacked Teodoras Bieliackinas (1907–47) in print. Bieliackinas was a Lithuanian Jew from Kaunas (Kovno) who after a study trip to Norway had travelled to Iceland in 1937, where he subsequently studied languages at the University of Iceland. In 1946, in a series of articles in the daily *Morgunblaðið*, he wrote about the situation in the Baltic countries and criticized the Soviet Union. This did not please those Communists in Iceland who were loyal to Moscow and they attacked him in an article, calling him a “Fascist Jew” who had previously allied himself with Goebbels. The article, written by a certain Björn Franzson, is the worst incidence of antisemitism seen in print in Iceland after the Second World War. Franzson accused Bieliackinas of all but copying word-for-word from Nazi papers such as *Der Angriff*, *Der Stürmer*, and the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Among other things, Franzson wrote about Bieliackinas, who had lost his family during the Lithuanian and later the German destruction of the country’s Jewry:

Can you, dear reader, imagine a more repulsive or disgusting phenomenon than a Jew spreading Nazi propaganda after the Nazis have hanged, shot, gassed, and burnt in the flaming ovens seven million of his race? ... least of all should a Jew take it upon himself to do the work of Nazism if he did indeed have even the smallest shred of human dignity.<sup>34</sup>

After this, Franzson called Bieliackinas a Jewish Quisling. This attack on Bieliackinas was the first time since the Second World War that Icelanders had been witness to such public antisemitism on the left. It was perhaps not unex-

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<sup>34</sup> Björn Franzson, “Litúvískur fasisti launar íslenska gestrisni,” *Þjóðviljinn*, 13 August 1946, 5. See further Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson, “Formáli,” in Ants Oras, *Örlaganótt yfir Eystrasaltslöndum* (Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafélagið, 2016), 8; Ieva Steponavičiutė Aleksiejūnenė, “Teodoras Bieliackinas: mes visi sugrįšime į mūsų Lietuvą,” [www.15min.lt/kultura/naujiena/asmenybe/teodoras-bieliackinas-mes-visi-sugrisime-i-musu-lietuba-285-923862](https://www.15min.lt/kultura/naujiena/asmenybe/teodoras-bieliackinas-mes-visi-sugrisime-i-musu-lietuba-285-923862).

pected, as antisemitic accusations, propaganda, and associated caricatures with a direct relationship to Nazi caricatures of Jews, had been part of Stalin's show trials in the 1930s that were aimed at purging the Communist Party of Jewish members. Party-faithful Communists in Iceland and other countries did not criticize these purges, rather the opposite in fact.

Iceland was declared a republic in June 1944 and the remaining ties to Denmark were severed while Denmark was still, until 1945, occupied by Nazi Germany. In the new republic, which could boast of having the oldest parliament in the world, antisemitism did not disappear. In addition to the attacks on the Jew Bie-liackinas, the Social Democrat Jónas Guðmundsson (1898–1973) was responsible for the ugliest antisemitism to be expressed in public life in Iceland. Head of the Ministry of Social Affairs and a Social Democratic member of parliament,<sup>35</sup> he was obsessed with "Jewish and Zionist plans for world domination"; from 1946 to 1958 he published a journal, *Dagrenning* (Dawn), which focused mainly on the "dangerous Jews." Guðmundsson was a follower of a British eccentric named Adam Rutherford, who in 1939 published a book maintaining that the Icelanders were the descendants of the "real" Jews, specifically the lost tribe of the Benjaminites. As he wrote, while enjoying employment as a well-paid Social Democratic civil servant: "The role that Iceland and specifically the Icelandic nation has been given is that this nation, as the first among nations, should make it clear that it is part of God's great people of Israel and acknowledge publicly that this is so." Furthermore, in 1951 Guðmundsson published an Icelandic translation of the antisemitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.<sup>36</sup>

Eventually the Social Democrats had enough of Guðmundsson's sideline occupations and excluded him from the party. To his own mind this happened because he had written in Social Democracy's newspaper about "pyramids and occult subjects." His exclusion did not, however, adversely affect his career as a well-paid civil servant, and he later served as Iceland's representative on various pan-Nordic committees.

Guðmundsson explained the Second World War in the following manner in his journal, *Dagrenning*: "The Second World War was also their [the Communists'] invention and the Zionists organized a fabulous plan to destroy Germany, the bulwark of the free states of Europe. They created and supported the Nazi Party and introduced Hitler as its leader. The quest for the destruction of the

<sup>35</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Krati og gyðingahatari." *Fornleifur* [blog], 9 September 2016, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/2179692/>>.

<sup>36</sup> Jónas Guðmundsson, ed., *Samsærisáætlunin mikla: Siðareglur Zionsöldunga*, trans. Kristmundur Þorleifsson (Reykjavík: Jónas Guðmundsson, 1951).

Jews was only a propaganda trick, created in order to fool opponents.”<sup>37</sup> Only five years after the Second World War, a Social Democrat in Iceland could express himself in this way without any legal consequences.

Jónas Guðmundsson’s activities were an extreme case of Icelandic island-style xenophobia, which affected politicians from all the country’s different political parties. Antisemitism and racism were a part of this trend. In 1938, Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Hermann Jónasson (1896–1976) told a Danish counsellor at the Danish embassy in Reykjavík, that “It is a principle, Iceland has always been a pure Nordic country, free of Jews, and those who have come here in later years must leave again.”<sup>38</sup> The Icelanders wanted to keep Iceland “racially pure” from “Jews, Blacks, and Slavs.” From the Second World War until the 1960s, several Icelandic cabinets led by different political parties asked the US military authorities not to send black soldiers to the NATO bases in Iceland – and the US government complied. This became more difficult after the US human rights legislation of 1964 was introduced.<sup>39</sup>

Another Social Democrat who has made antisemitic comments is Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson (b. 1939). He opposed the investigation of the Nazi war criminal Evald Mikson, who after having played an active role in the murder of Jews now resided in Iceland. In 1992, the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Jerusalem office encouraged the Icelandic authorities to investigate Mikson’s wartime activities. After the Second World War, Mikson had settled in Iceland and changed his name to Eðvald Hinriksson. Hannibalsson was among those politicians who accused the State of Israel of being behind the request for an investigation of Mikson’s murder of Jews. Israel’s motivation was said to be an attempt to cover up its own military activities. The request was delivered by the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Jerusalem office to Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson during a state visit to Israel; Hannibalsson and other Icelandic politicians mistakenly assumed that the State of Israel stood behind the request. A number of Icelandic politicians, both on the right and the left, publicly called for Mikson to be protected. In their opinion, the request for an investigation of Mikson’s wartime activities came from a state which they claimed was actively annihilating a people and was thus guilty of war crimes, and they insisted that the evidence against Mikson had been fabricated by the Soviet Union. In their attempts to protect Mikson some Icelanders compared Israel to Nazi Germany. After his death in 1993, the Estonian Historical

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<sup>37</sup> Vilhjálmsdóttir, “Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004,” 142.

<sup>38</sup> Vilhjálmsdóttir, *Medaljens Bagside*, 10–11.

<sup>39</sup> Vilhjálmsdóttir, “Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004,” 143.

Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity confirmed the Simon Wiesenthal Center's claims that Mikson was a war criminal.

In 1993 some of the same politicians who wanted to protect Mikson refused to meet Shimon Peres when he was on a state visit to Iceland. Instead of welcoming a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, they branded him a war criminal. Many of these politicians came up with various reasons not to attend an official dinner that the president of Iceland held in honour of Peres. Steingrímur Hermannsson (1928 – 2010), a member of *Framsóknarflokkur*, was among those who refused to meet Peres. He was, however, more than happy to meet Yasser Arafat in Tunis in 1990, returning to Iceland with Arafat's propaganda stories that he quite uncritically relayed to the media.<sup>40</sup> Hermannsson was the son of former Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Hermann Jónasson, who had worked so hard to stop Iceland from accepting Jewish refugees in the 1930s.

Jón Baldwin Hannibalsson has also made antisemitic comments in connection with the conflict in the Middle East. In a radio broadcast in August 2011, he compared Israel to Nazi Germany, saying: "There we have a nation who are the descendants of those who were victims of German Nazism and European racism, who have become just like the Nazis."<sup>41</sup> In 2015 Hannibalsson went even further and likened Israel to ISIS.<sup>42</sup> This happened after he had ended his career in parliament, a career that had reached its high point with appointments as Minister of Finance and Minister of Foreign Affairs. After this he held the post of Iceland's ambassador in Washington and later in Helsinki (1998 – 2005). Hannibalsson's political downfall occurred in 2012, when it emerged that he had written letters on letterhead paper from the Washington Embassy to his wife's underage relative, in which he harassed her with his sexual fantasies. In Iceland writing offensive letters of a sexual nature is more damaging to one's political career than making antisemitic remarks.

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**40** Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsdóttir, "Emanuelis Zingeris, Star of the Red-Brown Road Show, Turns Up in Reykjavík on the Jewish New Year," *Defending History* [website], 18 September 2012, < <http://defendinghistory.com/emanuelis-zingeris-star-of-the-red-brown-road-show-turns-up-in-reykavik/41744> >.

**41** J. B. Hannibalsson, interview on *Á Sprengisandi*, Bylgjan radio station, 28 August 2011. The programme can be heard here < <http://www.visir.is/k/clp5961> >.

**42** J. B. Hannibalsson, interview on *Á Sprengisandi*, Bylgjan radio station, 15 November 2015. The programme can be heard here < <http://www.visir.is/k/clp41001> >.

## Academic antisemitism

There were several academics among the small number of Jews who managed to find temporary asylum in Iceland at the end of the 1930s, but these well-educated Jewish refugees had great difficulty finding work. They included Jewish doctors, such as Karl Kroner from Germany and the married couple Felix Fuchs and Stephanie Karpeles-Fuchs from Vienna. Nor were these doctors able to gain permanent residency in Iceland. Felix and Stephanie were deported to Denmark at the end of 1938; from there they risked their lives sailing via Gothenburg to the USA on a convoy ship. The opportunity to have a career in Iceland had been denied them by Icelandic doctors and the Icelandic Director of Health despite there being a great shortage of doctors in the country at the time.<sup>43</sup>

Otto Weg (1893–1984) was a highly educated geologist and mathematician from Leipzig who fled to Iceland after spending time in Buchenwald concentration camp where his brother was murdered. He did manage to settle in Iceland but was never able to have an academic career: in spite of holding a doctorate in geology, he had to support himself by offering private tutoring.<sup>44</sup>

Róbert Abraham Ottósson, the only academic of Jewish descent who was able to find employment at the University of Iceland in the first decades after the Second World War, was – despite his surname Abraham – a Catholic. His family had converted to Catholicism in the nineteenth century. His surname was, however, more than enough to ensure that a Danish trade union and the Danish authorities had prevented him from ever finding employment as a musician in Denmark, which was the reason he ended up moving to Iceland.

Since 1980, straightforward plain antisemitism has often surfaced in academic circles in connection with comments about the conflict in the Middle East. Anti-Zionism, which is how most critics of Israel define their criticism, can in many cases amount to pure antisemitism. Icelanders, who often have absolutely no idea about the history of Zionism, happily compare it to Nazism, the State of Israel with Hitler's Germany, and the policies of the state with apartheid, to simply note the main themes of the anti-Zionist narrative. What follows are just a few examples.

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<sup>43</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Útrunnin Vegabréf,” *Lesbók Morgunblaðsins (Morgunblaðið)*, 21 March 1998, 6–8.

<sup>44</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Gyðingar í hverju húsi,” *Fornleifur* [blog], 14 February 2013, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/1279701/>>.

In 2003, eighty-one employees of the University of Iceland signed a petition from three of their colleagues.<sup>45</sup> This petition was based on a false news report on a pro-Palestinian website that claimed that 187 Israeli professors had warned of an imminent ethnic cleansing of Palestinians under cover of the Iraq War. The false report pretended that the Israeli professors had called upon their colleagues around the world to be wary of the Israeli rulers who wanted to take advantage of the war in Iraq to drive all the Arabs out of Israel and Palestine. The author of the petition was the philologist Pétur Knútsson (formerly Peter Ridgewell, b. 1942).<sup>46</sup> Among the signatories was professor of history Gísli Gunnarsson (b. 1938), professor of sociology Þorbjörn Broddason (b. 1943), professor of philosophy Vilhjálmur Árnason (b. 1953), and professor of Literary Studies Helga Kress (b. 1939). The question that needs to be asked here is: did any of these academics ever warn against acts of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, Darfur, or elsewhere in the world? The answer is no. The blinkered focus was on Jews and on Israel.

In 2019, professor emeritus in history at the *Háskóli Íslands*, Gísli Gunnarsson, again came under the spotlight in connection with antisemitism in Iceland. In 2004, he wrote an article on the university's Science Web, *Vísindavefurinn*, where people can ask the experts at the university about any subject between heaven and earth. The article was a reply to the question: "Why have the Jews been persecuted throughout the centuries?"<sup>47</sup> In 2018, Merrill Kaplan, associate professor at Ohio State University, contacted the editorial staff at *Vísindavefurinn* and pointed out a number of dubious and incorrect claims and mistakes in Gísli Gunnarsson's arguments.<sup>48</sup> Among other things, Gunnarsson blamed Jews themselves for the persecutions. Kaplan, who worked on her PhD in Iceland, sent a detailed nine-page explanation of her arguments to the editorial staff at *Vísindavefurinn* and asked that the article be removed on account of the prejudices and proven errors that it contained. Instead of taking note of her arguments when he received them from the editorial staff, Gunnarsson chose to take to Facebook to air the matter and there he made patronizing critical comments about Kaplan interwoven with conjecture about whether the criticism was a conspiracy aimed at

<sup>45</sup> "Áskorun," <<https://notendur.hi.is/~peturk/ISRAEL/askorun.htm>>.

<sup>46</sup> Knútsson has also signed a declaration claiming that the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001 was not proven to have been committed Muslims, but was instead a conspiracy.

<sup>47</sup> Gísli Gunnarsson, "Hvers vegna hafa Gyðingar verið ofsóttir í gegnum aldirnar?" *Vísindavefur* [Q&A web of the University of Iceland] 2004 and a revised version of 14 January 2019, <<https://www.visindavefur.is/svar.php?id=1646>>.

<sup>48</sup> "Niðurstæða Vísindavefsins 'að Gyðingar hafa sjálfir kallað yfir sig ofsóknir'," *Kvennablaðið* [web-magazine], 11 January 2019, <<https://kvennabladid.is/2019/01/11/nidurstada-visinda-vefsins-ad-gydingar-hafa-sjalfir-kallad-yfir-sig-ofsoknir/>>.

him in particular. On his Facebook page, Gunnarsson claimed that he had not received any arguments from the critic. He received them in a letter from the editors of *Visindavefurinn* before he chose to air the matter on Facebook. In the following discussion, in which he largely received support from his fellow friends-of-Palestine, Gunnarsson had to admit that he was really not an expert in the area he had been asked about.<sup>49</sup> He subsequently changed his article. Also in this context, Gunnarsson for a long time advanced the long-debunked claim that Ashkenazi Jews are the descendants of Khazars who had converted to Judaism long after the “original” Jews, i.e. those alive at the time of Jesus. Only recently, after he was introduced to DNA studies that unequivocally prove that the Khazar theory is utter nonsense, has Gunnarsson dropped this argument. The Khazar hypothesis of Ashkenazi ancestry is a well-known antisemitic canard that contributes to the destruction of the Jewish people along with gas and bullets.

In certain Icelandic academic families antipathy and hatred towards Jews, their religion, and more recently the State of Israel, has reared its head generation after generation. In the 1920s the German composer and musical director Franz Mixa (1902–94) came to Iceland, where he married an Icelandic woman. As a dedicated Nazi he joined the NSDAP in 1932 as member number 782,617. While in Iceland, he opposed the employment of Jewish musicians in the country. In 1938 he left Iceland and became *Landesleiter der Reichsmusikkammer Gau Steiermark* (State Director of the Reich Music Institute for Reichsgau Styria) until 1943. Being a German soldier he was arrested by the French and imprisoned until 1947.

In 2009, his son, the doctor Ólafur Mixa (b. 1939), made comments on his personal blog. Clearly affected by the situation in the Middle East, he declared his support for Palestine in the following manner:

It has long been evident that Israel has absolutely no intention of negotiating about anything to do with Palestine. Their ideology seems to revolve around just one thing: being a master race (*herrabjóð*) in the ancient Palestinian territory and conquering everything little by little. And seeing it as their right given to them by God himself, this ferocious, vain, jealous, and vengeful Yahweh who appears in ancient tall tales that were collected around 600 BC and turned into holy scriptures.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Gísli Gunnarsson’s Facebook, 9 January 2019, <<https://www.facebook.com/gisli.gunnarsson.75/posts/10212540560605215>>.

<sup>50</sup> Ólafur Fr. Mixa, “Hvað þykir ‘raunhæft’ í Ísrael,” *Ólafur Fr. Mixa* [blog], 1 January 2009, <<https://olimikka.blog.is/blog/olimikka/entry/762411/>>.

The third generation of the Mixa family, Dr Már Wolfgang Mixa (b. 1965) is a national economist and lecturer at *Háskólinn í Reykjavík* (Reykjavík University) who regularly writes in the media about economic matters. In 2011, in an article entitled “Who controls the world?” in the Icelandic online paper *eyjan.is*, he posited without evidence that: “At the beginning of the twentieth century it was said to be impossible to wage war for very long without the Rothschild family and their collaborators having agreed to fund it.”<sup>51</sup> Már Mixa’s sister, who has publicly stated that she does not think that her brother’s stance on Jews being behind wars is hateful, has for many years been the chairperson of the pro-Palestinian *Félagið Ísland-Palestína* (Association Iceland-Palestine). In this group, the choice of words is often hateful; for example, the then chairperson of the association, Sveinn Rúnar Hauksson, wrote an article with the headline “Israel, Israel über alles.”<sup>52</sup>

## The Icelandic press and antisemitism

At the end of the nineteenth century, the antisemitism found in the Icelandic press was characterized by the same mindset as found among politicians, i.e. a general fear of foreigners. They tried, for example, to brand certain foreign families in Iceland as Jewish. Very few Jews were involved in trading in Iceland during the second half of the nineteenth century, and those who were never spent any time in the country. The only Jew to settle in Reykjavík at the beginning of the twentieth century was Fritz Heyman Nathan.<sup>53</sup> However, he was never subjected to antisemitic attacks, but rather was teased because of his poor eyesight and tics, which today would be recognized as Tourette syndrome.

The phenomenon of linking people with a foreign background to Judaism was later cultivated by Icelandic Nazis and, as mentioned earlier, continues to the present day. In 2014 an Icelandic historian came to the peculiar conclusion that two Scottish cloth-traders had to have been Jews. Just like previous genera-

<sup>51</sup> Már Wolfgang Mixa, “Hverjir stjórna heiminum?” *eyjan.is* [website], 28 September 2011. The article has been removed from *eyjan.is*, but is still available here <[https://postdoc.blog.is/users/3d/postdoc/files/hverjir-stjorna-heiminu\\_14971.pdf](https://postdoc.blog.is/users/3d/postdoc/files/hverjir-stjorna-heiminu_14971.pdf)>. See also Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Mixa und die Juden,” *Er ekkert í ísskápnum* [blog], 29 September 2011, <<https://postdoc.blog.is/blog/postdoc/entry/1194414/>>, where the article has been criticized.

<sup>52</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Gyðingahatrið í Gaza-umræðunni,” *Er ekkert í ísskápnum?* [blog], 7 March 2014, <<https://postdoc.blog.is/blog/postdoc/entry/1413583>>.

<sup>53</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Nathans hankat,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 18 (2009): 68–71.

tions of antisemites who linked Jews with the import of cloth carrying the plague and clothes taken from battlefields, the historian claimed that the names “Tierney” and “Harmitage” were derived from East European Jewish names. A quick search reveals, however, that these “cloth-Jews” were in fact Baptists with Irish and French backgrounds who were from Leith near Edinburgh.<sup>54</sup>

One Icelandic media figure stands out clearly as most frequently having made antisemitic comments in the press, even though he reportedly did not perceive himself as an antisemite. He referred to his opinions as just and fair criticism of the State of Israel. However, in nearly every case his comments were also an attack on the citizens of Israel. This was Jónas Kristjánsson (1940 – 2018), who was both the editor of several tabloid newspapers in Iceland and later also his own blog.<sup>55</sup> The blog had a record-breaking readership and was best known for its abrupt and to-the-point style, but never as fierce as when discussing Jews and Israel.

We should stress that Kristjánsson was definitely not the only one in Iceland who had fierce opinions and views. For over two decades, many other Icelanders have engaged in the same kind of excesses and sometimes much worse on social media and later in internet comments sections. Kristjánsson’s opinions about Jews in Israel follow the usual formulas. The most common is: “I don’t hate Jews, but I hate Zionists and the State of Israel,” which are then compared with Nazis and Nazi Germany. Another popular formula: “Many of my best friends are Jewish and I only hate Israelis who act like the Jews’ executioners, the Nazis.”

The comparison of Jews to Nazis defines a particular kind of antisemitism, not just seen as such by Jews, but also by non-Jewish researchers. Here is a small selection of Jónas Kristjánsson’s antisemitic remarks:

18 January 2009

The Israelis are Nazis ... [I] first visited Israel in 1965 and was captivated by the nation. Nonetheless, I began criticizing Israel in 1980. My first criticism concerned the same thing that Israel is criticized for today: random bombardment of people to win the elections at home. In total, I have written 311 articles about the country, the state, and the nation. My criticism has become stronger since a stay in Jerusalem in 1996. I became afraid for the nation itself, its aggression in daily life. I thought that it had ended up in an impasse and that it resembled its earlier tormentor, Hitler. The bloodbath in Gaza seemed like the bloodbath in Warsaw in 1943. The Israelis are the modern-day Nazis.

28 September 2010

Israelis are bullies ... I was in Israel on two occasions for two weeks. As I was exiting a hotel

<sup>54</sup> Vilhjálmsson, “Gyðingar í hverju húsi.”

<sup>55</sup> Jónas Kristjánsson, *Jonas* [blog]. < [www.jonas.is](http://www.jonas.is) >.

lift, some Israelis barged into it so that I had to make my way out of it again. The people in the tourist branch lied so that I had to dig up information about the opening hours of the Dome of the Rock by myself. Border guards and airport officials were Nazi-style louts. They view tourists as insects. For several years, Israel has bred a master race. Under the protection of the USA.

19 November 2012  
Israel is a nation of scum.

14 July 2014  
[I] have never had anything against Jews on the grounds of belief ... The last time I was in Israel, I felt that the conditions had perverted the state and the nation. Violence and aggression reigned. People view the Palestinians as dogs, or what is even worse. Extremists have taken power and been given the titles of ministers. When I managed to cross the river to Jordan I met polite Jordanians and felt as if I had come home to Europe. Liberated from a crazy state and a perverse nation.

18 July 2014  
Israel's Nazis ... [a] terminally ill country with insane voters annihilates a people under the protection of a very sick USA. It is absurd that fate has turned Israel into a monster that in the tiniest detail is reminiscent of the worse Nazis from seventy years ago.

1 August 2014  
Thoroughly rotten Israel ... The issue is not about Jews around the world, those who support this are few and others are against it. The issue is about Israel as a state, as a society, as individuals. Everything that goes by the name Israel has become a fire-breathing monster belonging to the world's greatest terrorist, the USA. The USA has full responsibility for having bred a monster and turning it into something that all good people feel antipathy towards.

18 December 2014  
Israel is becoming isolated ... Netanyahu only screams about the Jews' Holocaust seven decades ago. Europeans today do not, however, owe the country anything; they established the EU to prevent nationalism and racism in the present and the future. The time for Israel's racism and terror is over.

18 September 2015  
Israel is poison ... Israel's apartheid is reminiscent of South Africa's apartheid. I would not dream of knowingly buying goods from Israel. [I] think it is fine that Reykjavík does the same thing. This is not about antisemitism, Jews are not the same as Israel.<sup>56</sup>

In his journalism, the editor Jónas Kristjánsson did not show any antipathy towards any minorities other than Jews or any states other than Israel. He was active until the end and involved himself in the debate that arose in 2017 when Icelandic members of parliament from very different parties started a campaign against the religious circumcision of baby boys in Iceland. The campaign was

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<sup>56</sup> See the late Jónas Kristjánsson's website, <<http://www.jonas.is/page/2/?s=Israel>>.

primarily supported by people in Icelandic society who had a negative view of Muslims. In no way did the maximum penalty called for in the bill, with sentences of up to six years in prison for violating the proposed ban, reflect its noble intentions, e.g. only ten per cent of all Icelandic doctors at home and abroad supported the bill. On the subject of circumcision, two months before his death Kristjánsson wrote:

Circumcision is a bodily attack on the individual, who is unable to speak for himself. There is no tradition here for that sort of attack. That is why it is just to ban the circumcision of all children in Iceland, with fines and prison sentences as a consequence if this is not respected. We do not have to get mixed up in the traditions of the medieval states of Muslims and Jews, but we ought not to open the door to criminal traditions.<sup>57</sup>

## Antisemitism in art

A small and isolated people, Icelanders have at times felt a real fear of things foreign and unknown. However, it was never foreign ideas or trends or progress that Icelanders were afraid of, but rather foreign people made of flesh and blood.

This mindset was clearly encouraged by well-known Icelandic authors, children of their time, adopting this xenophobia. A renowned author such as Halldór Laxness (1902–98), who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955, wrote about Jews in his works. Laxness was in Berlin in 1936 during the Olympics. At that time he was a dedicated Socialist, if not a Communist, who had also converted to Catholicism and been a monk for a while. A “Jewish girl with a hooked nose,” as Laxness described the daughter of an alleged Jewish acquaintance, whose name Laxness never mentioned, provided him and a fellow Icelander with tickets for the games at the *Reichsstadion* in Berlin on 9 June 1936.<sup>58</sup> Laxness did not tell his readers about a second trip he made to Berlin in 1936, however. That trip took place after he defended Stalin at a PEN conference in Rio de Janeiro. This time the purpose of the author’s visit to Nazi Germany was to collect the royalties that the Austrian publishing house Zinnen owed him and his Danish agent.<sup>59</sup> Laxness eventually wrote in one of his memoirs that he had problems with the publishing house’s offices in Germany because of rumours that

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<sup>57</sup> “Trúarofsóknir á börnum,” <<http://www.jonas.is/truarofsoknir-a-bornum/>>.

<sup>58</sup> Halldór Kiljan Laxness, *Dagleið á Fjöllum* (Reykjavík: Helgafell, 1962), 267–69.

<sup>59</sup> Rigsarkivet (Danish National Archive), Archive of the Foreign Ministry, the Legation in Berlin (delivered in 1951): 81.A. 91: Icelandic author Halldor Laxness. The letters in the dossier are from the period 17 October 1936 to 24 March 1937, as well as March 1938.

he had a hostile attitude towards Nazi Germany.<sup>60</sup> More likely, the publishing firm, which was owned by Jewish families in Austria and not by Social Democrats as Laxness claimed, had difficulties paying the authors whose works the branch in Germany published. The Danish Foreign Ministry quickly sent a letter to the Danish legation in Berlin which was supposed to assure the German authorities that Laxness was totally non-political – or possibly a Social Democrat, at most.<sup>61</sup>

In a brilliant new book on attitudes towards foreigners and refugee policy in Iceland in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century,<sup>62</sup> the Icelandic historian Snorri G. Bergsson strongly suggests that Laxness flirted with antisemitism. Bergsson shows his readers how Laxness equates antisemitism with hatred of dogs.<sup>63</sup> In an article in the newspaper *Þjóðviljinn* on 31 October 1948, which Laxness titled “Parísarbréf” (Letter from Paris), he wrote:

The murderer of Europe drew these helpless refugees up here [to Paris] in the spring of 1940. I had a few acquaintances in their ranks. They were Polish. I have heard that they were murdered. They were probably transported eastwards to the concentration camps in Ásvits [sic; a spelling of Auschwitz unique to Laxness], where Hitler had five million Communists and suspected Communists murdered in the years 1940–45, and, of course, “Jews.” [sic; the quotation marks are Laxness’s own]<sup>64</sup>

Of course, opinions in Iceland are divided as to whether Snorri Bergsson’s analysis is correct. Being the only Icelandic recipient of a Nobel Prize, Laxness has saint-like status in Iceland. I have, among other things, been accused of sacrilege by one Icelandic historian. In 2018, Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson claimed that I also thought that Laxness was an antisemite because I welcomed Bergsson’s analysis in a review of his book.<sup>65</sup> The critic is a member of the EU organization Platform of European Memory and Conscience, which actively participates in the relativization of the Holocaust in the Baltic States. The organization endorses Es-

<sup>60</sup> Halldór Kiljan Laxness, *Vettvangur Dagsins, Ritgerðir* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1942), 282–89.

<sup>61</sup> Rigsarkivet [Danish National Archive], Archive of the Foreign Ministry, the Legation in Berlin (delivered in 1951): 81.A. 91.

<sup>62</sup> Bergsson, *Erlendur Landshornalýður*.

<sup>63</sup> Bergsson, *Erlendur Landshornalýður*, 164.

<sup>64</sup> Bergsson, *Erlendur Landshornalýður*. Note that Laxness was not actually in Paris in 1940.

<sup>65</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Sagnfræðileg perla komin út úr skel fyrir Vestan,” *Fornleifur* [blog], 23 November 2017, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/2206939/>>.

tonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Polish authorities who wish to honour the murderers of Jews as freedom fighters.<sup>66</sup>

Laxness's attitude towards Jews is at best peculiar. Contrary to what he himself writes, he never had demonstrably close contacts with Jews. Comparing antisemitism to hatred of dogs also suggests a fundamentally antisemitic attitude. A man who relativizes the history of the victims of Auschwitz, claims that the murdered were Communists, and only adds "Jews" in quotation marks and in passing, clearly has a rather warped attitude towards Jews.

Gunnar Gunnarsson (1889–1975), who lived outside of Iceland for much of his life, in Denmark for the longest period, is another great author who was closely connected to Nazism. After the war many people in Iceland thought that he deserved the Nobel Prize for his literary prowess. Although Gunnarsson was not a member of the Icelandic or the Danish Nazi Party and never made antisemitic public statements, he did ally himself with Nazism in the most unfortunate manner: he was a prominent member of the Nordic branch of the *Nordische Gesellschaft* (Nordic Society). The *Nordische Gesellschaft* worked to encourage antisemitism among its members. Gunnarsson associated with the leadership of this Nazi organization, including Alfred Rosenberg, who was one of the main ideologues of the Nazi Party and its propaganda against Jews. In 1940, shortly after Gunnarsson had moved from Denmark to East Iceland, he went on a lecture tour of forty towns in Germany, including Berlin, where he received an audience with Hitler. Today Gunnarsson is remembered through a state-funded research and memorial centre on his former farmstead, Skriðuklaustur in East Iceland. The leader and board of the *Gunnarsstofnun* (Gunnarsson Institute) do not want to talk about the Nazi part of Gunnarsson's life and officially deny that he was a dedicated Nazi sympathizer, even though he associated with top Nazis, met Hitler, and, among other things, praised the Anschluss (the annexation of independent Austria in 1938 by Nazi Germany) in the Icelandic press. The Danish embassy in Berlin in the 1930s considered Gunnarsson to be a Nazi; he was called in to meetings at the embassy and warned against socializing too much with top German Nazis. Yet the Gunnarsson Institute is of the opinion that you have to have worn a uniform and preferably murdered Jews in order to be a Nazi. Despite much criticism of the Gunnarsson Institute's tackling of the issue of Gunnarsson's Nazism,<sup>67</sup> in 2018 there is even less information and

<sup>66</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Holocaust Obfuscation and Double Genocide: The Show Goes On," *Defending History* [website], 13 June 2014, <<http://defendinghistory.com/holocaust-obfuscation-show/67054?>>.

<sup>67</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Iceland's Nazi Ghosts," *Fornleifur* [blog], 17 September 2012, <<https://fornleifur.blog.is/blog/fornleifur/entry/1257968/>>.

only in Icelandic on the Institute's new homepage about the low points of the author's career and life than has previously been the case.<sup>68</sup>



**Figure 4.1:** Icelandic author Gunnar Gunnarsson leaving the Reichskanzlei together with Hinrich Lohse following a meeting with Adolf Hitler, 20 March 1940. Photo by Heinrich Hoffmann. Fotoarchiv Hoffmann O.28, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek/Bildarchiv. With permission.

Another Icelandic author with Nazi tendencies was Guðmundur Kamban (1888–1945). Some also remember him as the victim of a war crime: Kamban was shot by resistance fighters in Denmark at the end of the war during a commotion at a guesthouse in the Østerbro neighbourhood of Copenhagen when he resisted arrest. Kamban was a blatant Nazi sympathizer and one of the three Icelanders who suggested to Goebbels that Prince Friedrich Christian zu Schaumburg-Lippe should be crowned king of Iceland if the Germans invaded the country. For a short period during the occupation, Kamban was the director of *Danmarks Radio*, appointed by the Germans. He often visited the Gestapo headquarters in Copenhagen; during one of these visits, Kamban recognized a Danish Jew, Jacob Thalmay, who had coloured his hair and was trying his hand at being

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<sup>68</sup> "Skáldið," <<https://skriduklaustur.is/skaldid>> and "Gunnarsstofnun," <<https://skriduklaustur.is/gunnarsstofnun>> on the website of Gunnarsstofnun (<https://www.skriduklaustur.is/>).

a double agent in the Gestapo headquarters. Thalmay's plan was to try and leave the country to rescue some of his relatives who had been deported to Theresienstadt in 1943. Kamban and Thalmay had lived at the same guesthouse in Østerbro, so Kamban was able to denounce Thalmay, who was subsequently arrested and imprisoned as a Jewish spy. Thalmay was sent to Auschwitz and later died on a death march.<sup>69</sup> In spite of this fact, there is still a memorial plaque for Kamban on the front of number 20 Uppsalastræde in Østerbro, where he is remembered as an innocent victim of "random revenge killings" in 1945. People in Iceland still talk of the "murder of Kamban."<sup>70</sup> Some years ago, I gained access to the police file concerning the death. The name of the man who shot Kamban is not yet in the open access period and therefore he cannot be identified, but from the report it is difficult to see how this was a premeditated killing. The distortion or denial of the facts of war as well as the glorification of perpetrators is also a problem in Iceland, as in many other European countries. The refusal of Icelandic politicians to prosecute the Estonian war criminal Evald Mikson, who settled in Iceland after the war and changed his name to Eðvald Hinriksson, is a good example of how Icelanders see their nationality as some sort of immunity against doing anything bad or wrong.

Hannes Pétursson (b. 1931), a leading poet in the postwar period in Iceland, has continued the island people's tradition of making foreigners appear suspicious or turning them into Jews. In the poet's autobiography, published in 2012,<sup>71</sup> Pétursson recounts his youth in the village of Sauðárkrúkur in North Iceland. His story is spiced up with a tale about a certain Albert Volker Lindemann who settled in Iceland in the 1930s. Lindemann ran a grocery store and a guesthouse in Varmahlíð in Skagafjörður. Pétursson explains to his reader that Lindemann was a homosexual who assaulted underage boys and that because of his sexual deviance he ended up having to leave Iceland. In addition to enlightening the reader in a very negative way about unsubstantiated details of Lindemann's life, Pétursson declares the sinner a Jew. It was not enough to make Lindemann a paedophile, he also had to be a Jew.

The most recent example of antisemitism in Icelandic art was produced by the Icelandic performance artist Snorri Ásmundsson (b. 1966). In June 2014, Ásmundsson posted a video on YouTube with the title *Hatikva*. According to Ás-

<sup>69</sup> Vilhjálmsson, *Medaljens Bagside*, 283. The first "Stolperstein" (*snublesten* in Danish) to be laid in Denmark was in memory of Jacob Thalmay (Carl Plougs Vej 7, Frederiksberg) in 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Borgþór Arngrímsson, "Sjótiu ár liðin frá uppgjöf Þjóðverja og morðinu á Guðmundi Kamban," *Kjarninn*, 5 May 2015, <<https://kjarninn.is/frettir/sjotiu-ar-lidin-fra-uppgjof-thjodverja-og-mordinu-a-gudmundi-kamban/>>.

<sup>71</sup> Hannes Pétursson, *Jarðlag í tímanum. Minningamyndir úr barnæsku* (Reykjavík: Opna, 2012).



**Figure 4.2:** Still from the music video “Hatikvah” by Icelandic artist Snorri Ásmundsson, published on youtube.com in 2014: < <https://www.youtube.com/user/snoriasmunds> >. Public domain.

mundsson, the video is a protest against Israel’s treatment of Palestinians. In it, the artist wears drag – a tight-fitting metallic dress, lipstick, and eye shadow – as a reference to Dana International, the transgender Israeli who won the Eurovision song contest in 1998, and sings the Israeli national anthem alongside two other adult performers in a very degrading manner. Somewhat spasmodically and with little grace they dance to the anthem with accompanying animated gestures and grimaces. One of those in the video is meant to be an Israeli soldier and a female participant is dressed as a Muslim woman who is attacked by the soldier at the beginning of the video; for the rest of the film she dances dressed in a cowgirl outfit. In addition to these characters, there are two young men with Down syndrome performing, dressed in large black overcoats and hats and with stuck-on sidelocks (*peyot*) in order to represent Hasidic Jews.<sup>72</sup> In an article in the English-language weekly *Icelandic Grapevine*, Ásmundsson explained what he wanted to achieve with his video. In addition, he described how he avoided being accused of and prosecuted for antisemitism under Icelandic law. Ásmundsson employed the frequently used alibi that he has Jewish friends: “Snorri added that he realized his artwork was highly controver-

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<sup>72</sup> “Hatikva” performed by Snorri Ásmundsson, < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mj-wRxdB42A> >.

sial and that it would make people angry but that some of his Jewish friends had had a good laugh about it.”<sup>73</sup>

## Economic hardship and antisemitism

A banking crisis hit Iceland in 2008, when several of the badly and irresponsibly run banks collapsed after several years of financial excess in Iceland and elsewhere. Responsibility for the banking crisis lay first and foremost with greedy financiers in Iceland. The worst effects of the crisis on the country’s economy were mitigated by the majority of Icelanders as well as the state refusing to accept responsibility or act as guarantors for the private bankers’ crimes and their customers’ naivety. Nonetheless, for a long period one could see psychological stress among the Icelandic populace which was expressed in different ways. Among the crowds who gathered to demonstrate in front of the parliament in Reykjavík to express their frustration, a small group of Icelandic neo-Nazis could be seen waving an old German Nazi flag. A female member of the global neo-Nazi group Combat 18 was the self-appointed “Führer” of the group. The group’s solution to Iceland’s economic crisis was “Aryan supremacy” and putting a complete stop to the immigration of foreigners – especially Muslims – to Iceland. As so often before in world history, some people saw foreigners as the reason for all their problems.

The other groups of protestors in front of the parliament did not take long to eject this neo-Nazi enclave from their spontaneous demonstrations. The protests were partly aimed at the financial crisis, which to a large extent many ordinary, albeit gullible and enthusiastic, Icelanders had brought upon themselves by borrowing from banks that claimed that they could provide better returns than, for example, banks in the oil states. But the protests were also aimed at politicians who were attempting to remedy matters by working for Iceland’s integration into the EU. By doing so they believed that Iceland could regain the good economic position it had enjoyed before the collapse, and quickly too, despite the fact that the financial upswing before the crash had not been a real recovery.

There were some among those Icelanders prosecuted for financial irregularities who placed blame on Jews. Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson, who owned and led the Icelandic *Baugur Group* (BG), which was active in several countries including the UK and Denmark, suffered huge, self-inflicted losses during the banking crisis.

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<sup>73</sup> ↪ <https://grapevine.is/culture/art/2014/07/16/hatikvah/>; See also ↪ <http://icelandreview.com/news/2015/03/06/icelanders-accused-anti-semitism>.

His former business partner, the Brit Philip Green, offered to purchase BG's properties for 30 per cent of their market price, and Jóhannesson agreed to the deal. Many people in Iceland thought that by doing so the Icelandic banks lost any chance of recovering BG's assets to cover the group's debt. This caused many Icelanders to bring up Green's Jewish background. On social media, allegations were made that banks and flamboyant rich men with Jewish names were responsible for the Icelandic crash. The Iranian-born Iraqi-Jewish brothers Robert and Vincent Tchenguiz, who had partly invested in the Icelandic bank Kaupþing but had largely borrowed from the bank, were made into the principal villains, even though their role in the crash was certainly exaggerated. Partly due to allegations made by a certain Icelandic prosecutor, one of the brothers was taken into custody by the UK's Serious Fraud Office. In 2012 it was shown that the allegations were false and the evidence insufficient. The Tchenguiz brothers lost millions of pounds from the collapse of the Kaupþing bank, however in Iceland many who cannot face reality remember them as the villains behind the crash.

Some foreign journalists also made similar aspersions when they, jokingly, tried to portray the Jewish first lady of Iceland, Dorrit Moussaieff (b. 1950), as being partly responsible for the collapse of the Icelandic banks. For example, there was an unusually unkind article by the journalist Robert Boyes in the British newspaper *The Times* in which he wrote about the financial crisis in Iceland. Boyes published similar articles in several international newspapers. He included among other things this comment from a man on the street, who judging from the wording was probably one of the tabloid journalists who he collaborated with in Iceland: "That gold rush, at the beginning of this century, has spun the illusion of wealth. Dorrit Moussaieff, the jet-setting jewellery-designer wife of President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, set the tone, with her coteries of girlfriends." One of these "girlfriends" who she apparently socialized with was, we learn, the American retail executive and television personality Martha Stewart. Stewart was indeed once invited to Iceland by the former president's wife, but neither Dorrit Moussaieff nor the president had anything whatsoever to do with the economic crash. Robert Boyes helped spread Icelandic slander that held the president's Jewish wife responsible for the crimes of the banking speculators.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Robert Boyes, "Scating on thin ice," *The Australian*, 10 October 2008, < <https://www.pressreader.com/australia/the-australian/20081010/281882999161333> >; Robert Boyes, "Bankruptcy's cold winds sweep Iceland," *Waikato Times*, 11 October 2008, < <https://www.pressreader.com/new-zealand/waikato-times/20081011/283107064841315> >. The article in the *Waikato Times* refers to Britain's *The Times* as the original publisher of the article. The same prejudices against Dorrit Moussaieff appear in Boyes's highly untrustworthy description of Icelandic society during the

Born in Israel, the president's wife had previously been forced to admit that her background did not please all Icelanders, both on the right and the left. At a conference on antisemitism at *Háskólinn á Akureyri* (University of Akureyri) in 2006, I provided examples of antisemitic comments directed at the president's wife which could be found after a brief internet search. In connection with this I provided examples of how many Icelanders expressed their frustration about the activities of domestic criminals by blaming Jews for the global economic situation.<sup>75</sup>

Already in 2001, to be precise on 11 September, a young university student, Egill Guðmundsson, wrote on his homepage about his experiences that terrible day. He concluded his piece with the words “Burt með Dorrit!” (Dorrit out!). A more detailed explanation of this statement can be found on his blog *Sokkasafi* (Sock juice) from 14 September 2001:

In Iceland today there is a Jew in Bessastaðir [the president's official residence]. Extremists in the Middle East have recently been getting stronger, as should be clear to all, and they really do not like Jews. It would be a piece of cake to hijack a plane from Icelandair and fly it into Kringlan [Reykjavík's second largest shopping mall]. Does Iceland deserve a Jew at the top?<sup>76</sup>

Subsequently, the same student published a survey about Jews in Iceland which he called “Die Bessestadt Juden,” concluding, “It is quite clear what people think about Jews. The nation has spoken.”<sup>77</sup>

Ástþór Magnússon, a former Icelandic candidate for the presidency who only had a marginal chance of being elected to the post, has often publicly presented Dorrit Moussaieff's Jewish background as a problem. For example, in 2008 he wrote the following in the comments section of a picture that he posted of a badly wounded child:

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financial crisis: *Meltdown Iceland: How the Global Financial Crisis Bankrupted an Entire Country* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 105–07.

<sup>75</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “It begins with Words...” Handout B, distributed at a seminar on the history of the Jews and antisemitism in Iceland, Akureyri University, 8 April 2006, <[https://postdoc.blog.is/users/3d/postdoc/files/varia/handout\\_2\\_2332.pdf](https://postdoc.blog.is/users/3d/postdoc/files/varia/handout_2_2332.pdf)>.

<sup>76</sup> Egill Guðmundsson's blog *Sokkasafi* has now been archived under the title *Pleasure, pleasure!* 9 September 2001, <<http://sokkasafi.blogspot.com/2001/09/>> or <[http://sokkasafi.tripod.com/2001\\_09\\_01\\_gamaltblogg.html](http://sokkasafi.tripod.com/2001_09_01_gamaltblogg.html)>.

<sup>77</sup> Vilhjálmsson, “It begins with Words...,” 6.

Mrs Dorrit Moussaieff, you who were born and raised in Jerusalem, are you going to sit idly by in the “enormousest [sic] country in the world,” Iceland the island of peace, while the “littlest” [sic]<sup>78</sup> souls of the world, the government of Israel, kill the people next door?

Dorrit, aren’t you going to lift a finger to help these victims?

I wrote a letter to you earlier this year and asked you to support and promote the message of Friður 2000 (Peace 2000)<sup>79</sup> in the Middle East. ... You didn’t answer the letter? Why? Is your heart as cold as the stone that you bought at auction in London for 735 million?<sup>80</sup>

This attack on Dorrit Moussaieff, in which her background and nationality as well as her profession as director of her family-owned jewellery company were used to smear her, was far from being an isolated incident in the years following the collapse of the Icelandic banks.

In 2008, the journalist Árni Snævarr, who today works for the United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) in Brussels, wrote an article on *eyjan.is*, in which he expressed his personal outrage over the situation in Iceland after the banks collapsed. Snævarr allowed his feelings caused by the financial crisis to rub off on his personal opinion of Dorrit Moussaieff. She had just publicly expressed a few well-intentioned words proposing a more simple and less materialistic way of life in the difficult economic situation. Snævarr made Moussaieff accountable for her husband President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson’s visions and optimism. Grímsson had, like many other Icelanders, naively put his faith in the bright, new Icelandic world of finance. As the father of the country in an office with limited political power, he called upon his fellow countrymen to be optimistic in difficult times. Snævarr’s article, targeting the president, but first and foremost his wife, was headlined: “Stay at home and count your diamonds.”<sup>81</sup>

## Foreskin issues

With assistance from the Danish branch of the American anti-circumcision group Intact, the group Intact Iceland was established in 2017. In many cases, the people who rallied around Intact Iceland on Facebook showed that they were primarily driven by hatred towards minorities. Two women, writing on *Píra-*

<sup>78</sup> Magnússon is here mocking Moussaieff’s inability to speak correct Icelandic by using incorrect superlative forms.

<sup>79</sup> Friður 2000, a charitable organization founded by Magnússon himself.

<sup>80</sup> Comment written by Ástþór Magnússon on Jónsson’s blog, 28 December 2008, <<https://jonmagnusson.blog.is/blog/jonmagnusson/entry/755687/>>.

<sup>81</sup> Árni Snævarr, “Vertu heima að telja demantana,” *Eyjublogg Árna Snævarrars*, 19 October 2008, <<http://arni.eyjan.is/2008/10/af-hverju-bori-i-ekki-svi-kkur.html>>.

*taspjall* (“Pirate chat,” the Facebook page of *Píratar*, the Icelandic Pirate Party), described religious circumcision of male children as a sex crime; they were reported to the police for hate speech. The police authorities in Reykjavík, demonstrating a gross misinterpretation of the penal code, chose not to pursue the case.<sup>82</sup>

During the time leading up to parliament rejecting the proposal to outlaw male circumcision, the *Píratar*’s Facebook page was awash with antisemitic and racist statements in the comments sections. The party otherwise defines itself as opposed to all forms of racism, but the debate about religious circumcision revealed the prevalence of the lowest forms of racism among the party’s supporters.

Ironically enough, other politicians, such as Björn Bjarnason, a former minister for *Sjálfstæðisflokkur*, were against the proposed ban. Bjarnason does, nevertheless, have his own issues with Jews and Muslims. Referring to completely unsubstantiated conspiratorial articles written by the rabidly antisemitic American journalist Wayne Madsen, he claimed that *Píratar* were taking bribes from George Soros and supported unrestricted immigration by Muslims.<sup>83</sup>

During a public hearing on the proposed ban, the Icelandic parliament received a number of statements supporting the right to religious male circumcision, but also many statements against it. Among the latter was a statement from the organization Jews against Circumcision, led by a 62-year-old man from New York State who has used several different names and pretends to be Jewish even though he is in fact a Christian. An Icelandic man, who claimed to have been circumcised in Iceland as a child at a time when no circumcisions did in fact take place, was given the opportunity to speak in support of the ban. In online media outside of Iceland this same man has grossly slurred Jews; for instance, in 2016 he called Israel’s prime minister “sub-human.”<sup>84</sup>

After much media attention from abroad, the bill against circumcising male children was rejected by the Icelandic parliament in 2018. Such a ban would be counter to the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Icelandic constitution. Among those who spoke during the deliberations on the bill were Jewish communities and organizations from several countries, the national Church of Iceland, and Catholics from Iceland and abroad. They all warned of the consequen-

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<sup>82</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Umskurðarbannsmenn fá svínslegan stuðning,” *Er ekkert í ísskápnum/Postdoc.blog.is* [blog], 2 March 2018, <<https://postdoc.blog.is/blog/postdoc/entry/2212241/>>.

<sup>83</sup> Björn Bjarnason, “Soros, Píratar og umskurður,” *Dagbók*, 13 February 2018, <<https://www.bjorn.is/dagbok/soros-piratar-umskurður?>>.

<sup>84</sup> Vilhjálmsson, “Umskurðarbannsmenn fá svínslegan stuðning.”

ces of a circumcision ban and condemned the unnuanced arguments presented by those in Iceland who were opposed to circumcision with their widely varying, but principally ignoble, motives.

## Concluding remarks

A new generation is now growing up in Iceland, more tolerant than ever before. In spite of the aforementioned cases of intolerance over the years, there is hope for Jews and other minorities. With help from Chabad the few Jews who live in Iceland now have a rabbi and the ability to express themselves religiously. The movement has not attracted any enmity from the surrounding society. Today Iceland is truly a more tolerant country when it comes to minority rights, which is why it is desirable to quell antisemitism and eradicate it from the country for good. The country has excellent legislation to combat hate speech and racism. Nonetheless, on the two occasions that someone has tried to get the authorities – the attorney general and the chief constable of Reykjavík – to investigate anti-semitic attacks, they have refused to do so. There are laws against racism, but only twice has someone been prosecuted successfully under these laws. The problem will not disappear as long as Icelandic media continue to accept rampant antisemitism and Islamophobia as well as statements supporting Holocaust denial in their comments sections. Nor have the authorities followed up on their promises from 2000 in Stockholm, where they vowed to introduce classes on the Holocaust into the school curriculum.<sup>85</sup> Ignorance is probably the greatest problem. This article has been written to provide an overview of a problem which really should not exist in Iceland, where generally no, or at times very few, Jews have ever lived. The problem is global and the solution is education.

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<sup>85</sup> Vilhjálmsson, “Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004,” 145.



Clemens Räthel

## 5 Beyond Shylock

### Depictions of Jews in Scandinavian Theatre and Literature

**Abstract:** This article casts light on the image of “the Jew” in the performing arts and literature in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway as well as on the latest academic works dealing with the topic. All three countries have a long tradition of Jewish characters both in theatre and in literature which indeed differ from one another and also, at least partly, from tested European traditions. Dealing with the Northern part of Europe highlights once more that depictions of Jews in fictional works are not necessarily linked to their actual presence. With these perspectives this article focuses on the complex interactions between aesthetic, performative, and political dimensions of antisemitism in the performing arts and literature and discusses the (lack of) academic discourses to approach the topic.

**Keywords:** Aaron Isaac; Golden Age; Henri Nathansen; Jewish stereotypes; Ludvig Holberg; Meir Aron Goldschmidt; Peter Andreas Heiberg; Philosemitism; Scandinavian literature; Scandinavian theatre.

## Introduction

The long and at times complicated relationship between the societies of the Scandinavian countries – I refer here to Denmark, Sweden, and Norway – and their Jewish minorities has been discussed and analysed from different perspectives. In the process of negotiating the (pre-)conditions of social and political participation, theatre and literature have assumed a key role. The topics of assimilation and integration, but also of more or less open antisemitism, can all be found on stage and in literature since at least the eighteenth century. Danish literature and theatre in particular offer a great variety of Jewish characters, with figurations of “the Jew” complementing and broadening common continental European patterns. So, what is there to discover in the “Northern” theatrical and literary world? What images of “the Jew” can be found in Scandinavia? How are the Jewish characters depicted, what functions are they assigned to fulfil, and to what extent do they interact with the extra-theatrical and -literary “reality”?

These questions are of particular interest if one considers that the performing arts do not simply mirror the state of Jewish integration (or the lack thereof).

The reverse is also true: literature shapes social “reality” and must therefore be regarded as an important social player. In recent years, these questions have attracted interest, both outside and within Scandinavia. In what follows, I aim to provide an overview of the central perspectives and works that deal with the depiction of Jews in Scandinavian literature and theatre in the eighteenth and (long) nineteenth centuries. The main focus will be on Denmark, where both the literature featuring Jews and the academic works focussing on these depictions are surprisingly extensive. In comparison, Sweden and Norway offer much less and will therefore be dealt with in greater brevity. I am not aiming to provide an overview of “all” Jewish characters that have been produced in the Scandinavian countries; this work has – at least partly – been done by Brøndsted (for Denmark),<sup>1</sup> Sauter (for Swedish theatre),<sup>2</sup> and Rothlauf (for Norway).<sup>3</sup> Rather, I intend to highlight the main approaches within Literary and Theatre Studies focusing on the depiction of Jews and their function in literary and performative works. This academic field is remarkably young, for a long time Scandinavian Jewish characters both on stage and in literature were hardly analysed at all. Recent works, however, have started to show the complexity of these figurations and to examine the many interconnections between literary or performative works and the extra-theatrical and -literary “reality.” Tracing literary and performative antisemitism or philosemitism requires one to take into account the specifics of artistic utterances and the many different ways of producing meaning in fictional works. As Hans-Joachim Neubauer and others have suggested, the work of literary and theatre scholars cannot be to identify or measure the amount of antisemitic depictions but rather to frame these in their time and their aesthetic and narrative conventions.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, I will show how this highly productive approach has increasingly come to influence the way in which Scandinavian theatre and literature and their depictions of Jews are read.

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<sup>1</sup> Mogens Brøndsted, *Ahasverus: Jødiske elementer i dansk litteratur* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2007), 9–54.

<sup>2</sup> Willmar Sauter, “Svensk-judisk teaterhistorik,” in *Nya judiska perspektiv: Essäer tillägnade Idy Bornstein*, ed. Idy Bornstein (Stockholm: Hillelförlag, 1993), 201–33.

<sup>3</sup> Gertraud Rothlauf, “Vom Schtetl zum Polarkreis: Juden und Judentum in der norwegischen Literatur” (PhD thesis, University of Vienna, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Hans-Joachim Neubauer, *Judenfiguren: Drama und Theater im frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 1994).

## Denmark

Like almost all literature and theatre history pertaining to Denmark, this chapter takes Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754) as its starting point. Not only is he considered to be the godfather of Danish literature and theatre, but as he was born in Bergen in Norway the Norwegians claim him as the founding father of their “national” art-institutions as well. However critically one approaches the concept of a national literature and theatre, it is certainly worth noting that Holberg’s position in this context should be discussed cautiously, as the very idea of a “national” stage or literature can hardly be applied to the beginning of the eighteenth century.

However, Holberg is the author who supplied the first vernacular stage, which opened its doors in Copenhagen in 1722, with comedies. Altogether he wrote some thirty pieces for this new theatre, plenty of which still lie at the heart of the Dano-Norwegian literary canon. Six of the plays feature Jewish characters: *Den 11. Junii* (June the Eleventh, 1724), *Mascarade* (Masquerade, 1724), *Det Arabiske Pulver* (The Arabian Powder, 1724), *Ulysses von Ithacia* (Ulysses of Ithaca, 1725), *Diderich Menschen-Skræck* (Diederich the Terrible, 1731), and *Huus-Spøgelse, eller Abracadabra* (The House’s Ghost, or Abracadabra, 1753). Apparently, at its origins the vernacular theatre seemed incapable of existing without Jewish characters. Clearly, Holberg’s oeuvre has been analysed in manifold ways, but the Jewish characters had been left in the margins until I delivered a more comprehensive reading of these complex figurations in my work on Jews in Scandinavian theatre. The clear depiction of Holberg’s Jewish characters makes it very easy for the audience to recognize them as such, especially as these stereotypes are not solely traditions of the Danish theatre but can partly also be found across the continent. Holberg’s Jews are stock characters, clearly marked externally, physically, and socially: bearded men, mavericks dressed in dark-coloured caftans, easily identified by the use of a specific language – a mixture of Danish, German, and Low-German that forms a pseudo-Yiddish stage dialect. They are closely connected to the sphere of moneylending, stock markets, and bartering. Furthermore, they are often seen running across the stage complaining about unjust treatment and are depicted as physically weak, which is underlined by their constant laments. However, this “semiotic homogeneity”<sup>5</sup> does not easily translate into a purely negative depiction of Jews. The theatre aesthetics of the time rely generally on stock characters – whether they are Jewish or not. The way

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<sup>5</sup> Clemens Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein? Jüdische Figuren im skandinavischen Theater* (Tübingen: Narr/Francke/Attempto, 2016), 46–48.

of telling a character differs strongly from the naturalistic and/or psychological mise-en-scène common for the European theatre since the Modern Breakthrough. Furthermore, the Jewish *dramatis personae*'s use of a "deviating" language in Holberg's comedies applies also, for example, to soldiers and barbers (speaking German) or noble characters (expressing themselves in French). Thus, the first vernacular Danish theatre was indeed a multilingual stage and one can assume that the audience was capable of understanding this mix of languages.<sup>6</sup>

Looking at Holberg's Jews requires that one situate them within the author's oeuvre and the stage traditions of the time. Doing so, it then seems of much greater interest to ask which functions these Jewish characters fulfil within Holberg's performative world. As I have pointed out, the interconnections between their semiotic homogeneity and functional heterogeneity offer the chance for much more complex readings and interpretations.<sup>7</sup>

Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, dramatic literature was generally regarded as the most popular and most prestigious genre, and the importance of Holberg for dramatic production in Denmark can hardly be overstated. However, due to financial difficulties and political uncertainties, the Danish Royal Theatre (as it was called from 1772) was in a precarious position until the late 1780s; as a consequence, hardly any literature at all was produced during this period. The theatre's repertoire consisted mainly of the well-known Holberg plays and translations from French and later increasingly also German – until Peter Andreas Heiberg (1758–1841) revived Danish dramatic literature towards the end of the eighteenth century. His rich dramatic oeuvre has hardly been discussed, most scholarly works dealing with him focus on his political pieces and statements even though he was a crowd favourite and his musical comedies *Indtoget*<sup>8</sup> and *Chinafarerne*<sup>9</sup> paved the way for the Royal Theatre's revival. Enormously popular, both plays feature a more modern and globalized world, focussing on economic and social entanglements. Yet again, this performative world seems to have been impossible to show without Jews. I have discussed *Chinafarerne* in particular in greater detail,<sup>10</sup> showing that the Holbergian

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<sup>6</sup> Fritz Paul, "Das Spiel mit der fremden Sprache: Zur Übersetzung von Sprachkomik in den Komödien Holbergs," in *Europäische Komödie im übersetzerischen Transfer*, ed. Fritz Paul (Tübingen: Narr, 1993), 295–323.

<sup>7</sup> Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 46–90.

<sup>8</sup> *Indtoget* premiered in 1793.

<sup>9</sup> *Chinafarerne* opened in 1792.

<sup>10</sup> Klaus Müller-Wille, "Ende gut, alles gut? Das Imaginäre der Ökonomie und die Konstitution des Populärtheaters (Fastin, P. A. Heiberg, Overskou, Hertz)," in *Wechselkurse des Vertrauens:*

semiotics also apply for Heiberg's Jews, but that Heiberg broke with some of the traditional depictions: his Jews appear in much greater numbers – in fact, the play starts with a group of Jews waiting for ships to return from China. Furthermore, they form a natural part of urban society. Still all male and with their distinctive “dialect,” they do not seem all alike. Heiberg gives a prominent spot in the play to the “noble” Jew Moses, who is not only willing to save the young Christian lovers from economic turmoil but also argues against his fellow Jews whom he blames for greed and cruelty. In addition, the musical score underlines that the noble Moses has become an integral part of the non-Jewish community in the play, at least to some extent.<sup>11</sup>

Peter Andreas Heiberg's son, Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791–1869), followed up on his father's success with a theatrical novelty that would influence the direction of the theatre for decades to come. Still, the younger Heiberg is mainly known today as a devoted disciple of Hegel, theatre manager, and harsh critic. His revolutionary take on theatre and the way of portraying Jews, however, has hardly been dealt with, my work on stage Jews being the first to take this into account: Heiberg's successful play *Kong Salomon og Jørgen Hattemager*, premiering in 1825, introduced a new genre – vaudeville – to the Royal stage,<sup>12</sup> and became an instant box office success. Once again, a Jewish protagonist takes centre stage: Salomon Goldkalb fools the rural community of the little Danish town of Korsør by pretending to be a rich banker. He figures as the play's most popular character, ridiculing the Danish bourgeoisie.<sup>13</sup> Vaudevilles became a very productive genre of the Royal Theatre between 1825 and the 1850s, and some of the plays feature Jewish characters prominently: think only of Adam Oehlenschläger's *Aladdin* (1805), Tomas Overskou's *Østergade og Vestergade* (1828) – featuring the first female Jewish character on stage – and Jens Christian Hostrup's *Genboerne* (1844). In a way, these plays carry forward Holberg's stock character Jews, even though they slightly update this tradition and partly enlarge the performative possibilities of Jewish characters.<sup>14</sup> As to finding more dramatic

*Zur Konzeptualisierung von Ökonomie und Vertrauen im nordischen Idealismus (1800–1870)*, ed. Klaus Müller-Wille and Joachim Schiedermaier (Tübingen, Basel: Francke, 2013), 193–213.

**11** Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 108–135.

**12** Kirsten Wechsel, “Herkunftstheater: Zur Regulierung von Legitimität im Streit um die Gattung Vaudeville,” in *Faszination des Illegitimen: Alterität in Konstruktionen von Genealogie, Herkunft und Ursprünglichkeit in den skandinavischen Literaturen seit 1800*, ed. Constanze Gestrich and Thomas Mohnike (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007), 39–59.

**13** Kirsten Wechsel, “Lack of Money and Good Taste: Questions of Value in Heiberg's Vaudeville,” in *Johan Ludvig Heiberg: Philosopher, Litterateur, Dramaturge and Political Thinker*, ed. John Stewart (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2008), 395–417.

**14** Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 183–205.

works featuring Jews from this highly productive period and analysing stagings of imported plays with Jewish dramatis personae (by authors such as Schröder, Kotzebue, and Iffland), this remains to be done.

To complicate things further, one has to keep in mind that these dramas – indeed, dramas in general up to the second half of the nineteenth century – were mostly written to be staged by a specific ensemble. Which implies that *how* they were performed is a significant factor to be analysed. As Niels Peder Jørgensen and my own work show, we find a very unique tradition of staging the Jew in Denmark: since the end of the eighteenth century Jewish characters have been closely associated with the theatre superstars.<sup>15</sup> Hans Christian Knudsen, hailed as a strong, patriotic, and witty actor, started this uniquely Danish tradition. He played almost all Jews at the Royal Theatre. After his untimely death, he was followed by Johan Christian Ryge, a majestic figure and natural lead actor of the cast, who took over Knudsen's parts and expanded the Jewish repertory further. At the peak of his career he had more than twenty different Jewish characters in his repertoire. The last in this line of succession is Johan Ludvig Phister, who kept the tradition alive up until the second half of the nineteenth century. The fact that the leading actors of the ensemble, who were all well-known and greatly adored beyond the stage, played almost all Jewish parts certainly influenced the reception of these figures. The positive associations with the actors and their special social standing enriched the image of the Jew on stage beyond their occasional textual flatness. To locate the dramatic characters within the theatre aesthetics of their time and also relate them to their performative execution has proven a very fruitful approach; this requires taking into account the status of the Royal Theatre as a public institution and reading the dramatic text as only one of many ingredients in the theatrical cocktail.<sup>16</sup>

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The depiction of Jewish characters in other literary genres in Denmark, however, follows different patterns. Unlike theatrical depictions, novels and poems appear much more free in their choice and embodiment of characters. Starting at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Danish authors provided a wide range of Jewish figurations in their works.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, literature became an important

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<sup>15</sup> Niels Peder Jørgensen, "The Stage Jew," in *Danish Jewish Art: Jews in Danish Art*, ed. Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen (Copenhagen: Selskabet til Udgivelse af Danske Mindesmærker, 1999), 470–79.

<sup>16</sup> Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 207–48.

<sup>17</sup> Mogens Brøndsted provides a good overview of characters and works with Jewish protagonists as well as extracts from selected works. Brøndsted, *Ahasverus*, 9–54.

forum in which to discuss the preconditions and (im)possibilities of the Jewish minority's political and social participation.

In the politically and economically difficult times at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the dispute about the “Jewish question” reached a new peak. The Napoleonic Wars had a deep impact on Denmark. As an ally of the French Emperor, the country faced intense fighting and saw the destruction of the fleet and heavy bombardments of the capital Copenhagen. In addition, the economy suffered greatly from the war, political and economic uncertainties reaching their climax with the country's bankruptcy in 1813. The Treaty of Kiel in 1814 marked a new low point: Denmark lost Norway to Sweden and what was once a dominant power in the northern hemisphere was reduced to a more or less insignificant kingdom. Despite, or rather because of, this decline, the arts thrived and thus the first half of the nineteenth century would later become known as the Danish “Golden Age.” Authors such as Adam Oehlenschläger, Hans Christian Andersen, and Henrik Hertz; painters like Christian Købke, Johan Thomas Lundbye, and Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg; the composers Christoph Ernst Friedrich Weyse and Friedrich Kuhlau and many other artists were at the forefront of this “era.”

At the same time, the legal status of the Jewish minority changed and was a topic of intense debate.<sup>18</sup> The culmination of this public controversy was reached in 1813 during the so-called literary *jødefejde* and the pogrom-like attacks on Jews in Copenhagen in 1819.<sup>19</sup> Leif Ludwig Albertsen has argued that literature in this case served as one of the main arenas of dispute, underlining that it has to be regarded as an important public domain and not “only” an aesthetic field. Following the heated discussions and violent conflicts during the 1810s, nearly all major Danish authors chose Jewish characters as protagonists for short stories and novels: Bernhard Severin Ingemann (1789–1862) wrote *Den gamle Rabbin* in 1827, the year after Steen Steensen Blicher's (1782–1848) gothic novella *Jøderne paa Hald* came out, Carsten Hauch's (1790–1872) *Guldmageren* saw the light of day in 1836, the same year Thomasine Gyllembourg (1773–1856) published her short story *Jøden*. Hans Christian Andersen's (1805–75) oeuvre contains several works with Jewish characters – most prominently the novel *Kun en Spillemand* (1837), the epic poem *Ahasverus* (1847), and the short story *Jødepigen* (1863). In her innovative reading of these Golden Age Jews, Stefanie von Schnurbein was the first to highlight that as diverse as these works are,

<sup>18</sup> Martin Schwarz Lausten, *Oplysning i kirke og synagoge. Forholdet mellem kristne og jøder i den danske oplysningsstid (1760–1814)* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Leif Ludwig Albertsen, *Engelen Mi: En bog om den danske jødefejde* (Copenhagen: Privattryck, 1984).

they all mainly feature “noble Jews,” very different from their dramatic siblings, for hardly anything is reminiscent of the Holbergian stock-characters with their “funny dialect.” Instead, a variety of figurations can be found:

Ingemann tells the story of an old rabbi. Loyal to his religious beliefs, he prevents his daughter from marrying a Christian. It turns out that in her heart she has already converted, and when the young couple gathers at the rabbi’s grave, their relationship meets with approval from the afterworld. The common religious origins are highlighted and used as a plea for tolerance. At the same time, the superiority of the Christian religion and conversion as the ultimate goal are two strong narratives that can be found in many of the Golden Age’s literary works, as Stefanie von Schnurbein shows.<sup>20</sup>

Katharina Bock’s take on Blicher’s intricate gothic tale connects the spooky elements with the Jewish character and is thus open to ambivalent readings. Blicher takes the reader to a manor in Jutland, travelling back in time to the seventeenth century, when a Dutch-Jewish family is living in the building. In doing so, Bock argues, the Jewish characters Salamiel, Joseph, and Sulamith all come to offer multiple aspects for association, closely connected with the many topoi related to (literary) Jews.<sup>21</sup> The question, what are these Jewish characters supposed to tell, proves to be very helpful also for Bock’s reading of Carsten Hauch. Following the familiar moral dichotomy of literary Jews, Hauch portrays two contrasting characters in *Guldmageren*: on the one side the greedy, cowardly, petty criminal Isak, on the other side the noble, wise, and altruistic Benjamin de Geer, a Spinoza-like figure. Hauch’s novel underlines that Jews are rarely portrayed as nuanced individuals but much more as agents of the idea that the “civil improvement” of the Jewish minority would be inevitable.<sup>22</sup>

Thomasine Gyllembourg’s novel deals, at least when it comes to the Jewish narrative thread, with questions of antisemitism, descent, and the role of religion and money. But at the same time, it is a light novella about young lovers and erotic infatuation, about three men courting the same young woman. By combin-

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<sup>20</sup> Stefanie von Schnurbein, “Darstellungen von Juden in der dänischen Erzählliteratur des poetischen Realismus,” *Nordisk Judaistik: Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 25, no. 1 (2004): 65.

<sup>21</sup> Katharina Bock, “Un-unheimliche Juden oder: Warum spukt es im Schloss? Steen Steensen Blichers Novelle über eine jüdische Familie in Jütland,” in *Beschreibungsversuche der Judenfeindschaft II. Antisemitismus in Text und Bild – zwischen Kritik, Reflexion und Ambivalenz*, ed. Hans-Joachim Hahn and Olaf Kistenmacher (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 83–107.

<sup>22</sup> von Schnurbein, “Darstellung von Juden,” 62–63.

ing these two threads, Gyllembourg delivers a novella that entangles Jewish emancipation with the emancipation of women.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to the aforementioned works, Hans Christian Andersen's oeuvre has been analysed in great depth; still, very little of this research has focused on the Jewish characters. Outside of Denmark, Hans Christian Andersen is probably best-known for his fairy tales, but his oeuvre contains everything from poems to vaudeville, novels, and short stories. A good many Jewish characters inhabit his works<sup>24</sup> and have been met with growing interest from literary scholars. Both in the short story *Jødepigen* (1856) and the novel *Kun en spillemand* (1837), Jewish characters take centre stage. *Jødepigen* tells the story of a young woman torn between religious loyalty – she has promised her dying mother to be true to her faith – and her Christian soul and longings. Of course, this recurring conflict depreciates the Jewish religion,<sup>25</sup> but more than that, it shows to what extent the integration of Jews was linked to the concept of conversion and thus total assimilation.<sup>26</sup> Another female Jewish character features prominently in *Kun en spillemand*: Naomi. Very different from *Jødepigen*, she is depicted as the exotic Other, wild, adventurous, and brave. Even though the novel appears to tell the story of Christian, the fiddler, it is as much a tale about Naomi. The two lives, it seems, are intrinsically connected from early childhood, which allows one to read them as two parts of the artist's character.<sup>27</sup> However, Naomi expands the well-known literary motif of the “schöne Jüdin,” as she turns out to be the active character in the book. She takes on Christian's identity, dresses up as a man, travels with a group of gypsies, and in the end marries rich. She becomes a hybrid figure, a mixture between a variety of ethnic and geographic origins, different religious

<sup>23</sup> Joachim Schiedermaier, “Der Kaufmann von Kopenhagen: Geld und Gabe in Thomasine Gyllembourgs Novelle *Jøden* (1836),” in *Wechselkurse des Vertrauens: Zur Konzeptualisierung von Ökonomie und Vertrauen im nordischen Idealismus (1800–1870)*, ed. Klaus Müller-Wille and Joachim Schiedermaier (Tübingen, Basel: Francke, 2013), 67.

<sup>24</sup> A good overview can be found in Erik Dal, “Jødiske elementer i H. C. Andersens skrifter,” in *Andersen og Verden: Indlæg fra den første internationale H. C. Andersen-konference, 25.–31. august 1991*, ed. Johan de Mylius, Aage Jørgensen, and Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1993), 444–52.

<sup>25</sup> Bruce Kirmmse, “Hans Christian og *Jødepigen*: En historisk undersøgelse af noget ‘underligt’,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 31 (1992): 59–66.

<sup>26</sup> Stefanie von Schnurbein, “Hybride Alteritäten: Jüdische Figuren bei H. C. Andersen,” in *Über Grenzen: Grenzgänge der Skandinavistik. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Heinrich Anz*, ed. Wolfgang Behschnitt (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007), 129–50.

<sup>27</sup> Johan de Mylius, *Myte og roman: H. C. Andersens romaner mellem romantic og realisme. En traditionshistorisk undersøgelse* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1981), 151–52.

roots, and multiple (gender) identities.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Naomi's in-betweenness does not mean that she symbolizes the other or better half of Christian, but primarily highlights the amount of extraordinary (narrative) possibilities linked to this character.<sup>29</sup> Several works have outlined that, in general, many of Andersen's literary Jews appear to function as narrative crossroads.<sup>30</sup> Crossroads of religions, social status, homo- and heterosexuality<sup>31</sup> – as well as non-heterosexual desire<sup>32</sup> – and North and South.

All these works from the so-called Danish “Golden Age” can be read as more or less direct reactions to the previously mentioned antisemitic discussions and pogroms,<sup>33</sup> as favourable contributions on the topic of Jewish emancipation. This literary “philosemitism,” however, is not a Danish invention and has been discussed in different contexts.<sup>34</sup> Yet again, it is crucial to highlight that literary texts produce meaning in complex ways: while it is mainly “noble” Jews who seem to appear during this period, these literary characters, however, are marked as quintessential Others who had to be assimilated, and who in that way could prove the integrative and harmonizing capacity of Danish bourgeois society.<sup>35</sup> Thus, it seems hardly productive to focus on the amount of anti- or philosemitism, rather it appears necessary to examine the functions of Jewish characters in the text.<sup>36</sup> With this in mind, the entanglements between the political and economic difficulties, the discussion about the legal status of the Jewish minority, and the aesthetic complexity of the literature appear worth exploring further.

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<sup>28</sup> von Schnurbein, “Hybride Alteritäten,” 136.

<sup>29</sup> Katharina Bock, “Philosemitische Schwärmerien: Jüdische Figuren in der dänischen Erzähl-literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts” (PhD thesis, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2019).

<sup>30</sup> von Schnurbein, “Hybride Alteritäten,” 139.

<sup>31</sup> Heinrich Detering, *Das offene Geheimnis: Zur literarischen Produktivität eines Tabus von Winckelmann bis zu Thomas Mann* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1994), 219–24.

<sup>32</sup> Clemens Räthel, “All the World is a Stage: Theatre and the Means of Otherness in H. C. Andersen’s *Lucky Peer* and Karen Blixen’s *The Dreamers*,” in *Literarische Juden in Skandinavien*, ed. Clemens Räthel and Stefanie von Schnurbein (Berlin: Berliner Beiträge zur Skandinavistik, forthcoming [2019]).

<sup>33</sup> Schiedermaier, “Der Kaufmann von Kopenhagen,” 55–56.

<sup>34</sup> Mona Körte, “Unendliche Wiederkehr. Der Ewige Jude und die Literatur,” in *Juden und Judentum in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, ed. Willi Jasper and others (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2006), 43–59.

<sup>35</sup> von Schnurbein, “Darstellung von Juden,” 57.

<sup>36</sup> Bock, “Philosemitische Schwärmerien.”

Jewish characters, both on stage and in literature, were mainly products of non-Jewish authors. That was about to change, when Meir Aron Goldschmidt (1819–87) entered the scene. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, he was probably the most prominent Jewish voice in Denmark. His novel *En Jøde* (A Jew), published in 1845 provides an insight into the Jewish community and deals with questions of participation and assimilation from a poignantly Jewish perspective. Other important works include the novel *Hjemløs* (1853–57) and the short story *Avromche nattergal* (1871). *En Jøde*, first published in 1845, follows the protagonist Jacob Bendixen through different stages of life and discusses the conditions and (im)possibilities of integration. Goldschmidt delivers the first realistic depiction of Jews in European literature.<sup>37</sup> His characters symbolize the tension regarding the Danish culture and nation,<sup>38</sup> the question of whether one can be both Danish and Jewish lying at the heart of the book<sup>39</sup> – as both Klaus Müller-Wille and Florian Brandenburg have shown. In contrast to his non-Jewish colleagues, Goldschmidt chooses to deny his protagonist a “successful” assimilation; Jacob Bendixen fails because of social exclusion and cultural differences.<sup>40</sup> Goldschmidt’s rich and varied oeuvre has yet to be studied in great detail, even though some work has been done in recent years focusing mainly on the outsider position of the Jewish protagonists and their rootlessness – which at times, not unproblematically, is claimed also for the author himself.<sup>41</sup> Goldschmidt’s journalistic writings and his works as a critic, however, are often left aside.

Goldschmidt, both as author and public figure, has been a reference point, notably in the oeuvre of the scholar and critic Georg Brandes (1842–1927), but even more so in the writings of Henri Nathansen (1868–1944). Brandes’s fictional work and its context have met with little interest from scholars, but recently Hjortshøj has shown that it can be read as an archive of cosmopolitanism, in which Jewishness does not function as a fixed entity but as a semantic field

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<sup>37</sup> von Schnurbein, “Darstellung von Juden,” 69.

<sup>38</sup> Florian Brandenburg, “‘At Orientaleren skal tale som Orientaler...’ Zur Problematik von Form und Funktion ‘Jüdischen Sprechens’ in M. A. Goldschmidts *En Jøde* (1845/52),” *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2014): 103–26.

<sup>39</sup> Klaus Müller-Wille, “Buchstabentheater: Zum Konzept einer modernen jüdischen Poetik in Meir Aron Goldschmidts *Avrohmche Nattergal* (1871),” *Orbis Litterarum* 68, no. 5 (2013): 411–41.

<sup>40</sup> von Schnurbein, “Darstellung von Juden,” 71.

<sup>41</sup> Tine Bach, *Exodus. Om den hjemløse erfaring i jødisk litteratur* (Copenhagen: Spring, 2006), 107–72; Kenneth H. Ober, “Meir Goldschmidt og den tysk-jødiske ghetto-fortælling,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 31 (1991): 82–89.

and an ongoing process.<sup>42</sup> Nathansen, on the other hand, is best known as a hugely successful playwright, an internationally acclaimed author, and one of the most productive and colourful literary figures of the first decades of the twentieth century. Despite his success, Nathansen too has, for a long time, hardly been of interest to literary scholars. Even in Denmark, he has been widely neglected in Literary and Theatre Studies dealing with the first half of the twentieth century. An exception is Tine Bach's pioneering work on Nathansen, which, not unproblematically, focuses mainly on the characters' alleged rootlessness and then transfers that analysis onto Nathansen himself.<sup>43</sup> In a recent series of articles, however, I have thoroughly examined some of Nathansen's works and in so doing highlighted the richness of his writings: his novel *Af Hugo Davids liv*, published in four parts in 1917, reads partly like an answer to *En Jøde*. Nathansen similarly follows his protagonist from cradle to grave and, in so doing, delivers a multi-layered narration of what it meant to be a Jew in Denmark at the beginning of the twentieth century. In contrast to Goldschmidt, Nathansen does not deny the possibility of integration, nor does he present it as the only option. Instead, he offers spatial and narrative interstices, in which his many ambiguous characters are to be found.<sup>44</sup> This immanent in-betweenness is characteristic of other works as well; for example, the drama *Dr. Wahl* (1915). Interestingly, Nathansen depicts in-betweenness as an option, a space in its own right, rather than understanding it as a deficient spatial or temporal construction.<sup>45</sup>

To date, Nathansen is best known for his drama *Indenfor murene*, which figures among the most performed plays ever at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, with over five hundred performances since its opening night in 1912, second only to the infamous "national" *Elverhøj*. In 2006 the play was even incorporated into the highly controversial culture canon published by the Danish Ministry of Culture. Dealing with questions of assimilation, reconciliation, and inter-religious relationships, *Indenfor murene* allows the audience, for the very first time, a

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<sup>42</sup> Søren Blak Hjortshøj, "Georg Brandes' Representation of Jewishness: Between Grand Recreation of the Past and Transformative Visions of the Future" (PhD thesis, Roskilde University, 2017), 173–209.

<sup>43</sup> Bach, *Exodus*, 215–52.

<sup>44</sup> Clemens Räthel, "Zwischen Räumen: (Un-)Möglichkeiten von Fremdheit in Henri Nathansens Roman *Af Hugo Davids Liv*," *Folia Scandinavica* 24 (2018): 53–70.

<sup>45</sup> Clemens Räthel, "Could You Change the Final Act? Processes of Translation in and around Henri Nathansen's Play *Dr. Wahl*," in *Translating Scandinavia: Scandinavian Literature in Italian and German Translation, 1918–1945*, ed. Bruno Berni and Anna Wegener (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2018), 175–86.

look into a Danish-Jewish home on stage.<sup>46</sup> Esther and Jørgen's young love is overshadowed by their parents' hatred towards each other, deriving from an old conflict that emerges once again as the seemingly impossible conditions of the inter-religious marriage are negotiated. Even though Nathansen does not solve the issue, he leaves the audience with some hope for a happy future for the young lovers. While Nathansen breaks several scenic taboos and addresses the fragility of social conventions,<sup>47</sup> in recent years the play has been openly read as a story of success, a reminder of a fortuitous acculturation, and as such a vigorous admonition for others, namely Muslim immigrants, to follow suit.<sup>48</sup> One might wonder whether such an interpretation of Nathansen's play – to bash one immigrant group with another – is productive in any way.

To sum up, during the last several years many meritorious works on the depiction of Jews in Danish literature and theatre have been accomplished. As I have shown, the variety and complexity of Jewish fictional characters require further examination, especially when it comes to literature and theatre in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

## Sweden

The literary and theatre traditions in Sweden are partly different from those of its Danish neighbours – mainly due to the fact that theatre came to Sweden more or less via Royal investment: the “immortal” theatre-monarch Gustav III (1746–92) founded many of the institutions that are still of defining importance for the arts in Sweden today, for example, the Royal Opera and the Royal Theatre as well as the Swedish Academy.

Gustav III was also key to the emergence of Jewish life in Sweden. The so-called *judereglement* from 1782 reformed the legal status of Jews who were eventually given the right to live (in select cities) and work (as merchants or in crafts not organized by the guild system) in Sweden. The German-born Aaron Isaac is considered to be the first Jew allowed to settle and work in Sweden without being forced to convert to Christianity. He was also the first Jewish author

<sup>46</sup> Clemens Räthel, “*What’s Jewish about a Jew?* The Question of (Un-)Recognizability in Two Productions of Henri Nathansen’s Play *Indenfor Murene* (Within the Walls),” *Scandinavian Studies* 90, no. 1 (2018): 24–26.

<sup>47</sup> Räthel, “*What’s Jewish about a Jew?*,” 38–40.

<sup>48</sup> In the theatre programme for the 2005 production of the play, both Tine Bach and Flemming Røghild stretch that narrative, as does Bente Clausen in a number of articles in *Kristeligt Dagblad* in 2005. See Räthel, “*What’s Jewish about a Jew?*,” 35–48.

who, in his “memoirs,” provided insight into the life of the young minority in the Swedish capital. I have argued that his autobiographical book, which was actually never meant to be published, can be understood as a form of transgressive literature,<sup>49</sup> as it describes Aaron’s long and eventful journey across many borders from his German hometown to Stockholm, the challenges of starting anew in Sweden, and the difficulties and pleasures he faced along the way. The book itself crosses many borders: written in a form of Yiddish-Swedish using Hebrew letters, it becomes almost impossible to decipher the text “correctly.” Thus, the German<sup>50</sup> and Swedish<sup>51</sup> “translations” differ from one another – even the name of the author is spelled differently – and in a sense the text demands that the reader cope with a “literary no-man’s-land.”<sup>52</sup> So far, hardly any research has been done on fictional Jewish characters from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, underlining the importance of Aaron’s text. As of yet, we simply do not know of any other Jewish figurations that might be found in Swedish literature from that time. In contrast, the stage offers a greater variety of characters.

The theatrical depictions of Jews appear partly similar to their Danish counterparts. Holberg is a favourite also in Stockholm, and again, embodying Jewish characters on stage proved to be very successful for both actors and authors. My work on stage Jews offers a closer look at Olof Kexél’s (1748–96) play *Välgörandet på prof*. The comedy, which premiered in 1790, is probably the only original Swedish play from the Gustavian era featuring a Jewish character. The manuscript of the play shows that Moses, the Jew, was a last-minute addition. In order to integrate a Jewish character, Kexél did not alter his comedy, but transformed one of the dramatis personae, the estate agent Dividerius, into a stage Jew by simply changing his name and translating his part into the common Jewish theatre-dialect. All this was done in order to offer the actor Kjell Waltman, a superstar of his time, another Jewish part, as the audience had been exceptionally delighted by his performances of Jews.<sup>53</sup>

While the Danish theatre kept a rather low profile in the controversies about the legal status of Jews and their participation in social and political life, the Stockholm stage took on a more active role: during the 1838 upheavals Richard

<sup>49</sup> Clemens Räthel, “Gränsland – Ett (judiskt) äventyr mellan Tyskland och Sverige,” *Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek* 36, no. 2 (2018): 236–42.

<sup>50</sup> Aaron Isaak, *Lebenserinnerungen: Textfassung und Einleitung von Bettina Simon* (Berlin: Edition Henrich, 1994).

<sup>51</sup> Aaron Isaak, *Minnen: Ett judiskt äventyr i svenska 1700-tal*, ed. Mattias Dahlén (Stockholm: Hillelförlaget, 2008).

<sup>52</sup> Räthel, “Gränsland,” 240–41.

<sup>53</sup> Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 314–29.

Cumberland's *The Jew* (1794) was brought back to stage, presenting a very favourable image of a Jew<sup>54</sup> by a cast full of crowd favourites. Another example would be the staging of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* in 1863, the same year that interreligious marriages were allowed in Sweden, though not without dispute. Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–99) has been discussed ever since its premiere in 1854,<sup>55</sup> both as a token of Jewish assimilation and as an example of antisemitism.<sup>56</sup> As the play is still regularly performed today, the impact a production of the play has on its audience has been shown in connection with the 2004 mise-en-scène at the Royal Theatre (*Dramaten*) in Stockholm.<sup>57</sup>

The (performative) bridges between the European continent and Scandinavia are not only apparent in the dramatic works staged – like *The Merchant of Venice* or *Nathan der Weise* – but also through people working on either side of the Baltic Sea, as Tiina Rosenberg underlines in her brilliant contributions regarding the history of theatre: the Swedish-Jewish director Ludvig Josephson (1832–99) introduced modern theatre ideas from France and Germany to both Sweden and Norway.<sup>58</sup> Accompanying these revolutionary stage concepts were the impressions of much more open societies, in which Jewish participation appeared almost self-evident – at least compared to how Josephson recalled the situation in both Norway and Sweden.<sup>59</sup> In his works, like Halévy's opera *La Juive* (1835), the topic of belonging features strongly.

How much there remains to discover, how many Jewish characters and figurations await a proper analysis, is demonstrated in the overviews *Svensk-judisk litteratur 1775–1994*<sup>60</sup> and the aforementioned *Svensk-judisk teaterhistorik*.<sup>61</sup> Both

<sup>54</sup> Ingeborg Nordin Hennel and Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, "Nystart på Arsenal," in *Ny svensk teaterhistoria 2. 1800-tals teater*, ed. Tomas Forser (Hedemora: Gidlund, 2007), 13–28.

<sup>55</sup> Ann Fridén, "Att vara eller inte vara: Shakespeare på kunglig scen i 1800-talets Stockholm," in *Den svenska nationalscenen: Traditioner och reformer på Dramaten under 200 år*, ed. Claes Rosenqvist (Höganäs: Wiken, 1988), 102–23.

<sup>56</sup> Willmar Sauter, "Shylock i Sverige," *Teatervetenskap* 20 (1979): 20–27.

<sup>57</sup> Yael Feiler, "What Happens When The Merchant of Venice is Being Staged? A Comparative Analysis of the Reception of Three European Productions," in *Shakespeares Shylock och antisemitism: Andra, utökande utgåvan*, ed. Yael Feiler and Willmar Sauter (Stockholm: Stuts, 2010), 133–62.

<sup>58</sup> Tiina Rosenberg, *En regissörs estetik: Ludvig Josephson och den tidiga teaterregin* (Stockholm: Stuts, 1993).

<sup>59</sup> Tiina Rosenberg, *Mästerregissören: När Ludvig Josephson tog Europa til Sverige* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2017).

<sup>60</sup> Hilde Rohlén-Wohlgemut, *Svensk-judisk litteratur 1775–1994: En litteraturhistorisk översikt* (Spånga: Megilla, 1995).

<sup>61</sup> Sauter, "Svensk-judisk teaterhistorik."

might serve as promising starting points for further work on this important subject matter.

## Norway

As mentioned previously, Ludvig Holberg is often regarded as the founding father of Norwegian literature and theatre. This narrative has come into being in connection with the organization of literature and theatre according to national spheres. During Holberg's lifetime, there was practically no (institutional) theatre in Norway. Now and again, touring companies found their way north, but the first permanent stage only opened its doors in Christiania (Oslo) in 1827. Even though Norway by then had become a part of Sweden, the longstanding relationship with Denmark can be traced easily: Danish was *the* language spoken on stage, actors and plays were mainly imports from Copenhagen. It was only in 1899 that Norway gained a national theatre of its own.

The country also occupies an exceptional position when it comes to its dealings with the Jewish minority. Actually, for a long time there was no Jewish minority in Norway. The otherwise very liberal 1814 constitution banned Jews from entering the country – this would not change until 1851 when, finally, after lengthy heated discussions, the second paragraph of the constitution was changed. Again, literature and theatre were heavily implicated in this dispute. Famously, the author Henrik Wergeland (1808–45) positioned himself against the so-called *jødeparagrafen* (Jew-paragraph). His political agenda was flanked by literary works that emerged in the context of two ballots on the Jew-paragraph in the Norwegian parliament: *Jøden – Ni blomstrende Tornekviste* in 1842, followed by *Jødinden – Elleve blomstrende Tornekviste* two years later. Little work has been done on the literary dimensions of these contributions. Katharina Bock's take on the two poem collections is therefore quite unique, as she shows how Wergeland aims to turn Jewish stereotypes into positive images.<sup>62</sup> In doing so, he addresses both the political elite and society more generally. Biblical references illustrate that Jews are not to be understood as a “nation” but a faith community, and that they embody the ideas of Christian love much better than the Norwegians. Furthermore, Wergeland highlights economic advantages

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<sup>62</sup> Katharina Bock, “Blühende Dornenzweige: Henrik Wergelands Gedichte und der Judenparagraph in der norwegischen Verfassung” (master’s dissertation, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2011), 63.

for the nation allowing Jews access to the country and thereby opening it up for trade connections.<sup>63</sup>

Turning to dramatic works, I have argued that Adolph Rosenkilde's (1816–82) vaudeville *En Jøde i Mandal* can also be read – partly – as a political statement. It premiered in 1849 and plays openly with the image of “the Jew”: in the little town of Mandal a Jew has allegedly been seen and the authorities are ordered, with regard to the constitution's second paragraph, to catch him and force him to leave the country by putting him on the ferry to Denmark. As it turns out, nobody has ever seen a Jew and thus tensions rise immensely. Rosenkilde's drama illustrates that the image of “the Jew” exists despite there being no Jews in the country. The connection between discursive presence and physical absence generates a sphere of the arcane in which immense power is attributed to the Jewish part.<sup>64</sup> In the disputes about the Jew-paragraph Rosenkilde's drama takes a clear position, as it turns out that the “dangerous” Jew is really a student in disguise looking for a cheap way home to Copenhagen. By ridiculing Norwegian society, *En Jøde i Mandal* illustrates perfectly theatre's ability to play with culturally relevant images of the Other and turn them upside down.<sup>65</sup> Other dramatic works from this period have been found that can be regarded as closely connected with discussions around the Jew-paragraph, such as Andreas Munch's *Jøden*<sup>66</sup> or Christian Rasmus Hansson's *Den første Jøde*.<sup>67</sup> To contextualize these and other dramatic works in depth within the political situation in Norway, but even more so within the theatre traditions of their time, remains to be done. As the overview *Vom Schtetl zum Polarkreis: Juden und Judentum in der norwegischen Literatur*<sup>68</sup> illustrates, other literary genres also depict Jews in many different ways. More generally, it seems that explorations of the diverse and ambivalent depictions of Jews in literature and theatre, especially in Sweden and Norway, still have plenty to offer.

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<sup>63</sup> Bock, “Blühende Dornenzweige,” 66.

<sup>64</sup> Clemens Räthel, “Gibt es denn hier niemand, der weiß, wie ein Jude aussieht? Adolf Rosenkildes Drama *Ein Jude in Mandal* (1848) und die Auseinandersetzungen um die rechtliche Stellung der Juden in Norwegen,” in *Juden und Geheimnis: Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen*, ed. Claus Oberhauser (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2015), 54.

<sup>65</sup> Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 281–89.

<sup>66</sup> Andreas Snildal, “De ere Jøder!” Andreas Munch, jødesaken og tilblivelse av et ukjent drama,” in *Andreas Munch: Jøden*, ed. Ernst Bjerke, Tor Ivar Hansen, and Andreas Snildal (Oslo: Det Norske Studentersamfund, 2012), VII–XXVII.

<sup>67</sup> Madelen Marie Brovold, “De første jødene. Norsk dramatikk 1825–1852” (master's dissertation, University of Oslo, 2016).

<sup>68</sup> Rothlauf, “Vom Schtetl zum Polarkreis.”



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## **The State of Research on Antisemitism**



Sofie Lene Bak

## 6 Chronicles of a History Foretold

### The Historiography of Danish Antisemitism

**Abstract:** Historiography has long ignored the topic of Danish antisemitism in the twentieth century because of the assumption that the rescue of Danish Jews during the Holocaust was irreconcilable with antisemitism of any kind. By the new millennium, public attention facilitated in-depth explorations of Danish refugee policy between 1933–45, revealing an official zeal to ostracize Jewish refugees and a radicalization of rhetoric, with the adoption of stereotypes and concepts from National Socialist ideology. Concurrently, a comprehensive investigation of the interwar and occupation years disclosed widespread xenophobia and racialism in Danish society. However, the focus of researchers quickly changed, leaving vital aspects such as continuity, the relationship between discourse and practice, as well as the period after 1945 largely unexplored. Danish historiography remains full of blanks and the lack of political and academic support suggests that the idea remains prevalent that antisemitism of any kind is irreconcilable with the Danish experience.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; Denmark; Jewish refugees; historiography; Holocaust; racism; racialism; National Socialism.

In the novella *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (Chronicle of a Death Foretold, 1981), the Colombian author and Nobel Prize laureate Gabriel García Márquez recounts the paradoxical story of a revenge killing announced and predicted in advance. The novella frequently comes to mind when examining the historiography of Danish antisemitism. Conclusions are usually foretold: for a long time, the notion that antisemitism was virtually non-existent in Denmark was reproduced in research as well as in collective memory – if the topic was mentioned at all. What was certainly always mentioned was the rescue of the Danish Jews during the Holocaust, when 95 per cent of the Danish Jewish community reached safety in Sweden in an operation affectionately referred to as “little Dunkirk.” Since very little research has actually been done on antisemitic representations and notions historically (or currently), such conclusions were based on extrapolation: as the Danes demonstrated the will to rescue the Jews in October 1943, they could not possibly hold antisemitic attitudes.

This article examines the historiography of Danish antisemitism focusing on research on anti-Jewish sentiments, artefacts, and archives in the twentieth cen-

tury. The word *antisemitisme*, translated from the German *Anti-Semitismus*, had no fixed meaning in the Danish language. In the early 1930s, it was a foreign word, and the etymological confusion was reflected in frequent misspellings. With the rise of National Socialism in Germany and the formation of Danish National Socialist parties prone to racist rhetoric, the word took on new negative connotations. The word became stigmatized and was perceived as a synonym for Nazism. This etymology long hindered investigations into forms and expressions of antisemitism that were not of Nazi origin or that predated the rise of National Socialism. An antisemitism that fed on the European tradition of secular racialism and racism but took root through an antisemitic interpretation of Danish history, Danish Jews, and Danish society.

To this day, the standard reference on the persecution and rescue of the Danish Jews during the Holocaust is the 1966 doctoral thesis by Israeli historian Leni Yahil, *Hazalat ha-Yehudim be-Danya* (in English as *A Test of Democracy*, 1969).<sup>1</sup> Inspired by the story of solidarity and activism, Yahil succumbed to a normative perception of the Danish people that only allowed for criticism of the small number of self-avowed Danish National Socialists and the even fewer proponents of a racist and radical antisemitism. Though the Danish translation (1967) of the original Hebrew version caused some embarrassment amongst modest Danish historians,<sup>2</sup> Yahil introduced a narrative that would have enormous influence both nationally and internationally: according to Yahil, the Danes possessed a “special character ... with its high ethical standard and its love of freedom and democracy”<sup>3</sup> and were immune to antisemitism. Antisemitism was simply “un-Danish” and alien to Danish culture.

For decades the topic was ignored. Antisemitism in any form was irreconcilable with the hegemonic perception of harmonious Jewish immigration and integration in the decades before the war, just as the exceptional rescue in 1943 overshadowed any conflicts and distracted attention away from the disgrace of Danish collaboration during the war. Since antisemitism was limited to a

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<sup>1</sup> Leni Yahil, *הצלת היהודים בדנמרק: דמוקרטיה שעמדה בבחן* [Hazalat ha-Yehudim be-Danya: demokratiya še-'anda be-mivḥan], The Rescue of the Jews in Denmark: A Democracy That Passed the Test] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1966). Danish version: *Et demokrati på prøve*, trans. Werner David Melchior (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1967). English version: *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of a Democracy*, trans. Morris Gradel (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Hans Kirchhoff, “Leni Yahil: Et demokrati på prøve. Jøderne i Danmark under besættelsen. Oversat til dansk fra hebraisk af Werner David Melchior.” [review article], *Historisk Tidsskrift* 4 (1969): 269–277.

<sup>3</sup> Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*, xviii.

group of stigmatized political deviants, it was never perceived as a common or collective phenomenon.

It was only in 1987 that Karl Christian Lammers became the first to point out the problems with this myth. His analysis was limited to a selection of articles from right-wing newspapers, focusing on the provincial daily *Jyllands-Posten*, and especially the notorious editorial of 15 November 1938. The editorial was a reaction to the events of the “Kristallnacht” expressing an acceptance of Germany’s right to solve “the Jewish Question” and including a national angle with the rhetoric that, “even at home, where the Jews have never reached as dominant a position as in the Central European countries, their unfortunate characteristics have been noticed in recent years.” However, the editorial was not placed in the context of the profile of *Jyllands-Posten* at the time or of the potential extent of antisemitism in Danish society in general.<sup>4</sup> Since then, the editorial has been a hot potato. In 2005, an unpublished master’s dissertation by Martin Ramlov provided historical context and documented the antisemitic trends and overall continuity from 1919 – 32. The findings were later published in a feature article in the left-wing newspaper *Information*. As of today, the legacy still befuddles editors and company historiographers, who frequently tend towards making excuses.<sup>5</sup>

In 2000, Michael Mogensen uncovered another taboo with an account of antisemitism among members of the Danish resistance. Based on letters intercepted by the Swedish Security Service he unravelled the antisemitic reactions of resistance fighters confronted with the former victims of persecution now operating the Danish refugee administration in Sweden. Antisemitism obviously played a role in tensions between activism and passivism, as Jews were accused of lacking engagement in active resistance in the Danish Brigade and in the illegal routes smuggling weapons and intelligence to and from occupied Denmark. Yet the letters also revealed a readiness to use racial and racist language, pointing to an aspect of discourse that had yet to be investigated.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Karl Christian Lammers, “Det fremmede element: Om antisemitisme i Danmark i mellemkrigstiden,” *Den jyske historiker* 40 (1987): 84–98. *Jyllands-Posten*, 15 November 1938: “Selv herhjemme, hvor jøerne aldrig har nået en så dominerende stilling som i de mellemeuropæiske lande, har man i de senere år bemærket deres uheldige egenskaber.”

<sup>5</sup> Martin Ramlov, “Antisemitisme i Danmark? Belyst gennem en analyse af *Jyllands-Posten* og Mosaisk Samfund 1919–1932” (master’s dissertation, Aarhus University, 2005). Ulrik Dahlin, “Da *Jyllands-Posten* var antisemitisk,” *Information*, 28 October 2008. For an apologetic interpretation, see Gerhardt Eriksen, *Hvis De vil vide mere: Historien om en avissucces* (Viby Jylland: *Jyllands-Posten*, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Mogensen, “Det danske flygtningesamfund i Sverige og ‘jødespørgsmålet’ 1943–45,” in *I tradition og kaos: Festschrift til Henning Poulsen*, ed. Johnny Laursen and others (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2000). See also Michael Mogensen, “Antisemitisme i det danske flygt-

Aspects of racialism had been investigated by Lene Koch in her doctoral thesis on racial hygiene and forced sterilization in Denmark from the 1920s to the 1960s. Racialist theories were pervasive in political debates and practices in the interwar years, not least inspired by eugenics. The powerful Social Democratic politician and minister of Social Affairs, K. K. Steincke, was personally responsible for the introduction of “racial-hygienic” or “reproduction-hygienic” legislation in Denmark, which he saw as the potential basis for a rational and expanding welfare policy. With a groundbreaking law on access to sterilization in 1929, Denmark became the first country in Europe to allow forced sterilization of “defective” individuals. The popularity of eugenics was undoubtedly linked to the pessimism following the First World War and the scientification of social thinking that celebrated social engineering and sought to treat societal dysfunction with surgery. It is obvious that racism in the twentieth century drew on the fundamental eugenic idea that improving the population was a task for the state.<sup>7</sup> In Denmark eugenics were neither antisemitic as in Germany nor racist as in the United States, yet they did encompass a notion of race and of its possible improvement and degeneration.

Following an international trend examining the role of bystanders in the mechanisms of the Holocaust, by the new millennium Danish society faced the troublesome and repressed history of the Jews who sought refuge in Denmark after 1933. Bent Blüdnikow broached the subject with a book titled *Som om de ikke eksisterede* (As If They Didn’t Exist) in 1991, while a master’s dissertation by Lone Rümitz in 1995 presented a more systematic analysis of Danish refugee policy and its consequences.<sup>8</sup> Concerns about the unemployment rate and social

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ningesamfund i Sverige 1943–45?” in *Antisemitisme i Danmark?* ed. Michael Mogensen (Copenhagen: Dansk Center for Holocaust og Folkedrabsstudier, 2002), 101–14.

<sup>7</sup> Lene Koch, *Racehygiejne i Danmark 1920–56* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1996); Lene Koch, *Tvangssterilisation i Danmark 1929–67* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2000), and Lene Koch, “Eugenic Sterilisation in Scandinavia,” *The European Legacy* 11, no. 3 (2006): 299–309. See also Jes Fabricius Møller, “Biologismer, naturvidenskab og politik ca. 1850–1930” (PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Bent Blüdnikow, *Som om de ikke eksisterede* (Copenhagen: Samleren, 1991), and Lone Rümitz, *Danmark og de jødiske flygtninge 1933–1940: En bog om flygtninge og menneskerettigheder* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000) (based on her master’s dissertation from 1995). See also Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Vi har ikke brug for 70.000 jøder,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 7 (1998): 41–56, and Frank Meyer, *Dansken, svensken og nordmannen...: Skandinaviske habitusforskeller sett i lys av kulturmøtet med tyske flyktninger* (Oslo: Unipub Forlag, 2001). Meyer applies a comparative perspective to the refugee policies of the Nordic countries. For an early but overlooked discussion of the negative reactions to the Jewish refugees in Denmark, see the memoir of the missionary Aage Esbo: *Blandt Danmarks Jøder: En Missionærers Tilbageblik over 35 Aars Virke blandt Jøder* (Copenhagen: Lohse, 1946).

tensions weighed heavily in the considerations of Danish authorities. According to Rünitz, Danish politicians perceived the Jewish refugee as a threat to the integrity and cohesion of society – the fear of creating a “Jewish Question” in Denmark – as well as to the nation’s survival, as the refugees presented a threat to the stability of the Danish-German relations.

This festering topic quickly attracted political attention, and in 2000 the newly established Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Copenhagen was assigned a sizable research grant and entrusted with carrying out a systematic investigation of Danish refugee policy from 1933–45. Thousands of individual refugee cases were examined as were official documents and public statements. The project yielded six volumes and an official apology from Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, head of the liberal-conservative government at the time. The apology was explicitly concerned with the expulsion of twenty Jewish refugees during the German occupation, described as a “shameful act” and “a stain on Denmark’s otherwise good reputation.” The Jewish refugees were deported from Denmark and sent back to Nazi Germany, where they were sent to concentration or death camps where eighteen of them were murdered.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, despite the impressive scale and rigour of the investigation, the role of antisemitism in the state apparatus, in parliament, government, and the police was only explored indirectly. Among the findings were the extent of official zeal in identifying, expelling, and discouraging Jewish refugees and a radicalization of rhetoric that occurred with the adoption of stereotypes and concepts from National Socialist ideology.

The refugee policy was supported by business organizations, trade unions, and even the Jewish community (*Mosaisk Troessamfund*), who all expressed an agreed upon aversion towards granting residence and work permits to the Jewish refugees. The established Jewish families, who dominated the leadership of the Jewish community, took on the fear of contributing to “the Jewish problem.” On several occasions, the community expressed the need for a confirmation of their place in Danish society and internal discussions in the community

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<sup>9</sup> See Cecilie Stokholm Banke, *Demokratiets skyggeside: Flygtninge og menneskerettigheder i Danmark før Holocaust* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2005); Hans Kirchhoff, *Et menneske uden pas er ikke noget menneske* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2005); Lone Rünitz, *Af hensyn til konsekvenserne: Danmark og flygtningespørgsmålet 1933–1940* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2005); Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, *Medaljens bagside – jødiske flygtningeskæbner i Danmark 1933–1945* (Copenhagen: Vandkunsten, 2005); Hans Kirchhoff and Lone Rünitz, *Udsendt til Tyskland: Dansk flygtningepolitik under besættelsen* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2007); Lone Rünitz, *Diskret ophold: Jødiske flygtningebørn under besættelsen* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2007).

during the German occupation do not reveal unconditional faith in their non-Jewish neighbours. Jewish leaders perceived antisemitism as a latent factor that could be provoked by the slightest opposition. As a consequence, the community loyally backed the restrictive refugee policy and heeded instructions to be discrete.<sup>10</sup>

That Danish refugee policy was in consonance with the wishes and attitudes of the Danish population was demonstrated by my PhD thesis in 2003. The ensuing book *Dansk Antisemitisme 1933–1945* (Danish Antisemitism 1933–45) documented that xenophobic prejudices about Jews were widespread in Danish society during the interwar years. Equally common was a racialism which linked certain behaviours, mentalities, and physiological stereotypes to “the Jewish race.” Antisemitic xenophobia thrived on an abstraction of the Jew based on anti-Judaism as well as on socio-economic stereotypes about perceived pre-emancipated and unassimilated “Jewish” behaviour. Racialism infected prejudices with an unselfconscious racism, however explicit racism was rarely directed towards Jews. On the other hand, xenophobic antisemitism was deemed acceptable in public debate.

Antisemitism was therefore not a marginal phenomenon confined to the radical racists in the Danish National Socialist parties. However, as the threat from the German neighbour became imminent, the political and juridical fight against racist antisemitism became an integral part of a strategy by the political establishment to preserve liberal democracy. Scientists stressed uncertainty around the concept of race and rejected the idea of pure and superior races. Clergymen emphasized the mutual ties between Christianity and Judaism, and politicians compared racism with medieval superstition, ridiculed the National Socialist racial theories, and changed the parameters of public debate. The offensive anti-authoritarian strategy was discursively translated into an association between antisemitism and Nazism and a rejection of the phenomenon as “un-Danish” and alien to Danish culture. The perception that antisemitism was imported to Denmark with National Socialism, that remains prevalent in historiography, is thus a perception created in the 1930s as a safeguard against antidemocratic in-

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<sup>10</sup> Peder Wiben, “Komitéen af 4. maj 1933: Jødisk flygtningearbejde i Danmark 1933–1941,” in *Fra Mellomkrigstid til Efterkrigstid: Festschrift til Hans Kirchhoff og Henrik S. Nissen på 65-årsdagen oktober 1998*, ed. Henrik Dethlefsen and Henrik Lundbak (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1998). Regarding the debate on the reactions of the Jewish communal leadership to the roundup in October 1943, see Arthur Arnheim, “Opgøret som udeblev,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 6 (1997): 16–26; Lone Rünitz, “Den nødvendige politik,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 7 (1998): 72–76 and Arthur Arnheim, “Nødvendig politik contra unødvendig passivitet,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 7 (1998): 77–79.

fluence. Danish resistance to antisemitism was not a matter of innate immunity but the result of a genuine political process.

Whereas Danish politicians rejected the relevance of antisemitism to Denmark and spurned the National Socialist form, they simultaneously encouraged a range of antisemitic stereotypes. This ambivalence had consequences for the political climate of the 1930s. The fear of creating a “Jewish problem” resulted in political consensus in favour of a very restrictive immigration policy.<sup>11</sup> In 2018, being the first PhD thesis on Holocaust Studies in more than decade, Jakob Halvas Bjerre documented that a German “Aryanization” policy was directed towards Danish-German trade from 1937. By 1942, all Danish Jewish agents and representatives for German firms in Denmark had been removed and most Jewish importers had been excluded from the German foreign trade. The successful Aryanization of German-Danish trade relations met no resistance from the Danish government. On the contrary, Danish police readily supplied the German legation with information on which companies were regarded as Jewish, and partners and competitors in the business sector did not refrain from opportunistic takeovers enhancing their “Aryan” status.<sup>12</sup> The Danish reactions to the enforcement of racist principles in Danish-German trade once again emphasize the ambivalence and inconsistency of the Danish position trapped between democratic ideals and the realities of foreign policy and clouded by antisemitic xenophobia.

The lukewarm and inconsistent Nazi-inspired antisemitism in Denmark has been investigated piece by piece rather than as a whole. John T. Lauridsen’s substantial investigations of the largest – and most influential – Danish National Socialist party, DNSAP (*Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Arbeiderparti*), have documented a cautious tactic that led to the exclusion of radical antisemites in 1935. Yet despite a historiographic tendency to the contrary, the antisemitism of DNSAP was by no means “moderate.” DNSAP promoted a racist antisemitism, declared a racial clash between “Danes” and “Jews,” and positioned itself against interracial mixing.<sup>13</sup> In *Dansk Antisemitisme 1933–1945* I uncovered the

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<sup>11</sup> Sofie Lene Bak, *Dansk Antisemitisme 1930–1945* (Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Jakob Halvas Bjerre, “Excluding the Jews: The Aryanization of Danish-German Trade and German Anti-Jewish Policy in Denmark 1937–1943” (PhD thesis, Copenhagen Business School, 2018) and Jakob Halvas Bjerre, “Samarbejdets diskrimination,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for Jødisk Kultur og Forskning* 26 (2017): 107–21.

<sup>13</sup> John T. Lauridsen, “DNSAP og ‘jødespørsgsmålet.’ Variationer over et internationalt tema,” in *Dansk Nazisme: 1930–45 – og derefter*, ed. John T. Lauridsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2002), 261–287, and John T. Lauridsen, ed., “*Føreren har ordet!*” Frits Clausen om sig selv og DNSAP (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Bibliotek/Museum Tusculanum, 2003).



**Figure 6.1:** During the German occupation of Denmark 1940–45, Danish police protect a young man who is harassed by National Socialists (The Museum of Danish Resistance). Public domain.

dangerous informant culture among the radical antisemites in the NSAP/Danish Anti-Jewish League (*Dansk Antijødisk Liga*) and the slippery slope between anti-Judaism and antisemitism in the Nazi-inspired party, the Danish People's Community (*Dansk Folkefællesskab*). In addition, the Danish reception and publication history of the antisemitic classics – most prominently *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* – has been recounted,<sup>14</sup> whereas the personal paths leading to an antisemitic worldview have been explored in biographies of the author Olga Eggers, the leader of the Danish Anti-Jewish League Aage H. Andersen, and the commander of the Danish SS corps C. F. von Schalburg.<sup>15</sup> Whereas the

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<sup>14</sup> John T. Lauridsen, “‘Zions Vises Protokoller’ på dansk,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 9 (2000): 65–68, and Morten Thing, *Antisemitismens bibel – historien om smæde-skriften Zions Vises* (Copenhagen: Informations forlag, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Charlotte Rohlin Olsen and Iben Vyff, “Olga Eggers – Kvinde i en brydningstid: En tematisk biografi om køn, politik og race mellem socialdemokrati og nazisme” (master’s dissertation, Roskilde University, 1997); Iben Vyff, “Olga Eggers – fra socialdemokrat til nazist og antisemit,” *Arbejderhistorie* 3 (1999): 17–30; Sofie Lene Bak, “Den røde synd: Brevvekslingen mellem Olga

complicity in the Holocaust and the antisemitic violence committed by Danish SS volunteers has been comprehensively documented, a study of antisemitic views among Danish SS soldiers is still lacking.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, most of the biographical works did not represent an academic or systematic approach towards the study of antisemites per se, but were part of the research into the Danish quislings who had hitherto been neglected by a historiography dominated by an “Allied scheme of history” and preoccupied with resistance rather than collaboration. The fact that Denmark holds the record as to the number of Nazi-inspired parties between 1928 and 1945 indicates that antisemitism as a National Socialist core value divided protagonists as to the question of how to understand and solve “The Jewish problem.”

In 2007, the Church historian Martin Schwarz Lausten concluded his investigation into the relations between Christians and Jews in Denmark from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, a period of 900 years. This was an unsurpassed intellectual achievement, published in six volumes from 1992 to 2007 and containing a total of 3,499 pages. This work reveals a surprising continuity in anti-Jewish sentiments, both general European trends as well as specific national features. Despite an inconsistent use of the concepts related to hostility towards Jews, the six volumes persuasively demonstrate that anti-Jewish sentiments were much more prevalent in Danish society than hitherto acknowledged. Schwarz Lausten’s conclusions contributed to the acknowledgment that antisemitism – even in its most narrow racist definition – in Denmark predated National Socialism and drew on specific Danish personalities, historical encounters, and debates. In the nineteenth century, just as previously, these encounters and debates were often initiated or inflamed by representatives from the National Church.<sup>17</sup>

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Eggers og Georg Brandes,” *Fund og Forskning* 43 (2004): 267–302; Sofie Lene Bak, “Aage H. Andersen: Danmarks fremmeste antisemit,” in *Over stregen – under besættelsen*, ed. John T. Lauridsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2007), 19–40, and Mikkel Kirkebæk, *Schalburg, En Patriotisk Landsforræder* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Claus Bundgård Christensen, Niels Bo Poulsen, and Peter Scharff Smith, *Under hagekors og Dannebrog: Danskere i Waffen SS* (Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 1998), and Dennis Larsen and Therkel Stræde, *En skole i vold, Bobruisk 1941–44: Frikorps Danmark og det tyske besættelsesherredømme i Hviderusland* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Martin Schwarz Lausten: *Kirke og synagoge 1100–1700: Holdninger i den danske kirke til jødedom og jøder i middelalderen, reformationstiden og den lutherske ortodoksi*, vol. 1 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1992); *De fromme og jøerne 1700–1760: Holdninger til jødedom og jøder i Danmark i pietismen*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 2000); *Oplysning i kirke og synagoge 1760–1814: Forholdet mellem kristne og jøder i den danske oplysningstid*, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 2002); *Frie jøder? Forholdet mellem kristne og jøder i Danmark fra Fri-*

Besides Schwarz Lausten's accomplishments, the chronological scope of Danish research is still mostly limited to the period of the Holocaust. Morten Thing's thematic approach to the "Russian" community from 1882–1943 provided insight into the ways that national-conservative hostility towards the Brandes brothers, Georg and Edvard, of Jewish descent – the main theorists of what has been termed "the modern breakthrough," and leading figures in the Radical movement in Denmark<sup>18</sup> – constituted a specifically Danish form of antisemitism. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the transition from a racial to a racist articulation of this "antibrandesianism" defined the limits of socially acceptable, or *salonfähig*, antisemitism.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the relative strength and influence of Radicalism in Denmark compared to Sweden, for example, explains why antisemitism was less prominent and prevalent in Denmark, where even the political right was divided on the question of whether Jews were "real Danes." Thing's most recent contribution, on the history of the Danish satirical press from 1840–1950, documents the continuity of anti-Jewish jokes and caricatures from the 1840s to the 1920s. Anti-Jewish caricatures identified by visual and textual codes were a recurrent occasional element in the Danish satirical press until the rise of fascist and National Socialist parties in Denmark made the discomfort unbearable for editors and cartoonists. By the early 1930s, Danish Na-

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*hedsbrevet 1814 til Grundloven 1849*, vol. 4 (Copenhagen: Anis, 2005); *Folkekirken og jøerne: Forholdet mellem kristne og jøder i Danmark fra 1849 til begyndelsen af det 20. århundrede*, vol. 5 (Copenhagen: Anis, 2007); *Jødesympati og jødehad i folkekirken: Forholdet mellem kristne og jøder i Danmark fra begyndelsen af det 20. århundrede til 1948*, vol. 6 (Copenhagen: Anis, 2007). Conclusions from the six volumes are summarized in Martin Schwarz Lausten, *Jøder og kristne i Danmark – fra middelalderen til nyere tid* (Frederiksberg: Anis, 2012), translated into English as *Jews and Christians in Denmark, from the Middle Ages to Recent Times, ca. 1100–1948* (Leiden: Brill, 2015). See also Thorsten Wagner, "Belated Heroism: The Danish Lutheran Church and the Jews, 1918–1945" in *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, ed. Kevin P. Spicer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), and works by Jonathan Adams (chapter 2, notes 11–14 in this volume).

**18** The Radical movement was introduced in Denmark with a series of lectures at Copenhagen University by the critic and scholar Georg Brandes (1842–1927) in 1871. Under the title "Main Currents in 19th-century Literature," he argued for a new realism and naturalism in Scandinavian and European literature. In 1884 Georg Brandes, his brother Edvard Brandes, and the politician Viggo Hørup established the daily newspaper *Politiken*. The Radical movement was represented politically by the party *Det Radikale Venstre* ("The Radical Left"), founded in 1905 as a social-liberal and antimilitarist party. Edvard Brandes, a classical scholar and theatre historian (1847–1931) was elected to the Danish parliament in 1880 and became Minister of Finance in 1909.

**19** Morten Thing, *De russiske jøder i København 1882–1943* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2008). See also, Bak, *Dansk Antisemitisme 1930–1945*, 279–94.

tional Socialists had a monopoly on antisemitic caricatures.<sup>20</sup> Previously, the continuity had been pinpointed in the catalogue from the exhibition *Jødehad i danske medier* (Jew-Hatred in the Danish Media) at the Media Museum of Denmark in 2008–09, and had been systematically documented for the period from 1870–1900 in a master's dissertation by Jens Viffeldt Pedersen in 2007. The satirical press being relatively well examined, other cultural codes, genres, and media remain to be investigated.

The period after 1945 is virtually unexplored. The first initial investigation into left-wing antisemitism was presented in 2002 by Bent Blüdnikow with a selected collection of astounding quotes and his subsequent account of the rise of left-wing terrorism targeting the Danish Jewish community from 1968–90.<sup>21</sup> However, systematic and conceptual explorations of the mutation and amalgamation of antisemitic, anti-Zionist, and anti-Israeli stereotypes and rhetoric remain non-existent.

## Future possibilities

Encouraged by the public and scientific interest at the turn of the new millennium, I was at the time convinced the debate would open up a new field establishing Antisemitism Studies as a research discipline in Denmark. With the firm establishment of the Danish Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies (*Dansk Center for Holocaust og Folkedrabsstudier*, DCHF) in 1999 and the Danish Jewish Museum in 2004, the institutional framework for interdisciplinary research on antisemitism seemed secured for years to come.

I was wrong. Conditions gradually deteriorated. In 2002, DCHF was deprived of its independent status and integrated into the Danish Institute for International Studies (*Dansk Institute for Internationale Studier*, DIIS) with a drastically reduced budget, and subsequently the research unit for Holocaust and Genocide Studies was dissolved. Finally, in 2017 DIIS lost the government contract for Hol-

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**20** Morten Thing, *De danske vittighedsblades historie* (Copenhagen: Nemos Bibliotek, 2018); Christian Hviid Mortensen and Therkel Stræde, *Jødehad i Danske Medier* (Odense: Brandts Danmarks Mediemuseum, 2009), and Jens Viffeldt Pedersen, “Dansk antisemitisme 1870–1900: Studier af jødefremstillingen i danske vittighedsblade” (master's dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 2007).

**21** Bent Blüdnikow, “Venstrefløj og antisemitisme,” in *Antisemitisme i Danmark?* ed. Michael Mogensen (Copenhagen: Dansk Center for Holocaust og Folkedrabsstudier, 2002), and Bent Blüdnikow, *Bombeterror i København, Trusler og Terror 1968–1990* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2009).

ocaust educational activities to a private supplier of teaching materials. Needless to say, this situation is in complete contrast with developments in certain other countries, for example Sweden and Norway. The lack of political will to fund Antisemitism and Racism Studies in Denmark leads one to suspect that the perception that antisemitism is something “un-Danish” – and the contention that the Holocaust never happened in Denmark – remains prevalent.

Deprived of an institutional setting or established research community, interdisciplinary cooperation and exchange between Jewish Studies and Antisemitism Studies is scant.<sup>22</sup> The epistemological schism dividing Jewish Studies from Antisemitism Studies still entails that accounts of Jewish history in Denmark refrain from emphasizing or exploring the topic.<sup>23</sup> This presents a paradox, as it is possible to write a history of antisemitism without any reference to actual historical Jews, whereas Jewish history can hardly be written without mentioning the conditions that aversion, distrust, and persecution created for Jewish life.

The historiography of Danish antisemitism is full of blanks regarding theoretical and conceptual explorations and empirical investigation into the continuity and ruptures of the twentieth century. Studies of the Holocaust era are similarly far from complete. The present historiography evinces the complex relationship between discourse and practices, between history and politics, and signifies the potential for further and more exhaustive research. As the extrapolation from rescue to the absence of antisemitism crumbled long ago, as did the idea of the “un-Danish” nature of antisemitism, a multitude of new paths open for a history untold.

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<sup>22</sup> An exception is Brian Arly Jacobsen, “Religion som fremmedhed i dansk politik: En sammenligning af italesættelser af jøder i Rigsdagstidende 1903–45 og muslimer i Folketingstidende 1967–2005,” (PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> For example, Arthur Arnheim, *Truet minoritet søger beskyttelse, Jødernes historie i Danmark* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2015), and Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, Martin Schwarz Lausten, and Hanne Trautner-Kromann, *En indvandringshistorie – jøder i Danmark i 400 år* (Copenhagen: Dansk-Jødisk Museum, 2018).

Paavo Ahonen, Simo Muir, and Oula Silvennoinen

## 7 The Study of Antisemitism in Finland

### Past, Present, and Future

**Abstract:** Finland's vulnerable postwar position impacted interpretations of its wartime history. This is likely the reason why the study of antisemitism was marginal or almost non-existent in twentieth-century Finland. The lack of research led to a widespread view that antisemitism was a marginal phenomenon in Finnish society, both before and during the Second World War. In the last twenty years there have been a growing number of studies making it clear that this was not the case – Finland was no exception when it came to antisemitism. This article will present the history of the study of antisemitism in Finland from three different vantage points: (1) fascism and the Holocaust, (2) religion and the Church, and (3) from the perspective of Finnish Jews, via several case studies of latent antisemitism.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; fascism; history of Finnish Jews; history of Finland; Holocaust; latent antisemitism; religious antisemitism.

## Introduction

The stage for postwar studies of antisemitism in Finland was set after the country emerged from war against the Soviet Union (1941–44) allied with Germany, and by the final brief hostility towards German troops retreating from Finnish territory in 1944–45. After that, Finland was left outside of Western security arrangements and under considerable Soviet influence, even if it was not occupied or turned into a people's democracy in the style of the rest of Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe.

The study of antisemitism was marginal or almost non-existent in twentieth-century Finland, despite the widespread and strong anti-Jewish attitudes described by activist Santeri Jacobsson in his book *Taistelu ihmisoikeuksista* (The Struggle for Human Rights) on the emancipation process of the Finnish Jews, published as early as 1951.<sup>1</sup> Instead, there was a twenty-year silence. Antisemitism started to appear alongside other topics in the social sciences and humanities in the 1970s, and the dispute over Jewish refugees deported from Finland

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<sup>1</sup> Santeri Jacobsson, *Taistelu ihmisoikeuksista* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1951).



**Figure 7.1:** Santeri Jacobsson, a civil rights activist and a writer of the book *Taistelu ihmisoikeuksista*, the first publication to describe the antisemitic ideas present in Finland. Finnish Jewish Archives/National Archives of Finland. Public domain.

in 1942 led to a suspicion that when it came to antisemitism, Finland was not so exceptional.

A sense of Finnish exceptionalism, an interpretation of antisemitism as a marginal phenomenon that mainly attracted right-wing extremists in the 1930s, was in harmony with so-called “driftwood” or “separate war” theories, i.e. theories understating Finland’s role alongside Nazi Germany in the Second

World War. At the time of the Cold War, these views might have been politically necessary, but when times change, necessity can become a burden. During the last twenty years, there has been a re-evaluation of Finland's wartime history and, consequently, the number of studies on antisemitism has also increased. In this article we will evaluate the history of the study of antisemitism in Finland from three different vantage points: (1) fascism and the Holocaust, (2) religion and the Church, and (3) from the perspective of the Finnish Jews, via several case studies of latent antisemitism. We will conclude the article with some thoughts on the present and future study of antisemitism in Finland.

## Fascism, war, and the Holocaust

Finland's vulnerable postwar position was reflected in the tendency of Finnish scholarship to avoid subjects that touched upon obvious political hazards. In the same vein, for a country struggling to rebuild after the war and to maintain its security in an uneasy situation, it was ill advised to address subjects that threatened the wartime myth of a unified nation fighting together, first to defend its liberty, and then to conquer the future.

The research field was in fact a minefield: study antisemitism, and you would run into fascism and be forced to name names. Similarly: study fascism, and the subject of antisemitism would be sure to crop up. And from antisemitism there would be but a small step to the Holocaust and the question of Finland's involvement in it, an altogether undesirable subject. Therefore, subjects like Finnish antisemitism, the history of fascism or the Holocaust in Finland, or the obvious anti-Soviet and anti-communist implications of the Finnish-German alliance, were best left largely unexamined.

One result of this tendency to avoid politically sensitive subjects was that scholarly investigations into the nature and influence of fascism in Finland were few and far between. The subject started to attract scholarly attention in the 1970s and 1980s. Like everywhere else, Finnish studies on fascism at the time were hampered by the conceptual confusion prevalent in the field, as scholars struggled to establish a precise definition for a protean political ideology with a bewildering array of incarnations. After the "new consensus" of the 1990s, when scholars increasingly found themselves in agreement on at least the broad outlines of the definition of fascism, the stage was set for a new round of Finnish scholarship on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Roger Griffin, Werner Loh, and Andreas Umland, eds, *Fascism Past and Present, West and*

A few works bear mention. One seminal study on the history of fascist movements was Henrik Ekberg's *Führerns trogna följeslagare* (Loyal Followers of the Führer) in 1991. It was the first in-depth look into the Finnish National Socialist groupuscules, their worldview and ideology.<sup>3</sup> While groundbreaking, at the time of its publication the work received little attention outside of scholarly circles, and was never even translated into Finnish from its original Swedish.

A new phase of studies of fascism in Finland nevertheless seems to have opened with the publication of *Suomalaiset fasistit* (Finnish Fascists) in 2016, by Oula Silvennoinen, Aapo Roselius, and Marko Tikka. The study is a general history of fascist movements in Finland up to the end of the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> Regarding studies of the postwar period, *Politiikan juoksuhaudat* (Political Trenches) from 2018, by Tommi Kotonen, deals with the fascist movements and groupings of the Cold War era.<sup>5</sup>

In the field of Holocaust Studies, Elina Sana's 2003 work, *Luovutetut, Suomen ihmisiä luovutukset Gestapolle* (Handed Over: Finnish Deportations into the Hands of the Gestapo), reopened the question of the Shoah as part of Finland's history. It re-examined the deportation of civilians and prisoner-of-war exchanges between Finland and Germany during their joint war against the Soviet Union from 1941–44. Sana's central claim was that through these actions, the Finnish authorities contributed to Nazi policies of terror and genocide on a wider scale than had been previously believed.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most important consequences of Sana's work was that Finland's recollection of problematic political questions around the Holocaust was also noticed abroad. Sana's results were publicized outside Finland, and the US-based Simon Wiesenthal Center directed an enquiry to the president of the republic, asking whether Finland would investigate the issues raised by Sana. As a result, the Finnish government funded a research project to clarify the issue of wartime prisoner exchanges and the deportation of civilians from Finland.

A direct result of this project was Oula Silvennoinen's 2008 doctoral thesis, *Salaiset aseveljet: Suomen ja Saksan turvallisuuspoliisiyhteistyö 1933–1944* (Se-

*East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Henrik Ekberg, "Führerns trogna följeslagare" (PhD thesis, University of Helsinki, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Oula Silvennoinen, Aapo Roselius, and Marko Tikka, *Suomalaiset fasistit: mustan sarastukseen airuet* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Tommi Kotonen, *Politiikan juoksuhaudat: äärioikeistolikkeet Suomessa kylmän sodan aikana* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Elina Sana, *Luovutetut: Suomen ihmisiä luovutukset Gestapolle* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2003).

cret Comrades-in-Arms: Finnish-German Security Police Cooperation, 1933–44), exploring Finland's relationship to Nazi policies of genocide and systematic mass murder. For the first time in the postwar period, this study brought to light the long-term German-Finnish security police co-operation, which had culminated in the activities of a previously unknown detachment of the German security police, the Einsatzkommando Finnland, in Finnish Lapland. This unit had been, along with the better-known Einsatzgruppen elsewhere on the German-Soviet front, part of the campaign of ideological and racial war against the Soviet population; actively supported by the Finnish security police, it had engaged in the mass murder of mainly Soviet prisoners of war, deemed either ideologically or racially undesirable as communists and/or Jews.<sup>7</sup>

Another more recent work, emanating from the same research project, is Ida Suolahti's 2016 doctoral thesis, *Yhteinen vihollinen, yhteinen etu: Sotavankien luovutukset ja vaihdot Suomen ja Saksan välillä jatkosodan aikana* (A Common Enemy, a Common Cause: The Handing-Over and Exchange of Soviet Prisoners of War between Finland and Germany during the War in 1941–44). Suolahti is concerned with the treatment of prisoners of war; she concludes that Soviet Jewish prisoners in Finnish custody were generally treated no better or worse than those of Russian nationality. Those prisoners handed over to the Einsatzkommando Finnland, however, constituted an exception to this rule.<sup>8</sup> The politics of memory regarding the Holocaust have received their most detailed treatment in the 2013 anthology *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History*, edited by Simo Muir and Hana Worthen. Two articles discuss the manifold debates Sana's work generated on Finland's role in the Second World War.<sup>9</sup>

One encouraging recent development has been the renewal of interest in the part played by the Finnish volunteer SS battalion, active on the German Eastern Front from 1941–43. The recent contribution by André Swanström, in his 2018 work *Hakaristin ritarit* (Knights of the Swastika), challenges the hitherto uncomplicated image of the Finnish volunteers being at worst bystanders to genocide and mass violence.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, a government-funded effort to chart

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<sup>7</sup> Oula Silvennoinen, *Salaiset aseveljet: Suomen ja Saksan turvallisuuspoliisiyhteistyö 1933–1944* (Helsinki: Otava, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Ida Suolahti, "Yhteinen vihollinen, yhteinen etu: Sotavankien luovutukset ja vaihdot Suomen ja Saksan välillä jatkosodan aikana" (PhD thesis, University of Helsinki, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Simo Muir and Hana Worthen, eds, *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> André Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit: suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka, uskonto ja sotarikokset* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2018).

the sources and relevant research for further studies on the subject is underway, under the auspices of the Finnish National Archives.

## Religious antisemitism and the Church of Finland

The roots of antisemitism extend deep into Christian tradition and the history of the Church. The first forms of secular antisemitism with no actual ties to the religion only developed as late as the end of the nineteenth century. Secular, also known as modern, antisemitism was based on national, political, and racial views, but it also found religious supporters. It can be argued that many non-religious antisemitic accusations fortified the negative religious image of the Jews, and many priests were able to harmonize the ideas of modern antisemitism with the Christian worldview based on the New Testament and Christian doctrine. Therefore, to understand antisemitism one must understand its religious dimensions, too.

It has not been easy for Christians to become aware of the anti-Jewish background of their religion. Before the end of the 1940s, even the whole idea of the New Testament being somehow anti-Jewish was non-existent. It might be said that Christian theologians practised antisemitism before the Holocaust, and conducted research on it afterwards.<sup>11</sup> This argument applies in Finland, too, although it took more than half a century for the latter to happen here.

The first theological studies that referred to antisemitism and the Finns did not address antisemitic ideas or deeds in Finland. In 1972, Professor Eino Murtorinne published his research *Risti Hakaristin varjossa* (The Cross in the Shadow of the Swastika), on the German *Kirchenkampf*. He described how the struggle was discussed in the Scandinavian Lutheran churches and how Hitler's politics, e.g. anti-Jewish laws, affected relations between Nordic and German churches. Three years later, Murtorinne published *Veljeyttä viimeiseen asti* (Brotherhood until the End), a similar study on Finnish and German churches during the Second World War.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Matti Myllykoski and Svante Lundgren, *Murhatun Jumalan varjo: antisemitismi kristinuskon historiassa* (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 2006), 15.

<sup>12</sup> Eino Murtorinne, *Risti hakaristin varjossa: Saksan ja Pohjoismaiden kirkkojen suhteet Kolmannen valtakunnan aikana 1933–1940* (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1972); Eino Murtorinne, *Veljeyttä viimeiseen asti: Suomen ja Saksan kirkkojen suhteet toisen maailmansodan aikana 1940–1944* (Helsinki: SKHS, 1975); Murtorinne has later written inter alia about the Luther Academy in Sondershausen: "Luterilaista yhteistyötä Kolmannen valtakunnan varjossa: Sondershausenin

The ominous political situation following the Second World War led to the disposal of sensitive archives in Finland.<sup>13</sup> Even some churchmen felt threatened, and important documents were lost. It is possible that the attention Murtorinne's books received led to such desperate measures nearly three decades after the war. For example, the archives of the Luther-Agricola Society vanished in the 1970s, perhaps for good. The Luther-Agricola Society was founded during German bishop Theodor Heckel's (1894–1967) visit to Finland in November 1940, and it maintained inter-church connections until the end of the Finno-German military alliance in 1944. Unfortunately, the details of these relations remain unknown.<sup>14</sup>

A few theological master's dissertations on antisemitism in Finland were also written in the 1970s. The focus of these works was not on the Church, but they clearly revealed that antisemitism had been alive and well amongst the clergy. For some reason, these revelations did not lead to a serious debate on Christian antisemitism and its possible effect on the Church of Finland. The focus turned to interfaith dialogue, and a working group called *Kirkko ja juutalaiset* (The Church and the Jews, a Finnish branch of the *Lutherische Europäische Kommission für Kirche und Judentum*) was founded in 1977. This group of Lutheran priests and theologians is still active and continues to hold religious discussions with representatives of the Jewish community.<sup>15</sup>

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Luther-akatemia ja suomalaiset 1932–1940,” in *Oppi ja maailmankuva: professori Eeva Martikaisen 60-vuotisjuhlakirja*, ed. Tomi Karttunen (Helsinki: STKS, 2009), 64–87.

<sup>13</sup> Silvennoinen, *Salaiset aseveljet*, 353–360.

<sup>14</sup> Eino Murtorinne, “Theodor Heckelin Suomen-vierailu ja Luther-Agricola -seuran synty – seitsemän vuosikymmentä sitten,” in *Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran vuosikirja* 2010, ed. Mikko Ketola and Tuija Laine (Helsinki: SKHS, 2010), 169–79; Eino Murtorinne, “Kolmas valtakunta ja sen kirkko tutkimuskohteena,” *Vartija* 5–6 (2011): 188–200.

<sup>15</sup> Marika Pulkkinen, *Kirkko ja juutalaisuus -työryhmän historia vuosilta 1977–2013* (Helsinki: Kirkkohallitus, 2013), 9–10. From the perspective of the study of antisemitism, the forty-year history of the “Kirkko ja juutalaiset” working committee indicates that it is unlikely to be a party to act on the matter. Representatives of the working committee were present when the Lutheran World Council rejected Martin Luther's antisemitic works in 1984. This means that the working committee was willing to reject such antisemitism without conducting any research on Luther's antisemitic books, their reception in or impact on the Church of Finland. The Lutheran World Council wanted to emphasize the religious character of Luther's ideas, and almost twenty years later, when Luther's antisemitism was raised in the Church Assembly of the Finnish Lutheran Church in 2000, the rejection of all of Luther's antisemitic works was blocked, by making a clear distinction between racial, national, or political antisemitism and Luther's religious views on the Jews. This is a good example of the unwillingness to deal with antisemitic ideas of the past, especially if we bear in mind that Luther encouraged such religious attacks on

A public wake-up call might have been provided by the investigative journalism television programme MOT and its findings on the Nazi connections of Finnish churchmen. The two-part episode *Isä, poika ja paha henki* (Father, Son, and Unholy Ghost) aired on the Finnish channel TV1 in 1999. Unfortunately, the episode automatically presented pro-German priests as National Socialists who accepted and even promoted racially motivated antisemitism; such simplistic allegations were easy to argue against, and so the chance was missed to address the issues at the core of this important topic.<sup>16</sup>

The first doctoral thesis on Finnish antisemitism, *Juutalaivastaisuus suomalaisissa aikakauslehdissä ja kirjallisuudessa 1918–1944* (Anti-Semitism in Finnish Journals and Literature, 1918–1944), was completed by Jari Hanski in 2006. Hanski dedicated a whole chapter of his book to religious antisemitism. Having read all the main ecclesiastical newspapers and magazines, he concludes that religious antisemitism “seems to be limited to only a few isolated statements,” and that with one exception, writers who engaged in religious antisemitism “did not accuse Jews of abandoning God or murdering Jesus Christ.” Coincidentally, Hanski’s key conclusion on non-religious antisemitism was similar – a marginal phenomenon supported by a small number of right-wing radicals.<sup>17</sup>

Religious antisemitism in Finland – present, yet insignificant. This view is in line with the positive interpretations of Finnish wartime history and can also be found in the biographies of many important churchmen of the early twentieth century and in the histories of missionary societies. For example, the biography of Bishop Erkki Kaila (1867–1944) ignores a considerable amount of source material on Kaila’s nearly obsessive views on the international conspiracies of the Jews after the First World War.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, missionary workers and other enthusiasts believed that the negative events, ideas, and qualities that Jews were blamed for were a “natural” manifestation of the curse that Jewish people had been under for centuries.<sup>19</sup> Today, these events, ideas, and qualities

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the Jews, e.g. “to set fire to their synagogues or schools,” and advised “that their houses also be razed and destroyed.” See Myllykoski and Lundgren, *Murhatun Jumalan varjo*, 397–98.

**16** Heikki Leppä, “Suomen kirkko ja natsi-Saksa,” *Vartija* 5–6 (1999): 163–70.

**17** Jari Hanski, “Juutalaivastaisuus suomalaisissa aikakauslehdissä ja kirjallisuudessa 1918–1944” (PhD thesis, University of Helsinki, 2006), 106, 292–93, 321. One must emphasize, contrary to Hanski’s findings, that probably every priest thought Jews had abandoned God and many considered them, partially or fully, guilty of killing Christ. See Paavo Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen evankelis-luterilaisessa kirkossa 1917–1933* (Helsinki: SKHS, 2017), 284–89, 324.

**18** Kalevi Toivainen, *Erkki Kaila – yliopistomies ja kirkonjohtaja* (Helsinki: STKS, 2007), 205; Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen*, 177, 187.

**19** Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen*, 300–23.

are simply called “antisemitic stereotypes,” but people engaged in missionary work seem to be able to ignore this.

During the last ten years, there have been a growing number of studies on religious antisemitism in Finland, especially by three church historians: André Swanström, Teuvo Laitila, and Paavo Ahonen. Swanström has carried out research on Christian Zionism and intolerance towards Finnish Jews. His recently published *Hakaristin ritarit* started out as an investigation on Finnish priests in the Waffen SS, but led to a re-evaluation of both the history and the historiography of the Finnish SS volunteers. Laitila gathered together bits and pieces of knowledge, mainly found in the previous research and master’s theses on Finnish antisemitism before the Second World War, in his 2014 book *Uskonto ja antisemitismi* (Fatherland, Religion, and Antisemitism).<sup>20</sup>

The first thorough research on religious antisemitism in Finland was the 2017 doctoral thesis by Paavo Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen evankelis-luterilaisessa kirkossa 1917–1933* (Antisemitism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 1917–33). Ahonen shows that antisemitism within the Finnish Church was considerably more common and more varied than had been previously known. Antisemitism was present in all the key church groups, and five out of the six Finnish-speaking bishops presented antisemitic ideas.<sup>21</sup> With Ahonen’s book, it is now clear that antisemitism in the Church of Finland was not a question of a few isolated statements or just an ideology of extremists without any broader significance.

## Case studies of latent antisemitism in the 1930s

Prior to the late 1990s, very few cases of antisemitism experienced by Finnish Jews themselves were known. The most famous incident, and more or less the only one discussed, was that concerning sprinter Abraham Tokazier, who was deprived of his gold medal in a 100-metre race at the first sports competition held at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki in 1938. One reason for the case becoming so infamous was a photo that proved that he was the first to cross the finish line

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<sup>20</sup> André Swanström, *From Failed Mission to Apocalyptic Admiration: Perspectives on Finnish Christian Zionism* (Åbo: Kyrkohistoriska Arkivet vid Åbo Akademi, 2007); Teuvo Laitila, *Uskonto, isänmaa ja antisemitismi: kiistely juutalaisista suomalaisessa julkisuudessa ennen talvisotaa* (Helsinki: Arator, 2014); André Swanström, *Judarna och toleransens psykohistoria i storfurstendömet Finland 1825–1917* (Åbo: Kyrkohistoriska Arkivet vid Åbo Akademi, 2016); Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit*.

<sup>21</sup> Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen*, 324.

(we will return to Tokazier below). But why is it that only one case of antisemitism was publicly discussed?

The reason for the silence surrounding the anti-Jewish resentment the indigenous Jewish population experienced in Finland can be found in the postwar politics of memory. After the Moscow Armistice in September 1944, when the Allied Control Commission entered Finland, the Jewish community wanted to put forth an explicitly positive image of wartime Finland, and therefore denied the existence of antisemitism or any misconduct against the Jewish population. This was done in the form of a memorandum that was widely published in Finland and abroad.<sup>22</sup> In many ways, Jews felt that they had finally earned their place in Finnish society (having received civil rights only in 1918), and focusing on discrimination did not serve or fit into this narrative. As one Finnish-Jewish woman interviewed in 2006 put it, it simply was not appropriate to talk publicly about antisemitism.<sup>23</sup> This silence upheld by the Jewish community corroborated the Finnish national narrative that Finland had fought a “separate war,” and had not shared the racial ideology of its *de facto* ally. Or, going even further, that Finland was an exception, “one of the few European countries in which anti-Semitism simply did not exist.”<sup>24</sup>

Bit by bit, the silence started to disappear. In 1997, in Taru Mäkelä’s documentary film *Daavid: Tarinoita kunniaasta ja häpeästä* (David – Stories of Honour and Shame), some Finnish-Jewish interviewees reflected on the antisemitism they had experienced, and on the increasingly anti-Jewish atmosphere of late 1930s Finland.<sup>25</sup> Two cases of academic antisemitism were brought up, in one of which a Jewish doctoral student, Moses Zewi, could not continue his research at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Helsinki, owing to his Jewish background. In 2006, Simo Muir published an article in a Finnish historical journal about yet another case of academic antisemitism at the University of Helsinki.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Simo Muir, “The Plan to Rescue Finnish Jews in 1944,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 30, no. 1 (2016): 81–104.

<sup>23</sup> Simo Muir, *Ei enää kirjeitä Puolasta: Erään juutalaissuvun kohtalonyvuodet* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2016), 14.

<sup>24</sup> This citation is from the back cover of Hannu Rautkallio’s book *Finland and the Holocaust: The Rescue of Finland’s Jews*, trans. Paul Sjöblom (New York: Holocaust Library, 1987). On Rautkallio and the denial of antisemitism, see Simo Muir, “Ignoring, Understating, and Denying Antisemitism,” in *Finland’s Holocaust: Silences of History*, 47, 58–61.

<sup>25</sup> Taru Mäkelä, *Daavid: Tarinoita kunniaasta ja häpeästä* (Helsinki: Kinotar, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Simo Muir, “Israel-Jakob Schurin väitöskirjan hylkäminen Helsingin yliopistossa: Antisemitismiä, kielikiistaa ja henkilöintrigejä,” *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 105, no. 4 (2007): 463–83. See also Simo Muir, “Anti-Semitism in the Finnish Academe: Rejection of Israel-Jakob Schur’s

The article analysed the rejection of Israel-Jakob Schur's doctoral thesis about circumcision in 1937. The PhD had already passed the pre-examination by the famous social anthropologist Edward Westermarck, but in the subsequent public debate several right-wing professors expressed criticisms and suggested that the PhD should be rejected. The written statements by the professors representing theology and ethnology contained various antisemitic tropes (degeneration of Western/Christian culture, blasphemy, vulgar behaviour) and clear prejudice against Jews. Furthermore, the copy of the PhD belonging to Professor Albert Hämäläinen contained numerous marginal notes ridiculing the Jewish doctoral student and referring to him as a "Yid."<sup>27</sup> After a long debate, the thesis was finally rejected owing to faulty German. The work had been evaluated by two German lecturers, one of whom expressed antisemitic views in his statement.

After the publication of Muir's article there were demands that the University of Helsinki should grant Schur the doctoral title posthumously. The rector of the university, Ilkka Niiniluoto, established a committee of three scholars – none of whom had any expertise in antisemitism – to look into the case.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, the rector declared that there were no signs of misconduct in Schur's case. The report by the committee claimed that the rejection was part of a general endeavour to elevate the standards of doctoral theses. The Central Council of Jewish Communities in Finland protested against the rector's decision to drop the case, to no avail, and internationally the rector's ruling was viewed as whitewashing.<sup>29</sup> In 2008, in a seminar dedicated to Schur's case, Professor Juha Sihvola, who condemned the rector's decision, explained that the university administration did not want to open a Pandora's box, as there were fears that other cases of misconduct and discrimination could turn up.<sup>30</sup>

In the wake of the Schur case, before the negative response from the University of Helsinki, the biggest daily in Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat*, published a long article by music critic Vesa Sirén about antisemitism in Finnish musical cir-

PhD Dissertation at the University of Helsinki (1937) and Åbo Akademi University (1938)," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 34, no. 2 (2009): 135–61.

<sup>27</sup> See Ilona Salomaa, "1930-luvun asiantuntijuuden turhuus: Westermarckilainen koulukunta ja suomalaisen uskontotieteen rooli ja merkitys Israel-Jakob Schurin tapauksessa," in *Hyljättiin outouden vuoksi: Israel-Jakob Schur ja suomalainen tiedeyhteisö*, ed. Simo Muir and Ilona Salomaa (Helsinki: Suomen Itämainen Seura, 2009), 111–13.

<sup>28</sup> Muir, "Ignoring, Understating, and Denying Antisemitism," 54–55.

<sup>29</sup> Muir, "Ignoring, Understating, and Denying Antisemitism," 57–58.

<sup>30</sup> Juha Sihvola, "Juutalaisuutta ja antisemitismiä koskevaa asiantuntemusta ei ollut edustettuna," in *Hyljättiin outouden vuoksi: Israel-Jakob Schur ja suomalainen tiedeyhteisö*, ed. Simo Muir and Ilona Salomaa (Helsinki: Suomen Itämainen Seura, 2009), 209.

cles and the case of conductor Simon Parmet (1897–1969).<sup>31</sup> Sirén had studied Parmet's career, and claimed that the internationally esteemed conductor had faced severe discrimination in Finland, and that in the 1930s he had found it practically impossible to get any work in the country. Sirén had also interviewed Finnish musicians and conductors who openly spoke of antisemitic abuse against Parmet, even long after the war. In this case, where there was no clear confrontation and Parmet's rivals remained unnamed, no one seems to have opposed (at least not publicly) Sirén's article and arguments.

The opposite was the case when American musicologist Timothy L. Jackson accused Finnish composer Jean Sibelius of antisemitism and unwillingness to help the German Jewish musician Günther Raphael after 1933.<sup>32</sup> The case was debated in a seminar at the Sibelius Academy in 2010, where Sibelius's early antisemitic diary entries were also discussed. It appeared to be impossible for many Finnish musicologists to accept that there was anything antisemitic in Sibelius's thoughts about Jews (world hegemony, control of the press, vulgar behaviour), especially when admitting to this could make Sibelius's position look even worse, in light of his close connections with the music industry in the Third Reich. The discussions around Sibelius and antisemitism demonstrated how difficult it has been in Finnish society to discuss antisemitism separately from National Socialist racial antisemitism and Nazi Germany. For many, it seems, admitting someone had or had had antisemitic thoughts in the past would make him or her automatically a "Nazi," which in a way was impossible because Finns had fought a "separate war" and were not associated with the racial ideology of the Third Reich.

In 2013, historians Malte Gasche and Simo Muir published a book chapter on antisemitic discrimination in Finnish sports, addressing amongst other examples the case of Abraham Tokazier referred to above.<sup>33</sup> Going through a wide selection of sports journals from the 1930s, they found that there were also other cases of antisemitism that contemporaries were aware of. In the 100-metre sprint, Tokazier, his chest straining at the cord, was immediately declared the winner (see

<sup>31</sup> Vesa Sirén, "Juutalaisvastaisuus eli myös musiikkielämässä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 12 December 2008. On other cases of antisemitism in Finnish musical life, see Simo Muir, "Suomalainen antisemitismi ja 'juutalaiskysymys,'" in *Säiteitä 2010. Sävellyksen ja musiikkiteorian vuosikirja 2*, ed. Veijo Murtomäki and others (Helsinki: Sibelius Akatemia, 2010), 58–64.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy L. Jackson, "Sibelius the Political," in *Sibelius in the Old and New World: Aspects of His Music, Its Interpretation, and Reception*, ed. Timothy L. Jackson and others (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 69–123.

<sup>33</sup> Malte Gasche and Simo Muir, "Discrimination against Jewish Athletes in Finland: An Unwritten Chapter," in *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History*, 128–50.

cover image). However, minutes later, another announcement followed in which he was declared to have come in fourth, depriving him of any medal. The following day, several newspapers published press photos testifying to the misconduct. The Jewish sports association Makkabi, which Tokazier represented, appealed to the Finnish Sports Federation to correct the result, but received no reply. Besides the photos and some remarks in the press, there are very few documents available that would shed light on what actually happened. The Finnish Sports Archive does not have many documents from the competition. Also, the role of the chair of the Finnish Sports Federation, Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, who seems to have been the chair of the competition committee, remains unknown. That same year, acting as Minister of the Interior, Kekkonen was in charge of banning Austrian Jewish refugees from entering the country.

It is likely that the results were changed owing to the public relations value the event. Finland's preparations for the 1940 Olympic Games (postponed owing to the war) were followed most closely by the Third Reich.<sup>34</sup> One year later, in 1939, the dismissal of all Jewish members of a tennis club near Helsinki received a lot of attention in the press, causing some commentators to recall the Tokazier case and to question whether the Finnish sports elite was being "Aryanized" prior to the 1940 Olympic Games.<sup>35</sup> Photos of the Tokazier case have popped up in the press regularly since the 1960s, causing amazement and condemnation, but did not lead to any further action. However, in 2013, when the Finnish author Kjell Westö published his novel *Kangastus 38* (Mirage 38), in which he depicted Tokazier's mistreatment, the case received widespread public attention, and discussions about amending the results arose. The Jewish sports association Makkabi appealed for the correction of the results and the case started to receive international attention.<sup>36</sup> Initially, the Finnish Sports Federation issued an official apology but said that amending the results would not be possible as a matter of principle.<sup>37</sup> Finally, under pressure from the public, the Sports Federation gave in and Tokazier was posthumously declared the winner of the 100-metre sprint.<sup>38</sup> The federation admitted that a mistake had been made, but not that it was a case of antisemitism.

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<sup>34</sup> Malte Gasche and Simo Muir, "Discrimination against Jewish Athletes," 134.

<sup>35</sup> Malte Gasche and Simo Muir, "Discrimination against Jewish Athletes," 136–42.

<sup>36</sup> "Juutalaisseura toivoo oikaisua Olympiastadionin vääryyteen," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 20 August 2013.

<sup>37</sup> "SUL pyytää anteeksi 75 vuotta vanhaa tuomarointivirhettä," *Yle Urheilu*, 18 September 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Stefan Lundberg, "Hbl:s bild gav Tokazier segern," *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 4 October 2013.

## What lies ahead?

Today, the history of the interwar period and wartime far-right political movements, the development of Finnish-German relations, and subjects like Antisemitism or Holocaust Studies regarding Finland still constitute an understudied field. These subjects nevertheless continue to attract the attention of both scholars and the reading public. The writers of this survey are all carrying out new



**Figure 7.2:** Old imagery in modern times: *Sionismia vastaan – Against Zionism*. This poster appeared on a litter bin in the city of Kajaani in the beginning of February 2018. Photo by Helena Ahonen.

research related to antisemitism in Finland. A research project by Oula Silvennoinen is seeking to compile, for the first time, a general history of Finland's involvement in the Holocaust, including the postwar intellectual efforts to create a palatable narrative for domestic consumption in Finland. Paavo Ahonen is extending his research on the Church of Finland further back in history, as in early 2018 he started his study on ecclesiastical antisemitism during the Grand Duchy of Finland (1809–1917). Simo Muir is continuing to examine cases of latent antisemitism in Finland, most recently the experience of antisemitism among Jewish school children in Helsinki in the 1930s and during the Second

World War.<sup>39</sup> Muir is also doing research on the representation of antisemitism and Jewish stereotypes in Jewish cabaret in Helsinki during the same period.

Finnish Jews today are probably confronted with more threats than at any point since the Second World War. One future challenge will be to analyse the new antisemitism that has grown from the xenophobic seeds of populist politics and the neofascist movement.<sup>40</sup> Another, simultaneous, phenomenon is antisemitism spreading amongst immigrants, especially ones from Muslim backgrounds. The irrational nature of antisemitism is apparent yet again in this situation, where the same actor can blame the Jews for being Jews, while also being willing to restrict immigration because he sees immigrants as antisemites. As in the past, Finland is no exception when it comes to antisemitism today.

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<sup>39</sup> Simo Muir, “Koulu sodan varjossa,” in *Kyläkoulu keskellä kaupunkia – Helsingin Juutalainen Yhteiskoulu 100 vuotta*, ed. Dan Kantor and others (Helsinki: Helsingin Juutalainen Yhteiskoulu, 2018), 54–69.

<sup>40</sup> The first master’s dissertation on contemporary antisemitic writings in Finland has already been written: Milla Toukola, “Kaiken takana on juutalainen: diskurssianalyysi Magneettimedian juutalaiskirjoituksista” (master’s dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2017).



Christhard Hoffmann

## 8 A Marginal Phenomenon?

### Historical Research on Antisemitism in Norway, 1814–1945

**Abstract:** Historical research on antisemitism in Norway developed relatively late and unsystematically. It had to contend with the prevalent view that antisemitism was virtually non-existent in Norwegian society since so few Jews lived in the country, or that it was at most a marginal phenomenon, limited to sectarian circles on the extreme political right. Challenging the self-image of Norway as a tolerant country, historical research over the last decades has uncovered various manifestations of an exclusionist tradition towards Jews in Norwegian history: from the total ban on Jews in the Constitution of 1814 to the prohibition of kosher slaughter in 1929, from the rejection of Jewish refugees in the 1930s to collaboration and complicity in the arrests and expropriation of Norwegian Jews under German occupation. Focusing on mainstream societal actors, such as the press at the beginning of the twentieth century, research has shown that caricatures of “the Jew” as a morally corrupt and harmful foreigner served as a negative foil to Norwegian identity. This form of stereotyping provided a repository of negative images of Jews for the Norwegian public, which would persist irrespective of the issues of the day.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; historiography; Holocaust; Norway.

## The (late) discovery of antisemitism in Norwegian history

Historical research on antisemitism in Norway emerged relatively late and unsystematically. After 1945, a patriotic memory culture developed in Norway that used the heroic resistance to Nazism during the German occupation as the ideological basis for national unity and community. While there were certainly also critical voices, the dominant view regarded Nazism and antisemitism as “un-Norwegian,” associated with the German occupiers and the (relatively few) Norwegian quislings.<sup>1</sup> The history of the rescue of Norwegian Jews served as a case in

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<sup>1</sup> On patriotic memory culture in Norway, see Anne Eriksen, *Det var noe annet under krigen. 2. verdenskrig i norsk kollektivtradisjon* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 1995); Synne Corell, *Krigens ettertid – ok*

point. While the deportation of 773 Norwegian Jews to Auschwitz appeared as the most horrific event in the history of the occupation, there was also a ray of hope, as the Norwegian paper *Arbeiderbladet* wrote in September 1946:

[It could be seen in] the firm and cold stance that the Norwegian people took towards the antisemitic agitation of the Germans, and the natural readiness to help that was shown the Norwegian Jews when it really mattered, to save the lives of fellow human beings. When people in Norway acted this way, they did so in accord with our entire national tradition. The people of Wergeland and Nansen could not act differently.<sup>2</sup>

Taking the experiences of wartime resistance as paradigmatic, the postwar patriotic narrative constructed an unambiguous national tradition of philosemitism, thereby effectively glossing over manifestations of antisemitism in the country's past. Historical research, too, was affected by this hegemonic national discourse. With the exception of the racist ideology of the Norwegian Nazi Party (*Nasjonal Samling*), antisemitism was regarded as a non-topic in Norwegian history.

It took until the 1980s and 1990s for this consensus to be effectively challenged. Based on an intensive study and documentation of the sources, Oskar Mendelsohn's monumental work *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år* (History of the Jews in Norway over 300 years), published in two volumes in 1969 and 1986, meticulously detailed various antisemitic writings, incidents, and debates in the Norwegian public sphere after 1910.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Mendelsohn did not delve further into the topic or even develop an argument about the significance of antisemitism in Norway. This was partly due to his "integrationist" approach, emphasizing the common ground of Norwegians and Jews and seeking to reinforce a Norwegian-Jewish identity after the trauma of the Holocaust.<sup>4</sup> While Mendelsohn remained within the limits of the patriotic Norwegian master narrative, criminologist Per Ole Johansen was more critical. His book *Oss selv nærmest:*

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*kupasjons historien i norske historiebøker* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press/Spartacus Forlag, 2010); *From Patriotic Memory to a Universalistic Narrative? Shifts in Norwegian Memory Culture After 1945 in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Arndt Bauerkämper and others (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> *Arbeiderbladet*, 27 September 1946. Translation by Hoffmann. See also Ingjerd Veiden Brakstad, "Jødeforfølgelsene i Norge. Omtale i årene 1942–1948: Framstilling og erindring av jødeforfølgelsene i Norge under andre verdenskrig, i et utvalg aviser og illegal presse" (master's dissertation in history, University of Oslo, 2006), 76–77.

<sup>3</sup> Oskar Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år*, vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), vol. 2. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> See Christhard Hoffmann, "Nasjonahistorie og Minoritetshistorie: Jødisk historiografi i Norge," in *Fortalt fortid: Norsk historieskriving etter 1970*, ed. Jan Heiret, Teemu Ryymin, and Svein Atle Skålevåg (Oslo: Pax forlag 2013), 246–50, 261.

*Norge og jødene 1914–1943* (We for Ourselves: Norway and the Jews 1914–1943), published in 1984, examined attitudes within the Norwegian state bureaucracy and police towards Jewish immigrants and refugees.<sup>5</sup> Studying the police's records on foreigners (*fremmedpoliti*), Johansen found that antisemitic stereotypes were commonly invoked as a justification for refusing Jews entry to Norway. Furthermore, he traced a line connecting the exclusionary bureaucratic practice in the interwar years to the “servile” execution of orders to register and arrest Norwegian Jews under German occupation.<sup>6</sup> Johansen's pioneering study met with criticism from the guild of professional historians. In a damning review in *Historisk Tidsskrift*, historian of the occupation Ole Kristian Grimnes brushed aside Johansen's new findings as “impressionistic” and “moralistic.”<sup>7</sup>

During the 1990s, the history of antisemitism became a topic of teaching and research at the University of Oslo, where historian Einhart Lorenz developed and taught a course on antisemitism and Jewish history and supervised the theses and dissertations of a large number of graduate students on these subjects. On a smaller scale, the same happened at the University of Bergen when Christhard Hoffmann, previously affiliated with the Centre for Research on Antisemitism at the Technical University of Berlin, started employment there in 1998. The consequences of these developments were twofold: the history of antisemitism became a topic at universities and, with numerous master's dissertations and doctoral theses completed, an academically-based research milieu with expertise on antisemitism emerged in Norway. Cooperation intensified in the early 2000s when the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies opened in Oslo; it would become the institutional heart for research on antisemitism in Norway. Among various efforts, the research project “The Cultural Construction of ‘the Jew’ in the Norwegian Public from 1814–1940,” financed by the Norwegian Research Council from 2008 to 2012, was developed and directed by Lorenz and Hoffmann (with Øivind Kopperud as coordinator), adding an interdisciplinary approach to the historical research on antisemitism in Norway.<sup>8</sup>

In the following three sections, I will present and discuss the status of research on antisemitism in Norway by looking at new findings about key events.

5 Per Ole Johansen, *Oss selv nærmest: Norge og jødene 1914–1943* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1984).

6 Per Ole Johansen, “Norsk Embedsverk og jødiske innvandrere og flyktninger 1914–1940,” in *Judiskt liv i Norden*, ed. Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom, and Mattias Tydén (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988), 287.

7 Ole Kristian Grimnes “Johansen, Per Ole, Oss selv nærmest: Norge og jødene 1914–1943” [review article], *Historisk tidsskrift* 64 (1985): 106–08.

8 On the project, see <<https://www.hlsenteret.no/forskning/jodisk-historie-og-antisemittisme/joden-som-kulturell-konstruksjon/>>.

This review will proceed chronologically, beginning with the exclusionary Constitution of 1814, before turning to antisemitism in the interwar years, and then finally discussing the significance of antisemitism in the Norwegian Holocaust.

## The ban on Jews in the Norwegian Constitution of 1814

The Norwegian Constitution (*grunnlov*), adopted and signed by the Constituent Assembly in May 1814 at Eidsvoll, remains one of the oldest single-document constitutions still in force today. Founded on the principles of popular sovereignty, the separation of powers, and human rights, in its time it was widely regarded as one of the most liberal and democratic constitutions in the world. At the same time, it was radically exclusionary towards Jews, Jesuits, and monastic orders. Article 2 of the Constitution stated clearly:

The Evangelical-Lutheran religion remains the public religion of the State. ... Jesuits and monastic orders are not permitted. Jews are still prohibited from entry to the Realm.<sup>9</sup>

That the exclusion of Jews and other religious groups was explicitly written into the Constitution represented a significant tightening-up compared to the traditional practice that had allowed for exceptions by issuing temporary travel and residence permits (letters of safe conduct) for Jews. This prohibition also stood in sharp contrast to the contemporaneous emancipation of the Jews in Denmark. Only two months earlier, Denmark had granted Danish Jews essentially equal rights as citizens (by the Royal Proclamation of 29 March 1814). In Norway, it took another twenty-five years before the poet Henrik Wergeland would publicly criticize the “Jewish clause” and launch a campaign for its repeal. Wergeland, who died in 1845, did not live to see the positive outcome of his initiative. Since an amendment of the Constitution required a two-thirds majority of votes in the Norwegian Parliament, four attempts were necessary before the “Jewish clause” was finally repealed in June 1851.

Most Norwegian historians interpreted the introduction of the ban on Jews, Jesuits, and monastic orders as a necessary step in nation-building: in order to secure national unity, religious pluralism and possible strife should be restricted

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<sup>9</sup> The English translation is quoted in Liselotte Malmgart, “State and Church in Denmark and Norway,” in *The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Northern Europe, 1780–1920*, ed. Keith Robbins (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 210.

as much as possible.<sup>10</sup> Others accepted Henrik Wergeland's view of what happened at Eidsvoll, interpreting the ban as a relic of a bygone age, and blamed either prejudiced peasants or defensive merchants for the clause.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, the Norwegian-American historian Samuel Abrahamsen, in an article in 1968, maintained that the anti-Jewish clause in the Norwegian constitution "falls within the general definition of antisemitism." Since the members of the Constituent Assembly did not have any personal acquaintance with Jews, the adoption of Article 2 was based on an "imaginary image of them," with the consequence of effectively "preventing religious and civil rights for Jews."<sup>12</sup> However, Abrahamsen did not substantiate the claim of antisemitism at Eidsvoll, focusing instead on Henrik Wergeland's public campaign for the repeal of the anti-Jewish clause in the 1840s.

In his pioneering two-volume work on the history of Jews in Norway, Oskar Mendelsohn likewise did not dig deeper into the origins of the anti-Jewish clause and its possibly antisemitic background. He dedicated only eight pages to the introduction of the clause, and eleven additional pages to its application, while he presented Wergeland's campaign against it and the repeal of the act in full detail, in more than two hundred pages.<sup>13</sup> In Mendelsohn's account, the constitutional ban against Jews was presented as a "mistake that was corrected." In contrast to what had happened in 1814, the history of Wergeland's heroic struggle was a story with a happy ending that could serve as the foundational narrative of Norwegian Jews.<sup>14</sup> The emphasis on Wergeland therefore left the origins of the clause unexamined.

Only in 2014, the year of the bicentennial of the Norwegian Constitution, were two major studies published that shed new light on the banning of Jews in the Norwegian Constitution. In his groundbreaking work *Paragrafen: Eidsvoll*

<sup>10</sup> See Ingvild Leite, "Integrering og ekskludering: Jødenes stilling i den danske anordningen av 29. mars 1814 og i den norske grunnloven 17. Mai 1814" (master's dissertation, University of Bergen, 2012), 7–10; Andrea Tebbenhoff, "'Jødeparagrafen': paragraf 2 i den norske grunnloven fra 1814" (master's dissertation, University of Groningen, 1996), 67–72.

<sup>11</sup> See Henrik Wergeland, *Samlede skrifter*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Oslo: Steen, 1925), 377–78.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Abrahamsen, "The Exclusion Clause of Jews in the Norwegian Constitution of May 17, 1814," *Jewish Social Studies* 30, no. 2 (1968): 68–69.

<sup>13</sup> Oscar Mendelsohn, *Jødenes Historie i Norge*, vol. 1, 42–49 (on the introduction of the clause), 50–60 (on its consequences), and 61–276 (on Wergeland's public campaign and the repeal of the "Jewish clause").

<sup>14</sup> On the cult of Wergeland as the cornerstone of Norwegian-Jewish identity and memory culture, see Hoffmann, "Nasjonalhistorie og minoritetshistorie," 248–49.

1814 (The Paragraph: Eidsvoll 1814),<sup>15</sup> Håkon Harket confronted the key question head-on: why did the Norwegian Constituent Assembly introduce Europe's most antisemitic clause into Europe's most liberal constitution? In answering this question, Harket first carefully reconstructed who at Eidsvoll actually said what in support of the ban. He then traced these statements back to the broader intellectual, political, and ideological context of the time. As it turned out, the most important proponents of the ban were not to be found among backward peasants, but rather among the liberal intellectual elite, i.e. enlightened men such as Christian Magnus Falsen, Georg Sverdrup, and Nicolai Wergeland, who were among the most progressive fathers of the constitution. As well-read intellectuals, they had closely followed the concurrent debates in Germany and Denmark about the "Jewish question," revolving around the contentious question of whether Jews could become productive citizens. Following the arguments of anti-Jewish thinkers such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Buchholz, and Friedrich Rühs, who argued that Jewish identity was incompatible with citizenship in a modern state, the ban on Jews was written into the Norwegian Constitution. The clause, Harket concluded, was "not a mishap in an otherwise liberal constitution," but was introduced after lengthy discussions, "because the Constitutional Committee viewed it as part of the foundation for Norway's free constitution."<sup>16</sup>

While Harket's study concentrated on the origins of the clause, Frode Ulvund's book *Fridomens grenser 1814–1851: Handhevinga av den norske "jødeparagrafen"* (Limits of Freedom 1814–1851. The Enforcement of the "Jewish Clause" in the Norwegian Constitution)<sup>17</sup> focused on its consequences and the ways in which the constitutional ban was applied in practice. Based on a detailed study and thorough analysis of the comprehensive source material, Ulvund showed that the ban was strictly enforced immediately after the Constitution was adopted in 1814. Requests for exceptions were categorically denied. Jews who accidentally became stranded on the Norwegian coast were imprisoned, fined, and expelled. Only in the 1830s and 1840s did a more liberal application of the clause

<sup>15</sup> Håkon Harket, *Paragrafen: Eidsvoll 1814* (Oslo: Dreyers forlag, 2014). For a shorter version in English, see Håkon Harket, "The Ban on Jews in the Norwegian Constitution," in *The Exclusion of Jews in the Norwegian Constitution of 1814: Origins – Contexts – Consequences*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann (Berlin: Metropol, 2016), 41–65. My summary of Harket's book pp. 19–20.

<sup>16</sup> Harket, *Paragrafen*, 386. Translation by Hoffmann.

<sup>17</sup> Frode Ulvund, *Fridomens grenser 1814–1851: Handheving av den norske "jødeparagrafen"* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2014). For a shorter version in English, see Ulvund's article "The Practice of Exclusion: How Article 2 in the Norwegian Constitution was Administered and Enforced between 1814 and 1851," in Hoffmann, *The Exclusion of Jews*, 141–70.

emerge, when the pre-1814 practice of issuing letters of safe conduct for individual Jews was taken up again. Ulvund's study also shows that in a commercial port city such as Bergen, with its Hanseatic tradition, local merchants and their representatives took the initiative to enforce the ban, notifying the authorities about persons, mostly rival merchants, who they suspected of being Jews. The police would then check if the suspects could prove their Christian religious affiliation with baptismal certificates; if not, they were expelled. Ulvund relates this antagonism towards Jews in Bergen to an exclusionary "Hanseatic habitus" that was prevalent at the same time in German Hanseatic towns such as Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck.<sup>18</sup>

Placing the exclusionist arguments against Jews at Eidsvoll in a broader comparative perspective, Ulvund, in his book *Nasjonens antiborgere: Forestillinger om religiøse minoriteter som samfunnsfiender i Norge, ca. 1814–1964* (Anti-Citizens of the Nation: Constructions of Religious Minorities as Enemies of Society in Norway, c. 1814–1964) studied the discursive constructions in Norway, between 1814 and 1964, of religious minorities (Jews, Mormons, and Jesuits) as "the nation's anti-citizen" and "enemies of society."<sup>19</sup> He argued that the negative images of these religious groups in Norwegian popular consciousness shared many commonalities: they were not based on genuine experience, but taken from the transnational circulation of stereotyped ideas, and they served as a counter-image to what it meant to be a good Norwegian citizen.<sup>20</sup> Ulvund's approach, comparing and contrasting negative attitudes towards Jews with attitudes towards other minorities, might serve as a model for future research that tries to examine antisemitism in connection with other antagonistic worldviews, such as anti-Catholicism, racism, or conspiratorial thinking.

## Manifestations of anti-Jewish hostility in the interwar years

After lifting the ban on Jews in 1851, the road was clear for the immigration of Jews to Norway. In contrast to the fears of a Jewish "invasion" that had haunted debates on the issue, actual immigration was slow and limited. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that a Jewish congregation was officially estab-

<sup>18</sup> Ulvund, "The Practice of Exclusion," 152–55.

<sup>19</sup> Frode Ulvund, *Nasjonens antiborgere: Forestillinger om religiøse minoriteter som samfunnsfiender i Norge, ca. 1814–1964* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Ulvund, *Nasjonens antiborgere*, 211–28.

lished in Christiania (Oslo). The Jewish minority in Norway never numbered more than two thousand people and remained one of the smallest in Europe.

Compared to other European countries, organized antisemitism was a marginal phenomenon in Norway before the Second World War. In an overview of the years 1900 to 1940, historian Terje Emberland described antisemitism in Norway as “mainly latent and situational” in character.<sup>21</sup> In his view, it was based on xenophobia, nourished by elements of anti-Jewish propaganda, and activated in certain contexts, such as the fear of competition, of cultural or religious alienation, or of war and revolution.<sup>22</sup> The diffuse nature of anti-Jewish hostility in Norway makes it difficult to determine its extent and intensity. Consequently, scholars have come to different conclusions. The following discussion of the state of research on antisemitism in Norway in the period between 1910 and 1940 focuses on two different manifestations: (1) Antisemitism as a comprehensive ideological worldview that was prevalent in small sectarian circles; and, (2) Incidents of antisemitism in mainstream Norwegian society, such as the media, political debates, and the state administration.

### ***Racism and conspiratorial thinking: antisemitic propagandists and their circles***

Historical research on modern antisemitism has long focused on the founders, supporters, organizations, and networks of the antisemitic movement, and the societal background conditions for its emergence in the 1870s and 1880s. Since there were no antisemitic organizations in Norway comparable to those in other European countries, research chiefly concentrated on those few individual ideological entrepreneurs who spread the antisemitic doctrine through their writings. The first and probably most influential antisemitic screed in Norway was Eivind Saxlund’s book *Jøder og Gojim* (Jews and Goyim), which was first published in 1910 and went through several editions. Saxlund was an attorney at the Supreme Court of Norway. Lacking originality, his book was more or less a compilation of the main works of German (racist) antisemitism (Theodor Fritsch, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and, in a later edition, Werner Sombart). As the Norwegian public had little experience (in 1910) recognizing antisemitism, many reviewers read the content of Saxlund’s book as objective information

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<sup>21</sup> Terje Emberland, “Antisemittismen i Norge 1900 – 1940,” in Trond Berg Eriksen, Håkon Harkestad, and Einhart Lorenz, *Jødehat: Antisemittismens historie fra antikken til i dag* (Oslo: Damm, 2005), 401.

<sup>22</sup> Emberland, “Antisemittismen i Norge 1900 – 1940.”

about “the Jews.”<sup>23</sup> Another propagandist of racist antisemitism in Norway was the typographer Mikal Sylten, who edited the journal *Nationalt Tidsskrift* (1916–45). Like Saxlund, he took his message mainly from German antisemitic sources such as Theodor Fritsch’s *Der Hammer*, and presented it as a fight for truth against “Jewish censorship.” Propagating the conspiratorial narrative of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Sylten sought to expose the destructive work of Jews and “hidden Jews.” He compiled lists of persons in Norway and abroad who he considered influential Jews (*Who’s Who in the Jewish World*). While the circulation figures of *Nationalt Tidsskrift* were small and, throughout the almost thirty years of its publication, declining, its impact was multiplied by other journals reprinting some of its articles.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to adopting the ideology of racist and conspiratorial antisemitism directly, antisemitic ideas became influential in Norway as integrated elements of broader religious and ideological movements. In his groundbreaking work on *völkisch* religion and Nazism in Norway, historian of religion Terje Emberland analysed the interweaving of neo-pagan and racial (Pan-Germanic and Nordic) thinking amongst key ideological figures of Norwegian Nazism. He thereby shed new light on the significance of an antisemitic, anti-Masonic, and conspiratorial worldview amongst some of these ideologues and in their circles.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, in a thorough study about the antisemitism of Norwegian poet Alf Larsen, historian of ideas Jan-Erik Ebbestad Hansen explored the relationship between the anthroposophical worldview of Rudolf Steiner (with its antagonistic image of the Jews), and antisemitic thinking amongst Norwegian writers of the 1920s and 1930s, such as Marta Steinsvik.<sup>26</sup> Recently, Martin Ringdal examined how seven key antisemitic propagandists in interwar Norway interpreted and disseminated *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. He found that these different ideological actors shared an alternate conception of reality that also found its expression in fields other than anti-Jewish conspiracy theories and described

<sup>23</sup> Olaf Sunde Christensen, “Jøder og Gojim. Mottakelsen av et antisemittisk skrift fra 1910” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 1998); Einhart Lorenz, “Eivind Saxlund,” in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, vol. 2, no. 2, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 772.

<sup>24</sup> Kristin Brattelid, “Mikal Sylten: Et antisemittisk livsprosjekt” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2004); Einhart Lorenz, “Nationalt Tidsskrift,” in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, vol. 6, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 483–84.

<sup>25</sup> Terje Emberland, *Religion og rase: Nyhedenskap og nazisme i Norge 1933–1945* (Oslo: Humanist Forlag, 2003), 158–69.

<sup>26</sup> Jan-Erik Ebbestad Hansen, *En antisemitt trer frem: Alf Larsen og ‘jødeproblemet’* (Oslo: Press, 2018).

their shared characteristics with the help of the sociological concept of a “cultic milieu.”<sup>27</sup>

Vidkun Quisling launched his authoritarian nationalistic party *Nasjonal Samling* (National Union) on 17 May 1933. Followers came to his movement from very different quarters; they included church-oriented Conservatives, neopagan racists, and radical nationalists with either Italian- or German-style fascist orientations. Initially, antisemitism was not one of the main factors attracting these supporters, but as the party failed to unite the forces of the political right in Norway and proved to be a total failure at the ballot box, ideological differences would become more important. In the argument between “Christian” and “national-socialist” wings of the party, the issue of racist antisemitism became crucial and controversial. In the end, the radical antisemites prevailed. Historical research has shown that the political marginalization of *Nasjonal Samling* “from party to sect” went along with a radicalization of its ideological profile, in particular an unreserved adoption of the racist and conspiratorial antisemitism of the German Nazi party.<sup>28</sup> The most influential figure in this respect was the editor of the party newspaper, Halldis Neegaard Østbye.<sup>29</sup> The ideological orientation of *Nasjonal Samling* towards national-socialist antisemitism did not mean that it was able to integrate the “cultic milieu” of the radical antisemites into the party. Some of these activists joined *Nasjonal Samling*, others remained in opposition to Quisling and continued with their own activities.<sup>30</sup>

**27** Martin Aasbø Ringdal, “Norge, vokn op!” Syv norske aktørers fortolkning og bruk av ‘Sions vises protokoller’ 1920–1945” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2018).

**28** Hans Olav Brevig, *NS – Fra parti til sekt, 1933–1937* (Oslo: Pax forlag, 1970); Dag Olav Brunknapp, “Ideeene splitter partiet,” in *Fra idé til dom: Noen trekk fra utviklingen av Nasjonal Samling*, ed. Rolf Danielsen and Stein Ugelvik Larsen (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1976), 9–47; Christhard Hoffmann, “Die reine Lehre einer politischen Sekte: Antisemitismus in der norwegischen ‘Nasjonal Samling’,” in *Vorurteil und Rassenhass: Antisemitismus in den faschistischen Bewegungen Europas*, ed. Hermann Graml, Angelika Königseder, and Juliane Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), 253–73.

**29** On Østbye, see Rikard A. Toftesund, “Da alt folket skulde tro løgnen.’ Halldis Neegård Østbye: Antisemittisk ideolog i Nasjonal samling” (master’s dissertation, University of Bergen, 2001).

**30** For example, the Ragnarok circle or the circle around Eugen Nielsen; see Emberland, *Religion og Rase*, 114–46, 285–310.

## ***Incidents of antisemitism in mainstream Norwegian society***

With the *linguistic turn* and the influence of cultural studies since the 1980s, historians have increasingly explored the semantics of antisemitism as a “cultural code.” This new approach did not explain antisemitism exclusively by studying antisemites, but also by understanding antisemitism as an “autonomous symbolic form of interpreting the world.”<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the focus of scholarly interest moved away from the writings of hardcore antisemitic ideologues to the cultural products of mainstream societal actors such as the media, the churches, and the literary world. In Norway, this approach was first systematically employed in the research project “The Cultural Construction of ‘the Jew’ in the Norwegian Public from 1814–1940.”<sup>32</sup> Its results challenge the popular perception that antisemitic ideas in Norway before 1940 were limited to marginal radical circles.

Based on an extensive study of primary sources, historian Lars Lien analysed the construction of “the Jew” in Norwegian daily newspapers and satirical magazines between 1905 and 1925.<sup>33</sup> His findings illustrate in graphic detail that negative stereotypes and racist images of Jews were widespread in Norwegian popular media. These images did not originate in real conflicts between the majority society and Jewish minority in Norway, but were largely taken over from trans-national antisemitic sources and applied to the Norwegian context. Caricatures of “the Jew” as a morally corrupt and harmful foreigner appearing in different, often contradictory, forms served as a negative counter-image to Norwegian identity and as a rhetorical tool to denounce political opponents as “un-Norwegian.”<sup>34</sup> This kind of stereotyping did not fly the flag of self-avowed antisemitism and it may usually not have been aimed at real (Norwegian) Jews, but it nevertheless consolidated a general worldview in which “the Jew” symbolized the immoral Other. Moreover, it provided a range of negative stereotypes of Jews for the Norwegian public which would persist regardless of the issues of the day.<sup>35</sup> For a more complete picture, it will be necessary that Lien’s pioneering work on the construction of “the Jew” in the Norwegian press be followed up by systematic

<sup>31</sup> Jan Weyand, *Historische Wissenssoziologie des modernen Antisemitismus: Genese und Typologie einer Wissensformation am Beispiel des deutschsprachigen Diskurses* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016), 38. Translation by Hoffmann.

<sup>32</sup> See the essays in Vibeke Moe and Øivind Kopperud, eds, *Forestillinger om jøder – aspekter ved konstruksjonen av en minoritet 1814–1940* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Lars Lien, “...pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøderne’. Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norsk dags- og vittighetspresse 1905–1925” (PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Lien, “...pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøderne”, 386.

<sup>35</sup> Lien, “...pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøderne”, 199.

studies on other cultural actors and discursive influences, such as the Norwegian Church and the free churches; art, literature, and theatre; philosophy and historiography.

The two main issues that sparked anti-Jewish agitation amongst the Norwegian public were the political controversy about the ban on Jewish religious slaughter in the 1920s and the question of Jewish immigration after 1933. In his comprehensive study on the discursive contexts and political processes that led to the 1929 legal prohibition of the Jewish slaughter method in Norway, historian Andreas Snildal carefully documented the widespread use of anti-Jewish stereotypes and antisemitic rhetoric in debates preceding the ban.<sup>36</sup> He insisted, however, that the motivations of those activists who supported the prohibition (particularly in the animal welfare movement and the peasants' movement) were often complex and could not simply be reduced to antisemitism. In his conclusion, Snildal nevertheless argued that his findings challenged the widespread notion that antisemitism in interwar Norway was "a marginal phenomenon": the controversy around kosher slaughter proved that antisemitic agitation did not just aim at external images but was "just as much directed towards the country's own Jewish community."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the lengthy duration and intensity of the debate contributed to the popularization and legitimization of antisemitic ideas, by depicting Jewish religious rituals as foreign and barbaric.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the case demonstrated that grassroots politics did not necessarily lead to positive outcomes, since in this instance it "led to restricting the religious freedom of a vulnerable minority."<sup>39</sup>

The other issue that gave rise to antisemitic agitation was immigration. After the First World War and the Russian Revolution, the conservative press evoked the threat of a mass invasion of East European "Bolshevik Jews" to Norway. As Einhart Lorenz has shown, these scaremongering scenarios of impending Jewish immigration combined widespread fears of revolution with antisemitic propaganda.<sup>40</sup> When, in the 1930s, German, Austrian, and Czech Jews were forced to flee from Central Europe, sections of the bourgeois press vehemently opposed

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<sup>36</sup> Andreas Snildal, "An Anti-Semitic Slaughter Law? The Origins of the Norwegian Prohibition of Jewish Religious Slaughter c. 1890–1930" (PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Snildal, "An Anti-Semitic Slaughter Law?," 311.

<sup>38</sup> Snildal, "An Anti-Semitic Slaughter Law?," 312.

<sup>39</sup> Snildal, "An Anti-Semitic Slaughter Law?," 309.

<sup>40</sup> Einhart Lorenz, "'Vi har ikke invitert jødene hit til landet' – norske syn på jødene i et langtidsperspektiv," in *Forestillinger om jøder*, 38–42.

accepting Jewish refugees in Norway, arguing that they would be harmful and a misfortune to the country.<sup>41</sup>

In both these debates, about religious slaughter and about immigration, mainstream political actors and publicists used arguments that originated from the worldview of radical antisemitic circles. This is particularly clear in the peasant movement and its newspapers, as Kjetil Braut Simonsen and others have convincingly shown.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, studies by Per Ole Johansen and Einhart Lorenz have demonstrated that the police and state bureaucracy discriminated against Jewish refugees in matters of immigration.<sup>43</sup> Taken together, these studies suggest that the conventional interpretation of Norwegian antisemitism as situational, marginal, and limited to radical sectarian circles is not really convincing. The existence of a long-term bureaucratic tradition of discrimination against Jewish immigrants and refugees proves that “silent and effective” practices of antisemitic exclusion were already well-established in Norway during the interwar period.<sup>44</sup>

## The role of antisemitism in the Norwegian Holocaust

The study of antisemitism in interwar Norway is also of direct significance for the poignant question of Norwegian collaboration in the Holocaust. In the spring of 1942, 1,582 Jews were registered by the police as living in Norway; 773, among them 53 unregistered, were arrested by the Norwegian State Police and deported to Auschwitz, while more than 1,000 were aided by the resistance movement in fleeing to Sweden. Only 38 of those deported survived the war.<sup>45</sup>

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**41** Lorenz, “Vi har ikke invitert jødene hit til landet”, 46–49.

**42** Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Den store jødebevægelse”: antisemittiske bilder av jøden i bondeavisene Nationen og Namdalen, 1920–1925” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2009); Kjetil Braut Simonsen, *Antisemittisme, innvandringsfiendtlighet og rasetenkning i norsk bondebevegelse, 1918–1940* (Oslo: HL-senteret, 2012); see also Kristin Foskum, “Nationen og antisemittismen: en undersøkelse av avisas Nationens holdning ovenfor jøder i perioden 1926–1938” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2005) and Lorenz, “Vi har ikke invitert jødene hit til landet”, 46–48.

**43** Johansen, *Oss selv nærmest*, 102–04; Einhart Lorenz, *Exil in Norwegen: Lebensbedingungen und Arbeit deutschsprachiger Flüchtlinge 1933–1943* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1992), 282–89.

**44** Johansen, “Norsk Embedsverk og jødiske innvandrere og flyktninger,” 287–88.

**45** Bjarte Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge: Registrering, Deportasjon, Tilintetgjørelse* (Oslo: Dreyer 2017), 365–66.

After the Second World War, the persecution and deportation of Norwegian Jews was largely understood by the Norwegian public as a measure exclusively attributable to the German occupying power, passing over the active involvement of Norwegian authorities in the processes of arrest and expropriation. This view has gradually changed since the 1990s, when the Norwegian state finally offered restitution to Jewish organizations and, in 2012, the prime minister publicly apologized for the role Norway played in arresting its own Jews. The official acceptance of responsibility has intensified the need to further explore the background to Norwegian collaboration in the Holocaust, and to determine the role that antisemitic attitudes among Norwegians may have played in the process. Within historiography, two main lines of interpretation have emerged, one emphasizing the influence of homegrown antisemitic traditions in Norway, the other attaching greater importance to political framework conditions and situational factors in explaining Norwegian collaboration in the Holocaust. A few examples may illustrate this: Taking a long-term comparative perspective on the courses of Jewish history in Denmark and Norway between 1814 and 1945, the Danish historian Therkel Straede contrasted an “integrationist paradigm” in Denmark with a “strong exclusionist tendency” in Norway, in order to explain the different fates of Danish and Norwegian Jews during the Second World War.<sup>46</sup> In the same way, focusing on the continuities of antisemitic stereotyping in Norway, Einhart Lorenz argued that the negative imagery resulted in a “widespread feeling that the Jews were foreigners who presented a threat to Norway”; he saw “indifference and cultural distance” towards Jews as “essential preconditions for the Norwegian participation in the deportations.”<sup>47</sup> By contrast, Bjarte Bruland, in his thoroughly researched analysis of anti-Jewish measures in occupied Norway, emphasized the decisive role of the German occupiers, their close cooperation with the Norwegian collaboration government, and the effectiveness of the “lightning action” in the autumn of 1942.<sup>48</sup> Bruland identified the antisemitic mindset of the German perpetrators (and their Norwegian accomplices in the Quisling government) as the ideological driving force behind the measures, but he did not systematically examine what impact anti-Jewish attitudes among Norwegian bystanders might have had on the course of events. Several of the documented cases suggest that some of the Norwegians who helped

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<sup>46</sup> Therkel Straede, “The ‘Jewish Feud’ in Denmark 1813,” in Hoffmann, *The Exclusion of Jews in the Norwegian Constitution of 1814*, 120.

<sup>47</sup> Einhart Lorenz, “Antisemitische Judenbilder und die norwegische Haltung zur Deportation,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 16 (2007): 234. Translation by Hoffmann.

<sup>48</sup> Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*.

Jews to hide and flee did so in spite of their antisemitic prejudices.<sup>49</sup> This shows that ideological factors and negative attitudes alone might not be sufficient to determine human action in a concrete situation and that other factors might have been more important.

Despite these different perspectives, there is a widespread consensus among historians that Norwegian antisemitism, regardless of its xenophobic and exclusionist features, was not exterminatory by nature, and that the persecution and destruction of the Norwegian Jews would not have happened had it not been initiated and ordered by the German occupiers.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, discussions in recent historiography suggest that it might be helpful to distinguish between different historical actors and different forms of antisemitism when assessing the effects of anti-Jewish attitudes during the occupation years. There is no doubt that the Quisling government and the leadership of *Nasjonal Samling* shared a radical antisemitic worldview with German National Socialists, and recent research has emphasized that this antisemitism was not a matter of opportunism but rather the core element of a comprehensive conspiratorial belief system.<sup>51</sup> It has proven much more difficult to determine to what degree subordinate authorities held antisemitic beliefs as they carried out measures against Jews that were ordered from above. In a few cases, even high-ranking members of the Nazified State Police warned individual Jews about the arrests and thereby enabled them to escape.<sup>52</sup> The most complicated and agonizing question regards the role of the Norwegian resistance movement. Why did its leadership not explicitly call upon its members to help Jews? Did anti-Jewish prejudices perhaps have a negative effect on the rescue of Jews? In his source-oriented study, Bruland clearly distinguished between the racist-conspiratorial antisemitic propaganda of the Quisling regime and expressions of anti-Jewish prejudice among average Norwegians.<sup>53</sup> He regarded the latter not as “malicious antisemitism” but as a form of xenophobia and (in the case of the resistance movement) mainly as a situationally-conditioned disdain towards civilians.<sup>54</sup> Bruland emphasized that negative attitudes towards Jews did not prevent their rescue,<sup>55</sup> and concluded that given the specific circumstances – i.e. the

<sup>49</sup> Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 464–68.

<sup>50</sup> Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 20.

<sup>51</sup> Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Vidkun Quisling, antisemittismen og den paranoide stil,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 96, no. 4 (2017): 446–67; Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 208, 372.

<sup>52</sup> Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 384, 427–29.

<sup>53</sup> Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 382.

<sup>54</sup> Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 464, 467.

<sup>55</sup> Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 468.

suddenness and short duration of the anti-Jewish actions in Norway – the resistance against them by helping Jews escape to Sweden was “significant.”<sup>56</sup>

Taking issue with this, journalist and author Marte Michelet came out with a much more critical assessment in her well-documented book, published under the title *Hva visste hjemmefronten?* (What Did the Resistance Movement Know?) in November 2018. Michelet claimed that, as early as the summer of 1942, the leadership of the Norwegian resistance movement had already received warnings from German anti-Nazis about an impending action against Norwegian Jews, but chose not to act.<sup>57</sup> The information was not passed on, Michelet argued, because a “rescue operation for Jews, an unpopular minority, was understood as running counter to the interests of the resistance movement.”<sup>58</sup> Michelet’s book, written in a self-confident and at times polemical manner, caused quite a stir. Bruland and some resistance historians rejected her allegations entirely, claiming they were unfounded and biased, while others welcomed a renewed debate about the more sombre aspects of the occupation years.<sup>59</sup> The different perspectives and interpretations clashed on 20 December 2018 at the seminar “Krigens fortellinger” (Narratives of the War) organized by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies in Oslo.<sup>60</sup> It attracted a huge audience of more than 500 listeners and contributed through informed and nuanced discussions to a cooling down of the emotionally charged debate.

## Conclusions and open questions

The findings of this historiographical overview may be summarized as follows: Research on antisemitism in Norwegian history emerged relatively late and was initially driven forwards by individual pioneering scholars working outside the guild of professional historians. It had to grapple with the widespread opinion that antisemitism was unknown (or at least insignificant) in Norwegian his-

<sup>56</sup> Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge*, 386.

<sup>57</sup> Marte Michelet, *Hva visste hjemmefronten? Holocaust i Norge: varslene, unnvikelsene, hemmeligholdet* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> Michelet, *Hva visste hjemmefronten?*, 341. Translation by Hoffmann.

<sup>59</sup> Bjarte Bruland, “Moralsk historieskriving,” *Dag og Tid*, 9 November 2018; Arnfinn Moland, “Michelets bok om Hjemmefronten og jødene er et faglig og etisk forfeilet prosjekt,” *Aftenposten*, 12 November 2018; Per E. Hem, “Hjemmefronten sviktet jødene,” *Morgenbladet*, 9 November 2018.

<sup>60</sup> The contributions and discussions from the seminar are available online in streaming video at <<https://www.hlsenteret.no/aktuelt/arrangementer/2018/streaming/krigens-fortellinger.html>>.

tory before the German occupation during the Second World War. Over the last thirty years, historians have challenged this self-congratulatory narrative of Norwegian history and have explored some of the blind spots of the past that had escaped rigorous research for such a long time (almost two hundred years in the case of 1814). Taken together, the results of this research proved the existence of an exclusionist tradition towards Jews in Norwegian history. It manifested itself discursively in the construction of the “Jewish Other” as a negative counter-image to Norwegian identity, and concretely in the total ban on Jews, the prohibition of Jewish religious slaughter, and the bureaucratic rejection of Jewish immigrants and refugees because they were Jews. These findings may also challenge the conventional view that antisemitism in Norway was a marginal phenomenon before the Second World War.

In addition to the desiderata already mentioned in this overview, there are, I believe, two main topics that could advance our knowledge in this field. (1) In order to place the exclusionist tradition towards Jews in Norwegian history in perspective, a comprehensive study of those public intellectuals (from Henrik Wergeland to Johan Scharffenberg) who criticized and opposed the ideology and practices of antisemitism in Norway would be helpful. How did these public figures define (and explain) antisemitism, what arguments did they use against it, and how much support did they receive? The study of anti-antisemitism can explore the power (and limits) of an integrationist tradition towards Jews in Norwegian history, and thereby determine the framework conditions<sup>61</sup> for antisemitism in Norway. (2) As we have seen, most research on antisemitism in Norway has focused on the periods 1814 to 1851 and 1914 to 1945. In contrast to this, the time between 1851 (the repeal of the anti-Jewish clause in the Constitution) and 1914 (the First World War) has received almost no scholarly attention. In this period, the first Jewish immigrants arrived in Norway, trying to make a living, build their religious community, and integrate into society. A systematic study of their reception and the associated discourses on Jews and Judaism could further illuminate the interplay of integrationist and exclusionist forces in Norwegian-Jewish history.

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**61** In other words, a kind of “leeway” for antisemitic activity. In a society that has very strong integrationist tendencies, the room for manoeuvre for antisemites will be rather small.



Kjetil Braut Simonsen

## 9 Norwegian Antisemitism after 1945

### Current Knowledge

**Abstract:** How did the Second World War and the trauma of the German occupation affect the extent and nature of Norwegian antisemitism after 1945? This article provides an overview of research dealing with postwar and contemporary antisemitism in Norway. Furthermore, it seeks to suggest some directions for further research. One priority, it argues, should be to analyse the development of Norwegian postwar antisemitism on a broad historical basis. Postwar antisemitism has gone through different stages since 1945. Which elements of antisemitism survived the experience of the Holocaust, which have been weakened, and which have faded away? Another important dimension for further research is the scope and development of Norwegian everyday antisemitism, as a discourse and as a form of practice. How has antisemitism been expressed outside of the public sphere, and how has this affected the Jewish minority in Norway?

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; anti-Zionism; attitudes; far right; historiography; Norway; post-Second World War.

The defeat of the Hitler regime in 1945 and revelations of the scope of Nazi crimes during the Second World War mark a turning point in the history of European antisemitism. Due to the experiences during the Second World War, “fascist ideology quickly became indelibly linked to savagery and extermination in the European and American public imagination.”<sup>1</sup> As a result, Swedish historian Henrik Bachner concludes, anti-Jewish sentiments – at least in their open, political form – were consistently rejected in the public sphere after 1945:

The culture of prejudice, which earlier was tolerated to a certain degree, was no longer accepted [*rumsren*]. Anti-Jewish and antisemitic sentiments and ideas became taboo.<sup>2</sup>

However, this public rejection of antisemitism did not lead to its disappearance as a *latent cultural structure* of stereotypes and negative representations. As has

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Feldman and Paul Jackson, “Introduction,” in *Doublespeak: The Rhetoric of the Far Right since 1945*, ed. Matthew Feldman and Paul Jackson (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2014), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Henrik Bachner, *Återkomsten. Antisemitism i Sverige efter 1945* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2004), 15. Translation by Simonsen.

been noted in several studies, antisemitism has continued to occur in less visible contexts, such as in everyday discourse and internal communication within distinct groups.<sup>3</sup>

What was the impact of the war and the trauma of the German occupation on the extent and nature of Norwegian antisemitism after 1945? How has antisemitism developed from 1945 to the present? Like other countries occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, Norway was deeply affected by the Holocaust. Altogether, 773 Jews from Norway were deported, most of them sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Only thirty-eight of these deported Jews survived. In total, the Nazis and their collaborators murdered between thirty and forty per cent of the Jews living in Norway before the German occupation.<sup>4</sup>

This article provides an overview of existing research on postwar and contemporary antisemitism. It seeks to summarize the current state of knowledge on the scope, nature, and development of Norwegian antisemitism after the Holocaust. Furthermore, and in extension to this, it also presents some suggestions for further research.

## General works

For many decades, antisemitism in Norway was explored by historians only to a limited extent. However, starting in the 1990s, knowledge of the subject has been greatly expanded. The exclusion of Jews in the Norwegian Constitution of 1814,<sup>5</sup> representations of the Jew in the daily and satirical press during the first decades of the twentieth century,<sup>6</sup> the debate leading up to the prohibition of Jewish re-

<sup>3</sup> See for example Jan Weyand, "Das Konzept der Kommunikationslatenz und der Fortschritt in der soziologischen Antisemitismusforschung," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 26 (2017): 37–58. Weyand claims that a core of "der beobachteten Veränderung des Antisemitismus nach 1945 [ist]: Er wird zwar in der Öffentlichkeit skandalisiert, kann im privaten Raum aber weitgehend ungehindert artikuliert werden" (the observed change in antisemitism after 1945: Although it is scandalous in public, it can be voiced relatively freely in the private sphere). Quotation on p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> On the Holocaust in Norway, see in particular Bjarte Bruland, *Holocaust i Norge: Registrering. Deportasjon. Tilintetgjørelse* (Oslo: Dreyer forlag, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> The ideological background of this article of the Constitution is analysed in detail in Håkon Harket, *Paragrafen: Eidsvold 1814* (Oslo: Dreyer, 2014). An anthology in English is also published on the subject, see Christhard Hoffmann, ed., *The Exclusion of Jews in the Norwegian Constitution of 1814: Origins – Contexts – Consequences* (Berlin: Metropol, 2016.)

<sup>6</sup> Lars Lien, "...pressen kan kun skrive ondt om jøerde." Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon i norsk dags- og vittighetspresse 1905–1925" (PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2016).

ligious slaughter in 1929,<sup>7</sup> and the antisemitism of the fascist collaborationist party *Nasjonal Samling*<sup>8</sup> are among the topics that have now been thoroughly examined. Several works have also outlined the history of Norwegian antisemitism before 1945 in a more general sense.<sup>9</sup>

Still, very little of this research has focused on the historical development of antisemitism in Norway *after* the Holocaust. No single work analysing the extent and development of antisemitism in Norwegian society from 1945 to the present currently exists.

The book that comes closest to being a general historical account, at least from 1945 to the mid-1980s, is the second volume of Oskar Mendelsohn's *Jødenes historie i Norge*. In this broad synthesis, Mendelsohn points to several examples of antisemitism in Norway at different times in the postwar period. Mendelsohn claims that open, political antisemitism never attained the same intensity as in Central and Eastern Europe. He also states that the conditions for anti-Jewish thought were further weakened during the postwar period.<sup>10</sup> In *Jødenes historie i Norge*, antisemitic attitudes and actions are described as "setbacks" within the framework of a generally positive development:

But setbacks occur. Several [people] claim to recognize some elements of antisemitism or related features in statements from certain extreme political circles since the late 1960s. Also, cases of what can be called vulgar antisemitism have occurred and most likely still occur, in the form of derogatory comments and crude remarks ... They show that inherited beliefs about the Jews may still live on ...<sup>11</sup>

Mendelsohn also mentions that antisemitic narratives such as Holocaust denial were common among the organized groups of former members of *Nasjonal Sam-*

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Snildal, "An Anti-Semitic Slaughter Law? The Origins of the Norwegian Prohibition of Jewish Religious Slaughter, 1890–1930" (PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Kjetil Braut Simonsen, "Vidkun Quisling, antisemittismen og den paranoide stil," *Historisk tidsskrift* 4 (2017): 446–67.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Oskar Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år*, vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 488–96 and 556–70; Terje Emberland, "Antisemittismen i Norge 1900–1940," in *Jødehat: Antisemittismens historie fra antikken til i dag*, ed. Trond Berg Eriksen, Håkon Harket, and Einhart Lorenz (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2005), 401–20; Per Ole Johansen, *Oss selv nærmest: Norge og jødene 1914–1943* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1984), and Einhart Lorenz, "Vi har ikke invitert jødene hit til landet – norske syn på jødene i et langtidsperspektiv" in *Forestillinger om jøder: Aspekter ved konstruksjonen av en minoritet 1814–1940*, ed. Øivind Koppenrud and Vibeke Moe (Oslo: Unipub, 2011), 35–52.

<sup>10</sup> Oskar Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år*, vol. 2 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1987), 364.

<sup>11</sup> Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie*, vol. 2, 364. Translation by Simonsen.

*ling* and within other right-wing circles.<sup>12</sup> He cites several examples in which Norwegian national newspapers, such as *Arbeiderbladet*, *Dagbladet*, *Aftenposten*, and *Verdens Gang*, took a clear public stance against antisemitism.<sup>13</sup>

While it is based on a huge amount of empirical material, Mendelsohn's book has several shortcomings. For one thing, the book is more a chronicle of sources than a historical *analysis*. Antisemitism is documented through individual cases, and the author makes few efforts to summarize his findings or to discuss the characteristics and functions of postwar antisemitism more systematically. In other words, the book reveals interesting empirical data and contains many historical details, but it gives no general evaluation of postwar antisemitism as a phenomenon.

As general studies of the historical development of postwar antisemitism in Norway are lacking, much of the knowledge sought has to be gleaned from works focusing on either specific political groups, topics, or individuals. In the following, I will discuss the different aspects of postwar antisemitism thematically. One subtopic is public discourse and the creation of an anti-antisemitic taboo after 1945. A second theme is the continuity of far-right antisemitism. A third theme is leftist antisemitism and anti-Zionism. A fourth topic is *contemporary* antisemitism: research dealing with present manifestations of antisemitism rather than its historical development. For all of these, I will discuss the most relevant available research and use this to try to outline the current state of knowledge.

## Public discourse and everyday antisemitism

As already noted, the National Socialist policy of persecution – especially the Holocaust – led to a profound change in public discourse in Western Europe. This also became the case in the Scandinavian countries. During the first decades of the twentieth century, negative stereotypes of the Jew were to a large degree accepted within the public sphere. Both in satirical magazines and mainstream newspapers, the Jew was represented as the incarnation of capitalism, communism, and other “threatening” phenomena.<sup>14</sup> In the shadow of the Holocaust after 1945, this culture of prejudice was no longer *salonfähig*. However, the

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<sup>12</sup> Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie*, vol. 2, 365–366.

<sup>13</sup> Mendelsohn, *Jødenes historie*, vol. 2, 346–54, 367–68.

<sup>14</sup> See Lien, “...pressen kan kun skrive ondt”; Lars M. Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude ...: Representationer av “juden” i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900–1930* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2000).

Holocaust experience also created an image of antisemitism as a phenomenon more or less exclusively associated with Nazism and political extremism. Such interpretations, Swedish historian Henrik Bachner states, have led to a “partial blindness towards milder forms of antisemitism, towards prejudices rooted in culture and negative attitudes passed on by broader segments of the population.”<sup>15</sup>

In Norway, the change in public expressions of antisemitism since 1945 has not been analysed in depth. Nor has the question of the degree to which everyday antisemitism survived in non-official contexts. Still, the theme has been touched upon in several works. Four of them will be discussed below.

In his book *“Jødefolket inntar en særstilling.” Norske haldninger til jødane og staten Israel*, historian Karl Egil Johansen analyses the change in attitudes towards Israel and Jews between 1945 and 2008. Johansen’s focus is primarily on discussions of Israel/Palestine, which will be analysed in detail later in this article. However, Johansen also presents material which shows how the anti-antisemitic norm affected public discourse in postwar Norway. Of particular interest is his discussion of the antisemitic wave at the end of 1959 and the beginning of 1960. Starting in Cologne, more than two thousand five hundred incidents of antisemitism were registered worldwide from December 1959 to February–March 1960. In Norway, anti-Jewish slogans and swastikas were painted at several spots in Oslo and other parts of the country. One Jewish businessman received threats by letter.<sup>16</sup> As Johansen shows, these incidents triggered disapproving reactions in the Norwegian press, which sharply condemned both Nazism and antisemitism. The leading newspaper *Morgenbladet*, for example, stated that the mentality which had led to the Holocaust would not be tolerated.<sup>17</sup> However, although antisemitism was universally condemned, some newspapers tended to trivialize the incidents, describing them as a form of apolitical hooliganism. “We believe it would be too wrong to ascribe too much importance to these phenomena,” the daily *Verdens Gang* stated in an editorial: “...in most cases, this seems to be brattish behaviour committed by irresponsible and thoughtless youngsters.”<sup>18</sup>

One reason for this ambiguity, Johansen suggests, was that the incidents were interpreted differently when they were committed in Norway than when

<sup>15</sup> Bachner, *Återkomsten*, 13–19, quotation p. 14. Translation by Simonsen.

<sup>16</sup> Karl Egil Johansen, “*Jødefolket inntar en særstilling.*” *Norske haldninger til jødane og staten Israel* (Kristiansand: Portal, 2008), 88–89.

<sup>17</sup> Johansen, “*Jødefolket inntar en særstilling,*” 88–92, statement on p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> Extract from quote, cited in Johansen, “*Jødefolket inntar en særstilling,*” 89–90. Translation by Simonsen.

they were committed in Germany. This corresponds with Henrik Bachner's research in Sweden. While the wave of incidents in Germany was more or less universally represented as a revival of antisemitism, many considered it unlikely that such incidents in Sweden could be caused by homegrown antisemitism.<sup>19</sup> In other words, although antisemitism was condemned, it was also, to a certain extent, reduced to a German (and fascist) phenomenon.

A second relevant publication is a PhD dissertation from 2014, written by historian Jon Reitan. The main focus of the thesis is the thematization and representation of the Holocaust in Norway from 1945 to the present. According to Reitan, a national-heroic narrative functioned as a hegemonic interpretation of the Nazi era in the first decades after 1945. An unbridgeable dividing line was drawn between the "good national forces" (the resistance movement) and the un-national elements (*Nasjonal Samling*). As a result of this interpretation, antifascist norms and values were linked to the formation and reconsolidation of a postwar national identity.<sup>20</sup>

Although this is not discussed in depth by the author, his empirical material clearly shows the extent to which antisemitism was associated with Nazi Germany and the Norwegian Nazi collaborators, and, therefore, described as un-Norwegian and unacceptable.<sup>21</sup> This implied only limited systematic critical reflection on homegrown antisemitism in Norway before 1940. "The profound decline in culture on which the hatred of the Jews depends," *Dagbladet*, for example, pointed out in an editorial in 1947, "has fortunately not been experienced in Norway. Here, in this country, a human is still a human."<sup>22</sup>

A third work is a 2006 master's dissertation written by historian Ingjerd Veiden Brakstad. Brakstad focuses on the description and remembrance of the Nazi persecution of the Jews between 1942 and 1948. Through this, she also highlights important material related to the perception of antisemitism during the first post-war years. Like Reitan, Brakstad notes that the rejection of antisemitism in many cases was related to "national character," a "Norwegian mentality" which had been resistant to antisemitism since the days of Henrik Wergeland.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, she provides several examples of everyday Norwegian antisemitism. For

<sup>19</sup> Bachner, *Återkomsten*, 139–40.

<sup>20</sup> Jon Reitan, "Møter med Holocaust: Norske perspektiver på tilintetgjørelsens historiekultur" (PhD thesis, Trondheim: NTNU, 2014), 99.

<sup>21</sup> Reitan, "Møter med Holocaust," 99–136, esp. quotations on p. 132.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Reitan, *Møter med Holocaust*, 132. Translation by Simonsen.

<sup>23</sup> Ingjerd Veiden Brakstad, "Jødeforfølgelsene i Norge: Omtale i årene 1942. Framstilling og erindring av jødeforfølgelsene i Norge under andre verdenskrig, i et utvalg aviser og illegal presse" (master's dissertation, University of Oslo, 2006), 83–85.

example, during a debate about Jewish displaced persons in 1947, one Norwegian housing cooperative (*borettslag*) opposed the creation of a “Jewish quarter” in their neighbourhood.<sup>24</sup>

A fourth work is a PhD dissertation by historian Vibeke Kieding Banik, analysing the attitudes of Norwegian Jews towards Israel between 1945 and 1975. In this work, antisemitic attitudes in Norway during the early postwar period are discussed over five pages. Banik suggests that latent antisemitic attitudes existed in Norway. However, she does not reach a conclusion as to how *widespread* such attitudes were within the population as a whole.<sup>25</sup>

To sum up, we know from existing research that antisemitism was already viewed as an un-national and un-Norwegian phenomenon during the initial period after the end of the German occupation. However, tensions between a public discourse dominated by a rejection of antisemitic sentiments and the continuation of an informal “everyday antisemitism” have still not been studied in depth. Several questions remain in need of answers: What new expressions of antisemitism have developed in a society where open ideological antisemitism was portrayed as un-Norwegian? Has the anti-antisemitic norm been strengthened or weakened over time? Also, to what extent and how has “everyday antisemitism” affected the relationship between majority and minority?

## Antisemitism on the far right

Before and during the Second World War, antisemitism in Norway – as in other European countries – took a particularly radical form on the extreme right. The Norwegian collaborationist party *Nasjonal Samling* (NS), especially from 1935 onwards, embraced antisemitism as a comprehensive “explanatory model.” In NS publications, bolshevism, capitalism, and liberalism were described as “Jewish phenomena.” During the German occupation of Norway, NS leader Vidkun Quisling saw the ongoing world war as a life and death struggle between the “Germanic people” and “International Jewry.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Brakstad, *Jødeforfølgelsene i Norge*, 88.

<sup>25</sup> Vibeke Kieding Banik, “Solidaritet og tilhørighet: Norske jøders forhold til Israel 1945–1975” (PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2009), 102–06.

<sup>26</sup> See Simonsen, “Vidkun Quisling, antisemittismen og den paranoide stil”; Christhard Hoffmann, “Die reine Lehre einer politischen Sekte: Antisemitismus in der norwegischen ‘Nasjonal Samling’,” in *Vorurteil und Rassenhaft. Antisemitismus in den faschistischen Bewegungen Europas*, ed. Hermann Graml, Angelika Königseder, and Juliane Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), 253–73.

To what extent did the Norwegian far right maintain this conspiracist and antisemitic worldview after 1945, within a political context where the expression of ideological antisemitism was taboo? To what extent has antisemitism been replaced by other images of the enemy?

During the first decades after the Second World War, an important task of the Norwegian far right was the attempt to rehabilitate former members of the NS. For these people, the German capitulation and the postwar trials led to a widespread decline in power and status.<sup>27</sup> A small segment of this group sought to implement organizational measures to rehabilitate the NS veterans socially, legally, and historically.<sup>28</sup>

The development of an organized neofascist community in Norway has often been dated to the late 1960s, when a new generation of far rightists founded the organization *Nasjonal Ungdomsfylking* (NUF) and later, in 1975, the party *Norsk Front* (renamed *Nasjonalt Folkeparti* in 1980). A second phase began in the late 1980s with the development of organized activism against immigration and the formation of a militant neo-Nazi skinhead subculture. After 2000, the militant right-wing extremist subculture stagnated markedly. At the same time, a new anti-Muslim conspiracist discourse developed in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Since the turn of the millennium, traditional neo-Nazism has primarily been located in small organizations such as the Odinist sect *Vigrid* and the pan-Nordic National Socialist organization *Den nordiske motstandsbevegelsen* (Nordic Resistance Movement), which has a small branch in Norway.<sup>29</sup>

The functions and development of far-right antisemitism during the postwar period have primarily been studied as part of a more general analysis of right-wing extremist ideology and practice. One article written by this author and published in the Norwegian peer-reviewed journal *Historisk tidsskrift* Winter 2019, deals with the development of Holocaust denial discourse in the magazine *8. Mai/Folk og land* between 1948 and 1975. This magazine was published by

**27** During the postwar treason trials, the NS was categorized as a criminal political organization. A total of ninety-two thousand cases were investigated, and about forty-six thousand persons were sentenced to various kinds of punishment, ranging from fines to the death penalty. See Johannes Andenæs, *Det vanskelige oppgjøret* (Oslo: Tanum-Nordli, 1979), 114–24, 165–68.

**28** See Georg Øvsthus, “Dom og oppreisning: Tidligere NS-medlemmers kritikk av landssvikoppgjøret og deres organiserte forsøk på å oppnå sosial rehabilitering” (master’s dissertation, University of Bergen, 1972), 4, 7–26.

**29** For an overview of the different historical phases and the present situation, see Tore Bjørø and Ingvild Magnæs Gjelsvik, “Utvikling og utbredelse av høyreekstremisme i Norge,” in *Høyreekstremisme i Norge: Utviklingsstrek, konspirasjonsteorier og forebyggingsstrategier*, ed. Tore Bjørø (Oslo: Politihøgskolen i Oslo, 2018), 27–144.

the organized community of former NS members.<sup>30</sup> The publication promoted not only NS apologist historical points of view, but also anti-democratic, racist, and antisemitic sentiments. Holocaust denial was embraced as early as the late 1940s onwards and became an integral element of broader NS revisionist arguments during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. This denialist discourse also implied a conspiracist outlook on the world. Several articles in *8. Mai/Folk og land* claimed that “International Jewry” was the “real instigator” of the Second World War and that the “myth of the six million dead” had been created by a powerful cabal, aiming to suppress the “true national forces.”<sup>31</sup> In this case, the community of former NS members functioned as an ideological bridge between traditional National Socialism and postwar neofascism. On the one hand, the milieu kept alive traditional images of the powerful and threatening “Jew.” On the other, the NS veterans were instrumental in introducing new ideological themes adapted to the postwar context, such as denial of the Nazi Extermination Policy. Antisemitic ideas also won support from actors who did not come from an NS background but still harboured right-wing views. In one recent book, historian of ideas Jan Erik Ebbestad Hansen shows that leading anthroposophist Alf Larsen advocated extreme anti-Jewish ideas during the immediate postwar years.<sup>32</sup>

Several studies of organized Norwegian right-wing extremism from the 1970s onwards have been published. The “first wave” of Norwegian neofascism from the late 1960s to the middle of the 1980s has been analysed in a monograph by journalist Per Bangsund and in two master’s dissertations.<sup>33</sup> The neo-Nazi subculture of the 1990s has been studied in particular by social scientists Tore

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**30** On *Folk og land*, see also Espen Olavsson Hårseth, “Folk og land 1967–75: Fra rehabilitering til nyfascistisk opposisjonsorgan” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2010) and “Mellom revisjon og politisk opposisjon: Avisen Folk og land 1952–1975,” *Historisk tidsskrift* 3 (2017): 280–307; Lasse Lømo Ellingsen, “Folk og land – kor går du?” Avisen Folk og land, miljøet rundt den og forholdet til nynazismen i Norge 1975–1986” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2016).

**31** Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Holocaustbeneketelse i *Folk og land* (8. mai), 1948–1975: En diskurs tar form,” *Historisk tidsskrift* 1 (2019), 8–25, <[https://www.idunn.no/file/pdf/67111948/holocaustbeneketelse\\_i\\_folk\\_og\\_land\\_8\\_mai\\_19481975\\_en\\_.pdf](https://www.idunn.no/file/pdf/67111948/holocaustbeneketelse_i_folk_og_land_8_mai_19481975_en_.pdf)>.

**32** Jan Erik Ebbestad Hansen, *En antisemitt trer frem: Alf Larsen og ‘jødeproblemet’* (Oslo: Press, 2018).

**33** See Lars Preus, “Bakover mot det nye Norge: Ideologisk utvikling innen norsk nynazisme 1967–1985” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2014); Tuva Marie Mcallister Buraas, “Jeg oppfatter meg ikke som nazist, men som nasjonal revolusjonær.” Erik Blüchers politiske ideologi, 1975–1985” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2018) and Per Bangsund, *Arvtakene: Nazisme i Norge etter krigen* (Oslo: Pax, 1984).

Bjørgo and Katrine Fangen.<sup>34</sup> Also, the small neo-Nazi organizations of the 2000s have been researched, mostly through works by graduate students.<sup>35</sup> Few of these works have antisemitism as the *main focus*,<sup>36</sup> but they nevertheless describe and discuss the phenomenon. Based on these works – as well as my ongoing research – I think three points related to the continuity and functions of antisemitism within Norwegian far-right circles should be highlighted.<sup>37</sup>

1) As a discourse, far-right antisemitism in Norway since 1945 has consisted of two main components. The first is conspiracism: the claim that an international Jewish conspiracy controls international politics and the economy and operates as the driving force behind multiculturalism, globalization, and immigration. This narrative is a continuation of the classical anti-Jewish accusations articulated in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and in National Socialist propaganda.<sup>38</sup> The second component is the denial of the Holocaust. This is a new feature of postwar antisemitism, although it builds upon old images of a powerful “International Jewry.” As already noted, Holocaust denial was expressed reg-

<sup>34</sup> Katrine Fangen, *En bok om nynazister* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001); Tom Kimmo Eiternes and Katrine Fangen, *Bak nynazismen* (Oslo: Cappelen, 2002); Tore Bjørgo, *Racist and Right-Wing Violence in Scandinavia: Patterns, Perpetrators and Responses* (Oslo: Tano, 1997), 272–311; Tonje Benneche, “Ideologiske knyttnever: Konflikt mellom blitzere og nynazister på 1980- og 1990-tallet” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2017).

<sup>35</sup> See Anett Svevad Riise, “Runemagi og raseideologi: En komparativ analyse av to nyhedsdanske, nynazistiske bevegelser” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2018); Elise Egeland Nerheim, “Nordfront og nettekstremisme: Den nordiske motstandsbevegelsens fiendebilder” (master’s dissertation, University of Agder, 2015); Siw-Randi Junge Kåsereff, “Jeg er ikke mikrorasist, men makrorasist: En antropologisk studie av Vigrid” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2009); Lill-Hege Tveito, “Kampen for den nordiske rases overlevelse: Bruken av den norrøne mytologien innenfor Vigrid” (master’s dissertation, University of Tromsø, 2007); Astrid Espseth, “Stempelingens konsekvens: En studie av nynazistiske grupperinger” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2007); Ellen Nygård, “Nynazisme på nett: En studie av historiebruk på Vigrid og Nordfronts nettsteder” (master’s dissertation, University of Stavanger, 2015); Magnus Stavrum Opheim, “Motstandskamp på internett: En diskursanalyse av nettsiden Fritetskamp.net” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> One exception is a master’s dissertation on the Holocaust denier Olav Hoaas. See Ingrid Sætheren Grimstad, “En studie av Olav Hoaas sitt ideologiske standpunkt” (master’s dissertation, University of Oslo, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Lately, I have carried out in-depth research on Norwegian far-right antisemitism after 1945 and have also written an article on the subject which is yet to be published. Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Antisemitism on the Norwegian Far Right, 1967–2018” (forthcoming).

<sup>38</sup> On the 1970s and 1980s, see for example, Preus, “Bakover,” 50–57; on the 1990s, Bjørgo, *Racist and Right-Wing Violence*, 272–311 and Fangen, *En bok om nynazister*, 182–89; on the conspiracism of the neo-Nazis in the 2000s, see for example Opheim, *Motstandskamp på internett*, 64–66; Svevad Riise, *Runemagi og raseideologi*, 47–50.

ularly in the NS veterans' publication *Folk og land* during the 1950s and 1960s. From the late 1960s onwards, denialist discourse was adopted by the new generation of right-wing extremists and has been a recurrent theme in neo-Nazi circles up to the present.<sup>39</sup>

2) The functions of far-right antisemitism in Norway have primarily been *abstract and ideological*. Antisemitism has served as an explanatory model, integrating all phenomena perceived as negative and/or threatening under the same ("Jewish") umbrella. As noted by social scientist Katrine Fangen, antisemitism in this case also tends to be the "esoteric" part of right-wing extremist ideology, which is internalized by new activists only gradually.<sup>40</sup> In this sense, it is a marker of political dedication and radicalization.

3) Antisemitism as a worldview has not been universally embraced within far-right circles since 1945. Anti-Jewish ideas have been supplemented with, and partly replaced by, new images of the enemy, during the last couple of years particularly anti-Muslim conspiracy narratives. One case in point is the right-wing extremist terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, who murdered seventy-seven people in Oslo and at Utøya. Breivik's political beliefs were based on a conspiracy narrative, which claimed that an alliance of Muslims and "Cultural Marxists" was undermining European civilization.<sup>41</sup> Still, within the broader flora of right-wing radical organizations, antisemitism has often functioned as a marker of a revolutionary and militant outlook.<sup>42</sup> Support for antisemitism suggests support for a more or less *total worldview*. Amongst groups and actors who have tried to appear moderate or responsible, or who have advocated ideological renewal, antisemitism has been either coded or absent. This also bears witness to the extent to which Nazi and fascist antisemitism has been rejected by the broader public since 1945.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See Preus, "Bakover," 55–56; Grimstad, "En studie av Olav Hoaas"; Simonsen, "Antisemitisme på norsk tyre høyre"; Nygård, "Nynazisme på nett."

<sup>40</sup> Fangen, *En bok om nynazister*, 184–86.

<sup>41</sup> On Breivik's ideology, see Øystein Sørensen, "Ideologi og galskap: Anders Behring Breiviks totalitære mentalitet," in *Høyreekstremisme: Ideer og bevegelser i Europa*, ed. Øystein Sørensen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Bjørn Arne Steine (Oslo: Dreyer, 2012), 14–44. On Islamophobia in Norway in general, see Sindre Bangstad, *Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia* (London: Zed Books, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Bjørgo, *Racist and Right-Wing Violence*, 294.

<sup>43</sup> These three points are elaborated further in Simonsen, "Antisemitism on the Norwegian Far Right".

## Israel and leftist antisemitism

One of the most heated topics related to postwar antisemitism in Norway and other parts of Europe is the relationship between antisemitism and criticism of Israel. In an essay about “the new antisemitism,” Norwegian historian of ideas Håkon Harket claims that the State of Israel has been one of the focal points of antisemitism since 1945.<sup>44</sup> Although neither strong criticism of Israel nor anti-Zionism are necessary or sufficient conditions for antisemitism, he concludes, the debate about Israel has provided a new platform for the articulation of anti-Jewish prejudice.<sup>45</sup>

In Sweden, the relationship between the left and antisemitism in general, and between anti-Israel and antisemitic sentiments in particular, have been studied in detail by historian Henrik Bachner.<sup>46</sup> In Norway, no such general work currently exists. However, several works have touched upon the subject. In his book on Norwegian attitudes towards the Jews and Israel, historian Karl Egil Johansen discusses the borders between antisemitism and critical attitudes towards Israel at some length. A special focus is directed towards the debate about well-known author Jostein Gaarder’s column “God’s Chosen People” in 2006.<sup>47</sup> Following this publication, Gaarder was accused of reproducing antisemitic and anti-Jewish sentiments. Still, Johansen’s work is more a study of the shifting opinions about Israel/Palestine in general than a systematic discussion of postwar antisemitism. He does not provide explicit conclusions on how prevalent antisemitism has been in this debate, nor on where the borders between anti-Jewish sentiments and legitimate political criticism of the State of Israel should be drawn more precisely.<sup>48</sup> Recently, the changing attitudes towards Israel and Zionism within the Norwegian labour movement have also been analysed in detail by historian Åsmund Borgen Gjerde. However, the borders between anti-Zionism and antisemitism are not the main focus of his dissertation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Håkon Harket, “Den nye antisemittismen,” in *Jødehat: Antisemittismens historie fra antikken til i dag*, ed. Trond Berg Eriksen, Håkon Harket, and Einhart Lorenz (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2005), 579.

<sup>45</sup> Harket, “Den nye antisemittismen,” 580.

<sup>46</sup> Bachner, *Återkomsten*.

<sup>47</sup> Jostein Gaarder, “Guds utvalgte folk,” *Aftenposten*, 4 August 2006, <<https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikk/i/weW34/Guds-utvalgte-folk>>.

<sup>48</sup> Johansen, “Jødefolket inntar en særstilling,” in particular 163–70.

<sup>49</sup> Åsmund Borgen Gjerde, “The Meaning of Israel: Anti-Zionism and Philo-Zionism in the Norwegian Left, 1933–1968” (PhD thesis, University of Bergen, 2018).

A contribution of a much more polemical nature than Johansen's book is an article written by the Norwegian author Eirik Eiglad and published in the anthology *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives* in 2013. Eiglad focuses on the ideological position of the Norwegian far left in the late 1960s and analyses its effects on present-day debates about the Middle East. One of his main arguments is that while, in the early 1970s, antisemitism "was not a general problem in Norway," the present situation in 2013 had become much more dangerous:

Today, the situation has changed. Alarming reports of anti-Jewish harassment and vandalism have become more common, and many attitudes that can properly be termed antisemitic have become publicly acceptable, as open antisemitic rhetoric has been smuggled back into mainstream political debates – we even have seen explosive outbursts of antisemitic hatred on the streets of the capital.<sup>50</sup>

Eiglad explains this shift by focusing on the rise of anti-Zionism as a political force on the left from the late 1960s onwards, in particular related to the influence of Maoism. "The Maoists," he states, "introduced anti-Zionism to Norway, first through SUF and then later through AKP (m-l) and its front organizations."<sup>51</sup> Since the 1970s this narrative "migrated" from the Maoist left to the left in general.<sup>52</sup> However, Eiglad does not present any empirical material from the period between the 1970s and the late 2000s. In this sense, the causes of the development of anti-Zionist opinion – and in Eiglad's view, the growing threat of antisemitism – are suggested rather than discussed in a systematic historical manner.

A third work, with a contemporary rather than historical focus, is an essay on leftist antisemitism written by journalist John Færseth. Although the Norwegian left generally does not hold antisemitic views, Færseth claims, parts of the

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<sup>50</sup> Eirik Eiglad, "Anti-Zionism and the Resurgence of Antisemitism in Norway," in *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 140–41. The same writer has also written a personal report of a series of antisemitic incidents occurring during a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Oslo in January 2009. See Eirik Eiglad, *The Anti-Jewish Riots in Oslo* (Porsgrunn: Communalism Press, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Eiglad, "Anti-Zionism and the Resurgence of Antisemitism in Norway," 142.

<sup>52</sup> "In the early 1970s, anti-Zionism was considered a fringe phenomenon associated with the Maoist-influenced left ... Anti-Zionist attitudes are now respectable; they are held by leading figures in academic life, trade unions, and politics, and have clearly colored Norway's interpretation of the conflict in the Middle East." Eiglad, "Anti-Zionism and the Resurgence of Antisemitism in Norway," 150–151.

left tend to overlook anti-Jewish statements or to accept them as a sort of legitimate critique of the politics of Israel.<sup>53</sup>

The relationship between attitudes towards Israel and antisemitism is also discussed in two reports on attitudes towards Jews and other minorities published by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies.<sup>54</sup> Attitudes towards the conflict are sorted into three categories: pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, and anti-Israeli. One finding is that respondents with *anti-Israeli* attitudes show a stronger tendency to embrace antisemitic sentiments than the more moderate pro-Palestinian respondents. Still, one main conclusion was that negative views on Israel and its policies were much more common than negative sentiments towards Jews. For nine out of ten respondents who expressed a critical stand against Israeli policies, the report concludes, negative attitudes towards Jews can hardly serve as the explanation.<sup>55</sup> The report from the 2017 survey also concluded that the relationship between pro-Palestinian attitudes and antisemitism was rather weak.<sup>56</sup> To a certain extent, this seems to call into question or at least to moderate Eiglad's thesis of a clear connection between sharp criticism of Israel and a rising tolerance for antisemitism.

Further research should dig much deeper into the historical debates on Israel and antisemitism, both on the left and in society at large. Have pro-Israeli attitudes necessarily implied a principled rejection of anti-Jewish stereotypes? Did the changing perspectives from the late 1960s and 1970s onwards lead to a weakening of the anti-antisemitic norm amongst the Norwegian public? Has the awareness of antisemitism within pro-Palestinian circles been strengthened or weakened over time?

## Contemporary antisemitism

Several of the latest works on antisemitism since 1945 have concentrated on *contemporary* attitudes towards Jews and other minorities rather than on historical

<sup>53</sup> John Færseth, "Den tolererte antisemittismen," in *Venstreekstremisme: Ideer og bevegelser*, ed. Øystein Sørensen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Nik Brandal (Oslo: Dreyer, 2013), 304–19, esp. p. 316.

<sup>54</sup> Christhard Hoffmann, Vibeke Moe, and Øivind Kopperud, eds, *Antisemittisme i Norge? Den norske befolkningens holdninger til jøder og andre minoriteter* (Oslo: The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, 2012), 18–19, 71–73; Christhard Hoffmann and Vibeke Moe, eds, *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge: Befolkningsundersøkelse og minoritetstudie* (Oslo: The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, 2017), 22, 94.

<sup>55</sup> Hoffmann, Moe, and Kopperud, *Antisemittisme i Norge?*, 73.

<sup>56</sup> Hoffmann and Moe, *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge*, 94.

developments from 1945 to the present. Four works shall be discussed here, three of them primarily of a quantitative nature and the fourth a qualitative study.

As already noted, in 2012 the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies published a report based on an autumn 2011 survey of attitudes towards Jews and other religious minorities in Norwegian society. Five years later, two surveys partly following up on the 2012 report were analysed in a new publication. The 2017 report focused on attitudes towards Jews and Muslims but also contained a minority study in which Jews and Muslims in Norway were asked about their experiences and attitudes towards each other. In both studies, attitudes are categorized in three dimensions: cognitive and affective dimensions, as well as the dimension of social distance.

The 2012 report found overall that 12.5 per cent of the Norwegian population held attitudes based on negative stereotypes of Jews. In the 2017 survey, the number had decreased to 8.3 per cent. One noteworthy finding was the high percentage supporting the statement "World Jewry is working behind the scenes to promote Jewish interests" (19 per cent in 2011, 13 per cent in 2017).<sup>57</sup> A suggested explanation for the shift is the growing focus on antisemitism from the mass media as well as from politicians in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in 2015.<sup>58</sup>

The reports also discuss the different factors which seem to make respondents receptive to antisemitic views. As already noted, one conclusion was that while most respondents with critical attitudes towards Israel did not hold antisemitic sentiments, such attitudes were more common among respondents classified as anti-Israeli than among other respondents.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, antisemitism was more common among men and less prevalent among younger persons and persons with higher education.<sup>60</sup> The 2017 report also concludes that negative attitudes towards Muslims are much more common than negative attitudes towards Jews. Overall, 34.1 per cent of the respondents held anti-Muslim stereotypes.<sup>61</sup> Also, one main conclusion is that antisemitism was most common among respondents with sceptical attitudes towards other minorities and immigrants. In other words, it seems to be related to a broader xenophobic mindset.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hoffmann, Moe, and Kopperud, *Antisemittisme i Norge?*, 6, 22; Hoffmann and Moe, *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge*, 7, 36.

<sup>58</sup> Hoffmann and Moe, *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge*, 98–99.

<sup>59</sup> Hoffmann, Moe, and Kopperud, *Antisemittisme i Norge?*, 71–73.

<sup>60</sup> Hoffmann, Moe, and Kopperud, *Antisemittisme i Norge?*, 60; *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge*, 8.

<sup>61</sup> Hoffmann and Moe, *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge*, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Hoffmann and Moe, *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge*, 91–100.

The 2017 report also shows that antisemitic sentiments are overrepresented among the Muslim majority in Norway. While negative attitudes against Muslims were markedly less prevalent among Jewish respondents (14.7 per cent compared to 34.1 per cent), negative stereotypes of Jews were more common among Muslim respondents than within the majority of the population (28.9 per cent compared with 8.3 per cent). However, while stereotypical images of Jewish power are prevalent, the difference between the Muslim sample and the population sample regarding social distance and anti-Jewish sentiments is minimal.<sup>63</sup>

A third study dealing with contemporary antisemitism, this time on a qualitative basis, is a report titled *Det som er jødisk*, written by researchers Alexa Døving and Vibeke Moe. The study is empirically based on interviews with thirty-three persons identifying themselves as Jewish, supplemented by interview material collected by *Det mosaiske trossamfunn* (the Jewish Religious Community in Norway). The project had three goals: to identify how Norwegian Jews perceived their own Jewish identity, to clarify the relationship between historical consciousness about the Holocaust and experiences of identity, and to analyse how antisemitism is interpreted and discussed by Jewish families.<sup>64</sup> The third question, which is discussed in the last section of the report, is most relevant to our context. A particularly interesting finding is the many examples of “everyday antisemitism” provided by the interviewees. As summarized in the report:

Altogether, the informants give the impression that it is part of their everyday experience for Norwegian Jews to be met with stereotypical sentiments. Which stereotypes are expressed depends on the context, the situational frame of the event, and who the performer is.<sup>65</sup>

According to the informants, the Israel/Palestine conflict is of particular importance regarding antisemitism today. Nearly all informants described the debate about the conflict as being at times unpleasant.<sup>66</sup>

One last work related to contemporary antisemitism is a pilot study of antisemitism in the media today, conducted by two researchers associated with the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies. The study is based on a limited number of strategically selected sources from the edited news media and the comment sections in online newspapers and on Facebook. The material was studied through a combination of quantitative content analysis and qualita-

<sup>63</sup> Hoffmann and Moe, *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge*, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Cora Alexa Døving and Vibeke Moe, “*Det som er jødisk.*” *Identiteter, historier og erfaringer med antisemittisme* (Oslo: The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Døving and Moe, “*Det som er jødisk,*” 88. Translation by Simonsen.

<sup>66</sup> Døving and Moe, “*Det som er jødisk,*” 89.

tive reviews. Also, 250 tweets with the hashtag “Jew” were included in the qualitative section. The study concludes that although the number of anti-Jewish stereotypes was relatively small they were still expressed both in readers’ comments and in the edited media. In the edited media, most problematic and antisemitic sentiments occurred in non-editorial texts. Furthermore, such sentiments were more widespread in comment sections than in articles. In the tweets, a kind of satirical antisemitism was identified. Here, the hashtag “Jew” was used as a synonym for negative behaviour associated with finance and profit.<sup>67</sup>

Viewed as a whole, the scope and nature of antisemitism in Norway today have to some degree been exposed. However, more systematic qualitative analysis of representations of the Jew in contemporary mainstream discourse as well as in extremist circles is called for. Such research is being conducted at the moment through the “Shifting Boundaries” project, based at the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies in Oslo. Here, antisemitism – for instance, in new social media – will be researched in depth.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

Until a few decades ago, antisemitism in Norway was thematized only to a limited extent by historians. Today, in contrast to this, our knowledge has grown considerably. Nonetheless, numerous topics, several of which are related to the postwar period, need to be explored further. As a conclusion to this article, I would like to point to some areas which in my view should be emphasized in further research.

We know from existing research that anti-Jewish expressions became taboo in Norway after 1945 and antisemitism as a worldview survived only on the fringe of society among marginal far-right groups. In this sense, postwar antisemitism in Norway can, to a large extent, be described as antisemitism “without anti-Semites.”<sup>69</sup> Still, little research focuses on how the anti-antisemitic norm has been maintained over time. On a general level, we know more about contemporary antisemitism than about the historical development of Norwegian antisem-

<sup>67</sup> See especially the summary in Lars Lien and Jan Alexander Brustad, *Medieanalyse av antisemittisme i dag* (Oslo: The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, 2016), 9.

<sup>68</sup> See “Shifting Boundaries. Definitions, Expressions and Consequences of Antisemitism in Contemporary Norway,” <<https://www.hlsenteret.no/forskning/jodisk-historie-og-antisemittisme/shifting-boundaries-definitions-expressions-and/>>.

<sup>69</sup> The term is used in Bernd Marin, “A Post-Holocaust ‘Anti-Semitism without Anti-Semites’? Austria as a Case in Point,” *Political Psychology* 2, no. 2 (1980): 57–74.

itism from 1945 to the present. Thus, one priority should be to analyse the development of Norwegian postwar antisemitism on a broad historical basis. To what extent and how has postwar antisemitism changed over time? Which elements of antisemitism survived the experience of the Holocaust, which have been weakened, and which have faded away? How has antisemitism been expressed in a society where openly anti-Jewish statements have become taboo? In what kind of situations and contexts has antisemitism reoccurred, and have the anti-antisemitic norms grown weaker or stronger over time?

Furthermore, an important subtopic is the scope and development of everyday Norwegian antisemitism, both as a discourse and as a form of practice. How has antisemitism been expressed outside the public sphere, and not least, how have such “everyday expressions” of antisemitism affected the Jewish minority? Such a focus would deepen our knowledge and allow us to understand Norwegian antisemitism on a more general level. It would also offer insight into the challenges facing minorities in modern Norway.

Karin Kvist Geverts

## 10 Antisemitism in Sweden

### A Neglected Field of Research?

**Abstract:** Research on antisemitism in Sweden can be divided into two categories: one which has antisemitism as a phenomenon as its object of study, and one where antisemitism constitutes part of the findings but where the object of study is something else (bureaucracies, organizations, etc.). No university currently has a centre for Antisemitism Studies and at centres for Racism Studies research on antisemitism is non-existent. One critical issue is how antisemitism is defined, since some definitions tend only to recognize propagandistic and violent examples; another is the popular notion that antisemitism is “un-Swedish” and therefore not part of Swedish culture. Based on these factors combined, this article argues that antisemitism is a neglected field of research in Sweden.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; historiography; Holocaust; Jewish refugees; Nazism; racism; Sweden.

## Introduction

The first study of antisemitism in Sweden is found in a book on the history of the Swedish Jews published in 1924, by historian Hugo Valentin.<sup>1</sup> Typical of historiography in the 1920s, it focuses on how the Swedish state handled diplomacy and foreign relations, and not on antisemitism as a phenomenon. It even lacks a definition of antisemitism. Eleven years later, in 1935, Valentin wrote a book where he analysed and critically examined the history of antisemitism.<sup>2</sup> It was translated into English in 1936 with the title *Antisemitism: Historically and Critically Examined*.<sup>3</sup> The book gives an overview of antisemitism throughout history, but it only mentions Sweden in one short passage. Valentin explains why this is so by arguing that he has “not been able to devote much space to the position of the Jews in non-antisemitic countries – Scandinavia for example.”<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Hugo Valentin, *Judarnas historia i Sverige* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1924).

<sup>2</sup> Hugo Valentin, *Antisemitismen i historisk och kritisk belysning* (Stockholm: Geber, 1935).

<sup>3</sup> Hugo Valentin, *Antisemitism: Historically and Critically Examined*, trans. A. G. Chater (New York: The Viking Press, 1936).

<sup>4</sup> Valentin, *Antisemitism: Historically and Critically Examined*, 5.

this book, Valentin gives a surprisingly modern definition of antisemitism as “hatred or persecution of the Jews.” He points out that the term “antisemitism” is misleading since there are no “semites” to be “anti,” yet argues that “the expression Antisemitism however is preferable to any such word as *Judenhass*, since it denotes that Jews are not attacked in their quality of a religious community but as a race.”<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, he does not apply his own definition in his study. Instead, he falls into the trap of refuting the claim that the Jews are to blame for causing antisemitism, and spends the rest of the text trying to prove this accusation wrong.

In 1940 theology professor Efraim Briem published a book on the causes and history of antisemitism.<sup>6</sup> The book was most likely a serious attempt on Briem’s part to explain antisemitism, but his argument is flawed by the accusation that the Jews are to blame for antisemitism, and thus the book itself feeds antisemitism instead of explaining and combatting it. This was understood at the time by contemporary readers, as can be seen for instance in a quite sharp review by the rabbi of the Jewish Community of Stockholm, Marcus Ehrenpreis, where he completely rejects Briem’s argument and exposes it as false.<sup>7</sup>

It would take over sixty years before historians chose to address the issue again.<sup>8</sup> The first proper study of antisemitism in Sweden was produced in 1986 by historian Mattias Tydén.<sup>9</sup> After this, more studies followed in the 1980s and 1990s. In a recent overview of historical research on racism and xenophobia, historian Martin Ericsson concludes that “the field [i.e. research on antisemitism] is today well established within Swedish historiography.”<sup>10</sup> But is this characterization correct? Well, it depends on how you define Antisemitism Studies. If you choose to see Antisemitism Studies as a field in its own right, as is done internationally, meaning that the primary object of study is antisemitism as such, then

<sup>5</sup> Valentin, *Antisemitism: Historically and Critically Examined*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Efraim Briem, *Antisemitismen genom tiderna: Orsaker och historia* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1940).

<sup>7</sup> Marcus Ehrenpreis, “Judisk partikularism: Reflexioner kring Briems bok om antisemitismen,” *Judisk Tidskrift* 13, no. 7 (1940): 189–97. I would like to thank Pontus Rudberg for bringing this review to my attention.

<sup>8</sup> Here, I have only included books published by scholars as part of the Swedish historiography of Antisemitism Studies, but it should be mentioned that articles by journalists and others were published in *Judisk Krönikan* and *Judisk Tidskrift* from the 1940s to the 1980s addressing how antisemitism should be understood.

<sup>9</sup> Mattias Tydén, *Svensk antisemitism 1880–1930* (Uppsala: Centrum för multietnisk forskning, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Martin Ericsson, *Historisk forskning om rasism och främlingsfientlighet i Sverige – en analyserande kunskapsöversikt* (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2016), 254.

most research in Sweden will not fall under this definition. In this article, I will provide an overview of research on antisemitism in Sweden, as well as an overview of attitude surveys and the institutional milieu in which these studies have been undertaken, in order to evaluate the state of Antisemitism Studies in Sweden today.<sup>11</sup>

## Studies of Swedish antisemitism as a phenomenon

Previous research on antisemitism in Sweden can be roughly divided into two categories.<sup>12</sup> The first has its primary focus on antisemitism as a phenomenon. The second instead focuses on other phenomena, such as organizations, institutions, or government bureaucracies, where antisemitism appears as part of the findings but not as the primary object of study.

Following this categorization, the historiography of Antisemitism Studies in Sweden must be said to start only in 1986, with Tydén's book *Svensk antisemitism 1880–1930*. Tydén studies antisemitic organizations, antisemitism within business associations and the farmers' movement as well as antisemitism expressed by the authors Ola Hansson (1860–1925) and Bengt Lidforss (1868–1913), and provides a thorough description of the ways in which antisemitism was expressed around 1900. He argues that this shows that an antisemitic tradition was established in Sweden: it is thus not a phenomenon that came from abroad.<sup>13</sup>

In 1988, historian of ideas Magnus Nyman published a dissertation on the freedom of the press and opinions on minorities from 1772–86.<sup>14</sup> Up until 1774, when Swedish King Gustav III invited Aaron Isaac to settle, Jews were only allowed to enter Sweden if they converted to Lutheranism.<sup>15</sup> Nyman

<sup>11</sup> This article will cover studies on antisemitism in Sweden. This means that I will not include studies on antisemitism in other countries, even if they were written by Swedish scholars, since they do not deal with Sweden. I will also disregard studies of Finland during the Swedish era written by Finnish scholars since they will be included in the chapter on Finland.

<sup>12</sup> Karin Kvist Geverts, *Ett främmande element i nationen: Svensk flyktingpolitik och de judiska flyktingarna 1938–1944*, Studia Historica Upsaliensia (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, Historiska institutionen, 2008), 24; Lars M. Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude...: Representationer av "juden" i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900–1930* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2000), 28.

<sup>13</sup> Tydén, *Svensk antisemitism 1880–1930*.

<sup>14</sup> Magnus Nyman, *Press mot friheten: Opinionsbildning i de svenska tidningarna och åsiktsbrytningar om minoriteter 1772–1786* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> Nyman, *Press mot friheten*, 217.

shows that antisemitic opinions were expressed in the press in debates on freedom of religion, but also frequently in news reports where foreign Jews were accused of being hostile to the Swedish state and driven by a secret, international Jewish world conspiracy. He also shows that antisemitism existed in Sweden even prior to the settlement of the first Jews.<sup>16</sup>

The very same year, art historian Lena Johannesson published an article on antisemitic agitation in what was known in Sweden as the *rabulistpress*, the politically radical “rabble-rousing” press, from 1845–60. This press constitutes a good source for studying antisemitism for two reasons: because we can expect to find explicit examples published here, and because of the broad impact of this press we can surmise these perceptions were known and widespread throughout Swedish society. Johannesson looks at antisemitic agitation in illustrations in *Fäderneslandet* and *Folkets röst*; both newspapers launched campaigns against Jewish business owners, where they depicted them with antisemitic stereotypes as “capitalist,” “greedy Jews,” and “usurers.”<sup>17</sup> Ericsson underlines that not all of the radical left press participated in these campaigns, the Stockholm-based newspaper *Demokraten* did not participate for example.<sup>18</sup> Johannesson points out that previous studies of the antisemitic riots of 1838 and 1848 have either completely overlooked or misunderstood their antisemitic aspects.

In 1998 Rochelle Wright published *The Visible Wall: Jews and Other Ethnic Outsiders in Swedish Film*.<sup>19</sup> Drawing on a cross-disciplinary approach, Wright provides a historical overview of how Jews and other ethnic minorities in Sweden have been depicted in films produced in Sweden from the 1930s until today. One of her findings is that antisemitism was only briefly discussed in film criticism during this period. She argues that this could be explained “perhaps because an acknowledgement of anti-Semitism, even in the past, conflicts with their own sense of a collective national identity characterized by broad-mindedness and tolerance.”<sup>20</sup> Historian Lars M. Andersson suggests that this tendency to overlook or inability to see antisemitism, as described both by Jo-

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**16** Nyman, *Press mot friheten*, 159.

**17** Lena Johannesson, “Schene Rariteten.’ Antisemitisk bildagitation i svensk rabulistpress 1845–1860,” in *Judiskt liv i Norden*, ed. Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom, and Mattias Tydén (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988), 169–208.

**18** Ericsson, *Historisk forskning om racism och främlingsfientlighet*, 43.

**19** Rochelle Wright, *The Visible Wall: Jews and Other Outsiders in Swedish Film* (Uppsala: Studia multiethnica Upsaliensis, 1998).

**20** Wright, *The Visible Wall*, 10.

hannesson and Wright, could be an explanation as to why there are so few systematic studies of Swedish antisemitism.<sup>21</sup>

At the turn of the century, three doctoral theses were published which all focused on antisemitism as a phenomenon and which all built on sociologist Helen Fein's definition of antisemitism.<sup>22</sup> The first was by historian of ideas Lena Berggren, who investigated the propagandistic antisemitism of the extreme right in a study of the writer and publisher Elof Eriksson and the National Socialist association *Samfundet Manhem*.<sup>23</sup> Berggren defines propagandistic antisemitism as "an antisemitism which is far reaching, explicitly expressed, and articulated in a propagandistic way." She focuses on the relationship between antisemitism and Nazism, since antisemitism is "an essential and necessary element within National Socialism, but it also exists in itself, outside of Nazism, even in a propagandistic form."<sup>24</sup>

The second thesis was by historian of ideas Henrik Bachner, who analysed antisemitism in Sweden as expressed in public debate after 1945.<sup>25</sup> Bachner shows that antisemitism came to be seen as illegitimate after the Second World War and that this was connected to the experiences of the Holocaust, but his most important finding was that antisemitism never disappeared. He argues that antisemitism was latent in the interwar period, and "returned" in the 1960s. He characterizes it as an antisemitism without antisemites.<sup>26</sup>

The third thesis was by aforementioned historian Lars M. Andersson, who investigated antisemitism in popular culture by studying how "the Jew" was represented in the Swedish comic press from 1900 – 30.<sup>27</sup> He shows that "anti-semitic perceptions to a large extent were seen as self-evident and given by nature," arguing that we should therefore consider ideas on "race" and "Jews" as aspects of Swedish modernity.<sup>28</sup> He also argues that it is possible to detect a

<sup>21</sup> Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude...*, 28.

<sup>22</sup> The definition is discussed below under the heading "Definitions of antisemitism."

<sup>23</sup> Lena Berggren, *Nationell upplysning: Drag i den svenska antisemitismens idéhistoria* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1999). A revised version was published in 2014 with a new title: *Blodets renhet: En historisk studie av svensk antisemitism* (Malmö: Arx Förlag, 2014). As early as 1997, Berggren had published some of her findings in her thesis: "Från Bondeaktivism till rasmystik: Om Elof Erikssons antisemitiska skriftställarskap 1923 – 1941" (licentiate thesis, University of Umeå, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Berggren, *Nationell upplysning*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Henrik Bachner, *Återkomsten: Antisemitism i Sverige efter 1945* (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 1999). The book was revised and republished with a new afterword in 2000.

<sup>26</sup> Bachner, *Återkomsten*, 456 – 57.

<sup>27</sup> Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude....*

<sup>28</sup> Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude...*, 14.

hegemonic antisemitic discourse in Sweden during the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup>

In 2001, historian Håkan Blomqvist published a book on antisemitism in the early writings of Arthur Engberg (1888–1944), a leading figure and ideologue of Swedish social democracy.<sup>30</sup> Blomqvist was surprised that he had never come across mention of Engberg's antisemitic ideas in other studies of his work, and suggests that perhaps his predecessors ignored his expressions of antisemitism because they did not fit well with Engberg's ideology as a social democrat.<sup>31</sup>

In 2008, in two chapters in an anthology, Mikael Byström and I investigated antisemitism in debates in the Swedish parliament and in the bureaucracy of the immigration department, finding that both discourses were affected by “antisemitic background noise.”<sup>32</sup>

In 2009, Henrik Bachner published a study on the so-called “Jewish question” as it was understood and expressed in Conservative, Social Democratic, and Christian debates in Sweden during the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> Bachner shows that antisemitic arguments were more seldom expressed in Social Democratic debates and more often in Conservative ones. All three defined antisemitism in a very narrow way, only including what Berggren would describe as propagandistic antisemitism. This meant that moderate expressions of antisemitism, what I have characterized as antisemitic background noise, were not recognized as antisemitism.<sup>34</sup>

In 2013, Håkan Blomqvist published a new study on antisemitism in Sweden, this time with a focus on how perceptions of Bolshevism, Jews, and Judaism were expressed and connected in public discussions during and after the First World War.<sup>35</sup> He follows historian Henrik Rosengren and argues that we should

<sup>29</sup> Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude...*, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Håkan Blomqvist, *Socialdemokrat och antisemit? Den dolda historien om Artur Engberg* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Blomqvist, *Socialdemokrat och antisemit?*, 114.

<sup>32</sup> Mikael Byström, “En talande tytnad? Ett antisemitiskt bakgrundsbrus i riksdagsdebatterna 1942–1947” and Karin Kvist Geverts, “Fader Byråkratius’ rädsla för antisemitism: Attityder mot judiska flyktingar inom Socialstyrelsens utlänningsbyrå,” in *En problematisk relation? Flyktingpolitik och judiska flyktingar i Sverige 1920–1950*, ed. Lars M. Andersson and Karin Kvist Geverts, Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia 36 (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, Historiska institutionen, 2008), 119–38 and 73–94 respectively.

<sup>33</sup> Henrik Bachner, *“Judefrågan.” Debatt om antisemitism i 1930-talets Sverige* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Bachner, “*Judefrågan*,” 302.

<sup>35</sup> Håkan Blomqvist, *Myten om judebolsjevismen: Antisemitism och kontrarevolution* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2013).

differentiate between allosemic and antisemitic perceptions, where the former would describe Jews as different but not necessarily in a negative or hostile way.

Recently, the new project *The Archives of Antisemitism in Scandinavia: Knowledge production and stereotyping in a long-term historical perspective*, led by Cordelia Heß and Jonathan Adams, has published two new articles on the antisemitic riots of 1838 and on the blood-libel affair in *Aftonbladet*.<sup>36</sup>

## **Studies where antisemitism is one focus among many**

The second type of studies, where antisemitism is not the primary object of study but rather one focus among many, is much more common than the first. Both due to the number of studies and to the fact that these do not qualify as Antisemitism Studies per se, I will only mention them briefly here. The purpose of mentioning them at all is that doing so provides an overview of what has been studied and where we lack knowledge of antisemitism in Sweden.

Many studies fall under the category of immigration control or refugee policy. From these we know that antisemitic perceptions expressed either as Judaeophobia regarding Eastern European Jews or antisemitic background noise had as a practical outcome discrimination against Jews when it came to applications for citizenship from 1880–1920 and residence permits from 1938–44.<sup>37</sup> We also know that legislation and regulations concerning foreigners in Sweden were influenced by ideas of “race” and fear of a rise in antisemitism, expressed explicitly in the legislation of 1927 and implicitly in the legislation of 1937.<sup>38</sup> Several studies have shown that antisemitic ideas influenced Foreign Office officials,

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**36** Cordelia Heß, “Eine Fußnote der Emanzipation? Antijüdische Ausschreitungen in Stockholm 1838 und ihre Bedeutung für eine Wissensgeschichte des Antisemitismus,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 27 (2018): 65–87; Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, “A Rational Model for Blood Libel: The *Aftonbladet* Affair,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (New York: Routledge, 2018), 265–84.

**37** Carl Henrik Carlsson, *Medborgarskap och diskriminering: Östjudar och andra invandrare i Sverige 1860–1920* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2004); Kvist Geverts, *Ett främmande element i nationen*.

**38** Tomas Hammar, *Sverige åt svenskarna: Invandringspolitik, utlämningskontroll och asylrätt 1900–1932* (Stockholm: Caslon Press, 1964); Kvist Geverts, *Ett främmande element i nationen*.

members of Parliament as well as university students during the Second World War and the Holocaust.<sup>39</sup>

Several studies focusing on the reception of Jewish refugees during or after the Second World War by the Jewish community in Stockholm have discussed the importance of antisemitism.<sup>40</sup> Others have studied antisemitism in connection with the reception of Eastern European Jews from 1860 – 1914,<sup>41</sup> the reception of the Hechaluz,<sup>42</sup> Jewish converts in the nineteenth century<sup>43</sup> and during the Second World War<sup>44</sup> as well as the reception and integration of the Jewish children who came with the *Kindertransport*<sup>45</sup> or the groups of Jews who fled

**39** Paul A. Levine, *From Indifference to Activism: Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust 1938–1944* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1998); Hans Lindberg, *Svensk flyktingpolitik under internationellt tryck 1936–1941* (Stockholm: Allmänna förlag, 1973); Sverker Oredsson, *Lunds universitet under andra världskriget: Motsättningar, debatter och hjälpinsatser* (Lund: Lunds universitethistoriska sällskap, 1996); Mikael Byström, *En broder, gäst och parasit: Uppfattningar och föreställningar om utlänningar, flyktingar och flyktingpolitik i svensk offentlig debatt 1942–1947* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2006); Steven Koblak, *The Stones Cry Out: Sweden's Response to the Persecution of Jews 1933–1945* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1988).

**40** Svante Hansson, *Flykt och överlevnad: Flyktingverksamhet i Mosaiska församlingen i Stockholm 1933–1950* (Stockholm: Hillelförlaget, 2004); Pontus Rudberg, *The Swedish Jews and the Victims of Nazi Terror, 1933–1945* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2015), also published as *The Swedish Jews and the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 2018).

**41** Anna Besserman, “...eftersom nu en gång en nådig försyn täcks hosta dem upp på Sveriges gästvänliga stränder.’ Mosaiska församlingen i Stockholm inför den östjudiska invandringen 1860 – 1914,” *Nordisk Judaistik* 5, no. 2 (1984): 13–38.

**42** Malin Thor Tureby, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum: Tysk-judiska ungdomars exil i Sverige 1933–1943* (Växjö: Växjö University Press, 2005).

**43** Per Hammarström, “Juden översvämma landet’ Den judiska gårdfarihandeln i Kungl. Maj:ts befallningshavandes femårsberättelser 1865 – 1905,” in *Den nya staten: Ideologi och samhällsförändring kring sekelskiftet 1900*, ed. Erik Nydahl and Jonas Harvard (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2016), 25–50; Per Hammarström, “Israels omvälvande som jordens fulländning: Antiju-diskhet och antisemitism i Missionstidning för Israel 1874 – 1885,” in *Makt, myter och historie-bruk: Historiska problem i belysning*, ed. Stefan Dalin (Sundsvall: Mittuniversitetet, 2014), 123–42; Per Hammarström, “I sällskap med judar: Association, assimilation och konversion i Stockholm 1809 – 1838,” in *Nationen så in i Norden: En festskrift till Torkel Jansson*, ed. Henrik Edgren and others (Skellefteå: Artos & Norma bokförlag, 2013), 157–68; Per Hammarström, “Om-vändelseberättelser, judemission och svensk lågkyrkhed runt sekelskiftet 1900,” in *Från legofolk till stadsfolk: Festskrift till Börje Harnesk*, ed. Erik Nydahl and Magnus Perlestat (Härnösand: Institutionen för Humaniora, 2012), 137–53.

**44** Pär Frohnert, “De behöva en fast hand över sig.’ Missionsförbundet, Israelmissionen och de judiska flyktingarna 1939 – 1945,” in *En problematisk relation? Flyktingpolitik och judiska flyktingar i Sverige*, 227–48.

**45** Ingrid Lomfors, *Förlorad barndom – återvunnet liv: De judiska flyktingbarnen från Nazityskland* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs universitet, 1996).

pogroms in Poland and Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>46</sup> Some have focused on antisemitism and the integration of the Jewish group in Lund<sup>47</sup> or in Sundsvall, Hudiksvall, Östersund, and Härnösand from 1870–1940.<sup>48</sup>

The connections between Nazism and antisemitism have been studied by several researchers,<sup>49</sup> as has antisemitism within conservative groups,<sup>50</sup> among musicians,<sup>51</sup> and in business organizations.<sup>52</sup> For a long time, there was a lack of studies on the Church and its connection to antisemitism, but this has begun to change.<sup>53</sup>

In Ericsson's previously mentioned overview of the research on racism, he argues that there is a lack of knowledge about antisemitism in the period pre-1850 as well as a lack of studies on continuity, i.e. of studies with a long histor-

**46** Łukasz Górniołk, *Swedish Refugee Policymaking in Transition? Czechoslovaks and Polish Jews in Sweden, 1968–1972* (Umeå: Umeå universitet, 2016).

**47** Anna Svensson, *Nöden – en shtetl i Lund* (Lund: Gamla Lund, 1995).

**48** Per Hammarström, *Nationens styrbarn: Judisk samhällsintegration i några Norrlandsstäder 1870–1940* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2007).

**49** Heléne Lööw, *Nazismen i Sverige 2000–2014* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 2015); Heléne Lööw, *Nazismen i Sverige 1980–1997. Den rasistiska undergrundsrörelsen: Musiken, myterna, riterna* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1998); Heléne Lööw, *Nazismen i Sverige 1924–1979: Pionjärerna, partierna, propagandan* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 2004); Heléne Lööw, "Kampen mot ZOG: Antisemitismen bland moderna rasideologer," *Historisk Tidskrift* 116 (1996): 65–91; Eric Wärenstam, *Fascismen och nazismen i Sverige 1920–1940: Studier i den svenska nationalsocialismens, fascismens och antisemitsmemens organisationer, ideologier och propaganda under mellankrigsåren* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1970).

**50** Gunnar Åselius, *The “Russian Menace” to Sweden: The Belief System of a Small Power Security Elite in the Age of Imperialism* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 1994); Rolf Torstendahl, *Mellan nykonservatism och liberalism: Idébrytningar inom högern och bondepartierna 1918–1934* (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget, 1969).

**51** Henrik Rosengren, "Judarnas Wagner." *Moses Pergament och den kulturella identifikationens dilemma omkring 1920–1950* (Lund: Sekel, 2007); Petra Garberding, *Musik och politik i skuggan av nazismen: Kurt Atterberg och de svensk-tyska musik-relationerna* (Lund: Sekel, 2007); Henrik Karlsson, *Det fruktade märket: Wilhelm Peterson-Berger, antisemitismen och antinazismen* (Malmö: Sekel, 2005).

**52** Cecilia Fredriksson, *Ett paradis för alla: EPA mellan folkhem och förförelse* (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1998); Sven Nordlund, *Affärer som vanligt: Ariseringen i Sverige 1933–1945* (Lund: Sekel, 2009); Sven Nordlund, "En svensk tiger?" Svenska reaktioner på tyska ariseringsskrav under 1930-talet och andra världskriget," in *Sverige och Nazityskland: Skuldfrågor och moraldebatt*, ed. Lars M. Andersson and Mattias Tydén (Stockholm: Dialogos, 2007); Göran Blomberg, *Mota Moses i grind: Ariseringssiver och antisemitism i Sverige 1933–1943* (Stockholm: Hilleförlaget, 2003).

**53** Anders Jarlert, *Judisk “ras” som äktenskapshinder i Sverige: Effekten av Nürnberglagarna i Svenska kyrkans statliga funktion som lysningsförrättare 1935–1945* (Malmö: Sekel, 2006); Besser-mann, "...eftersom nu en gång en nädlig försyn"; Bachner, "Judefrågan".

ical perspective.<sup>54</sup> Ericsson also suggests that historians have a lot to gain from interacting with researchers in the social sciences, who primarily study racism but not so often antisemitism.<sup>55</sup>

## Definitions of antisemitism

One problem with some of the studies in the second category is how they define antisemitism. Andersson argues that too often only extreme utterances, what can be categorized as propagandistic antisemitism, are regarded as antisemitism. This leads to “moderate” expressions of antisemitism becoming invisible.<sup>56</sup> This problem is also connected to a tendency to view antisemitism as “un-Swedish,” imported from abroad, as Hélène Lööw has put it.<sup>57</sup> Related to this is what Andersson characterizes as “the biographical dilemma,” meaning the “tendency to deny, downplay, and trivialize antisemitic expressions uttered by famous persons.”<sup>58</sup>

Most researchers who study antisemitism in Sweden follow sociologist Helen Fein’s definition:

I propose to define antisemitism as a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs toward Jews as a collectivity manifested in individuals as attitudes, and in culture as myth, ideology, folklore, and imagery, and in actions – social or legal discrimination, political mobilization against Jews, and collective or state violence – which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace, or destroy Jews as Jews.<sup>59</sup>

Several also adopt the scale elaborated by John C. G. Röhl which separates antisemitism into different levels, ranging from everyday antisemitism on the lowest

**54** To some extent this might change with the research project being undertaken by the editors of this anthology.

**55** Ericsson, *Historisk forskning om rasism och främlingsfientlighet*, 254, 266.

**56** Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude...*, 49. For an example of this, see Sven B. Ek, *Nöden i Lund: En etnologisk stadsdelsstudie* (Lund: Liber, 1982).

**57** Hélène Lööw, “Det finns antisemitism men inga antisemiter,” in *Tankar i “judefrågan.” Nedslag i den svenska antisemitismens historia*, ed. Lars M. Andersson and Karin Kvist Geverts, Opuscula historica Upsaliensia (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, Historiska institutionen, 2019 [forthcoming]).

**58** Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude...*, 51.

**59** Helen Fein, “Dimensions of Antisemitism: Attitudes, Collective Accusations, and Actions,” in *The Persisting Question: Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Antisemitism*, ed. Helen Fein (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987), 67.

level to genocidal antisemitism on the highest.<sup>60</sup> Some have elaborated on the description of the everyday level of antisemitism; for instance, I myself have used the metaphor of antisemitism being a background noise, in order to catch those moderate antisemitic utterances by state officials which indeed should be categorized as expressions of antisemitism, but which were seen as unbiased and “normal” in contemporary society.<sup>61</sup> The aforementioned Henrik Rosengren has introduced Zygmunt Bauman’s term “allosemitism” in order to distinguish between negative stereotyping of Jews (antisemitism) and descriptions of Jews as different but not necessarily in a negative way (allosemitism).<sup>62</sup>

## Institutional affiliation and attitude surveys

So, where are the studies on antisemitism in Sweden being produced? In an article from 2017, Lars M. Andersson and I argued that almost all research on antisemitism has been conducted by scholars at the departments of history or the history of ideas in Lund, Stockholm, Uppsala, and Umeå.<sup>63</sup> Most of this was already completed during the years 1999 – 2007. After 2007, there have only been a few more studies, for instance by Blomqvist and Bachner. In our article, we also searched for studies on antisemitism at institutions for international migration and ethnic relations (IMER), since studies on racism are often pursued there, but we found almost nothing.<sup>64</sup> Since our article was written in 2017, I updated some of the research. A search for university courses on antisemitism reveals that there are a few where antisemitism is a part of what is studied, but symptomatically none of these are taught within centres for Racism Studies or IMER institutions.<sup>65</sup> Our conclusion, that “despite a few exceptions, there seems to be a

**60** For a discussion of Röhl, see Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude...*, 15, or Carlsson, *Medborgarskap och diskriminering*, 36 – 37.

**61** Kvist Geverts, *Ett främmande element i nationen*, 37 – 38.

**62** Rosengren, “*Judarnas Wagner*,” 61 – 62. Håkan Blomqvist has used the term “allosemitism” in his study on the myth of Judeobolshevism: *Myten om judebolsjevismen*, 21 – 25.

**63** Lars M. Andersson and Karin Kvist Geverts, “Antisemitismen – antirasismens blinda fläck?” in *Från Afrikakompaniet till Tokyo: En vänbok till György Nováky*, ed. Marie Lennersand and Leos Müller (Stockholm: Exkurs, 2017), 146 – 175. One exception is the studies by Berit Wigerfelt and Anders Wigerfelt at Malmö University.

**64** Andersson and Kvist Geverts, “Antisemitismen – antirasismens blinda fläck?,” 154.

**65** The search was conducted in March 2019; it showed that there are only a few courses where antisemitism is taught, but in all of them antisemitism is not the sole object of study. Instead, antisemitism is studied as part of something else, the Holocaust or human rights for instance. These courses were found at four universities, see *Religionsvetenskap och teologi: Förintelsen i*

clear division both when it comes to space and discipline, as well as time, between antisemitism and racism research,” remains valid.<sup>66</sup>

The lack of studies on antisemitism is also a sad constant when it comes to attitude surveys in Sweden. Very little has been done apart from some surveys conducted by the Living History Forum and Brå (The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention).<sup>67</sup> One exception is a study of antisemitic attitudes among Arabs and Muslims by Mikael Tossavainen,<sup>68</sup> and there are also a few comparative studies of antisemitism in Europe where Sweden is included.<sup>69</sup> Thus, it seems equally symptomatic that the national SOM (Society Opinion Media) institute at the University of Gothenburg, which measures almost every attitude held by the Swedish people, never asks any questions on antisemitism.<sup>70</sup>

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*korsets skugga – Antisemitismens framväxt och konsekvenser* (7.5 credits), given at the Centre for Religious and Theological Studies at Lund University, <<https://www.ctr.lu.se/kurs/TEOB16/VT2018/>>; *Nutida rasism och mänskliga rättigheter* (7.5 credits) given within the master’s programme of human rights at the Department of Theology at Uppsala University, <<http://www.uu.se/utbildning/utbildningar/selma/utbplan/>>; *Nazismen, Nazityskland och Förintelsen* (7.5 points), given at the Department of History at Stockholm University, <<https://www.su.se/sok-kurser-och-program/hi1311-1.412155>>; *Sverige och förintelsen* (15 credits, part-time studies), given at the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Gothenburg, <<https://www.su.se/sok-kurser-och-program/hi1311.412155>>.

**66** Andersson and Kvist Geverts, “Antisemitismen – antiratismens blinda fläck?,” 154–55.

**67** Henrik Bachner and Jonas Ring, *Antisemittiska attityder och föreställningar i Sverige* (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2006); Brottsförebyggande rådet (BRÅ), *Hatbrott 2015: Statistik över polisanmälningar med identifierade hatbrottsmotiv och självrapparterad utsatthet för hatbrott* (Stockholm: Brå, 2015); BRÅ, *Antisemittiska hatbrott, Rapport 2019*, no. 4 (Stockholm: Brå, 2019).

**68** Mikael Tossavainen, *Det förnekade hatet: Antisemitism bland araber och muslimer i Sverige* (Stockholm: SKMA, 2003).

**69** See Lars Dencik and Karl Marosi, *Different Antisemitisms: Perceptions and Experiences of Antisemitism among Jews in Sweden and across Europe* (London: Institute of Jewish Policy Research, 2017); Johannes Due Enstad, *Antisemitic Violence in Europe, 2005–2015: Exposure and Perpetrators in France, UK, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Russia* (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2017); European Commission, *Perceptions of Antisemitism [report]*, Special Eurobarometer 484 (Brussels: European Commission, 2019), <<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/85035>>. See also yearly studies of antisemitism such as World Value Studies, Pew Research Center, and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

**70** Thanks to a tip from Hélène Lööw, I checked the questions of the SOM institute national questionnaire but there were none dealing with antisemitic attitudes. See also the introduction to this volume by Cordelia Heß.

## Antisemitism Studies – a Neglected Field of Research

This article has shown that although several works which mention antisemitism have been published since Hugo Valentin's book in 1924, there are still only a few that deal solely with antisemitism as their primary object of study. This means that Lars M. Andersson's conclusion from 2000 still stands: research on Swedish antisemitism comprises just a handful of studies. Why this is the case is difficult to answer with certainty. In our 2017 article, Andersson and I argued that antisemitism constituted a blind spot in Racism Studies in Sweden, and perhaps this could be explained by the tendency pointed out here – that antisemitism is a racism which tends to be either unseen or characterized as “un-Swedish.” Either way, I conclude that Antisemitism Studies, narrowly defined, remains a neglected field of research in Sweden.

Hopefully, this conclusion might become dated as soon as within a few years' time. The reason for this is the newly awakened interest, on a political level, to combat racism. In 2016 the Swedish Government gave a special mandate to the Swedish Research Council to establish a programme on Racism Studies.<sup>71</sup> So far only one project dealing with antisemitism has received funding; managed by the editors of this anthology, Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, its goal is to establish an Antisemitism Studies network in the Nordic countries. This is all well and good, but in order to succeed a large political investment should ideally be made, for instance similar to the one in Norway.<sup>72</sup>

Also, on 21 January 2019, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven uttered these words in the Statement of Government Policy: “Wherever anti-Semitism exists, and however it is expressed, it must be identified and fought.”<sup>73</sup> Prime Minister Löfven also made a promise that the Swedish government would host a conference on Holocaust remembrance in 2020, and would establish a Holocaust museum. Time will tell if the political commitment to fight antisemitism will also

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<sup>71</sup> Utbildningsdepartementet, “Uppdrag att utlysa medel för ett forskningsprogram,” regeringen.se, 2 February 2016, <<https://www.regeringen.se/regeringsuppdrag/2016/02/uppdrag-att-utlysa-medel-for-ett-forskningsprogram/>>.

<sup>72</sup> For a presentation of the Norwegian projects “Shifting Boundaries” and “Jøden som kulturell konstruksjon” (The Jew as a social construct), see the webpage of HL-Senteret <<https://www.hlsenteret.no/forskning/jodisk-historie-og-antisemittisme/>>.

<sup>73</sup> Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in the Statement of Government Policy (Regeringsförklaringen) of 21 January 2019, 14, <<https://www.government.se/speeches/2019/01/statement-of-government-policy-21-january-2019/>>.

materialize in the funding of new research,<sup>74</sup> but we certainly live in interesting times. Scientists usually do not make wishes, but if I could, I would wish that in ten years' time Antisemitism Studies would be a growing research field in Sweden and that my conclusion in this article will be outdated.

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**74** The Swedish Government has recently committed funding to establish a Holocaust museum in Sweden and is currently investigating the future museum's focus, organization, and partnerships.

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## **Perceptions, Encounters, and the Presence of Antisemitism**



Firouz Gaini

# 11 Jerusalem in the North Atlantic

## The Land and State of Israel from a Faroese Perspective

**Abstract:** In this paper I ask why a predominantly Evangelical Lutheran North Atlantic society has given Jews and Israel such a central position and role in local and national discussions on religion and politics, culture and society. How do current societal changes in the Faroes, associated with newfound cultural diversity and religious hybridity, affect the special Faroese-Israeli connection? This paper, based on a selection of written media and literary accounts as sources of information, focuses on the period since the end of the twentieth century, but links this period to the whole post-Second World War era in some of its discussions. While the Faroes might be less secular than other Nordic countries, we can see that its religious and cultural identities are dynamic, adapting to new societal premises, and rekindling Faroe Islanders' passion for Jerusalem.

**Keywords:** Christian Zionism; Faroe Islands; frontiers; identity; Jerusalem; religion.

## Introduction

“I do not believe it is a coincidence that there are *eighteen* islands constituting the Faroes,” says Jeffrey Bernstein while visiting the North Atlantic island community in spring 2013, “because the number eighteen is associated with ‘chai’ (*hai*), which means life or living in Hebrew.”<sup>1</sup> Bernstein, a prominent Messianic Jew from New York City, who founded the congregation Gates of Zion, considers the Faroes (or the Islands of Life, as he calls them) to represent a sacred gift contributing to the salvation of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Like many other Christian and Jewish missionaries who have visited the remote islands since the late twentieth century, he expresses the sense of being “among friends” who have a special connection to Jerusalem and Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> Snorri Brend, “Jeffrey: Ísrael eигur noggvar vinir í Føroyum,” *Portal*, 3 November 2013, <<http://umsit.portal.fo/jeffrey+israel+eigur+nogvar+vinir+i+foroyum.html>>. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value. The word חי (hai, “life”) has the value  $8 + 10 = 18$ .

<sup>2</sup> Brend, “Jeffrey.”

In Tórshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands, all public city buses flew the azure blue and white flag of Israel on 14 May 2018, in commemoration of the birth of the State of Israel seventy years earlier. The Mayor of Tórshavn, Annika Olsen, from the right-wing pro-independence *Fólkaflokkurin* (People's Party), defended this controversial decision despite some criticism in the media. Normally, the city buses only fly Faroese and Nordic flags on national days. That same day, *Ísraelsvinir* (Friends of Israel) and *Vinirfelagið Føroyar-Ísrael* (Faroes-Israel Friendship Association) organized an event with speeches and music at the city-centre square. Svenning av Lofti, the indefatigable religious campaigner for Faroese-Israeli relations, who has been a guide and promoter of tours to Israel for more than forty years now, addressed the audience of approximately 150 people. The Israeli right-wing activist Avi Lipkin participated (and gave a talk at another meeting later that same day) as a special guest. You could see Israeli flags in the hands of many people at the square, but also a Palestinian flag carried by a small group of young Faroe Islanders opposing the jubilee.

Israel has played an important role in Faroese political and religious debates for seventy years now, yet there has never been a Jewish community in the Faroes. There are just twelve Jews in total in the Faroes, six men and six women, of whom seven were born in the Faroes (according to the 2011 census). There is very little information about Jews living in the Faroes since the seventeenth century, when the first Jewish families of Spanish-Portuguese origin settled in Denmark. There have probably been Danish Jewish traders in the Faroes from time to time, for instance people working for entrepreneurs like Jacob Franco, Abraham Levi, and Abraham Cantor, who were in charge of tobacco exports to the Faroes and Iceland in the early eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Occupied by the United Kingdom in April 1940, the Faroes did not receive Jewish refugees in the 1930s or during the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> There have, of course, been examples of Jews marrying into Faroese families over the centuries, for instance the case of the Meyer family from the island of Suðuroy (Mr Meyer settling in the Faroes at the beginning of the twentieth century), but genealogical mapping is a complex task. People were

<sup>3</sup> Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, no. 3–4 (2004): 132.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Alexander S. Brustad, from the Resource Department of the Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Oslo, Norway, told me (by email correspondence) that they do not have any information on Norwegian Jews fleeing to the Faroes during the Second World War. Jonathan Harmat, at the Jewish Information Centre (*Jødisk Informationscenter*) in Denmark, told me (by email correspondence) that they do not have any information on Danish Jews fleeing to the Faroes during the war. Historians in the Faroes have drawn the same conclusion in oral communication.

familiar with *jødar* (or *gýðingar* in old texts), which is the Faroese word for Jews, through the Bible, which was read in Danish prior to the first Faroese translation in 1937.<sup>5</sup> However, Faroe Islanders' ideas about Jews have never been investigated before. Nor has there been any scientific research on the relationship between the Faroes and Israel. From an Evangelical Lutheran North Atlantic perspective, people have known of Jews from the Bible and have also been aware of Jerusalem. Despite this focus on Biblical and present-day Jerusalem, there is a lack of scholarly work on Jewish-Christian relations in the Faroes, and their assumed impact on philosemitism, antisemitism, etc. in the North Atlantic.

In this paper, I ask why a predominantly Evangelical Lutheran North Atlantic society has given Jews and Israel such a central position and role in local and national discussions on religion and politics, culture and society. How do current societal change in the Faroes, associated with newfound cultural diversity and religious hybridity, affect the special Faroese-Israeli connection? This paper, drawing on a selection of written media and literary accounts as sources of information,<sup>6</sup> focuses on the period since the end of the twentieth century, but links this period to the whole post-Second World War era in some of its discussions.

## Religion and new spirituality

The Faroe Islands (51,000 inhabitants) is an autonomous country within the Kingdom of Denmark, located in the North Atlantic, midway between Norway, Iceland, and Scotland. The Faroes, originally belonging to Norway, were Christianized during the tenth century. More than 95 per cent of the population is Christian (according to the 2011 census). Almost 85 per cent are members of the Faroese Evangelical Lutheran (State) Church, which includes the Inner Mission (probably about 10 to 15 per cent of the population), even though this congregation is highly autonomous and hence could be treated as a separate de-

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<sup>5</sup> Although the Bible in its entirety was only translated to Faroese very recently in history, there have been older Faroese written documents with stories and citations from the Bible. Some of the chants and ballads from the Viking and medieval eras (oral tradition in the Faroes) contain biblical messages. The oldest known Bible translation in Faroese (viz. the Gospel of Matthew) was undertaken by the priest Johan Hendrik Schrøter in 1823. The Lord's Prayer, for instance, was translated by Friðrik Petersen and printed in 1892. See further Elsa Funding, *Føroyskar biblutyðingar* (Tórshavn: Faroe University Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> All translations from Faroese and Danish to English language are my own.

nomination.<sup>7</sup> Around 15 per cent belong to the Calvinist-inspired (Plymouth) Brethren, focusing on asceticism and the ideal of being “Equal under Christ” in social relations.<sup>8</sup> The Brethren has been in the Faroes for almost 150 years. Since the 1970s and 1980s, various new globally oriented neo-evangelical churches (Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals, and Charismatics) have gained a foothold in the Faroes, and even though they might have relatively few members, they have had a very significant impact on the religious landscape in the Faroes. One such movement, initially known as Christ is the Answer (*Kristus er svarið*), includes congregations “nurtured by a new Utopia concentrated on the individual.”<sup>9</sup>

The Faroes have a very high rate of believers compared to the other Nordic countries, and many young people from all layers of society have adopted neo-evangelical Protestantism as their identity. The free churches, with members considering themselves to be “true believers” in contrast to the State Church’s secularized and laid-back “Christians by tradition” who “belong without believing,” represent various associations that – in some cases – are in strong competition with each other.<sup>10</sup> What American scholars have sometimes termed postmodern evangelical Christianity,<sup>11</sup> aiming to attract new groups of young members, mirrors tendencies in the Faroes today, where mysticism in relation to the reconfiguration of the God/Individual relationship is at the core of religious identities.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the groups associated with neo-evangelical associations, but also with the older free churches, subscribe to Christian Zionism in their beliefs and spiritual visions. In these sects, sometimes described as Christian fundamentalists in the media, support for Israel is deep-rooted. While the Christian Zionist inspiration largely seems to come from the United States, Faroese congregations emphasize the Faroese foundations of their religious and political message. The messianism of such millenarian sects is often centred on a vision of a future Israel (or Messiah), as when a young man from the Brethren says:

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<sup>7</sup> Christophe Pons, “The Anthropology of Christianity in the Faroe Islands,” in *Among the Islanders of the North: An Anthropology of the Faroe Islands*, ed. Firouz Gaini (Tórshavn: Faroe University Press, 2011), 84.

<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Hansen, *Eindarmantan føroyinga og vikingarrøslurnar* (Tórshavn: Emil Thomsen, 1987), 309–16; Jan Jensen, “‘Be Real and Relate’: An Anthropological Study of Religious Practices in a Faroe Islands Christian Church” (master’s dissertation, Copenhagen University, 2017), 12–16.

<sup>9</sup> Pons, “The Anthropology of Christianity in the Faroe Islands,” 82.

<sup>10</sup> Pons, “The Anthropology of Christianity in the Faroe Islands,” 85–87.

<sup>11</sup> Edwin Zehner, “Missionaries and Anthropology,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. Hilary Callan (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Pons, “The Anthropology of Christianity in the Faroe Islands,” 120–23.

We see today's Israel as the earthly version of the Israel to come; it is the foundation of what shall come, but is not the genuine, true, or complete biblical Israel at all. Not until the rapture will Israel be more, according to our dispensational thinking. The reality is already there, i.e. Israel; and it is a message from God regarding what is to come.<sup>13</sup>

Today, many young people, echoing some of the nineteenth-century founders of the Brethren movement, seem to be absorbed by the question of the "destiny of Israel and the Jews and their situation in the end times."<sup>14</sup> The Christian Zionism of Evangelical Christians in the Faroes and elsewhere views the establishment of the State of Israel as the start of the realization of Biblical prophecies which will lead to the "Second coming."

## Islands and frontiers

Standing in the square with Tórshavn Town Hall just behind him, wearing a suitable blue-and-white-striped scarf, Svenning av Lofti's highly emotional oratory focused on the shared destiny of Israel and the Faroes:

Perhaps no other nation understands the struggle for existence of the Jewish people as well as the Faroese. How they were robbed of their right to existence far back in time. They not only lost sovereignty over their own country, but also lost the Hebrew language ... and have been chased and hated among nations, just because they were Jews. But they got their mother tongue back after a long struggle – like we Faroese did.<sup>15</sup>

He tones down the religious rhetoric and emphasizes people's right to live and work in their own country – with their own language and national characteristics. "God bless Israel, God bless the Faroes" (in this order), were the last words in his speech, which aimed to strengthen the sense of being part of a common struggle (or mission), in the Faroes and in Israel.

The Brethren in the Faroes, maybe especially among the first generations of followers, maintained a strong interest in Faroe Islanders' "right to political identity and autonomy in the same way as Biblical Israel."<sup>16</sup> Later, among Brethren as well as other Faroese (neo-)evangelical congregations, but also among Faroe Islanders in general, the awareness of the colonial past and the sense of

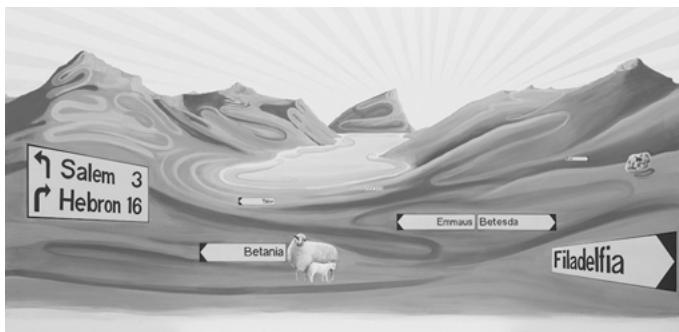
<sup>13</sup> Tórður Jóansson, *Brethren in the Faroes* (Tórshavn: Faroe University Press, 2012), 281.

<sup>14</sup> Jóansson, *Brethren in the Faroes*, 89.

<sup>15</sup> Svenning av Lofti, "Røða: Ísrael sjeyti ár," *Sandportal*, 22 May 2018, <<http://sandportal.fo/tidindi/ro-a-israel-sjeyti-ar>>.

<sup>16</sup> Jóansson, *Brethren in the Faroes*, 34.

being on the edge of the modern world sparked new interest in corresponding “marginal peripheries” around the world.<sup>17</sup> Echoing what Danish pastor and philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) described as the unity between the Nordic spirit and the spirit of God, which he said was laying the ground for a (Nordic) New Jerusalem, the islands symbolize a frontier of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> Faroese preachers and ministers often describe the islands as some kind of remote outpost or haven for Christianity and Biblical Israel. In a (Zionist) Jewish perspective, this mapping could also express a symbolic extension of the frontier myth, which normally refers to Israel’s geographic border regions. Frontier settlements, idealized by Zionist leaders as places of steadfastness and patriotism forming resilient people, have been “glorified by the Ashkenazi elite since the founding of the State of Israel.”<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 11.1:** Edward Fuglø, *A Promised Land* (2010). With permission.

Annexation of the Faroes is of course not on Israel’s political agenda, but the frontier metaphor is quite interesting in relation to discussions about issues concerning Christian Zionism and Messianic Judaism today. Hebron, Bethel, Mizpa, Smyrna, Nebo, Elim, Hermon, and Salem are all places mentioned in the Old Testament, associated with important persons and tales, but they also appear on the religious map of the contemporary Faroe Islands. If you travel through the Faroes, you will notice these names, as well as many others that bring Israel to mind, on the signs of halls belonging to small congregations (part of the

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<sup>17</sup> Pons, “The Anthropology of Christianity in the Faroe Islands,” 112–24.

<sup>18</sup> Pons, “The Anthropology of Christianity in the Faroe Islands,” 91.

<sup>19</sup> Cathrine Thorleifsson, “Guarding the Frontier: On Nationalism and Nostalgia in an Israeli Border Town,” in *Identity Destabilised: Living in an Overheated World*, ed. Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Elisabeth Schober (Oxford: Pluto Press, 2016), 111.



**Figure 11.2:** Hebron is a small Plymouth Brethren congregation in Argir, just outside the capital Tórshavn, which started its activities in the 1930s. The “new” Hebron (depicted above) opened its doors in 1992. Photo by author.

Brethren or other denominations) in villages and towns. On several occasions, Jewish religious and political dignitaries visiting the Faroes, for instance Yitzhak Eldan (in spring 2001), then Israeli ambassador to Denmark, have talked about the “Israel-friendly” Faroe Islands, alluding to less friendly (or even hostile) neighbouring Scandinavian countries voicing criticisms about Israeli policies.<sup>20</sup> Faroe Islanders supporting the Scandinavian countries’ relatively critical standpoints towards Israeli policies (usually regarding the situation of the Palestinian population) often keep silent in order not to enrage pro-Israel religious communities and their political allies in the Faroes. Actually, most Faroe Islanders seem to be more interested in the cultural history and geography of Christianity than in what takes place in the Knesset in twenty-first-century Israel. This reflects the past/present/future temporal dimension – and its boundaries – in the presentation of Jews and Israel in Faroese narratives and discourse.

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**20** Ritzaus Bureau, “Israels ambassadør besøger Israel-venlige Færøerne,” *Fyens Stiftstidende – Fyens Amts Avis*, 15 April 2001, <<https://www.fyens.dk/indland/Israels-ambassadoer-besoeger-Israel-venlige-Faeroerne/artikel/225583>>.

## Jerusalem in heart and mind

In the recent branding of the country as a tourist destination, the Faroes is portrayed as (probably) the “last Paradise on Earth.” The religious connotation of this Paradise is clear, but it also reflects an image of the islands as unspoiled, authentic, and maybe also, as American rabbi Niles Elliot Goldstein writes in a travel report, as a place to experience the spirituality of solitude. Travelling in the Faroes, he writes, “I felt a kinship with that sense of solitariness,” because, he adds, it spoke to “a part of my soul in a way that only nature could.”<sup>21</sup> There is also a nostalgia in the presentation of Faroese culture and nature, a longing for something that might reveal the so-called Nordic spirit, yet also the Nordic New Jerusalem, which for some people is found in the past and for others (like apocalyptic millenarians) is found in the future. Nostalgia can, according to Marilyn Strathern, function as a potent source of reconnection and identity in turbulent times,<sup>22</sup> and Jerusalem (also called *Jorsala* or *Jorsalaborg* in Old Norse) is the symbol of a form of spiritual homesickness touching many people in the Faroe Islands.

In a remarkable book about his “pilgrimage” to Jerusalem in 1951–52, the Faroese clergyman and writer Kristian Osvald Viderøe (1906–91) wrote: “Finally it is clear as daylight to me, that I will enter the huge band, which has gone to his Holy Land and up to Jerusalem.”<sup>23</sup> The book, *Ferð mín til Jorsala* (My Voyage to Jerusalem), published in Faroese in 1957, does not represent the account of a typical Christian (or Christian Zionist) pilgrim or tourist, because Viderøe’s Jerusalem is (1) a concrete city, (2) a city in history, and (3) a religious concept linked to redemption and salvation.<sup>24</sup> It is both a real and an imagined place. From childhood memories, Viderøe recalls his mother singing about Holy (New) Jerusalem coming down from the skies after the end of the world.<sup>25</sup> To him, visiting Jerusalem is a religious expedition as much as it is a pilgrimage. Lost in his deep philosophical meditations, Viderøe forgets practical matters such as booking a hotel, and enters the city of Jerusalem when “all cheap hotels are full.”<sup>26</sup> It is a dark day, cloudy and rainy, bringing homely Faroe Islands to the wayfarer’s mind,

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<sup>21</sup> Niles Elliot Goldstein, “No Jew Is an Island – Especially in the Faroes,” *Forward*, 17 October 2015, < <https://forward.com/culture/322291/no-jew-is-an-island/> >.

<sup>22</sup> Thorleifsson, “Guarding the Frontier,” 107.

<sup>23</sup> Kristian Osvald Viderøe, *Ferð mín til Jorsala* (Tórshavn: s.n., 1957), 21.

<sup>24</sup> Bergur Djurhuus Hansen, *Er heima til? Ein tekstslagsástøðilig og bókmentasøgulig viðgerð av ferðafrásagnum Kristians Osvald Viderøe* (Tórshavn: Faroe University Press, 2015), 91.

<sup>25</sup> Hansen, *Er heima til?*, 19.

<sup>26</sup> Hansen, *Er heima til?*, 116.

and influencing his descriptions of the city, a mix between expectation and disappointment. Viderøe, a Lutheran protestant in the Holy Land, does not find the spiritual enlightenment and transformation that he was hoping Jerusalem, through a rite of passage, would offer him. Pilgrimage, he concludes, does not open any gates, and the imagined New Jerusalem becomes lost in the downfall of the world.<sup>27</sup> Back home in the North Atlantic, in an elegiac mood of being unwelcome, Viderøe feels thrown out of the Faroese Paradise. He desires this Paradise, but sees that he has no access to it.<sup>28</sup>

Kristian Osvald Viderøe, an explorer who travelled the world for decades, has written very original and inspiring books from Israel and other parts of the world for Faroese readers. He is a very influential writer of modern Faroese literature, but he does not fit into any dominant literary genre and has been described as mysterious and perplexing, because of his writing style (inventing new words and odd spellings of common words) and his extensive use of classic world literature in his examination of life in the Faroes. He is a kind of “post-modernist” author experimenting with Faroese linguistic conventions.

Viderøe’s mission was very different from those who go on today’s Christian Zionist “Blessing Israel” pilgrimages, which often function as a kind of ritualistic religious-political statement.<sup>29</sup> These pilgrimages are supposed to strengthen the religious identities of the travellers.<sup>30</sup> “We stand together with Israel,” was the message of the Nordic Christian Evangelical pilgrims, including a group of Faroe Islanders waving Faroese flags, participating in the annual Jerusalem March (in 2017) organized by the pro-Israel International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ).

Shortly before his expedition to Jerusalem, Viderøe, who had been working as pastor in a Faroese village for decades, began to suspect that the villagers were not satisfied with his performance as spiritual adviser.<sup>31</sup> He observed an old woman passing by, and he knew that in her mind she lived at least as much in *Jorsalaborg* and the Holy Land in the days of Jesus, as she did in the village of Hvalvík.<sup>32</sup> She lived her worldly (secular) life in Hvalvík, but her spiri-

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<sup>27</sup> Hansen, *Er heima til?*, 130–31.

<sup>28</sup> Hansen, *Er heima til?*, 303.

<sup>29</sup> Maria Leppäkari, “Nordic Pilgrimage to Israel: A Case of Christian Zionism,” in *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management*, ed. Razaq Raj and Kevin Griffin, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: CABI, 2015), 209–14.

<sup>30</sup> Leppäkari, “Nordic Pilgrimage to Israel,” 213–14.

<sup>31</sup> Viderøe, *Ferð míni til Jorsala*, 19–22.

<sup>32</sup> Viderøe, *Ferð míni til Jorsala*, 4–8.

tual life was in the Holy Land – Mary Magdalene.<sup>33</sup> People will keep travelling to Jerusalem and Israel, with different dreams and projects, reinventing the continuity and rupture between past, present, and future.

## Jews and the Nazis in local papers

Under the headline “Zionism,” an anonymous Faroe Islander using the pseudonym Harald Heims-Forvitni (Harald World-Curious) authored a poetic and allegorical article about a new political movement of the Jewish people. The text was published in the Faroese journal *Fuglaframi* in February 1902.<sup>34</sup> Harald talks about a coming “beautiful summer morning,” more celestial than other mornings. Signs tell that it is not far away; and one of these signs, he says, “is that the dispersed Jewish people shall build their old country again, as they did in an earlier time.” He then introduces the movement, which aims to gather Jewish people in Palestine in order to establish this country. Even if they do not have traditions of farming, sailing, or artisanship, says Harald enthusiastically, there is no reason to believe that Jewish people cannot become as proficient in these trades as anyone else. “Let us be ‘good people,’” he says in the conclusion to his Biblical scenario, “then we will one day enter the ‘full day’ [following the ‘beautiful morning’; author’s comment], free from all (worldly) work and trouble.”

Except for a limited number of personal letters of this kind, prior to the 1930s the local press mostly offered short descriptive summaries of news from the Nordic and European press about Jews, for instance regarding the Dreyfus Affair. In the 1930s and 1940s, Faroe Islanders could read about the situation of Jews in Nazi Germany in the local press, but the articles were again mainly brief translated synopses of foreign bulletins. Accounts of Jewish people and Judaism were not tainted by antisemitism or anti-Jewish sentiments, but in a few cases, the narratives could give the reader a sense of passive empathy with the German nationalist ideology. In 1935 the newspaper *Dagblaðið* (referring to reports in local German newspapers) wrote about a group of Faroe Islanders participating at a (traditional) dancing festival in Lübeck.<sup>35</sup> The Germans honoured their Faroese and other Nordic guests with a generous reception, which – as expected and required – ended with the gathering singing the national anthem and performing

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<sup>33</sup> Viderøe, *Ferð míni til Jorsala*, 4–8.

<sup>34</sup> Harald Heims-Forvitni, “Zionisman,” *Fuglaframi* 22 (1902): 3–4.

<sup>35</sup> [Dagblaðið editorial], “Dansiferðin til Lübeck,” *Dagblaðið*, 13 July 1935, 3.

the mechanical Hitler (“Sieg Heil”) salute. While this scene, of course, does not mean that the dancing group necessarily supported Nazi Germany, it is curious that the newspaper does not raise an eyebrow over the political context. In another article from 1938, the newspaper *Tingakrossur* refers to news from *Völkischer Beobachter* (the NSDAP’s daily) without mentioning the source’s political affiliation.<sup>36</sup> In the early 1940s, disputes between Faroese politicians and intellectuals in the papers occasionally involved insinuation that the counterparty was a “Nazi sympathizer” with “Nazi behaviour” and “Hitler methods.”<sup>37</sup> Nobody wanted such a label in the media. Grækariis Djurhuus Magnussen, a Faroese journalist who wrote the book *Dreingirnir í Waffen SS* (The Boys in the Waffen SS), says that more than ten Faroese men joined the Waffen SS. Most of these young men, he says, were Nazis.<sup>38</sup>

## Israel in local media

During the Cold War, especially from the 1970s on, strong antagonism between leftist and rightist parties affected the debate on local and international political issues in Faroese newspapers. Israel was now frequently in the spotlight, and especially *Dagblaðið*, the newspaper of the conservative-liberal right-wing *Fólkaflokkurin*, became infamous for the inflammatory language and hard-line anti-socialist and pro-Israel positions of its editorials and articles. In November 1956, *Norðlýsið*, a local newspaper from the town of Klaksvík, printed an article under the title “Shepherd and Commander,” about David Ben-Gurion, “the creator of the new Israel.” It is a greeting and congratulations from the Faroes, for Ben-Gurion’s seventieth birthday. The word “shepherd” likely made the reader think of a Faroese man taking care of his sheep. Ben Gurion, the nameless writer says, is a rare personality, “who is not afraid to go his own way and is often criticized, also by Jews.”<sup>39</sup> Not only did he establish a state, says the writer, “but also a fortress, which resists all Arab attacks.”<sup>40</sup> The shepherd is portrayed as a good man, the commander as a brave and resolute guardian of the country.

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<sup>36</sup> [Tingakrossur editorial], “Hvat verður av jødunum?” *Tingakrossur*, 9 July 1938, 2.

<sup>37</sup> For instance: [Tingakrossur editorial by Rikard Long], “Louis Zachariasen og P. M. Dam viðvíkjandi,” *Tingakrossur*, 4 February 1942, 2; [Tingakrossur editorial by Louis Zachariasen], “Tveir dómar,” *Tingakrossur*, 12 April 1944, 1–2.

<sup>38</sup> Grækariis Djurhuus Magnussen, *Dreingirnir í Waffen SS* (Tórshavn: Steyrin, 2004).

<sup>39</sup> Norðlýsið, “Seyðamaður og herhövdingi,” *Norðlýsið*, 23 November 1956.

<sup>40</sup> Norðlýsið, “Seyðamaður og herhövdingi.”

In another article (reader's submission) in the *Dimmalætting* newspaper in October 1979, Ivan Carlsen talks about the "Historic Rights of the Jews against the Palestine-Arabs." He decided to write the text, he explains, as a response to the opinion (from a radio interview) of a Norwegian woman working for the PLO, which the Faroese communist journal *Arbeiðið* referred to in one of its pieces. "Now that the Jews have occupied the land of the Palestinians..." was the woman's statement that enraged Carlsen. How can it be, he writes rhetorically, "that communists are always ready to attack Israel and defend the Arabs?" He then explains that Israel is much closer to being the socialist ideal state than any Arab country:

This country [Israel] is the only country in the world, which with its kibbutz-method carries out genuine communism, and it works excellently, yes, so well that Moscow and Peking can only dream about it, but never realize it. ... But the essential and best of all is that there is complete freedom. And is this not exactly what communism says that it wants to promote? ... We [in the Faroes] who have such good lives, and still have our freedom, can only wish for peace to be obtained; I am convinced that this much-desired peace will come, but when, yes, that is another question that will not be discussed on this occasion.<sup>41</sup>

This article illustrates the role of Israel in local debates about political ideologies in the 1970s. The image of the State of Israel from the 1970s – with the kibbutz as a symbol of an inclusive socialist project – is quite different from usual portrayals of Israel in the twenty-first century. In the early 1980s, the clash between left and right in the political press of the Faroes became more outspoken and bitter, with accusations of antisemitism and hatred of Jews (e.g. *Dagblaðið*, 21 August 1985) on the one side, and of wilfully ignoring Zionist brutality and the oppression of the Palestinians (e.g. *Sosialurin*, 27 January 1983) on the other. Some of the readers' letters and commentaries are so rabid and irrational, that it is difficult to take them as anything but sordid entertainment.

In a long article in *Sosialurin*, at that time the newspaper of the Social Democratic Party, Israel is compared with South Africa: "Israel has the same characteristics as South Africa when you look at the respective treatment of the Palestinians in Israel and the black Africans in South Africa."<sup>42</sup> In the last paragraph of this article, which is based on a trip to Israel, readers are told that: "A serious talk with a Palestinian says more about the Holy Land than all the Israeli tourist

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<sup>41</sup> Ivan H. Carlsen, "Søguligu rættindi jødanna mótvægis Palestina-arabanna," *Dimmalætting*, 30 October 1979.

<sup>42</sup> Leif Olsen, Jógvan A. Joensen, and Óssur Winthereig, "Hitt hersetta ferðamannalandið," *Sosialurin*, 27 January 1983.

offices and Zionist world movements together can provide.”<sup>43</sup> *Sosialurin* and *Dagblaðið* were the largest newspapers to focus strongly on the Israel/Palestine conflict; for them it was a pivotal case to engage with (on both local and international levels), representing a divergence in a society experiencing many ruptures and changes: modern/traditional, global/local, individualist/collective, secular/religious, etc. The debate on Israel in local media, you could perhaps say, has absorbed political, cultural, and religious controversies into itself, like distorted images in a crystal ball.

In May 1988, *Dagblaðið* ran a short news piece regarding the festivities for the fortieth anniversary of the State of Israel. There was a “very successful parade,” which shows that Israel still “has many good and faithful friends” in the Faroes, read the newspaper.<sup>44</sup> “The future of our land is inseparably connected to the future of Israel,” said Fríðtór Debes, one of the speakers at the event.<sup>45</sup> He also stressed the very important duty of the Faroes to continue to be positive towards Israel, hence not to be party to the ongoing “media war” against Israel. In February 1992, at a meeting organized by *Vinarfelagið Føroyar-Ísrael* in Tórshavn, Jákup Kass explained that it is crucial for all Christians to understand that we have to help the Jews against their many enemies in order to help ourselves – otherwise, he said, we will lose our Christian heritage, which we received from the Jews.<sup>46</sup> We note that the pro-Israel Christian right in the Faroes is very active in the media and is prepared to defend Israel on every occasion. The Bible-oriented Christian Democratic party, *Miðflokkurin* (Centre Party), which was established that same year (May 1992), has played an important role as a catalyst for the religious-political programme of the Christian right.<sup>47</sup>

In May 1993, *Sosialurin* visited an Israeli-Faroese family in Israel; the newspaper wanted to get the views of Israelis regarding the complex Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Sloomi Yagubaec (sic), who has a Faroese wife and two children, lived in the Faroes for three years before the small family moved to a Jewish settlement close to Jerusalem. He says that Faroe Islanders should not believe everything that the Western media are saying about Israel, because much of it presents a distorted view of the situation in the country. Yagubaec claims that Faroe

<sup>43</sup> Olsen, Joensen, and Winthereig, “Hitt hersetta ferðamannalandið.”

<sup>44</sup> [Dagblaðið editorial], “Sera væleydnað skrúðgonga,” *Dagblaðið*, 24 May 1988.

<sup>45</sup> [Dagblaðið editorial], “Sera væleydnað skrúðgonga.”

<sup>46</sup> [Dagblaðið editorial], “Jákup Kass heldur røðu,” *Dagblaðið*, 19 February 1992.

<sup>47</sup> Jenis av Rana, the chairman of *Miðflokkurin* and newly appointed Faroese Minister of Culture, Education, and Foreign Affairs (as part of the coalition Government from September 2019), has the establishment of a Faroese “Embassy” in Jerusalem as one of his main political goals.

Islanders are familiar with this predicament: “When foreign media make a big story about the [Faroe] pilot whale hunt, and dramatize it, while hardly mentioning that other larger countries kill thousands of dolphins...”<sup>48</sup> He says that foreign countries do not understand Israel. Asked how they will attain peace, he says:

The day we get either a complete right government or a complete left government. If we get a left government, it will return all the so-called occupied territories to the Arabs, and then we might get peace for a while, but we will get serious problems in the end. You just have to look at the map...<sup>49</sup>

Since the 1990s, with the introduction of new media (Internet) and cultural globalization, Faroe Islanders have turned to new sources for inspiration and information in their quest for answers to difficult political questions. Israel, somehow, was also unfastened from the religious-political tautologies of Faroese media narratives. While hard-line members of Christian Zionist congregations, and *Miðflokkurin* in the Parliament, are determined to keep their pristine image of Israel intact, other Faroe Islanders are reinterpreting and renegotiating their relationship to Jerusalem and Israel. The distance between the imagined historical city and present-day Jerusalem seems to be growing. Yet, people generally avoid conflicts, in media debates or elsewhere in society, because of the Faroese egalitarian style of social organization and demand for conformity. Living together without giving offence, avoiding topics that lead to conflict, is part of everyday life in the Faroes, for congregation members as well as in society as a whole.<sup>50</sup>

## New cultural horizons

Faroe Islanders got the opportunity to explore fresh and alternative images of contemporary Israel through the exciting Faroe Islands International Minority Film Festival (FIMFF) in August/September 2018. The festival’s founder and co-ordinator, Nadia Abraham, has a Faroese mother and a Palestinian father. She grew up in the Faroes, and experienced what it is like to represent a minority in a small island community. The festival has the goal of encouraging

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**48** Jan Müller, “Gevist at stuðla yvrgangsmonnum,” *Sosialurin*, 15 May 1993.

**49** Müller, “Gevist at stuðla yvrgangsmonnum.”

**50** Dennis Gaffin, *In Place: Spatial and Social Order in a Faeroe Islands Community* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1996), 136–38.

Visibility and empowerment, by being an open and inclusive platform for queer and minority cinema, and an arena which facilitates the sometimes tough conversations around culture, race, religion, and sexual identity.<sup>51</sup>

Here are summaries of three of the movies shown:

*Disobedience* (Director: Sebastián Lelio, 2017) tells the story of a successful New York photographer returning home to her Jewish Orthodox community in London. She is reunited with her childhood friends, David and Esti, who are now married. The two women rekindle old feelings and attractions. The three characters are forced to re-evaluate personal values and beliefs, while sensing strong pressure from the community.

*The Field* (Director: Mordechai Vardi, 2017) is about Ali Abu Awwas, a Palestinian activist teaching his compatriots non-violent resistance. He reaches out to Jewish Israelis at the heart of the conflict. Through the organization The Roots, he and others from both sides of the conflict meet to listen and tell each other their stories of suffering.

*Bar Bahar* (Director: Maysaloun Hamoud, 2016) is set in the city of Tel Aviv. Two single Palestinian women are sharing an apartment and living a free-spirited lifestyle. Laila is a successful lawyer and Selma is an aspiring DJ. When Nour, a reserved Muslim woman, moves in, tension starts building. Through their shared fight for truth and rights in a culturally sensitive society, the three women seal as strong friendship.

The movies in the film festival address sensitive subjects which used to be taboo, in the Faroes as well as in Israel, and which many people from the conservative religious communities deem offensive. They also demonstrate the way identity is negotiated by young people representing sexual minorities in communities characterized by strong religious family values. Nadia Abraham has narrated her own life story in an article about FIMFF in the Danish newspaper *Politiken*.<sup>52</sup> Her parents divorced when she was three years old, and her mother moved from Denmark back to the Faroes with the children. Nadia's mother told her that her father was Israeli, because that made "things simpler" in the Faroes. "It was not so easy to be Palestinian here. It was not so good, and you did not talk about it. Because, well, a Muslim thirty years ago..."<sup>53</sup> Today, she emphasizes, you can be as you like, "as long as you don't make too much noise, it is fine."

In November 2018, the Faroese Film Club organized the screening of three new Israeli films. The Israeli Film Days included the following movies: *Foxtrot* (Samuel Maoz, 2017), *Red Cow* (Tsivia Barkai-Yacov, 2018), and *Outdoors* (Asaf

<sup>51</sup> FIMFF, "Second Faroe Islands International Minority Film Festival Catalogue," August 2018, < <http://fimff.fo/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FIMFF-CATALOGUE-FINAL-PRINT-1.pdf> >.

<sup>52</sup> Emilie Maarbjerg Mørk, "Drags, homoseksuelle og muslimer: Filmfestival vil ruske op i færinger," *Politiken*, 8 September 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Mørk, "Drags, homoseksuelle og muslimer."

Saban, 2017). The Israeli embassy in Copenhagen provided the films and Benjamin Dagan, the Israeli ambassador to Denmark, opened the festival on a Monday evening (after having been the guest of honour at the Brethren's conference in Tórshavn the day before). The films represent new artistic and cultural productions aiming to contribute rich narratives about present-day Israel as well as images critically reflecting on the nation's moral and cultural foundations. The films make small everyday life stories important, hence also demystifying the spiritual nostalgia for Jerusalem and Biblical prophecies. The festival was a success, but it attracted some people, most likely from the religious communities, who were not prepared for the cinematic presentation of present-day Israel. During the show Monday night (*Red Cow*), a part of the audience chose to get up and march out of the hall – in front of the ambassador – in protest against the film's theme: the sexual awakening of a young lesbian girl from a Jewish Orthodox family.

## Final remarks

In March 2015, more precisely on Friday 20 March at 10 a.m., the Faroes experienced a total solar eclipse, which had attracted several thousand spectators from all around the world to the archipelago. This was also the day of the vernal equinox. In the Jewish tradition, a total solar eclipse is regarded as a warning to unbelievers and a sign of judgment over nations. The darkness caused by the eclipse is a bad omen. Doomsayers would say that the solar eclipse augurs sombre times in the North, influencing the relationship with Israel in a negative direction. On the other hand, as Jeffrey Bernstein pointed out, the eighteen islands constituting the Faroes can also be linked to *hai* (meaning "life" or "living" in Hebrew, and with the sacred numerical value of eighteen), which announces a much brighter future. In the same way, there are many ways of reading and decoding the past/present/future relationship between the Faroes and Israel, with reference to worldly as well as metaphysical schemes. This paper has detailed some of the reasons why Jerusalem and Israel have played a central role in local debates on culture, religion, and politics. While the Faroes might be less secular than other Nordic countries, we have also seen that religious and cultural identities are dynamic, adapting to new societal premises, and rekindling the passion for Jerusalem.

Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsisson

## 12 Jews in Greenland

Translated by Jonathan Adams\*

**Abstract:** There has never been a Jewish community as such in Greenland, but over the years there have been Jewish visitors who have lived there for a period of time: journalists, nurses, meteorologists, and American and Danish servicemen. Furthermore, the first vessel in the Israeli navy began life as an American coastguard ship that patrolled the Greenlandic coast. This article tells some of these stories and concludes with a short addendum on (the lack of) antisemitism in Greenland.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; Greenland; history; Jews.

Jews in Greenland. It sounds perhaps rather strange, almost like a coincidence. Indeed, it is only coincidence and a spirit of adventure that brought Jews to Greenland. Nonetheless, for a short while the country could boast of having the northernmost *minyan* in the world, namely the one assembled at Thule Air Base next to the village of Dundas (Pituffik) at 77° north. It was thus located much further north than, for example, the congregation *Or HaTzafon* (Light of the North, affectionately known as “The Frozen Chosen”) in Fairbanks, Alaska, that some people claim to be the most northerly in the world.

We know even less about the whereabouts of Jews in Greenland than we do in Iceland.<sup>1</sup> There were certainly Jews among the first Dutch whalers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At least, the Jews of Amsterdam participated in the valuable whale-oil trade and owned some of the ships that took part in the whaling. However, in order to find unequivocal reports of Jews in Greenland we have to head to the twentieth century.

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1 On Jews in Iceland, see Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsisson, “En islandsk jødisk annal, 1625–2003,” *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 12 (2003): 102–16.

## A Zionist in Aasiat

The German-born journalist and globetrotter Alfred J. Fischer<sup>2</sup> and his wife visited Greenland in 1955. His friends in London said to him before his departure, “You’re not going to find any Jews in Greenland!” They were wrong. Fischer did find a Jew, in the town of Aasiat (Danish: Egedesminde) at the southern end of Disko Bay. He described his visit to the town’s hospital:

The friendly Danish doctor, Dr Schmidt, took me round the various departments. Finally we reached the children’s section, whose inmates were an amusing mixture of Mongolian types with slanting eyes and blond, fair-skinned babies revealing their partly Danish parentage. With some astonishment, I noticed the nurse, whose features showed neither Danish nor Greenlandic characteristics. Dr Schmidt introduced her: “Miss Rita Sheftelovich [Scheftelowitz] from Copenhagen.” Sheftelovich sounds no more Danish than François sounds English. Moreover, Miss Sheftelovich regarded my wife and me with the same curiosity with which we looked at her. In the afternoon we met her again, since one inevitably meets everyone at least two or three times a day in Egedesminde. Without any further ado, Rita now enquired in English whether by any chance we happened to be coreligionists.

Rita Scheftelowitz told Fischer that both of her parents had come from Russia to Denmark.<sup>3</sup> The family was Orthodox and she became a Zionist at a young age. Her plan was to emigrate to Israel where she wanted to work in one of the children’s homes run by the Women’s International Zionist Organization. She had come to Greenland to work as an intern in a place that was completely different to Denmark, but she had also been driven by a sense of adventure when, like so many other young Danes, she had headed to Greenland to experience the midnight sun and the rugged natural beauty. Rita invited the Fischers to her room for tea and canned pineapple, “brought from the southern countries to the proximity of the North Pole,” as Alfred J. Fischer put it. Rita Scheftelowitz said goodbye to the Fischers with the words “*LeShanah Haba’ah b’Yerushalayim*” – next year in Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fischer briefly mentions his visit to Greenland in his biography: *In der Nähe der Ereignisse* (Berlin: Transit Buchverlag, 1991), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Rita, who today is called Rita Felbert and lives in Copenhagen, has informed me that her mother actually came from Poland and her father from what is now Lithuania.

<sup>4</sup> The Wiener Library, London: Press Cuttings, Denmark (Greenland): Typed manuscript (dated 1957) with the title “Encounters with the Jews near the North Pole. Report from Greenland” (4 pages). The sections have the following titles: “I. In Egedesminde prior to Jerusalem, Nurse Rita Sheftelovich is the first Jewish girl in Greenland,” “II. The Chemnitz Family are proud of their Jewish grandfather from Poland,” and “III. The World’s northernmost minyan.” It has

Forty-seven years later in an interview with the author, Rita Scheftelowitz, then Felbert, remembered her time in Greenland as if it were yesterday, and not least her encounter with the Fischers in the autumn of 1955. She had been given a contract for one year and sailed to Greenland on the ship *Umanaq*. On board were also officials from the Greenland Office who were to oversee conditions in Greenland and check on the tuberculosis patients who had received treatment at the Øresund quarantine hospital in Copenhagen.

When Rita arrived in Aasiaat, nearly the whole town was standing on the quayside as the ship docked. And so began a busy year for Rita, working as a nurse both in the small hospital in Aasiaat and in the outlying settlements. She sailed to these settlements scattered along Disko Bay in the ship *Bjarnov*, and in January when the sea had frozen she visited her patients by dog sled accompanied by hunters. On one occasion the temperature was -37 °C. On one of these trips, she took a sick child back to the hospital in Aasiaat. In the winter of 1955–56, a measles epidemic devastated the small town. It took the lives of many of the inhabitants, who had no immunity to the virus. Those who had already been weakened by tuberculosis or other diseases were easy prey. Much of Rita's work involved caring for the sick and trying to prevent the disease spreading to the outlying settlements.

There was also time to enjoy oneself in Aasiaat. Rita made many good friends among the Greenlanders and joined in the town's activities. Keeping kosher was not too much of a problem either. She abstained from eating meat (*fleyshik*) and, of course, there was plenty of fish. Supplies and mail arrived twice during the long winter – tossed out of an aeroplane onto the ice outside of the town. The last delivery included a care package for Rita from her mother, containing *matzah* among other things.

Rita wanted to return to Greenland and was just about to agree to a two-year contract working at a children's home in Nuuk, but her plans changed. She took some courses and in 1959 travelled to Israel on *Ulpan*; she worked for two years in Tel Aviv before marrying and returning to Denmark.<sup>5</sup>

When Rita returned to Denmark in 1956, the ship that she was sailing on called in at the naval station Grønnedal (Kangilinnguit). Here she met her relative Gunnar Saietz (later a painter), who in 1955–56 was doing military service there with the Greenland Commando. Driven by a spirit of adventure, Gunnar

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not been possible to discover whether Fischer's manuscript has ever been published in English, but his story about Rita Scheftelowitz was published in Switzerland (most likely in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, for which Fischer had been writing since the 1930s) under the heading: "Jüdische Begegnungen in Nordpolnähe" (Jewish encounters near the North Pole).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Rita Felbert, 30 June 2003.



**Figure 12.1:** Rita Scheftelowitz at a dance party (*dansemik*). Here she is dancing with Golo, her Greenlandic interpreter. Photo: Rita Felbert's private collection.

had applied to be sent to Greenland after finishing school. One of his more enjoyable duties at Grønnedal was to turn over the very few jazz LPs on the record player at the local radio station and broadcast them. So one of the first disc jockeys in Greenland was a Jew. Gunnar came close to an early and unhappy end in Greenland, when the house he slept in was destroyed by an avalanche. By a stroke of luck, he was not in the building at the time, but twenty years later four Danes were killed when an avalanche came crashing down in the same place.<sup>6</sup>

## Chemnitz the Jew

In Nuuk, Alfred Fischer met Jørgen Chemnitz, an interpreter for the Danish civil service in Greenland. With pride, Jørgen told Fischer about his grandfather from Poland. According to Jørgen, he had arrived in Greenland on a merchant ship

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<sup>6</sup> Telephone interview with Gunnar Saitz, 1 July 2003.

after a voyage of six weeks. The climate in Greenland was too harsh for him and he was already ill and bedridden with pneumonia when the last ship left for Denmark. Therefore, he had to spend the winter in Greenland, where he gradually recovered. The following year he decided not to return to Copenhagen after all, but instead married the kind Greenlandic woman who had taken care of him during the winter. Chemnitz thus became the founding father of the influential Chemnitz family in Greenland. Fischer wrote about his newly discovered Jewish Greenlandic twist:

The Chemnitz family has given Greenland its intellectual elite. One nephew represents the first native clergyman with academic training. True – none of them belong to the Jewish faith any more. On the other hand, there is no member of the Chemnitz family who is not proud of his Jewish origins and who would not take pleasure in recounting his strange family history.

However, despite what Jørgen Chemnitz had insisted to Alfred Fischer in 1956, later generations of the Chemnitz family know nothing of any Jewish origins. The fact of the matter is, their ancestor, Jens Carl Wilhelm Chemnitz, came to Greenland in 1834. He was probably born on Als but his family originated in Holstein with links to Mecklenburg. The first Chemnitz in Greenland, who was not a Jew, was employed by the Royal Greenland Trading Department as a cooper.<sup>7</sup>

## Ten toes in the ice

In 1929, Fritz Loewe, a Jewish meteorologist, arrived in Greenland with his colleague and friend, Alfred Wegener, who was world-famous for his theory of continental drift. The expedition went to the interior of Greenland where one of their tasks was to measure the thickness of the ice sheet using the newest methods and instruments. After three trips into the interior, a group of researchers and thirteen Greenlanders set off for a fourth time, carrying supplies for colleagues who were at the camp called *Eismitte* (“Ice-Centre”). However, all the Greenlanders bar one gave up and returned to the west coast. Wegener, Loewe, and the Greenlander Rasmus Villadsen struggled on with all the supplies they could carry, in temperatures that plummeted to -54 °C. When they reached the *Eismitte* camp, Fritz Loewe’s toes were frostbitten and his colleague had to amputate them with scissors and a penknife. Loewe survived but had to spend

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<sup>7</sup> Pastor Jens Christian Chemnitz, nephew of Jørgen Chemnitz, kindly informed the author of the Chemnitz family's correct genealogy, 19 June 2003.

the winter of 1930–31 at *Eismitte*. Alfred Wegener and Rasmus Villadsen, however, attempted to return to the west coast but never reached their destination. In 1934, Loewe had to leave Germany with his family, first fleeing to England and later settling in Australia where he became a professor. He went on to establish Australia's first department of meteorology at the University of Melbourne.

## Thule Air Base

During his journey in 1955, with the aim among other things of finding Jews, Alfred J. Fischer also visited the world's most northerly *minyan* at the Thule Air Base. He flew there from Kangerlussuaq (Søndre Strømfjord) and encountered a strange, modern micro-society almost entirely composed of men, complete with its own radio station and a brand new television station that they were overjoyed with. From 1954 onwards there was a Jewish congregation on the base that was always able to gather about fifteen men for Sabbath services. There was a sort of reserve rabbi working at Thule: a law graduate and lieutenant from New Orleans called Maurice Burk. Fischer met Burk in the elegant "Officers' Club." Burk told him everything about the most northerly *minyan* in the world. The congregation had originally been founded by a certain Captain Robert Holt, a theology student from the Christian Science movement. His Hebrew skills were said to be so exceptional that many people did not even realize that he was not actually Jewish.<sup>8</sup>

After finishing his studies at Tulane Law School in 1953, he became first lieutenant in the Judge Advocate General's Department of the US Air Force. In December 1954 he was deployed to Thule. It was Maurice Burk's idea to hold a Passover *Seder* in 1955 and it turned out that there were many more Jews in Thule than he had realized. He had not even met all of them until the *seder*. They had *matzah*, food, and wine as well as *haggadot* flown to Thule, and the

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<sup>8</sup> See note 5. Alfred Fischer described Burk thus: "A lawyer by profession – he works in the Army's legal department. Burk will find the hardship of his year in Thule far easier to bear than many others, since he regards his Jewish activities as a real mission. He comes from New Orleans, of an Orthodox Jewish family. As a child he attended the *cheder*. His mother was a native American, while Maurice's father immigrated from Pinsk and is supposed to possess more Jewish knowledge than many a rabbi." By "native American" Fischer did not mean that Burk's mother descended from the indigenous peoples of North America, but rather that she belonged to an old Jewish family in the United States.

*seder* was held in the largest room at the base.<sup>9</sup> The Danish commander in Thule, Eigil Franch Petersen,<sup>10</sup> was also invited to the *seder*.



**Figure 12.2:** The Passover Seder in Thule in 1955. Maurice Burk from New Orleans reads aloud from the Haggadah. Photo: Maurice Burk's private collection.

Alfred J. Fischer also described some of the Jews he met at the Thule Air Base. One of the first men he met was Kleinmann, a twenty-two-year-old from New York, who ran the bookshop. When he arrived at Thule as an Orthodox Jew, the Protestant priest at the base made sure that he never had to work on the Sabbath and he had kosher food sent in from New York, even tinned *gefилte fish*.

Another soldier, Robert J. Mezistrano, a Sephardi Jew born in Casablanca, was according to Fischer something of a linguistic genius. He spoke Arabic, French, Italian, English, and German, if not even more languages. His parents were originally from Istanbul. There was also another Holocaust survivor at

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<sup>9</sup> Information from a letter from Maurice L. Burk to the author, 9 April 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Eigil Franch Petersen, later rear admiral and head of Greenland's defence. He was rapidly promoted through the ranks because he had fought alongside the British and Americans at the Normandy landings in 1944. He later did service at Grønnedal.

the base, Louis Helish (originally Lutz Helischkowski),<sup>11</sup> who had been deported from Berlin with his family to Theresienstadt. His father was murdered in Auschwitz, but Lutz, his younger sister, and mother survived and emigrated to the United States in 1945. Lutz had had eighteen different jobs before he joined the army. In uniform he returned to Berlin where he married a Jewish girl, also a survivor.

In total, there were fifty-three Jews at the Thule Air Base when Alfred J. Fischer visited. Together with them and fifteen others who were stationed in Søndre Strømfjord, he participated in a *Rosh Hashanah* service led by Rabbi Kalman L. Levitan from New York. Fischer described Rabbi Levitan's sermon to the congregation:

In beautiful, moving words he related the story of the call made upon Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac to the situation of the men in Thule, encouraging them to take a positive view of their fate in light of divine providence.<sup>12</sup>

Upon his arrival back in New York, Rabbi Levitan wrote to Maurice Burk's brother, Dr Kopel Burk:

This letter is merely to inform you that he is well and in good spirits. The rigours of his duty assignment are not conducive to the easiest kind of living, but it should please you to know that he has adapted to his circumstances without forgetting his Jewish responsibilities. Meeting, knowing, and serving him has been both a pleasure and privilege for me.<sup>13</sup>

The Thule Air Base was no dream posting for a young American soldier. This can clearly be seen in contemporary American films where being deployed to Greenland was usually portrayed as a punishment. For many of the Jewish men, the Sabbath and High Holy Days provided a welcome opportunity to take more time off. However, the highpoint of Maurice Burk's stay in Greenland was probably not Jewish life but rather Bob Hope's visit to Thule in December 1954. His Christmas show was filmed and broadcast on television across the United States,

**11** Lutz Helischkowski's name is on the list of survivors from Theresienstadt, see Bořivoj Spilka, *Terezín Ghetto 1945* (Prague: Repatriační odbor ministerstva ochrany práce a sociální péče Republiky československé, 1945), 175.

**12** See note 5.

**13** Letter from Kalman L. Levitan, Chaplain (Capt.) USAF, 3650th Military Training Wing, Sampson Air Force Base, Geneva, New York, 18 October 1955, to Dr Kopel Burk, Staten Island, New York. Rabbi Kalman L. Levitan was a rather unusual chap; he was also a poet and published his poems in miniature books of exquisite quality, which due to their rarity today change hands for a small fortune. His most famous works were *The People of the Little Book* (Palm Beach Gardens: Kaycee Press, 1983) and *Tongues of Flame* (Palm Beach Gardens: Keycee Press, 1989).

indeed across the globe. Other celebrities performed alongside Bob Hope, such as Anita Ekberg and numerous men, including the Jewish actors Robert Strauss and Peter Leeds.

## A ship with history

Just as a small curiosity that links the histories of Greenland and Israel, we finish by mentioning that the State of Israel's first naval vessel *Eilat* (later *Matzpen*, "compass") had originally been an American coastguard ship that had been launched under the name *Northland* in 1927. The ship, reinforced to sail in ice, was used for patrolling the Bering Sea. In 1941, the ship was sent along with other American vessels to the coast of Greenland to protect Danish interests, among other things. On 12 September 1941, the crew boarded the Norwegian trawler *Buskø* which was being used by the Germans as a weather ship and for transporting spies. This was the first American naval victory of the Second World War and the first action by the Americans, before they officially entered the war. In the wake of this victory, the crew of the *Northland* captured three German spies who were busy building a secret radio station on the coast. The crew of the *Northland* also sank a German submarine and a German ship that was transporting spies to Greenland in the summer of 1944. In 1946 the *Northland* was sold to an American company supported by Jewish organizations. A year later it sailed to Palestine carrying Holocaust survivors under a new and more fitting name, *The Jewish State (Medinat haYehudim)*.<sup>14</sup>

## Addendum 2018

It is difficult to imagine that antisemitism is something that hardworking Greenlandic fishermen and hunters and their families have been too bothered about. Antisemitism was apparently first discussed in Greenland in 1935 in the newspaper *Atuagagdliutit*,<sup>15</sup> in a translated article by the Copenhagen bishop Hans Fuglsang-Damgaard (1890 – 1979). The bishop later became well known for his pastoral letter written after the German capture and deportation of the Danish

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<sup>14</sup> The information about *USCGC Northland* is from the US Coastguard's homepage < [http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/Northland\\_1927.html](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/Northland_1927.html) > (now defunct). See also < [https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/iip/history/The\\_Coast\\_Guard\\_and\\_the\\_Greenland\\_Patrol.pdf](https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/iip/history/The_Coast_Guard_and_the_Greenland_Patrol.pdf) >.

<sup>15</sup> Hans Fuglsang-Damgaard, "Antisemitisme," *Atuagagdliutit*, 1 December 1935, 67–69, < [http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pagId=3772907](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pagId=3772907) >.

Jews in 1943. In his letter, he denounces antisemitism in no uncertain terms and describes it as irreconcilable “both with the biblical view of the Jewish people and the Christian commandment of charity and with democratic principles of justice.” The letter was signed by all the bishops in Denmark and read out in the country’s churches on 3 October 1943.

There is one further example of antisemitism, but it is probably better understood in a Danish, than a Greenlandic context. In a report about antisemitic incidents in Denmark, published by the Jewish community (*Det Jødiske Samfund i Danmark*) in 2013, we read that “a suspected Greenlandic man walks past the Copenhagen synagogue and says to a guard standing in front of the synagogue, ‘All Jews must die. There is a bomb in the synagogue this evening – and all the Jews in the synagogue this evening are going to die.’ The police were called and they picked up the presumably Greenlandic man who was clearly intoxicated.”<sup>16</sup>

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**16** *Rapport om Antisemitiske hændelser i Danmark 2013*, 14, < <http://mosaiske.dk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AKVAH-rapport-2013.pdf> >.

Lars Dencik

## 13 Antisemitisms in the Twenty-First Century

### Sweden and Denmark as Forerunners?

**Abstract:** This article deals with antisemitism in Europe and post-Holocaust Sweden and Denmark specifically. The idea that it is always “the same old antisemitism” that pops up and “shows its ugly face” does not find support in this study. Instead, we distinguish between three different kinds of contemporary antisemitisms: *Classic antisemitism*, *Aufklärungsantisemitismus*, and *Israel-derived antisemitism*. Our findings suggest that each of these antisemitisms is inspired by different underlying “philosophies,” and that they are carried by different social groups and manifested in different ways.

In the Scandinavian countries today, we find that there is less classic antisemitism, much more *Aufklärungsantisemitismus*, and a relatively stronger presence of Israel-derived antisemitism. In our analysis this specifically Scandinavian pattern of antisemitisms is closely related to the highly developed processes of modernization in the Scandinavian countries on the one hand and the relatively large numbers of recently arrived immigrants from the Middle East on the other. This appears to imply that antisemitism based on racial prejudices is losing ground, as is antisemitism based on religious convictions. However, according to the European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights (FRA) in *Antisemitism: Overview of Data Available in the European Union 2007–2017* (Luxembourg: Luxembourg Publications Office of the European Union, 2018), the incidence of violent antisemitic attacks seems to be on the rise. These typically emanate from small pockets of individuals in the population who share an image of all Jews being accomplices to whatever the State of Israel does.

Considering how the processes of modernization operate it is assumed that other countries in Europe will follow a similar trajectory. Rationalization, secularization, and individuation will also come to penetrate these societies and weaken notions of “race” and “religion” as springboards for antisemitism. Thus, tendencies towards *Aufklärungsantisemitismus* will be strengthened. If integrating and getting rid of the marginalization and condescending treatment of its newly arrived Muslim inhabitants does not succeed, Israel-derived antisemitism can be expected to thrive. The pattern of antisemitisms in Denmark and Sweden might be a preview of what antisemitisms in twenty-first-century Europe could come to look like.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; *Aufklärungsantisemitismus*; *brit milah*; Denmark; European Agency for Fundamental Rights; Holocaust; immigration; modernization; *shechita*; Sweden.

It is sometimes said that Jews are like any other persons – just more so. When it comes to modern antisemitism, the Scandinavian countries are likewise just like any other European country – just more so. Do not misunderstand! It is not that there is more antisemitism in the Scandinavian countries today than in Europe in general – indeed, the opposite appears to be the case – but rather that ongoing transformations in the patterns of antisemitism, changes which have to do with deeper tendencies in social and political developments in Europe – have gone further in the Scandinavian countries than they have in Europe in general.

Antisemitism is always a matter of prejudices about and animosity towards Jews. But antisemitism is still not a coherent and stable body of attitudes about Jews. Reviewing the history of antisemitism in Europe we find that antisemitism in some epochs was mainly based on religious ideas, with Jews being seen as traitors who did not believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and who should be blamed for having killed him; in other epochs antisemitism was instead fed by political ideas, with Jews being seen as strangers who did not belong to the people with a birthright in their nation-state; we also have epochs when the idea of Jews as controllers, abusers, and exploiters of the economy surfaced as the predominant form of antisemitism; the *Shoah* that destroyed European Jewry in the first part of the twentieth century was, however, mainly based on racist biological ideas of Jews as a degenerate people whose very existence constituted a disease within the human body. Accordingly, this racist idea commanded the Jew be extinguished – both individually and as a people.

Behind these diverse aspects of antisemitism there usually lies a mental construction of a Jewish conspiracy of some kind. Even if it may not be quite obvious to the antisemite what Jews are really up to, how they actually killed the Christian Messiah, infiltrated the nations of the world, run the world economy, or are in fact a racially degenerate people, etc. – just this, the very fact that this is obscure, makes the antisemite even more convinced that somehow there must be some kind of a secret (world) conspiracy behind it all.

So, what is the predominant image of a secret Jewish world conspiracy in the Scandinavian countries today? Here are two background examples:

1. Late at night on 15 February 2015, a *bat mitzvah* party took place in the Jewish cultural centre where the main synagogue is also located in Copenhagen.

About eighty people, most of them teenage girls, were celebrating that one of their friends had passed the symbolic threshold to become a fully independent and responsible member of the Jewish community. As part of what are now considered necessary regular security measures whenever a Jewish event takes place, thirty-seven-year-old Dan Uzan was acting as a volunteer guard outside the buildings where the festivities took place. Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein, a twenty-two-year-old Danish citizen with Palestinian parents, suddenly appeared and tried to get into the Jewish cultural centre behind the synagogue. Dan Uzan, unarmed but responsible for security at the entrance, blocked his path. The attacker, armed with loaded guns, shot him in the head at close range. Dan Uzan died. A few hours later El-Hussein was shot dead by a Danish police tactical unit.

It is thought that the attack might have been a copycat of the Paris attacks on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket about a month before. El-Hussein might have learned of those Paris attacks while inside a Danish prison, where he was serving a two-year sentence. He had been released from prison only two weeks before his attacks. There was a suspicion that he may have become radicalized in prison like the men behind the Paris attacks.<sup>1</sup> The head of Denmark's prison and probation service reported that authorities had noticed changes in his behaviour in prison and had alerted the intelligence services.

2. On the evening of 9 December 2017, in Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden, a Jewish youth organization held a *Chanukah* party. About forty persons were in a building adjacent to the synagogue when twelve masked men threw Molotov cocktails into the synagogue courtyard and ran away. By chance, the fire was noticed and put out before anyone was injured. Some time later the police succeeded in arresting three men: a twenty-two-year-old Palestinian from Gaza; a twenty-four-year-old Palestinian, and a nineteen-year-old Syrian. They were asylum seekers in Sweden: the latter two had been granted permanent residency status as refugees, while the man from Gaza had had his application for asylum rejected. In court they were all subsequently convicted of committing a hate crime.

Apparently their attack on the synagogue had been provoked by the fact that President Trump had a few days previously announced that he had ordered

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<sup>1</sup> Angelique Chrisafis, "Charlie Hebdo Attackers: Born, Raised and Radicalised in Paris," *The Guardian*, 12 January 2015, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/12/-sp-charlie-hebdo-attackers-kids-france-radicalised-paris>>.

that the US embassy be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and thus by implication had also officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

## Demographics

Before continuing we need to clarify some demographic factors. One relevant figure in this context is the absolute and relative number of Jews in the populations in question:<sup>2</sup>

**Table 13.1:** Jewish Population in Some Scandinavian Countries.

Country	Core Jewish Population	Jews per 1,000 Population	Greater Jewish Population
Denmark	6,400	1.12	8,500
Sweden	15,000	1.52	25,000

The number of Jews living in Finland, with a population of 5.5 million, and in Norway, with a population of 5.3 million, is today considerably lower than in the two previously mentioned countries. There are slightly more than a thousand people in each of these countries who could be regarded as belonging to a core Jewish population. As can be seen above, the proportion of Jews as part of the population of the Nordic countries is very small. In Denmark and Sweden it is about the same as in today's Germany, lower than in France, Hungary, the UK, Belgium, and the Netherlands, but higher than in Poland, Spain, Italy, and Austria.

The Scandinavian countries, although similar in some significant respects, nonetheless followed very different trajectories through the *Shoah*. In Norway close to 40 per cent of the two thousand one hundred Jews living in the country at the time perished under the rule of the Nazi-collaborator Vidkun Quisling. At the end of September 1943, the Danish Jews learned that they too would be persecuted. In an unprecedented and unique rescue operation, almost all of them, slightly more than seven thousand, managed to escape to Sweden where they were then well received. In the 1930s until the outbreak of the Second World War, Sweden's immigration policy was very restrictive – just under three thousand Jews out of the many hundreds of thousands trying to escape Nazi perse-

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<sup>2</sup> Sergio DellaPergola, *Jewish Populations in 13 European Union Countries Covered in the FRA Survey of Perceptions and Experiences of Antisemitism among Jews 2018* (London: Institute of Jewish Policy Research, 2017).

cution in Europe were permitted entry, most of them as “political refugees.” After the war, about thirteen thousand Jews were brought to Sweden from concentration camps and other places in Europe. This lay the ground for the fact that Sweden is the only country in Europe that today harbours a considerably larger Jewish population than before the *Shoah*. At the beginning of the 1930s there were slightly more than six thousand Jews in Sweden – today there are more than three times as many Jews in Sweden compared to when the Nazis took power in Germany.<sup>3</sup>

Other relevant demographic changes in this context have also taken place. For instance, Sweden with approximately ten million inhabitants (2018) received well over one million immigrants in the decade 2007–17, many of them from Muslim and/or Arab countries.<sup>4</sup> In 2017, according to official statistics, 544,828 persons living in Sweden were born in or have two parents who were both born in one of the following five countries: Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, or Syria. To this could be added those 46,032 who by the same criteria originate from Arab countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, or the United Arab Emirates. If you also add those 158,759 persons who themselves come from one of the Muslim countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, or Turkey, or who were born in Sweden of two parents who both came from one of these countries, you realize that today in Sweden there are about three quarters of a million persons who in some way or another are characterized by an upbringing in Muslim and/or Arab environments.<sup>5</sup> Which in and of itself, of course, would not be anything to focus on in this context, were it not for the fact that in more than a few such environments antisemitic tropes circulate, sometimes supported and disseminated by state-sponsored antisemitic propaganda. A similar pattern of development, albeit to a considerably lesser degree, has taken place in Denmark with its slightly less than 5.8 million inhabitants. According to official statistics from October 2018, 505,091 – i.e. just under 9 per cent of the Danish population – originate from non-Western countries, i.e. either born in such a country or the

<sup>3</sup> Together with Jews who later escaped to Sweden in connection with the 1956 uprising in Hungary and the antisemitic policies of the communist regimes in Poland at the end of the 1960s.

<sup>4</sup> Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB) Statistikdatabasen, *Invandring till Sverige*, <<https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/manniskorna-i-sverige/invandring-till-sverige/>> (updated 6 November 2018).

<sup>5</sup> SCB Statistikdatabasen, *Befolning efter födelseland 2017*, <<https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/manniskorna-i-sverige/invandring-till-sverige/>>. Not since 1930 have official statistics registered religious affiliation; at that time there were fifteen Muslims living in Sweden.

children of parents born in a non-Western country, mainly the Muslim countries Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, and Iran.<sup>6</sup>

At this point it should be stated very clearly that the overwhelming majority of these immigrants in Scandinavia in no way engage in any kind of anti-semitic acts. There is no empirical foundation for the far too easily and too often stated prejudice that Islam as a religion, or Muslims in general, constitute a threat to the welfare of Jews in Scandinavia. Nor that persons with such backgrounds do not integrate into the modern Scandinavian welfare states. For example, a survey undertaken by Als Research in Denmark shows that most so-called non-Western immigrants to Denmark have no problem accepting women's equality or homosexuals and reject the use of violence against others. The same study, however, also identifies a certain, albeit quite small, minority among these immigrants who strongly disagree on these same points, and as a result approve of the use of violence.<sup>7</sup> Among some of the younger generations of Muslims in both Denmark and Sweden, in particular those living as marginalized inhabitants in ghetto-like areas in some of the suburbs of larger cities, there are those who have developed into criminal outlaws and some also into Salafist jihadists.<sup>8</sup> A constitutive element of this ideology is “intolerance, discrimination, and hatred towards other groups, in particular Jews and Shia Muslims.”<sup>9</sup> According to the Swedish security police, the number of Islamist

<sup>6</sup> Det nationale integrationsbarometer accessed at < <https://integrationsbarometer.dk/> >, and Danmarks Statistik, Statistikbanken, *Befolning og Valg, Indvandrere og efterkommere FOLKIC*.

<sup>7</sup> Bjarke Følner, Sofie Aggerbo Johansen, Silas Turner, and Gustav Egede Hansen, “Undersøgelse af maskulinitsopfattelser og holdninger til ligestilling særligt blandt minoritetsetniske mænd” [report] (Copenhagen: Als Research, 2019), < [http://www.alsresearch.dk/uploads/Publicationer/Resume\\_Maskulinitsopfattelser\\_Als\\_Research.pdf](http://www.alsresearch.dk/uploads/Publicationer/Resume_Maskulinitsopfattelser_Als_Research.pdf) >. Reported in Søren Astrup, “Undersøgelse: Synet på homoseksualitet og kvinders rettigheder støder mange indvandrere,” *Politiken*, 25 February 2019, < <https://politiken.dk/indland/art7056107/Synet-på-homoseksualitet-og-kvinders-rettigheder-støder-mange-indvandrere> >.

<sup>8</sup> In more than a few cases they have become radicalized while in prison. There is a spectrum of different shades between Salafism and Salafist jihadism. In some cases, Salafism has proved to be a breeding ground for violent jihadism. Not all Salafists are jihadists, but all jihadists are Salafists.

<sup>9</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, Filip Ahlin, Peder Hyllengren, and Magnus Normark, *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism: Påverkan mot och utmaningar för det svenska samhället* (Stockholm: Försvarshögskolan, Centrum för totalförsvare och samhällets säkerhet, 2018), 7, 102. One of the conspiracy theories believed by some Salafists is “that the Shi'ite faith was created by a Jew who was trying to corrupt Islam from the inside.”

groups in Sweden who approve of violence has increased by a factor of ten in less than a decade.<sup>10</sup>

The Swedish Security Service estimates that around three hundred people (mostly young men, but there are also women among them) have travelled from Sweden to join jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria, especially Daesh/ISIS.<sup>11</sup> The leading Danish daily has reported that at least twenty women from Denmark have joined Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq.<sup>12</sup> Some of these so-called Islamic State terrorists were killed in the fighting there, however today at least 150 of them, now experienced in handling weapons and familiar with exercising brutality, are back in Sweden.<sup>13</sup> Again, the same pattern goes for Denmark, however with lower numbers.<sup>14</sup>

## Antisemitisms

Before continuing we also need to familiarize ourselves with the fact, all too often overlooked, that there are not only different *degrees* of antisemitism in different countries and historical epochs, but also that we can and ought to speak of and analyse different *qualities* or kinds of antisemitism.

In a previous study, based on data collected in 2012 in several European countries, among them Sweden, we were able to distinguish between three different kinds of antisemitism: classic antisemitism, *Aufklärungsantisemitismus*, and Israel-derived antisemitism.

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**10** Ranstorp and others, *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism*, 7, 15; Säkerhetspolisen, “Så mycket har extremistmiljöerna vuxit,” 3 July 2017, <<https://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/ovrigt/pressrum/aktuellt/aktuellt/2017-07-03-sa-mycket-har-extremistmiljoerna-vuxit.html>>.

**11** In relation to its population, more people have travelled from Sweden to join these jihadist groups than from any other country in Europe with the exception of Belgium. Ranstorp and others, *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism*, 109.

**12** Jonas H. R. Moestrup, “Danske kvinder drager mot Syrien: Sådan lokker kalifatet,” *TV2 Nyheder*, 3 March 2019, <<http://nyheder.tv2.dk/2017-03-03-danske-kvinder-drager-mod-syrien-saa-dan-lokker-kalifatet>>.

**13** Ranstorp and others, *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism*, 210; *SVT Nyheter*, 18 December 2018, <<https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sa-dalig-koll-har-kommuner-na-pa-is-atervandarna>>.

**14** Morten Skjoldager, *Truslen Indefra* (Copenhagen: Lindhardt & Ringhof, 2009).

## Classic antisemitism

This is based on classic antisemitic stereotypes such as “Jews have too much control over global affairs” and “Jews are responsible for most of the world’s wars.” The proportion of persons within the national populations who hold such attitudes to an extent that warrants labelling them “antisemites” is continually being measured in many countries around the world by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). We refer to this as *Classic antisemitism*.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 13.2:** Proportion of classic antisemites in Scandinavian countries in 2014.

DENMARK	8 %	NORWAY	15 %	SWEDEN	4 %
Male	11 %		21 %		4 %
Female	6 %		9 %		3 %
<b>AGE</b>					
18–34	7 %		8 %		2 %
35–49	4 %		15 %		1 %
50+	12 %		20 %		7 %

The proportion of antisemites within the general population according to this measure is remarkably lower in Sweden than in virtually any other country in the world. The proportion of antisemites in the general population is a bit higher in Denmark and Norway than in Sweden, although even there the number is lower than in all other European countries. According to this 2014 poll, the corresponding proportion of classic antisemites is in Hungary 41 per cent, France 32 per cent, Belgium and Germany 27 per cent, and Italy 20 per cent.<sup>16</sup> A follow-up poll conducted in 2015 in a select number of countries largely confirms this picture. Among the countries surveyed at the time, the lowest proportion, 8 per cent, was found in Denmark. Sweden was not among the countries included in this follow-up poll.<sup>17</sup>

**15** Anti-Defamation League, “ADL Global 100. An Index of Anti-Semitism,” < <https://www.adl.org/adl-global-100> >.

**16** Among the EU countries surveyed, only the UK, with 8 per cent of its population being antisemites as measured by this method, approaches the relatively low levels found in the Scandinavian countries.

**17** The ADL 2015 Update (“Poll Finds Dramatic Decline in Anti-Semitic Attitudes in France; Significant Drops in Germany and Belgium,” 30 June 2015, < <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/new-poll-anti-semitic-attitudes-19-countries> >), comprising a select number of countries, shows the following percentage of antisemites as defined by the ADL criteria: Hungary 40 per

However, even if the proportion of Swedes who according to the ADL's criteria qualify as antisemites is remarkably low compared to other countries, there still exist small groups of politically organized Nazi-sympathisers in the country. Furthermore, in Denmark since around the turn of the millennium there has been an active neo-Nazi group that runs a local radio station (*Radio Oasen*) and at times organizes public demonstrations flying the swastika. It has also formed a political party, *Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Bevægelse* (DNSB, National Socialist Movement of Denmark), and has participated in local elections in Greve, a municipality south of Copenhagen. In the 2005 municipal elections it received 73 votes, corresponding to 0.3 per cent of votes cast, and in the elections to the regional council they received 611 votes, corresponding to 0.1 per cent of votes cast. It has been estimated that in the whole country there might be around 1,000 passive and 150 active members of the DNSB.<sup>18</sup>

The largest and most active neo-Nazi organization in Scandinavia at present is the so-called *Nordiska Motståndsrörelsen* (NMR, Nordic Resistance Movement). It attempts to be a pan-Nordic neo-Nazi movement and in Sweden is also a political party. It was established in Sweden and claims to be active in Norway, Finland, and Denmark, and also to have members in Iceland. The NMR has been described as a terrorist organization due to their aim of abolishing democracy along with their paramilitary activities and stockpiling of weapons.

One of the NMR's favourite activities is to organize public marches and other kinds of collective demonstrations wearing uniform-style outfits, flying Nazi-inspired flags, and so on in connection with various large public cultural and political events. These have included the annual bookfair in Gothenburg and the all-inclusive political summer-rally in Almedalen on Gotland, where members of the group assaulted two pro-Israel activists on 6 July 2018. On special occasions they manage to bring out a few hundred sympathizers, but generally they seem unable to muster more than a few dozen. At times they appear threatening and resort to violent forms of action. Some of them have participated in general and local elections, but normally without gaining enough support to be represented in any government body.<sup>19</sup> In the 2018 general elections in Swe-

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cent, Poland 37 per cent, Spain 29 per cent, Italy 29 per cent, Belgium 21 per cent, France 17 per cent, Germany 16 per cent, the UK 12 per cent, and Denmark 8 per cent. Sweden was not included in this update.

<sup>18</sup> Wikipedia, < [https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danmarks\\_Nationalsocialistiske\\_Bevægelse](https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danmarks_Nationalsocialistiske_Bevægelse) >.

<sup>19</sup> There is one exception. In local elections in Grästorp in 2010, the neo-Nazi party, *Svenskarnas parti* (SvP, Party of the Swedes), received 102 votes (2.8 per cent) and a single mandate. *Svenskarnas parti* thus became the first Nazi party to sit in an elected assembly in Sweden since the 1940s. The party was disbanded in 2015.

den, NMR received a total of 20,106 votes, which corresponds to 0.03 per cent of the votes cast in the country.<sup>20</sup> Even if the NMR and other similar groups are very small in terms of numbers, they are still quite visible in the public sphere. This fact in itself causes definite alarm among Jews in Sweden.

Add to this the fact that since the 2018 general elections the third largest party in the Swedish parliament (based on slightly less than 18 per cent of the vote in the national elections) is the *Sverigedemokraterna* (Sweden Democrats). This party has actually grown from the same ideological roots that nourish the aforementioned Nazi-affiliated groups. However, since its creation in 1988, in parallel with its rapidly growing popular support – mainly due to its strong anti-immigration and by implication also anti-Muslim positions – it has moderated these positions and now prefers to present itself as a socially conservative and nationalist party. With its 2010 entry into the Swedish parliament, it has tried to distance itself from its white supremacist and Nazi-influenced background. As part of its attempt to pursue this transformation, several party officials have been excluded because of their either bluntly racist or antisemitic statements. Nonetheless, this did not stop one of their representatives and former second deputy speaker of the Swedish parliament, Björn Söder, from suggesting in a 2014 interview with the leading Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter*, that since Sámi and Jews (for example) have dual identities, they would have to adapt and be assimilated in order to be considered Swedish in the cultural sense. This was interpreted to mean that Jews cannot be Swedish – unless they abandon their Jewish identity.<sup>21</sup>

In 2016, another leading representative of *Sverigedemokraterna*, its then parliamentary group leader and now economic-political spokesman, Oscar Sjöstedt, jokingly recounted how he and some colleagues, German slaughterhouse workers in Iceland, would kick sheep, pretending they were Jews, while shouting “*die Juden!*”<sup>22</sup> The fact that the leadership of *Sverigedemokraterna* did not find this reason enough to sanction their representative might be an indication of the party’s tacit acceptance of antisemitism.

To sum up on this point: There appears today to be a smaller proportion of the population in the Scandinavian countries who have classic stereotypes and

<sup>20</sup> Valmyndigheten, <<https://data.val.se/val/val2018/slutresultat/R/rike/index.html>>.

<sup>21</sup> Niklas Orrenius, “Den leende nationalismen,” *Dagens Nyheter*, 14 December 2014, <<https://www.dn.se/nyheter/politik/den-leende-nationalismen/>>. In 2018 Björn Söder reiterated his statement.

<sup>22</sup> Filip Johansson, “Här skämtar Oscar Sjöstedt (SD) grovt om judar,” *Expressen*, 6 October 2016, <<https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/har-skamtar-sjostedt-sd-grovt-om-judar/>>. The video from the party where this took place is dated 2011.

negative attitudes about Jews than among the general population in other comparable countries in the world. In Sweden the proportion of classic antisemites in the general population is lower than anywhere in the Western world. Still, there are neo-Nazi groups in the Scandinavian countries. This is particularly so in Sweden where, although small in terms of membership and very weak in attracting popular support, they have succeeded in attracting attention through their public demonstrations and actions. They thereby also succeed in creating unease among those who are and feel targeted by them – today mainly refugees and immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries and those who defend their right to stay in the country, but also Jews.

The feelings of unease and discomfort among Jews at the presence and public activities of these neo-Nazis is certainly understandable. But do these groups in fact represent a threat to the Jewish populations in Sweden and Denmark? As it seems their messages do not attract popular support, rather the opposite is true, and their demonstrations, terrible as they appear, have so far not involved violent physical attacks on individual Jews or Jewish institutions in the country. In fact, it appears that participants in these activities, largely comprising young men with criminal records involving weapons and the use of violence,<sup>23</sup> are primarily excited by racist ideologies of *Anno-dazumal* and enjoy the theatrical provocation of carrying heraldic symbols reminiscent of the Third Reich. However, one can never know – and this is precisely what these groups are counting on. Still, classic antisemitism is less present in Sweden and Scandinavia in general than elsewhere.

## **Aufklärungsantisemitismus**

Another kind of what might be perceived as antisemitism are attempts at prohibiting core Jewish practices such as *brit milah* (the circumcision of newborn male babies) and *shechitah* (the slaughter of animals according to ritual prescriptions).

The 2018 FRA survey<sup>24</sup> asked respondents about the extent to which they had heard it suggested that circumcision and/or slaughter according to tradition-

<sup>23</sup> Erik Wiman, Frida Sundkvist, and Frida Svensson, “Aftonbladet/SvD granskar: 58 av nazisterna dömda för brott,” *Aftonbladet*, 27 September 2017, <<https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/mOBel/aftonbladet-svd-granskar-58-av-nazisterna-domda-for-brott>>.

<sup>24</sup> The FRA survey refers to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Human Rights survey of Jewish people’s experiences and perceptions of discrimination and hate crimes in European Union member states. The FRA survey was conducted in 2012 and 2018. In the references below, “FRA Report 2018” refers to *Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism: Second Survey on Dis-*

al religious rules should be banned in their country. Almost all respondents in Denmark (98 per cent) said they had heard non-Jewish persons suggesting that circumcision or slaughter according to Jewish tradition, or both, should be prohibited. In Sweden, 77 per cent of respondents were also aware of non-Jewish people suggesting this for their country. Since slaughter according to Jewish tradition is already forbidden – in Sweden since 1937 and Denmark since 2014 – the suggestions heard in both of these secular-Lutheran countries primarily concern circumcision. In none of the other ten participating EU countries are Jews confronted by such suggestions to the same extent.<sup>25</sup> Suggestions of this kind were more rarely heard in Catholic countries like Hungary, Spain, and Italy.

In 2012, no EU member state other than Sweden had a law in effect prohibiting *shechitah*. Since 2012, however, legal prohibition of *shechitah* has also been introduced in the Netherlands, in the province of Wallonia in Belgium, and in Denmark. At the time that Denmark ratified the law in February 2014, the minister of agriculture, Social Democrat Dan Jørgensen, proclaimed that “animal rights weigh heavier than respect for religious considerations.”<sup>26</sup>

In this context it should be mentioned that in recent years there has raged an intense and widespread public debate in Denmark on the circumcision of infant boys. A Danish medical doctor, Morten Frisch, launched a branch of the Intact America organization, called it Intact Denmark, and succeeded in making it into a popular movement. A journalistic internet survey indicated that slightly more than 80 per cent of the Danish population would like circumcision of infant boys to be prohibited in Denmark. A petition to the same end collected the fifty thousand signatures required to have the issue raised in the Danish Parlia-

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*crimination and Hate Crime against Jews in the EU* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018), <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/2nd-survey-discrimination-hate-crime-against-jews>>.

**25** FRA Report 2018, 70, tab. 8. The survey carried out in 2012 among Jews in eight EU states (Denmark was not included at the time) also showed that Jews in Sweden had been confronted with such suggestions more often than Jews in the other seven participating EU countries. At the time, 85 per cent of Jews in Sweden confirmed “In the last 12 months, having personally heard non-Jewish people suggest that circumcision and traditional Jewish slaughter should not be allowed to take place in their country.”

**26** Reported by Danish Radio and Ritzau News Agency, 13 February 2014. See also Andrew Brown, “Denmark’s Ritual Slaughter Ban Says More about Human Hypocrisy Than Animal Welfare,” *The Guardian*, 20 February 2014, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/andrewbrown/2014/feb/20/denmark-halal-kosha-slaughter-hypocrisy-animal-welfare>>.

ment.<sup>27</sup> However, the government-appointed Ethics Council (*Det Etiske Råd*) had already been asked by parliament to examine the issue. On 28 June 2018, they recommended that religiously motivated ritual circumcision of boys in Denmark not be prohibited.<sup>28</sup> On the seventy-fifth anniversary of the rescue of the Danish Jews from Nazi-occupied Denmark to Sweden, 11 October 2018, in the fully packed Copenhagen synagogue, Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen stood in front of the Torah ark and faced the assembled dignitaries and members of the Jewish community, promising not to allow any religious rights or traditions to be taken away from the Danish Jews. In spite of the strong popular movement to legally prohibit *brit milah*, this practice has not been banned in Denmark, nor has it been in Iceland, where a similarly popular initiative to do so had been raised at the same time.<sup>29</sup> In Sweden, too, calls have recently been made to prohibit *brit milah*. For example, in 2011 the former chairman of the Liberal Party and minister of social affairs, Bengt Westerberg, headed a motion to legally prohibit the circumcision of infant boys.<sup>30</sup> Still, in spite of strong popular opposition to the practice, neither in Denmark nor in Sweden is *brit milah* legally prohibited – yet. The reason for this is probably that a majority of parliamentary politicians in these countries recognize how, all things considered, it would tarnish their country's image and risk having them labelled “anti-Jewish” for being the first country in the world today to prohibit this core Jewish practice.<sup>31</sup>

It should be understood that behind the strong efforts in the Scandinavian countries today to ban *brit milah* and *shechitah* are mainly humanitarian, Enlightenment-based concerns, liberal ideas about individual free choice, and ideas about what constitute “humane” animal rights. This corresponds to the priority given to rationalist reasoning and the parallel secularist disrespect for reli-

<sup>27</sup> Anne Sofie Allarp, “Venstrefløjens sværmen for et omskæringsforbud er dybt bekymrende,” *Berlingske*, 20 November 2018, < <https://www.berlingske.dk/kommentatorer/venstrefloejens-svaermen-for-et-omskaeringsforbud-er-dybt-bekymrende> >.

<sup>28</sup> Det Etiske Råd, “Udtalelse om rituel omskæring af drenge (2018),” < <http://www.etiskraad.dk/etiske-temaer/sundhedsvaesen/publikationer/udtalelse-om-rituel-omskaering-af-drenge-2018> >. A minority within the Ethics Council did not agree with this conclusion.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, the chapter about antisemitism in Iceland by Vilhjálmur Órn Vilhjálmsson in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> Staffan Bergström and others, “DN Debatt: ‘Därför måste regeringen stoppa omskärelse av pojkar,’” *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 November 2011, < <https://www.dn.se/debatt/darfor-maste-regeringen-stoppa-omskarelse-av-pojkar/> >.

<sup>31</sup> Circumcision is also a custom among Muslims, amongst whom it is however practised differently (the subjects are usually pre-pubescent boys, not babies) and is not as fundamentally rooted in the core scriptures as it is for Jews.

giously-based convictions that characterize much of modern Scandinavia.<sup>32</sup> In relation to what we are discussing here we use the term *Aufklärung antisemitismus* – a notion coined by the French-Italian historian Diana Pinto – to refer to this phenomenon.

However, the remarkable support for the Intact Denmark movement and many of the other rather aggressive efforts to stop the practices discussed here, cannot be attributed solely to a preference for rationalist attitudes and humanitarian concerns. Rather, much of the support for these attempts also – and this is particularly so in Denmark<sup>33</sup> – stems from mainly blatant anti-Muslim but also (albeit not so outspokenly) anti-Jewish sentiments.

Even if it is true that the campaigns against *brit milah* in Denmark and Sweden build upon strong Enlightenment-based convictions (however often mixed up with misunderstood and wildly exaggerated notions about how circumcision actually affects the baby boy), and even if it is also true that this form of antisemitism – to the extent that it should even be labelled antisemitism – is not life-threatening to individual Jews, several Jewish community leaders and members do regard it as threatening the future of Jewish life in the country.<sup>34</sup>

## **Israel-derived antisemitism**

A third form antisemitism consists in accusing and attacking Jews and Jewish institutions in the country, referring in one's actions to what one thinks the State of Israel has or is supposed to have done. We label this kind of antisemitism *Israel-derived antisemitism*.

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**32** See Figure 13.1: The Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map of the World (2008 Version).

**33** Consider the history of radical anti-Muslim politics and the political atmosphere in the country.

**34** Søren Ploug Lilmoes, "Jøder: Forbud mod omskæring vil slutte jødisk liv i Danmark," *Berlingske*, 4 February 2015, < <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/joeder-forbud-mod-omskaering-vil-slutte-juedisk-liv-i-danmark> >. Bent Melchior, "Kronik. Overrabbiner om omskæringsdebatt: Vi afviser med foragt påstanden om, at vi lemlæster vores drengebørn," *Politiken*, 25 February 2018, < <https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art6354779/Vi-afviser-med-foragt-pastanden-om-at-vi-lemlaeester-vores-drengeboern> >. See Anne Cecilie Ratschau Kvium and others, "Mere end jøde: En antropologisk undersøgelse af omskæringsdebattens konsekvenser for danske jøder," Rapport/Eksamens i anvendt antropologi (University of Copenhagen, Institut for Menneskerettigheder/Institut for antropologi, 2015), < <https://beggesider.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/mere-end-jc3b8de.pdf> >. See also Nikolaj Bøgh, "Hvad lærte vi af omskæringsdebatten," *pov. International*, 10 October 2018, < <https://pov.international/hvad-vi-laerte-af-omskaeringsdebatten/> >.

A measure of Israel-derived antisemitism might be the degree to which Jews in Europe feel safe or unsafe because they are Jewish, due to the impact of the Arab–Israeli conflict. To the question “To what extent does the Israeli-Arab conflict impact on how safe you feel as a Jewish person in your country?” we received the following answers:

**Table 13.3:** The impact of the Israeli-Arab conflict on Jews’ perceptions of safety in Denmark and Sweden (2018)

	Sweden	Denmark
A great deal	40 %	35 %
A fair amount	27 %	35 %
A little	28 %	26 %
Not at all	5 %	4 %

This table shows that approximately two thirds of the Jewish respondents in both Sweden and Denmark appear to perceive their security in their respective countries as being strongly affected by the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict.<sup>35</sup> Among the twelve EU states investigated, the Jews in Belgium, France, Spain, and Germany – those countries hit most severely by terrorism – perceived the impact of the Arab–Israeli conflict on their sense of security as Jews even more strongly, whereas Jews in the former communist and currently immigrant-rejecting countries Poland and Hungary did so to a considerably lesser extent.<sup>36</sup>

Another indication of Israel-derived antisemitism might be found in the answers to the question “How often do you feel that people in your country accuse or blame you for anything done by the Israeli government *because you are Jewish?*” To this question we received the following answers:

**Table 13.4:** Jews’ perceptions of being held accountable for the actions of the Israeli government, in Denmark and Sweden (2018)

	Sweden	Denmark
All the time	14 %	9 %
Frequently	20 %	28 %

<sup>35</sup> In the 2012 FRA survey the proportion who felt so in Sweden was a little lower – 61 per cent. See Lars Dencik and Karl Marosi, *Different Antisemitisms: Perceptions and Experiences of Antisemitism among Jews in Sweden and across Europe* (London: Institute of Jewish Policy Research, 2017), 18. The entire report is available online at < <https://www.jpr.org.uk/publication?id=4841> >.

<sup>36</sup> FRA Report 2018, 43, fig 16.

**Table 13.4:** Jews' perceptions of being held accountable for the actions of the Israeli government, in Denmark and Sweden (2018) (*Continued*)

	Sweden	Denmark
Occasionally	42 %	44 %
Never	26 %	19 %

Here too, Jews living in Poland and Hungary, where according to the ADL index there is a considerably higher proportion of antisemites in the population than in the other twelve countries included in the FRA survey,<sup>37</sup> experience being blamed for what the Israeli government is doing to a considerably lesser extent than do Jews in Sweden, with its remarkably smaller number of classic antisemites in the general population.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, in 2018, Jews in all other participating countries except for the UK felt blamed as Jews for what the Israeli government was doing to a larger extent than Jews in the Scandinavian countries.<sup>39</sup>

To explore the animosity against Israel further and, if possible, also to get an idea of the extent to which such attitudes spill over onto Jews living in each of these countries, we also asked to what extent the Jewish respondents had heard non-Jewish persons in the country state, "The world would be a better place without Israel." This is reported to have been heard within the last twelve months by about one third of the respondents in all countries involved;<sup>40</sup> in Denmark, 34 per cent report having heard it, in Sweden the number is 26 per cent.

Another indirect measure might be how often a Jew in each country hears the statement, "Israelis behave like Nazis against the Palestinians." In Denmark 55 per cent of Jewish respondents say that in the last twelve months they have heard this "all the time" or "frequently." In Sweden the corresponding number is 43 per cent.<sup>41</sup> Only in the UK is this statement reported to have been heard

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<sup>37</sup> See note 16 in this chapter.

<sup>38</sup> The answers to the same question in the 2012 FRA survey show the proportion of Jews in Sweden who felt blamed "all the time" or "frequently" because of what Israel is doing was higher in 2012 (49 per cent) than in 2018 (34 per cent). See Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemites*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> In the 2012 FRA survey, Jews in Belgium, Italy, and France also reported being blamed more often than Jews in Sweden did. See Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemites*, 19, fig. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Only in Hungary did the answers deviate slightly from this. There, "just" 19 per cent of respondents claim to have heard such a statement, whereas at the other end of the spectrum 40 per cent of respondents in Spain say they have come across such assertions. FRA Report 2018, 26, tab. 3.

<sup>41</sup> FRA Report 2018, 26, tab. 3.

just slightly less often than in Sweden, in all other countries it has been heard more often. The figure for Denmark is surpassed by higher numbers in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Hungary, and Poland.

Could it be that Jews in Scandinavia for some reason are more (or less) sensitive than Jews in other European countries in perceiving statements to be “antisemitic”? For instance, criticism of Israel? 19 per cent of Danish Jews claim they perceive non-Jews’ “criticism of Israel” as being antisemitic. In Sweden, 28 per cent of Jewish respondents say this is the case. In other words, the vast majority of Jews in these two countries do not perceive criticism of Israel to be in and of itself “antisemitic.” Jews in Denmark are less likely than Jews in any of the other countries included in the study to regard criticism of Israel as antisemitic. Aside from Danish Jews, only Jews in the Netherlands and Poland score lower than Jews in Sweden do – in all other countries Jews are more prone to perceive criticism of Israel as antisemitic. Denmark and Sweden are also the two countries surveyed where Jews are the least likely to regard supporting boycotts of Israel or Israelis as “antisemitic.”<sup>42</sup>

Do the answers to the questions posed about Israel-related issues indicate the degree of Israel-derived antisemitism in the countries in question? The picture is not clear. It would be misleading to assume that attacks or threats against Jews and Jewish institutions in a European country due to what Israel is doing emanate from attitudes towards Israel in the general population of that country – even if there are instances where this has also been the case. What is relevant in this context is how certain elements and specific pockets within the population react.

As one might have noticed, all the perpetrators mentioned in the two examples at the beginning of this article originate from a region of the world where antisemitism has long been part of state propaganda – not rarely modelled on Nazi-German templates. Not surprisingly then, the police investigating the two attacks described discovering a great deal of antisemitic propaganda on the perpetrators’ telephones and in their social media histories. A not-too-far-fetched assumption is that these perpetrators shared the view promoted in this propaganda, that there is a semi-secret US–Israel political alliance and that Jews as such, including Jews outside of Israel and the US, are tacit agents pursuing the supposed political ambition of this alliance, both to control and destroy the world. In a similar vein, it was probably not just a slip of the tongue when one of the leading Salafist preachers in Sweden, Anas Khalifa (also known as

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<sup>42</sup> However, a majority of Jews in both Denmark (63 per cent) and Sweden (66 per cent) do perceive supporting boycotts of Israel as antisemitism. FRA Report 2018, 29, tab. 5.

Abu Malik),<sup>43</sup> in a note on the Israel–Palestine conflict posted on Instagram, instead of naming Israel, stated “Jews murder children, the elderly, blow up hospitals, etc.”<sup>44</sup> This is just in congruence with the widely held conspiracy theory in these circles – but not only in these circles – that *all* Jews are in fact party to the atrocities the State of Israel is blamed for. This conspiratorial image is, if not the most widespread, then certainly the most murderous of the different anti-semitic images that today circulate in certain segments of European societies, not least in the Scandinavian countries. Thus, antisemitism in the general population is ten times more widespread in Hungary than in Sweden,<sup>45</sup> whereas the proportion of Jews who report having been physically attacked because they are Jews, or having witnessed others being physically attacked, is higher in Sweden than in Hungary.<sup>46</sup>

In this context one needs to be particularly careful not to generalize these facts to target Arabs or Muslims in general. There are, unfortunately, strong politically motivated forces, in particular in today’s Denmark, that intentionally attempt to collectively stigmatize already marginalized groups of immigrants and children of immigrants from the Middle East living in the country. Some of these do indeed have strongly negative, not to say hostile, feelings and attitudes towards Israel. These are basically related to the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict, and do not emanate from traditional antisemitism – although, as we have seen, they are sometimes also amplified by propaganda they have consumed.

## Perpetrators

Who, then, are the perpetrators of these different antisemities today? The FRA surveys of 2012 and 2018 ask: “Thinking about the incident where somebody attacked or threatened you in a way that frightened you because you are Jewish –

**43** At present residing in a suburb of the city of Gothenburg.

**44** Quoted from Ranstorp and others, *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism*, 135. My emphasis.

**45** ADL 2014. See note 15 in this chapter.

**46** Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemities*, 14–15, figs 15 and 16. The FRA Report 2018 does not give figures on experiences of physical attacks country by country. However, it reports, “Overall, across the 12 countries surveyed, 3 % of the respondents personally experienced a physical attack because they are Jewish in the five years before the survey.” FRA Report 2018, 51. A table on the same page however gives figures for the proportion of respondents who say they experienced antisemitic offensive or threatening comments in person. The proportion who did so in 2018 is higher in Sweden (19 per cent) than in Hungary (17 per cent). The proportion in Denmark is equal to that in Sweden. See FRA Report 2018, 50, fig. 50.

“who did this to you?” The respondents were given an opportunity to choose between different kinds of possible perpetrators,<sup>47</sup> among them: “Someone with right-wing political views,” “Someone with left-wing political views,” “Someone with Muslim extremist views,” and “Someone with Christian extremist views.” The answers we received are distributed as follows:

**Table 13.5:** Jews’ perceptions of who attacked or threatened them in incidents in Denmark and Sweden (2012, 2018)

Someone with	2018		2012
	Sweden	Denmark	Sweden
Muslim extremist views	40 %	34 %	51 %
Left-wing political views	27 %	27 %	25 %
Right-wing political views	18 %	10 %	5 %
Christian extremist views	1 %	3 %	0 %

As shown, the answers to the 2012 survey in Sweden (Denmark was not included in that survey) show a similar pattern as in both countries in 2018 but with somewhat sharper differences.

Of the twelve EU countries, only in Germany is the proportion of supposed Muslim extremist perpetrators slightly higher than in Sweden. Only in Italy and Spain is the proportion of supposed left-wing political perpetrators slightly higher than in Sweden and Denmark.

The 2018 FRA report states: “While the category ‘someone with Muslim extremist views’ is reported often, respondents frequently selected it in combination with another category. In one third of the cases of antisemitic harassment, respondents chose it together with ‘someone with a left-wing political view.’”<sup>48</sup>

In no country is the proportion of supposed Christian extremist perpetrators as low as in Denmark and Sweden. With respect to supposed right-wing political perpetrators, the figures for Poland (53 per cent) and Hungary (46 per cent) differ considerably from what is the case in the other countries. Here the two Scandinavian countries occupy the middle range within the field of nations.

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**47** The list of options to choose from read like this: 1) Family/household member; 2) Neighbour; 3) Colleague, boss or supervisor at work; 4) Someone from school, college or university; 5) A customer, client or patient; 6) Someone with right-wing political views; 7) Someone with left-wing political views; 8) Teenager or group of teenagers; 9) Doctor, healthcare worker; 10) Police officer or border guard; 11) Public official (e.g. a civil servant); 12) Private security guard; 13) Someone with Christian extremist views; 14) Someone with Muslim extremist views.

**48** FRA Report 2018, 53.

The 2018 FRA report does not differentiate between those who are identified as uttering antisemitic *comments* and those who are identified as perpetrators of physical antisemitic *violence and threats*. However, we were able to use the database of the 2012 survey to investigate this. There it appears that the proportion who report having personally been *physically* attacked because they are Jewish was higher in Sweden than in all other countries except for France. Regarding antisemitic comments, the category of people with left-wing views and the category of people with Muslim extremist views are “blamed” for being the source of such comments to more or less the same degree. However, when it comes to physical violence and threats, they are much more often attributed to those with Muslim extremist views than to any of the other groups we focus on.<sup>49</sup>

A comparison between the proportion of respondents who say they have experienced antisemitic harassment in 2012 and 2018 conveys that this has on the whole remained the same over the years. However, with respect to having experienced offensive or threatening comments in person, this is reported to have increased in two of the countries, Germany and Sweden.<sup>50</sup>

Even if it is true that only a small proportion of the persons who participated in the survey report having been the victim of a *violent* physical attack because they are Jewish, and even if such attacks and threats do not occur frequently, the fact that they occur at all may cause a higher and more longlasting level of fear among Jews, for instance of being identified as such because of carrying or wearing something that might help people recognize them as being a Jew. This sense of fear may reach even beyond the localities where the violent antisemitic attacks have occurred, and then have a greater impact than even frequent occurrences of antisemitic comments and widespread antisemitic attitudes about Jews living in the country do.

The fact that this kind of attack is today mostly attributed to Muslim extremists and the fact that the reasons the perpetrators give for carrying out these actions are related somehow to Israel, makes *Israel-derived antisemitism* a major factor in contemporary antisemitism – and this is especially so in Scandinavia.

## Markers of Jewish identity

Both the 2012 and the 2018 survey asked the respondents, “Do you ever avoid wearing, carrying or displaying things that might help people recognize you as

<sup>49</sup> Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemitisms*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> FRA Report 2018, 51.

a Jew in public, for example wearing a kippah/yarmulke, magen David/Star of David or specific clothing or displaying a *mezuzah*?"

In 2012 we found the level of avoidance of carrying anything that might identify one as a Jew to be higher in Sweden than in the other participating EU countries.<sup>51</sup> In the 2018 survey this question was put only to those respondents who in their answer to a preceding question had indicated that they at least sometimes wear, carry, or display such items. The result with that screening still shows avoidance in the Scandinavian countries to be higher than in most of the twelve participating EU countries. The country with the highest percentage to report avoiding displaying Jewish symbols "all the time" and "frequently," among those who describe themselves as sometimes carrying such symbols, is Denmark (41 per cent). The corresponding figure in Sweden is 35 per cent. In France and Germany it is almost the same, 36 per cent, whereas the feeling of needing to hide one's Jewish symbols is lower in all other countries.

Noteworthy in this context are the figures for Hungary. Hungary is the country with the highest proportion of antisemites in the general population,<sup>52</sup> and yet it is the country where the fewest respondents who sometimes carry Jewish symbols feel the need to avoid doing so always or frequently (16 per cent).

Is there a paradox in this? Sweden and Denmark are the countries with the lowest, and Hungary is the country with highest proportion of classic antisemites in the general population. Hungary is also the country with the lowest proportion of Jews who feel they always or frequently for security reasons need to avoid carrying anything that might make them recognizable as Jews, whereas Denmark and Sweden have the highest proportion of Jews who avoid carrying symbols that might make them recognizable as Jews.

Our analysis concludes that this is *not* a paradox. The popular idea that it is always "the same old antisemitism" that again and again pops up and "shows its ugly face" does not find support in our study.<sup>53</sup> Of course, there are persons who at the same time, for example, hold classic antisemitic stereotypes, are very hostile towards Israel, and favour prohibiting core Jewish customs such as the circumcision of baby boys and the manufacture of kosher meat products. Our data, however, does not suggest that there should be a significant correlation between these – rather, it points to each form of antisemitism being inspired by different underlying "philosophies," being carried by different social groups, and being manifested in different ways. Hence, instead of just lumping all

<sup>51</sup> Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemitisms*, 16, fig. 18.

<sup>52</sup> Anti-Defamation League, "Global 100," 2014 and Update 2015. See notes 15 and 17 in this chapter.

<sup>53</sup> Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemitisms*, 32.

kinds of hostile remarks or actions against Jews under the label “antisemitism,” we would do better, both for analytical purposes and especially in order to find remedies, to speak of three distinct antisemitisms.

## A specific pattern of antisemitism in Scandinavia

Above I have presented to what extent these distinct antisemitisms are manifested today in the Scandinavian welfare states, i.e. Denmark and Sweden. Based on this we may ask: is there a specifically Scandinavian pattern of antisemitisms? If so, is this pattern just a special case among other special cases, or is the pattern instead somehow inherently related to the fact that Sweden and Denmark are probably among the most advanced social welfare states and most modernized societies in the world today? Let us summarize some main features of contemporary antisemitism in Scandinavia:

1. By European and international standards there are today outstandingly low levels of classic antisemitism in the population. Propositions like “Jews have too much power in the country,” “the interests of Jews in the country differ from the rest of the population,” “Jews are not capable of integrating into society,” and the like are less often heard in either Denmark or Sweden than in any of the other EU states.<sup>54</sup>
2. By European and international standards there is an outstandingly high level of *Aufklärungsantisemitismus*, i.e. attacks on and attempts at prohibiting the practice of core Jewish customs. Virtually all Jews in Denmark and more than three quarters in Sweden have recently been confronted with such proposals, in particular about ritual circumcision (*brit milah*). In other EU member states such propositions are heard to a considerably lesser extent.<sup>55</sup> Religious slaughter (*shechitah*) has already been prohibited in these two countries, unlike most of the other participating EU member states.
3. Israel-derived antisemitism, i.e. attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions in the country which refer to what the State of Israel is doing, appears to be a major source of unease among Jews in Denmark and Sweden. Two thirds of respondents in these countries report that the Arab–Israeli conflict impacts “a great deal” or “a fair amount” on their feeling of safety in the coun-

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<sup>54</sup> FRA Report 2018, 26, tab. 3.

<sup>55</sup> FRA Report 2018, 70, tab. 8.

try.<sup>56</sup> This is the case even though the extent to which they are blamed for what Israel is doing, or confronted with statements such as “the world would be a better place without Israel,” is not any greater than in the other EU member states – rather the opposite in fact.<sup>57</sup> Is there another paradox in this? No, an explanation is to be found in the clear discrepancy that exists in Denmark and Sweden between the general population on the one hand and pockets of individuals on the other. The population on the whole is “politically correct” and quite capable of distinguishing their occasionally very harsh criticism of Israel from their behaviour towards Jews in general and from rejecting Israel’s right to exist, but in the same two countries there are individuals and small groups who share an impression of Jews in general being accomplices to whatever the State of Israel does. Moreover, they are also not adverse to viewing Jews as party to an imagined evil Israel/US plot to exploit, oppress, and destroy the world.

## Scandinavia as a forerunner

When asked in a 2018 survey to assess various social and political issues,<sup>58</sup> 82 per cent of Swedish respondents rated antisemitism as a “very big” or a “fairly big” problem. Only “racism” was rated as a serious problem by a slightly larger proportion (83 per cent) of respondents. In Denmark 56 per cent rate antisemitism a “very big” or “fairly big” problem – a slightly larger proportion of Jewish respondents rated “intolerance towards Muslims” and “immigration” as serious problems in the country. Considerably fewer respondents in Denmark than in all of the other participating countries assess antisemitism as a “very big” or “fairly big” problem. The respondents in Sweden do not distinguish themselves greatly from the average respondents from other countries in this respect. Compared to the results of the 2012 survey, three countries stand out with increased proportions of respondents who say that antisemitism is “a very big” or “fairly big”

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<sup>56</sup> FRA Report 2018, 43, fig. 16. An even larger proportion of respondents in Belgium, France, Spain, and Germany – all being countries where murderous attacks on Jews that made reference to “Israel” have taken place – indicate this to be the case.

<sup>57</sup> FRA Report 2018, 44, fig. 17.

<sup>58</sup> The issues the respondents were asked to assess are: Antisemitism, Racism, Crime level, Unemployment, Immigration, Intolerance towards Muslims, Government corruption. Antisemitism is regarded as being among the three most serious issues by respondents in all of the participating countries except for Italy and Spain. In both of these countries “Unemployment” and “Government corruption” are assessed to be more of a problem. FRA Report 2018, 16, tab. 1.

problem – the UK, Germany, and Sweden (increased by 27, 23, and 22 percentage points, respectively).<sup>59</sup>

Can these results be understood as somehow reflecting the social and political conditions in each of these countries? First of all, we can establish that respondents in Denmark and Sweden differ in their assessments of antisemitism as a problem in their respective countries. About twice as large a proportion of respondents in Sweden than in Denmark perceive antisemitism to be “a very big problem.”<sup>60</sup> Historical national self-images probably play a role here. In Denmark one proudly recalls the rescue of the country’s Jews in October 1943. Denmark in the eyes of the Danes, and also in the eyes of the Jews living in Denmark, was never an antisemitic country – quite the opposite!<sup>61</sup> In Sweden, on the contrary, there is a certain self-blame for having endorsed a “J” being stamped in the passports of Jews trying to escape Nazi Germany, whereby they could more easily be refused entry into Sweden. This self-blame also results from the fact that Sweden, although neutral during the Second World War, allowed the German Wehrmacht to use its territory for troop transports.

But besides historical facts, more contemporary factors also distinguish the countries. In Sweden, clearly neo-Nazi movements have in recent years been very active and visible on the public scene. This is not the case in Denmark. In Sweden a populist political party with obvious neo-Nazi roots, *Sverigedemokraterna*, is strongly represented in the Parliament. Members of this party have repeatedly been caught making antisemitic remarks and gestures. In Denmark, a xenophobic populist party, *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People’s Party), has a similarly very strong standing in the parliament, however it is not stained by similar Nazi tendencies. Add to this huge differences between the countries with respect to immigration and immigration policies. Whereas in recent years Denmark, largely under the influence of *Dansk Folkeparti*, has pursued a very restrictive line regarding immigrants and refugees from the Middle East being able to settle in the country, Sweden has been much more open and generous in this respect. As shown in the first section of this article, the number of immigrants and refugees from the Arab and the Muslim world in general received in Sweden is much higher than in Denmark. Even if this in itself is not related to acts of antisemitism, the presence in the country of members of these groups may, rightly or wrongly, be perceived as a latent threat to Jews in the country. The magnitude of such a perception may very well be related to the relative size of the groups

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<sup>59</sup> FRA Report 2018, 18.

<sup>60</sup> FRA Report 2018, 17, fig. 1.

<sup>61</sup> See the chapter by Sofie Lene Bak in this volume.

in question, in particular of young marginalized Arabs and Muslims, living in one's neighbourhood or the country in general. The infamous events that have taken place in the city of Malmö in recent decades may serve as a case in point illustrating this.<sup>62</sup>

## The *Shoah* and its consequences for antisemitism in Scandinavia

This article deals with antisemitism in Europe, specifically Scandinavia, after the Holocaust – the *Shoah* (שואה, “calamity”) or *Khurban Eyrope* (חרבן איראָפֵע, “destruction of Europe”) as Jews themselves prefer to call the murder of millions of Jews in Europe in the years 1939–45. The first thing to observe in this context is how the *Shoah* itself, and experiences and knowledge about it, have fundamentally changed the position of, and attitude towards, antisemitism in Europe. The next thing to observe is the changes brought about by the general processes of modernization that in the decades since the Second World War have radically transformed European societies.

One effect of the collapse of the Third Reich has been the total discrediting of its fundamental ideas in the eyes of the postwar populations in Europe. “Race” is no longer a socially acceptable concept when it comes to describing and analysing social issues and societies. The radically increased mobility between nations and peoples that has taken place in recent decades in Europe has also made most European societies much more ethnically mixed and cosmopolitan than they used to be. After the *Shoah* ideas of “human rights” and “the equal value of every human being” have become codified in international conventions and are also hegemonic in many countries – today this is particularly so in Sweden. On the whole, both “race” as a concept and “racism” as an ideology and perspective have largely lost their explanatory power and by that also the place they previously held in public affairs. Even if antisemitism based on racist ideas and assumptions is still alive and kicking as a significant aspect of fringe

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**62** By Swedish standards, a relatively large number of immigrants from the Middle East live in social housing in Malmö in areas such as Rosengård, from where several of the many antisemitic incidents in the city are thought to have emanated. Brottsförebyggande rådet (BRÅ), “Hatbrott 2016: Statistik över polisanmälningar med identifierade hatbrottsmotiv och självrappporterad utsatthet för hatbrott,” *Rapport 11* (2017), <[https://www.bra.se/download/18.4c494ddd15e9438f8ada9786/1513175214923/2017\\_11\\_Hatbrott\\_2016.pdf](https://www.bra.se/download/18.4c494ddd15e9438f8ada9786/1513175214923/2017_11_Hatbrott_2016.pdf)>. See also “Antisemitism in Sweden, section 1.6. Situation in Malmö since 2009,” Wikipedia, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism\\_in\\_Sweden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism_in_Sweden)>.

neo-Nazi groups in some European countries, including Sweden, the political and social roles played by “race” in social affairs seem to be fading out, especially in Scandinavia.

Jews throughout history have – though not everywhere and not always – been identified by race, as they were in Nazi Germany. In several countries, including Scandinavia, traditionally Jews have officially only been identified by religion. Since about the mid-nineteenth century, here they have formed what they called “communities of Mosaic believers” (*Det Mosaiske Troessamfund* in Denmark and *Mosaiska Församlingen* in Sweden) – so-named as a kind of counterpart to the “communities of Christian believers” into which all other citizens in the country at that time were born and had to belong.<sup>63</sup> Today the ethnic and cultural aspects of Jewishness have become more central and the former “communities of Mosaic believers” in both countries have adopted the term “Jewish communities.” However, there is a significant difference. Since the year 2000, Jews are one of five groups<sup>64</sup> officially acknowledged as being a “national minority” in Sweden. In Denmark they are still officially regarded as mainly a religious minority.

Fuelled by the emergence of several private Muslim schools, in recent years voices have been raised to prohibit schools based on religion. In Denmark this has focussed entirely on Muslim schools. In Sweden the Left, Social Democratic, and Liberal political parties have proposed a total prohibition of all religious schools, a proposal subsequently modified to apply only to the establishment of new religious schools.

In Denmark there is just one Jewish school, Carolineskolen. Attendance at this school requires that at least one parent be a paying member of a recognized Jewish congregation in Denmark. In Sweden there is also just one Jewish school, Hillelskolan. This is a Jewish school however it is not defined as a “religious” school. Since the Jews in Sweden have “national minority” status, the Jewish school in Sweden is regarded as a national minority school. This means the school respects Jewish holidays, teaches about Jewish history and culture, etc. but is not permitted to include Jewish religious practices in the school curriculum. In principle, admittance to this school is open to anyone who wants to study there.

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**63** The rationale behind this goes: as the Christians have their Christ, Jews have their Moses – otherwise all belong to the same Swedish/Danish nation. The difference between Jews and other Danes or Swedes should be attributed solely to religion.

**64** The other groups are the Sámi, Roma, Swedish-Finnish, and the regionally defined Tornedalians. Along with this, Yiddish is also an officially acknowledged minority language in Sweden, implying support and funding from the state.

Looking at the social role of religion in a historical perspective, it is clear that in the wake of modernization religion has lost much of its social significance in Europe, and this is especially so in Scandinavia. Only in recent years, fuelled in part by the immigration of large numbers of Muslims, has religion once again become an issue of public concern and debate. In surveys carried out around the turn of the millennium, when affiliated members of the Jewish communities in Sweden were asked “How do you regard the Jewish group in Sweden?” not even 5 per cent chose the option “primarily as a religious group,” whereas just over 65 per cent chose the option “primarily as a part of the Jewish people.”<sup>65</sup> When asked about their relationship to practising the Jewish religion, just 3 per cent of the affiliated members of the Jewish communities in Sweden describe themselves as “orthodox,” whereas 44 per cent characterize themselves as “traditional but not orthodox,” 26 per cent say they are “liberally Jewish,” 28 per cent say they are “just Jewish,” and just over 9 per cent say they “do not practise religion at all.”<sup>66</sup> (In Denmark no equivalent study has been carried out as of yet.)

On the whole, Jews in Sweden and Denmark are very well integrated in society and quite assimilated into the modern Western lifestyle. Religion today plays a subordinate role in the two Scandinavian societies and it would seem this is also largely the case among their Jewish populations. Based on the relative social unimportance of religion in these societies, one would expect antisemitism emanating from concern with religious matters – as it has historically when Jews have been accused of being murderers of Christ, deniers of the Messiah, worshippers of an evil God, etc. – would have faded out. In Sweden and Denmark today, rationality and secularism are preferred values guiding public affairs and colouring what is valued in public debate. In fact, in these countries there is not only a certain hostility towards bringing religion into the public sphere, but also towards religion as such.

Yet paradoxically enough, this condescending view of religion has led to an increased preoccupation with certain of the core Jewish religious practices. In a previous section of this article we introduced the notion of *Aufklärungsantisemitismus*. This particular category of anti-Jewish attitudes – objecting to and denying Jews the right to practise some of their core Jewish customs such as *brit milah* and *shechitah* – is, it would seem, mainly driven by liberal Enlightenment-based ideas about each individual’s right to choose for themselves and ideas about what

<sup>65</sup> Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemitisms*, 36, tab. 4.3. Close to 25 per cent chose the option “both aspects to the same extent,” and slightly less than 6 per cent did not know how to answer the question.

<sup>66</sup> Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemitisms*, 26, tab. 3.1.

is “humane” for animals. But the energy put into these efforts certainly also emanates to a considerable extent from a desire to counter anything “Muslim” – and this is especially so in Denmark. The remarkably successful Intact Denmark movement – the idea being that the male’s penis should be kept “intact” – also builds to some extent upon suppressed but still clearly sexual obsessions and classic antisemitic energies, nourished by a long history of antisemitic prejudices.

After all, “race” is no longer a concept underlying the antisemitism of Denmark or Sweden, nor are Jews today on the whole regarded in these countries as being particularly deviant, “strange,” or “foreign.” Combining three different indices of how “strange” Jews are perceived to be in their respective countries, showed that Jews in Sweden on all three indices are seen as “strange” in their country to a lesser extent than they are in any of the other seven countries involved in the 2012 FRA survey.<sup>67</sup>

## Israel and antisemitism in Scandinavia

In the increasingly multicultural<sup>68</sup> and highly modernized welfare societies of Sweden and Denmark, neither “race” nor “religion” are socially significant today, nor do they constitute a major basis for the antisemitic attitudes, remarks, or actions that still occur in these countries. Yet according to 91 per cent of Swedish and 85 per cent of Danish respondents, such attitudes, remarks, and actions have in fact increased over the past five years in their respective countries<sup>69</sup> – what then is the source of this antisemitism, and what is it that lends energy to the ways in which it manifests itself?

The answer is: Israel. Or rather, the reactions of certain groups to how they perceive Israel, and what they perceive the State of Israel is doing. Israel is involved in international conflicts and many controversies. People, including

**67** Dencik and Marosi, *Different Antisemitisms*, 13, fig. 14. Jews are seen to be most “strange” in Hungary, followed by Latvia, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the UK (in that order).

**68** See the migration figures in the introduction to this text. In Denmark “multiculturalism” is officially deemed to be something the country should avoid, whereas in Sweden it is officially acknowledged that the country is today a multicultural society. Even if there are different evaluations of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism as ideologies, the social reality “on the ground” is that in both of these countries there live increasing numbers of people from different nations and cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. In that sense they are as a matter of fact today both multicultural and cosmopolitan countries.

**69** See FRA Report 2018, 19–20, fig. 2.

Jews, can sometimes be very critical of actions undertaken by the Israeli state, of the politics its government pursues, of what goes on within and around the country, and so forth.

There are several institutions and groups who today speak of a, or even *the*, new antisemitism.<sup>70</sup> By this concept one attempts to identify a new form of antisemitism that has developed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The “new antisemitism” is supposed to manifest itself mainly as opposition to Zionism as an ideology and as criticism of the State of Israel. Those who employ the concept “the new antisemitism” generally posit that much of what various individuals and groups today purport is criticism of Israel and Zionism, is in fact antisemitism hiding behind the cover of anti-Zionism. “Anti-Zionism is the new antisemitism” reads the proposition.<sup>71</sup> However, it appears the proposition that the old antisemitism nowadays “hides behind anti-Zionism” reverses what is actually going on.<sup>72</sup> According to our observations anti-Zionism is the *primary* reaction. Most of the violent attacks on individual Jews and Jewish institutions in Europe carried out by different groups of terrorists is a consequence of their conspiratorial image that Jews as such are tacit agents of, or accomplices to, Israel’s political actions and ambitions, and as such are legitimate targets in their fight against “Zionism.”

This in effect is a kind of adopted or derived antisemitism, today flourishing in certain quarters in Europe, not least in some rather well-defined circles in Denmark and Sweden. Today its presence in these societies in and of itself is per-

**70** See Brian Klug, “The Myth of the New Anti-Semitism,” *The Nation*, 15 January 2004; Brian Klug, “Interrogating ‘New Anti-Semitism,’” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 468–82; Michael Lerner, “There Is No New Antisemitism,” *The Baltimore Chronicle*, 2 February 2007; and Antony Lerman, “Jews Attacking Jews,” *Ha’aretz*, 12 September 2008.

**71** Writing in 1973 in the publication of the American Jewish Congress, *Congress Bi-Weekly*, the Foreign Minister of Israel, Abba Eban, identified “the new anti-Semitism,” saying: “[R]ecently we have witnessed the rise of the new left which identifies Israel with the establishment, with acquisition, with smug satisfaction, with, in fact, all the basic enemies ... Let there be no mistake: the new left is the author and the progenitor of the new anti-Semitism. One of the chief tasks of any dialogue with the Gentile world is to prove that the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is not a distinction at all. Anti-Zionism is merely the new anti-Semitism. The old classic anti-Semitism declared that equal rights belong to all individuals within the society, except the Jews. The new anti-Semitism says that the right to establish and maintain an independent national sovereign state is the prerogative of all nations, so long as they happen not to be Jewish.”

**72** On this point see also Peter Beinart, “Debunking the Myth that Anti-Zionism is Antisemitic,” *The Guardian*, 9 March 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/mar/07/debunking-myth-that-anti-zionism-is-antisemitic>>.

ceived as, and does in fact constitute, more of a threat to Jews wherever they live than any of the other contemporary antisemitisms we have described.

Critical stands on what Israel is doing may very well be both warranted and legitimate. Often they are. As has been observed all too often in recent years, frivolous use of the notion of antisemitism ultimately hollows out its usefulness in describing and pinpointing what really constitutes a danger to Jews as well as to the idea of human rights in general. Antisemitism is too serious a matter to be misused for narrow political purposes, for instance by spokespersons for Israel or Zionist interests.

However, what does make opposition to “Israel” a source of antisemitism is the propensity to presuppose an inherent link between Israel and individual Jews and Jewish institutions in Europe. Of course, most people in Sweden and Denmark can distinguish very well between “Israel” and individual Jews and Jewish institutions in the country. Statistics show, however, that when Israel, as is often the case, comes to the fore in the news, antisemitic attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions, regardless of their personal stands on the events in Israel, increase. “In the past two decades, antisemitic attacks in Europe have generally peaked in line with tensions in the Middle East. ‘They were essentially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, imported,’ said Marc Knobel, a historian at the Crif umbrella group for France’s Jewish organizations. ‘Rather than attacking Israelis, people went for Jews.’”<sup>73</sup> The propensity to construct and believe in the link that leads certain individuals and groups to attack Jews because of how they perceive the State of Israel and what Israel is doing, normally lies with only a few groups, albeit specific ones: Muslim extremists with jihadist orientations, and some leftists, mainly extremist ultra-left action groups.<sup>74</sup> In both of these groups, as is the case also among right-wing extremists, there prevails an ambition to “explain” what goes on in the world by identifying an “ultimate” actor or force that can be blamed for being the agent behind it all.

However, when heated situations come to a head, or just become very complex and ambiguous, people who normally are perfectly able to think clearly and make distinctions also tend to regress to oversimplified and more or less conspiracy-like thought structures. This is why at times we may also encounter persons who are normally not at all antisemantically inclined, and at times even wider sectors of public opinion, resorting to what we have described as Israel-de-

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<sup>73</sup> John Henley, “Antisemitism rising sharply across Europe, latest figures show,” *The Guardian*, 15 February 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/15/antisemitism-rising-sharply-across-europe-latest-figures-show>>. See also Svenska kommittén mot antisemitism (SKMA), “What is antisemitism?” <<https://skma.se/about-antisemitism/>>.

<sup>74</sup> FRA Report 2018, 53.

rived antisemitism, even if in much milder and far more tame forms than the extremist groups do.<sup>75</sup>

The Swedish historians Stephane Bruchfeld, Mikael Byström, and, in particular, Karin Kvist Geverts have each elaborated on the concept “the antisemitic background noise” (*det antisemittiska bakgrundsbruset*) to describe how a kind of unsharply articulated or latent antisemitism rattles in the background of political processes and debates. Bruchfeldt introduced the concept in an article as early as 1996<sup>76</sup> and referred back to it in his dissertation published in 2006.<sup>77</sup> Kvist Gevert made it a key concept in her dissertation of the same year<sup>78</sup> and drew a parallel to the notion of “white noise” as used in e.g. statistics, psychology, and audiology to describe what is constantly in the background but in a pitch that tends to escape the untrained human ear.

Another Swedish historian, Lena Berggren, has made the following reflections:<sup>79</sup>

In my thesis<sup>80</sup> on what antisemitism articulated in the border area of Swedish ultra-nationalism looked like I could show that antisemitism was not of one single kind – even in this ideological environment – and that the most crude antisemitism was expressed by persons who were in fact *not* organized fascists. I could also demonstrate that in my material there were strong indicators that it was not national socialism that was the gateway to antisemitic attitudes, but rather the cultural nationalism and neo-romantic currents that had been strong in Sweden since the late nineteenth century, currents that were also present in the early phases of the Swedish race biology.

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**75** The idea that Jews in general are in fact related to and supporters of the State of Israel, and thus also are to be blamed for atrocities carried out by that state, is apparent in statements and actions taken by the former Social Democratic chairman of the Malmö city council, Ilmar Reepalu. See the interview in “Reepalu: Israel har skapat en ‘varböld,’” *Skånska dagbladet*, 27 January 2010, <<https://www.skd.se/2010/01/27/reepalu-israel-har-skapat-en-varbold/>>.

**76** Stéphane Bruchfeld, “Löjliga anklagelser – om den s k historierevisionismen,” *Historisk Tidskrift* 1 (1996): 120–47.

**77** Mikael Byström, *En broder, gäst och parasit: Uppfattningar och föreställningar om utlänningar, flyktingar och flyktingpolitik i svensk offentlig debatt* (Stockholm: Stockholms Universitet, 2006).

**78** Karin Kvist Geverts, *Ett främmande element i nationen: svensk flyktingpolitik och de judiska flyktingarna 1938–1944*, Studia historica Upsaliensia 233, Uppsala University Holocaust and Genocide Studies Publications 2 (Uppsala: Acta universitatis Upsaliensis, 2008).

**79** Lena Berggren, “Om antisemitismen och forskarens ansvar,” <<https://www.blogg.umu.se/forskarbloggen/2017/04/om-antisemitism-och-forskarens-ansvar/>>.

**80** Lena Berggren, *Blodets renhet: En historisk studie av svensk antisemitism* (Malmö: Arx Förlag, 2014).

Parallel to this thesis two others on Swedish antisemitism were published. In his thesis *En jude är en jude är en jude...*,<sup>81</sup> Lars M. Andersson convincingly showed how prominent, to say the least, antisemitism was in the Swedish comic press during the first decades of the twentieth century. Henrik Bachner demonstrated in razor sharp clarity in his thesis *Återkomsten*<sup>82</sup> that antisemitism in Sweden survived 1945. Later works by Håkan Blomqvist<sup>83</sup> and several others have further increased our knowledge about Swedish antisemitism and contributed to documenting empirically that antisemitism was far from only originating within national socialist discourse but was also broadly represented among the political left. “The antisemitic background noise” is still there in Denmark and Sweden. But this “noise” is today not just “white.” Rather, it has become inked with the blue stripes and star of the Israeli flag.

## Conclusion

So here we are: antisemitism based on racial prejudices is losing ground, and so is antisemitism based on religious convictions. Classic antisemitic prejudices no longer have a strong popular resonance in Denmark and Sweden. Yet antisemitic attacks still occur, and they may even be on the rise. Within the Jewish population in the two countries there is a sense of increasing insecurity. Fear of possible Israel-derived attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions is the main cause of this sense of insecurity, and such attacks are also the overall dominant factor behind contemporary antisemitism in these two modern Scandinavian welfare states.

In order to understand the position and character of antisemitism in these countries, it is necessary to recognize that the social reality of Jews living in the Western world has undergone a fundamental and rapid transformation in the last century, not only because of major events in Jewish history itself – such as the *Shoah* and the establishment of the State of Israel – but also, and mainly, because of the impact of ongoing sociological modernization processes, with all the associated implications in terms of the rationalization, secularization, and individuation of social life.

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**81** Lars M. Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude...: Representationer av “juden” i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900–1930* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2012).

**82** Henrik Bachner, *Återkomsten: Antisemitism i Sverige efter 1945* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2004).

**83** Håkan Blomqvist, *Myten om judebolsjevismen: Antisemitism och kontrarevolution* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2013).

*Rationalization* implies that efficiency, utility, profitability, and rational justification of attitudes and actions become superior considerations in all spheres of life.

*Secularization* implies that anything, not least established values and religious traditions, can and should be subjected to critical questioning as to why these customs, rules, and traditions should prevail.

*Individuation* means that individuals have become singled out socially, “disembedded” from their social backgrounds, as the leading British sociologist Anthony Giddens puts it,<sup>84</sup> and are nowadays – ideally – treated only as an individual person, not as a person belonging to or representing any ascribed collectivity, be it via kinship, ethnic belonging, religious affiliation, or anything else of the kind. The idea of equal rights for all, regardless of race, sex, or social background, has become widely accepted as a new and fundamental value in the Western world – especially so in the modern Scandinavian welfare states.<sup>85</sup>

In the wake of the breakthrough of Enlightenment ideas in Europe in the eighteenth century, the processes of rationalization, secularization, and individuation have been operating in Western societies and have brought about dramatic changes penetrating virtually all aspects of life. Scientific thinking, technological innovations, economic growth, ideas of democracy, the rule of law, human, individual, and equal rights, increasing respect for “the other” – all of this and much more of what today is usually described as “progress” has both caused and characterized what is meant by the modernization of societies.

The Scandinavian welfare states are according to various criteria probably the most thoroughly modernized countries in the world. The very comprehensive global research project World Values Survey (WVS) explores people’s values and beliefs. Issues such as support for democracy, tolerance of foreigners and ethnic minorities, support for gender equality, the role of religion and changing levels of religiosity, the impact of globalization, attitudes towards the environment, work, family, politics, national identity, culture, diversity, insecurity, and subjective well-being are being monitored.<sup>86</sup> Based on these and other measures and indicators, and further analysis of WVS data, two leading political scientists, Ro-

<sup>84</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 21–29.

<sup>85</sup> Lars Dencik, “‘Homo Zappiens’: A European-Jewish Way of Life in the Era of Globalisation,” in *Turning the Kaleidoscope: Perspectives on European Jewry*, ed. Sandra Lustig and Ian Leveson (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 79–105.

<sup>86</sup> The World Values Survey is a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life. It is led by an international team of scholars, with the WVS Association and WVSA Secretariat headquartered in Vienna, Austria, < <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/> >.

nald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, found that there are two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation in the world. Based on this they produced a “cultural map” of the world where countries are plotted along two orthogonal axes. The vertical (y) axis plots countries according to their relative positions with respect to Traditional vs Secular-Rationalist Values, the horizontal (x) axis plots countries’ relative position with respect to Survival vs Self-expression Values.<sup>87</sup> The map looks like this:

As can be seen, Sweden is to be found in the upper right corner of this map, which means it is the most secular-rational country in the world, but also the country where the most space is given to self-expression values. In other words, it is simultaneously the most modern and also the most individualistic of all countries in the world. Furthermore, as can be seen, the two other Scandinavian welfare states, Denmark and Norway, follow suit.

As we have noted throughout this article, the pattern of antisemites in Sweden and Denmark differs from how antisemitism manifests itself elsewhere in Europe. In the Scandinavian countries there is today less classic antisemitism, more *Aufklärungantisemitismus*, and a relatively stronger presence of Israel-derived antisemitism.

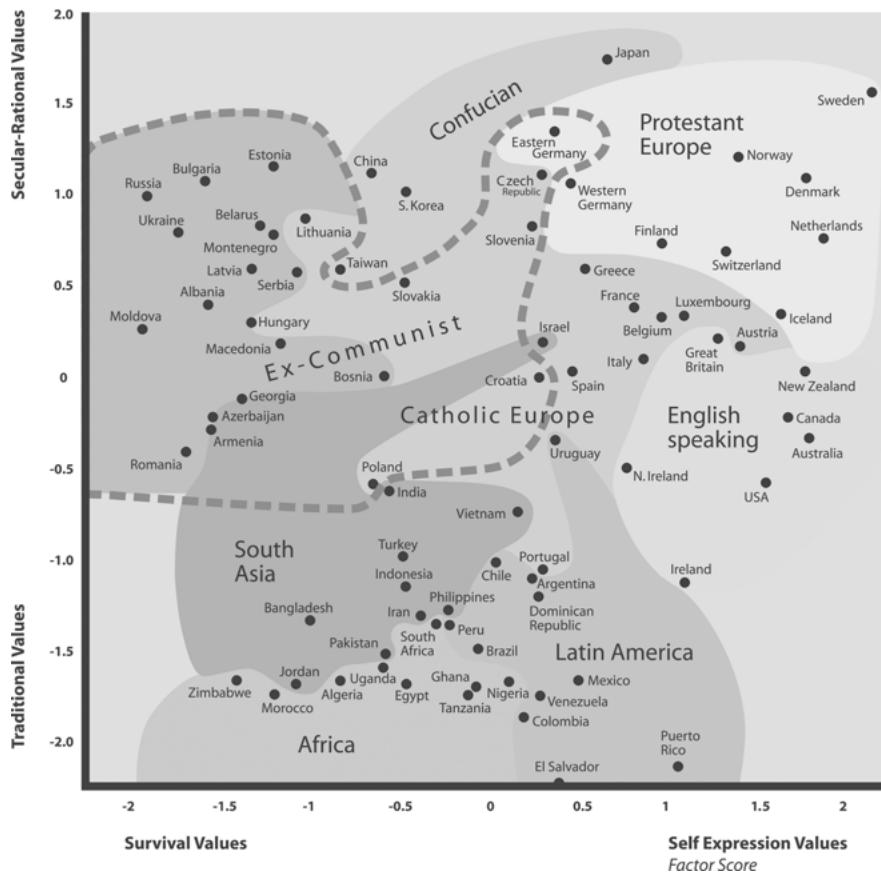
One may conclude that this is just one exceptional case among other patterns of antisemitism. However, in our analysis this Scandinavian pattern of antisemites is rather closely related to the relatively highly developed processes of modernization in the Scandinavian countries on the one hand and the relatively strong presence of recently arrived immigrants from the Middle East on the other.

There is no way to predict how the world will develop. However, considering the way the processes of modernization operate it is not a far-fetched assumption that in due time other countries in Europe will follow a similar trajectory. Rationalization, secularization, and individuation will also penetrate these societies and weaken notions of “race” and “religion” as springboards for antisemitism. At the same time, the very same values will strengthen tendencies to what has here been termed *Aufklärungantisemitismus*. And if societies are not willing or not able to integrate their immigrants, if for instance marginalization and condescending treatment of Muslim inhabitants continues or even grows, as in Denmark today, Israel-derived antisemitism can also be expected to continue or grow.

An apparently strange phenomena discussed in places – also in this volume – refers to the concept of “antisemitism without Jews.” This has been observed in

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<sup>87</sup> The Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map recreated by Koyos – Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, < <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5459884> >.



**Figure 13.1:** The Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map of the World (2008 Version). Wikipedia Commons (public domain).

countries where virtually no Jews have ever lived, e.g. Japan, and in countries where virtually no Jews live anymore, e.g. Poland. In the Nordic countries, as demonstrated at the beginning of this article (see the section on Demographics) the presence of Jews in the population has historically been very marginal, although it should be kept in mind that in Sweden, in contrast to all other European states, the Jewish population has actually almost tripled as a consequence of the *Shoah*. However, even if, in Sweden at least, antisemitism cannot as such be regarded as being “without Jews,” one element of our analysis makes for “antisemitism without Jews” being a highly viable phenomenon for as long as we can foresee: Israel.

One could think that without living Jews around, the sociological modernization processes would make classic antisemitism obsolete and make *Aufklärungantisemitismus* irrelevant. But as long as the State of Israel prevails and acts on the political scene there will still remain one source for continued and threatening antisemitism: Israel-derived antisemitism. Paradoxical as it may seem, this kind of antisemitism can thrive even if the targets can no longer be local living Jews. In such cases someone else can just be singled out as an “objective agent” of Israeli and by implication even “Jewish” interests.

In this perspective, what we in this article have been able to note about the patterns of antisemitism in Denmark and Sweden, might not just be one exceptional case, but rather a preview of what antisemitisms in twenty-first century Europe might come to look like.

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