

JEWISH STUDIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES TODAY

JEWISH STUDIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES TODAY

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Jewish studies in the Nordic countries today

EDITORIAL

The current volume of *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* is based on a symposium arranged by the Donner Institute in March 2015, holding the title *Jewish studies in the Nordic Countries Today*.

Jewish studies have for centuries formed a central part of the academic work within faculties of theology and the humanities in the Nordic countries. Research relating to Judaism has been conducted from a broad spectrum of theoretical perspectives, ranging from historical and exegetic approaches to cultural and linguistic studies as well as ethnographic investigations spanning diverse cultural and geographic areas, time periods and communities. The field is thoroughly interdisciplinary, combining methodologies from the humanities, theology and the social sciences.

The contacts between Nordic scholars in the field have always been an important source of academic exchange, debate and learning. Nourishing these networks is vital both for individual researchers in the field and for the professionalization of the academic discipline as such at our Nordic universities. By organising this seminar and publishing this volume, the Donner Institute wishes to contribute to the strengthening of the Nordic conversation on Jewish studies. We are pleased to be able to publish this volume, containing articles by several prominent Nordic scholars in the field, dealing with current approaches, findings and challenges within their own research, thus contributing to a lively and creative scholarly discussion where different theoretical, methodological and epistemological perspectives can meet.

The volume opens with four historically oriented articles dealing with classical source texts and their interpretation. Cecilia Wassen discusses Jesus' relation to questions of ritual purity and, contrary to most scholars in the field, argues for the conclusion that Jesus was far from disinterested in such matters. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, for her part, analyses Jesus-oriented visions of Judaism in antiquity as they are presented in three third- and fourth-century texts. Antti Laato traces early apologies for the virgin birth of Jesus in the Jewish *Toledot*



Participants in the symposium 'Jewish Studies in the Nordic Countries Today' gathered at Åbo Akademi University in March, 2015. Photo by Björn Dahla.

Yesbu tradition. Early modern Polish-Lithuanian Karaite poems are the subject of Riikka Tuori's article, focusing on poems written on the biblical narrative of the binding of Isaac.

The following section deals with more recent historical themes relating to Judaism in the Nordic countries. Claudia Welz offers a phenomenological, psychological and ethical analysis of Holocaust testimonies and the crisis of witnessing constituted by the Shoah. Jewish Holocaust survivors are the theme also of Sofie Lene Bak's article, dealing with the repatriation and restitution of Holocaust victims in post-war Denmark. In Vibeke Kieding Banik's article, the discussion moves on to Norway and the perceived crisis of identity among the local Jewry that was vividly debated in the interwar period. Laura Ekholm and Simo Muir, on their part, analyse the organized name-change process in the 1930s in the Jewish Community of Helsinki, presenting the often rather innovative results of these processes. Jan Schwarz offers a reassessment of the state of Yiddish language and culture in Europe in the decades following the Holocaust, concluding that they were indeed in dynamic flux. The section closes with Christhard Hoffmann's critical overview of the historiography on Jewish immigration and integration in Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

After this, focus is broadened towards questions of a more general philosophical and theological nature. Risto Nurmela reviews Sigmund Freud's last work *Moses and Monotheism*, and the portrayal of Moses given in this book. Mia Anderssén-Löf, on her part, studies the understanding of redemption and

particularly the role of the Messiah to redemption as expressed in Haredi and Hardal Jewish writings. Finally, two ethnographically driven articles focusing on contemporary Jewry are presented. Ben Kasstan's reflexive analysis of his own fieldwork among the Haredi community in Manchester brings a methodological contribution to the volume. The recreation of traditional Hasidic song practices among progressive Jews in London is the topic of Ruth Illman's article, which illuminates the phenomenon in relation to theories of contemporary religious change. The volume is concluded by Natalie Lantz, who offers a personal reflection on what it means to pursue Jewish studies in Sweden, discussing the obstacles and opportunities that rise to the fore from a student's point of view.

We are grateful to all authors for their dedicated work with this volume and to the reviewers, who with their professional and engaged comments have contributed to the crystallization of this volume into a publication of notable academic standard. We hope that it will be valuable and stimulating for students and researchers within the various fields in which issues relating to Jews and Judaism in the Nordic countries arise.

Turku/Åbo 29 January 2016,
Ruth Illman and Björn Dabla

The Jewishness of Jesus and ritual purity

CECILIA WASSEN

Today it is commonplace for historical Jesus scholars to emphasize Jesus' Jewishness. At the same time most New Testament scholars deny that he cared about the Jewish purity system, which was a central aspect of early Judaism. This article examines how such a reconstruction of the historical Jesus would influence his Jewishness, arguing that it indeed would make such a Jesus figure 'less Jewish'. The article also investigates questions concerning what Jewish identity in the late Second Temple period entails and how we may characterize the Judaism of Jesus' time, especially in relation to purity concerns. Finally, I examine key Gospel texts that are commonly used as evidence to prove Jesus' alleged disinterest in purity laws. On the basis of a proper understanding of how the purity system functioned in Jesus' time, I conclude that there is no evidence for the view that Jesus was disinterested in matters of purity; quite the opposite.

The Jewish identity of Jesus

In the last few decades biblical scholarship has deepened our understanding of Judaism in the late Second Temple period. Our perspective on Jesus and the early Jesus movement has changed accordingly. Thanks to the great works of Geza Vermes, E. P. Sanders, Paula Fredriksen, and others, who have presented a Jesus who is very much a product of his cultural milieu, it is now commonplace to consider Jesus as a Jew, not only at birth, but also at death. Earlier generations of New Testament scholars, especially prior to WWII, did not hesitate to present Jesus over and against the Judaism of his day by highlighting his alleged rejection of Jewish laws. Judaism was often depicted in negative terms, characterized by petty legalism and focused on a work ethic, in contrast with the religion of grace and forgiveness which was offered by Jesus and Paul (for descriptions, see Heschel 2009: 152–61, 175–200; Arnal 2005: 8–14). Nevertheless, there were notable exceptions among Christian biblical scholars who engaged critically with Jewish traditions and presented Judaism in a more nuanced way (see Möller 2015: 90–104). Among non-academic Christians, Jesus' Jewishness is still, unfortunately, highly controversial, as Amy-Jill Levine posits in her 2007 book, *Jesus the Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*. Although she is writing for an American

audience, the book is a valuable corrective in the Nordic context also. Today overtly negative evaluations of Jewish practices and beliefs are rare in scholarship and scholars repeatedly emphasize that they present a 'Jewish Jesus'. In the 1970s Geza Vermes emphasized Jesus' Jewish identity in his book, entitled *Jesus the Jew* (1975). So also did John Dominic Crossan (*The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, 1991) and John P. Meier (*Jesus the Marginal Jew*, 1991). In fact, the recent phase of research into the historical Jesus – 'the Third Quest' – has been characterized by its placing of Jesus within Judaism. Tom Holmén explains: 'the estimate of today's Jesus scholars is that a constitutive factor clearly distinguishing the "Third Quest" from the previous phases of Jesus research is precisely its laying a clear emphasis and stress on the Jewishness of Jesus' (Holmén 2001a: 143).

At the same time as scholars emphasize the Jewishness of Jesus, the majority of them claim that he dismissed the Jewish purity system, which was a basic feature of early Judaism. Contrary to most New Testament scholars, I contend that there is no evidence for the widespread view that Jesus challenged the purity system, which I will demonstrate below. A related issue that I will also discuss probes whether historical reconstructions of a Jesus who dismisses purity laws negatively affect his Jewishness. Hence, I will also address the thorny issue of Jewish identity as it applies to Jews in antiquity; what did 'Jewishness' in antiquity entail?

Jewishness and common Judaism

What do scholars mean when they highlight Jesus' Jewishness? We can assume that scholars do not primarily refer to his ethnic identity, since no serious scholar doubts that Jesus was a Jew in that sense; rather, the emphasis on his Jewishness denotes his cultural and religious identity, which goes hand in hand with an ethnic identity, forming a sort of 'communal identity'.¹ The insistence

- 1 Since non-Jews could enter into the Jewish group through religious rituals – becoming either full members through conversion (circumcision for men) or God-fearers – the tie between Jewish religion and ethnic identity is weakened. Shaye Cohen (1999: 3) points to a 'progression from ethnicity to religion from Hasmonian times' (p. 3). This openness to non-ethnic Jews is part of a trend in the Greco-Roman world in which the cults in general became increasingly independent of ethnic identities. Anders Runesson (2011: 133–51) describes 'de-ethnosing processes' in relation to cults, such as those of Isis, Serapis, and Mithras. A Roman person, for example, worshipping Isis in Rome did not become an Egyptian. In my study, Jewish identity refers to expressions of belonging to a primarily (but not exclusively) ethnic group by accepting and conforming to the customs, beliefs, and practices of that particular group.

on Jesus' Jewish identity in the 1970s and 1980s was an important corrective to older, and often derogatory views of early Judaism. But it is odd that scholars still feel a need to assert the Jewishness of Jesus, as James Crossley (2008: 177–89) points out, as if anyone would doubt the fact that Jesus was Jewish. In comparison, for example, no Swedish historians would highlight the *Swedish* identity of the country's famous king, Gustav Vasa; no book about him would be entitled, *Gustav Vasa, the Swedish King*. On the one hand, the assertion of Jesus' Jewish religious identity may simply be a way of encouraging the readers to look behind 2,000 years of church history, which is a challenge. On the other hand, the emphasis may reveal an apologetic tendency among scholars to stress that Jesus was indeed Jewish in spite of reconstructions that portray Jesus as quite distinct from other contemporary Jews. According to William Arnal, it is quite commonplace among Jesus scholars to 'safeguard the Jewishness of Jesus', perhaps as a response to what he describes as 'a proliferation of charges that certain contemporary reconstructions of the historical Jesus are un-Jewish or even – it is implied – anti-Jewish' (Arnal 2005: 16). Among the targets of such a critique are John Crossan, Leif Vaage, and Burton Mack, whose Cynic-like Jesus is sometimes seen as un-Jewish. The Jesus Seminar, which produces a non-apocalyptic Jesus largely on the basis of the sayings of Jesus (as found in the alleged early layers of Q and the Gospel of Thomas) is also subject to similar criticism. John Meier, for one, makes the charge that 'especially among certain authors now or formerly connected with the Jesus Seminar, emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus is hardly a central concern' (Meier 1991–2009, III: 3–4). Other critics include Birger Pearson, Hans Dieter Betz, and E. P. Sanders (Pearson 1996; see Arnal 2005: 17). The latter finds an anti-Jewish bias in the analyses of many historical Jesus scholars. Although Sanders does not suspect them of having personal anti-Jewish sentiments, he alleges that they are ignorant in general of ancient Judaism and often dislike ancient cultures (Sanders 2002). In a similar vein, Crossley claims that many contemporary scholars still assert Jesus' uniqueness and superiority by reconstructing a 'Jewish-but-not-that-Jewish' Jesus, that is, a Jewish Jesus who is still very different in some ways from contemporary Judaism (Crossley 2008: 173–99; Crossley 2013). He points to tendencies to differentiate Jesus from others in several areas, especially *halakhah* (Torah observance), but also in his views on women, on forgiveness, the temple, and so on. He highlights statements such as N.T. Wright's concerning the presentation of 'a very Jewish Jesus who was nevertheless opposed to some high-profile features of first-century Judaism' (Wright 1996: 93). That scholars find a way to demonstrate that Jesus transcends, intensifies, ignores, or challenges 'at least one key symbol of Jewish identity' is a current trend in

scholarship today according to Crossley (2013: 116–17). For this study, the following statement by Michael Bird demonstrates such an attitude, with a focus on Jesus and purity: ‘I am inclined to identify Jesus as essentially Torah compliant, but also recognize the fact that he challenged and flouted many of the legal interpretations of his contemporaries. One particular area of disagreement appears to be in matters relating to purity...’ (Bird 2008: 16). Would such a reconstruction make Jesus less Jewish, or in Crossley’s terminology, ‘Jewish but not that Jewish’?

In this context Arnal’s analysis and critique of the debate over the Jewish Jesus is relevant. He states, ‘... in terms of current, mainstream scholarship in North America and Western Europe, the non-Jewish historical Jesus is a classic straw man, a way of characterizing the views of one’s opponents as self-evidently false’, adding that this critique by itself demonstrates how self-evident the Jewishness of Jesus is for most scholars (Arnal 2005: 19). Thus, in his view, it is unfair to criticize scholars of a Cynic-like Jesus such as Crossan, for example, for making Jesus un-Jewish, when they assert the opposite and ambitiously attempt to uncover Jesus’ Galilean context, which included both a Jewish and a Greek population (*ibid.* 25–9). Importantly, Arnal emphasizes that historians have to account for real diversity in any ancient culture: ‘Real people – even Jews! – have different views and behave in multiple ways’ (*ibid.* 31). Similarly, Tom Holmén points to the heterogeneous character of Judaism in Jesus’ time, arguing that scholars have to allow Jesus to have been both different and Jewish: ‘historical Jesus study must now reengage in the quest for a different Jesus’ ... and, ‘this is our only way forward as long as we continue to regard the Judaism that formed Jesus’ context as heterogeneous and diverse’ (Holmén 2013: 533).²

Of course, the critique of scholarly reconstructions of Jesus as being un-Jewish depends on how we define the concept ‘Jewish identity’, that is to say as a communal religious and cultural identity in the first-century Judean/Galilean context. Or, put differently, what makes a reconstruction of Jesus un-Jewish? Which criteria should be applied for this assessment? This difficulty makes it even more important that scholars explain what they mean by the term ‘Jewish’ in regard to Jesus, which, incidentally, Crossley leaves out of his discussion. In addition, a definition of Jewishness has to be useable. Sometimes New Testament scholars define Jewishness so broadly that it virtually loses all its meaning. An illustration (although extreme) of this is provided by Donald Hagner, who in a critical survey of Jewish approaches to the study of Jesus

2 Holmén also advocates that scholars should adopt an essentialist definition of Judaism, and distinguish a core or centre of ‘mainstream’ Judaism (2013: 533).

exclaims, 'What must be said as forcefully as possible is that the *kerygmatic Christ of the Gospels is fully Jewish* [italics in original]. Acceptance of the entire narrative of the Gospels tradition entails no denial of Jesus' Jewishness' (Hagner 1997: 84).

A Jewish religious/cultural identity depends on how one characterizes first-century Judaism, which is especially difficult since Judaism in Palestine was highly diverse and included many sects. One may point to certain basic practices that are uniquely Jewish; for example, circumcision, Sabbath observance, avoidance of pork, and the worship of one invisible God. These characteristics are well known by ancient non-Jewish writers, who are especially fascinated by the subjects of the Sabbath and pork (Sanders 2008: 20; Barclay 1996). Sanders's description of a 'common Judaism' is highly useful as he focuses on 'a pattern of religion' that includes both practice and basic beliefs, importantly about God's grace and the covenant upon which Torah observance is based. His starting point is to find what 'the priests and the people would agree upon', that is, 'common' Judaism, which was in a sense also normative, since it was shared by the majority of the people (Sanders 1992: 47). By defining a 'common Judaism', rather than a mainstream Judaism, various sects are included. Concerning common Jewish practice, Sanders highlights worship, supporting the temple (paying temple tax, making offerings etc.), keeping the Sabbath, circumcision, purity observations, and diet (*ibid.* 235–40). The last four practices in particular serve as identity markers of Jews, while 'details of Sabbath and purity practices also identify different groups within Judaism' (*ibid.* 235). An important aspect, or 'common denominator', of early Judaism is the theology, which he characterizes as 'covenantal nomism'. This definition also provides an answer to his key theological questions; how to get in (covenant), and how to stay in (nomism). In polemical rhetoric against much of previous New Testament scholarship Sanders explains: 'Legal obedience was founded not on the (entirely hypothetical) principle that each individual must earn salvation by compiling merits, but rather on the (well-supported) principle that this is what God, who chose the people, specified as the way they should live' (Sanders 2008: 13). He clarifies that the major beliefs which make up 'covenantal nomism' are faith in the one God and the belief that his will is found in the Hebrew Bible, including laws and notions of election (*ibid.* 23).

While Sanders has received wide acclaim for correcting earlier scholarship (e.g., Cohen 2008), he has also acquired critics, including from some unexpected scholarly quarters. According to Philip Alexander, Sanders emphasizes Jewish beliefs, for example, grace and forgiveness, at the expense of the legal character of first-century Judaism, in effect turning early Judaism into

a Protestant, watered-down version of the religion (Alexander 1986).³ In a similar line of critique, Jacob Neusner alleges that Sanders brings questions derived from Christian theology to early rabbinic literature, which means that he misses the core of Mishnah's concerns. Yet, at the same time, Neusner finds 'the fundamental nature of the covenant conception' in early rabbinic literature according to Sanders description 'self-evident' (Neusner 1978: 177). This statement in fact supports Sanders's claim that Torah observance is founded on a covenantal theology, which many New Testament scholars have missed. But Neusner, supported by Bruce Chilton, argues that Sanders's presentation of covenantal nomism 'yields little that is more than simply banal' (Chilton and Neusner 1995: 15). Furthermore, Chilton and Neusner criticize Sanders for harmonizing diverse types of Judaism, arguing that these various forms of Jewish religiosity should more accurately be labelled 'Judaisms': 'Does he then tell us the distinctive viewpoint of each [source]? Not at all. All he wants us to know is are the facts common to them all?' (*ibid.* 14). Martin Hengel and Roland Deines (1995: 15–16) raise similar points of critique concerning harmonistic tendencies in an article responding to Sanders' characterization of 'common Judaism'. But, Sanders's primary concern is precisely to uncover what these distinct Jewish sources have in common, not to explain what sets them apart. In addition, Neusner had previously characterized common Judaism as based on scriptures, temple, and the practice of common people, which is not far from Sanders's description (Neusner 1984: 21; see Luomanen 2002: 117). Jonathan Z. Smith, finally, alleges that religions such as early Judaism do not have an essence (Smith 1980: 1–25).

Petri Luomanen explains, however, that many of his critics do not distinguish between the concepts 'covenantal nomism' and 'common Judaism' outlined by Sanders, rather seeing the former as an aspect of the latter (Luomanen 2002: 118). Responding to Neusner's critique, Sanders highlights the diversity within Judaism which does not invalidate its unity: 'The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the members of the 'fourth philosophy', the common people, the

- 3 Philip Alexander (1986: 105) alleges that 'His [Sanders's] answer to the charge of "legalism" seems, in effect, to be that Rabbinic Judaism, despite appearances, is really a religion of "grace". But does that not involve a tacit acceptance of a major element in his opponents' position—the assumption that "grace" is superior to "law"? The correct response to the charge must surely be: And what is wrong with "legalism", once we have got rid of abusive language about "hypocrisy" and "mere externalism"? It is neither religiously nor philosophically self-evident that a "legalistic" view of the world is inferior to one based on "grace". If we fail to take a firm stand on this point we run the risk of seriously misdescribing Pharisaic and Rabbinic Judaism, and of trying to make it over into a pale reflection of Protestant Christianity.'

Hellenistic Jewish philosophers such as Philo all disagreed on lots of points. They all belonged, however, to Judaism. Where most of them agree is where we find “common Judaism” (Sanders 2008: 19). He adds, ‘Without *common or shared identity*, however, Judaism might have broken into Neusner’s separate Judaisms, and many more Jews would have assimilated themselves to common Mediterranean life’ (*ibid.* 21). Furthermore, Sanders makes it clear that he never claimed to have presented the essence of Judaism, for which he had been criticised by Smith, but simply common practices and beliefs (*ibid.* 23).

Jewish identity in antiquity: a matter of perspective

The difficulty of defining early Judaism is exemplified in the ongoing debate about the identity of early Christ-believers; at what point do they stop belonging within Judaism? That scholars differ widely on this issue demonstrates the complexity and difficulty with defining a Jewish identity in antiquity. To illustrate the problem, the Maccabees provides evidence for Hellenized Jews who have stopped circumcising their children and covering up the marks of circumcision (1 Macc. 1:15, 48, 60; 2 Macc. 6:10; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 12.254). Were they Jewish? Who decides? Furthermore, Philo condemns a group of Jewish philosophers who interpret the Mosaic laws allegorically (as Philo himself does), to the extent that they have stopped observing these laws. By holding on to the superiority of the Torah, without observing the Jewish customs, these Jews still likely maintained a strong Jewish identity. But were they ‘Jewish’? Philo’s nephew, Tiberius Alexander was procurator of Judea in 46–8 CE, of Egypt in 66–70 CE, and served as Titus’ second-in-command during the Jewish revolt. Was he Jewish? Josephus claims that Tiberius did not continue to involve himself ‘in the practices of his countrymen’ (*Ant.* 20.100–3). Discussing Jewish identity, Marisa James (2012: 8) notes that ‘Roman historians primarily concern themselves with whether Tiberius Alexander was a good Roman, while Josephus is concerned with whether Tiberius is a good Jew’. What would Tiberius himself have said? We do not know. We may also note the enigmatic accusation by John in Rev. 2:9, which captures the complexity of the problem head on: ‘I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.’ In this case, a group of people identify themselves as Jews, an identity which John rejects. In this context, Arnal’s colourful depiction of ancient Jews adds an important aspect by pointing to the ‘messiness’ of cultures: ‘Even if Sanders is right that there was a form of “common Judaism” it does not necessarily follow that these generalizations apply to any particular person or group of persons. Some people reject, resist,

or deliberately modify key, even definitional, aspects of their culture.’ He points out that ‘Valentinus was a Christian. Siddhartha was a Hindu. Luther was a Roman Catholic’, and so forth (Arnal 2005: 31). But when reconstructions of Jesus lack any resemblance to contemporary Judaism (albeit based on our limited knowledge of the subject), is that Jesus still Jewish? It becomes important to find a balance between reconstructing a Jesus who is historically plausible in his milieu and allowing him, just like other leading, historical figures, to also be distinctive within that milieu. But where do we draw the line between depicting Jesus as distinctive and as uniquely different from his cultural context? Arnal points to this problem when he states, ‘Without insisting that he be unique, or to be understood in “opposition” to “Judaism”, we should still note the possibility, even likelihood, that such an influential figure, an apparent catalyst for subsequent change, will be distinctive’ (Arnal 2005: 31; cf. Holmén 2013).

It is important to take into consideration that Jewish identity is not a stable category, but changes from the viewpoint of different groups. For example, both the members of the Qumran movement and the groups around Paul saw themselves as the true Israel; they both claimed to belong to the true covenant of God. From their perspective they were the most Jewish of Jews. Paul included Gentile Christ-believers in his definition of being Jewish, a perspective most other Jews would dismiss completely (Rom. 2:23–9). Jewish identity depends on context and perspective, which is also evident in the ongoing conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans. From an outsider’s perspective, Samaritans and Jews would be very similar in their beliefs, religious practices, language, and material culture (Knoppers 2013: 217–39). Yet, as John 4:9 explains, ‘Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans’. Distinguishing themselves from Jews made up an important aspect of the communal identity of Samaritans in the time of Jesus and both Jews and Samaritans harboured a marked hostility towards each other. From this perspective ‘Jewish identity’ in antiquity depends on context, circumstances, and point of view; that is, when, where, and according to whom is it being defined? Shaye Cohen notes, ‘Jewishness was a subjective identity, constructed by the individual him/herself, other Jews, other gentiles, and the state’ (Cohen 1999: 3). Sanders addresses this issue in a reflection, written in 2008, on his earlier work. He asks whether individual Jews who omitted half or more of the common practices and beliefs would still be counted as Jewish. He answers, ‘I would say yes, if they counted themselves as Jewish and if other people saw them as Jewish. A person who gave up all of the typical practices, it would seem to me, would merge into the Gentile world. Legally, a “son of Israel” might still be a Jewish by birth; but socially, a total apostate would have removed himself or herself from the collective entity of Judaism’ (Sanders 2008:

21–2). Here he touches on the importance of distinguishing between the different perspectives of insiders and outsiders of groups, that is between emic (internal) and etic (external) perspectives. From a sociological perspective it is important not only to take the self-understanding of groups into account, but also study them from an outside perspective as Luomanen argues. If we only focus on the insiders' perspective, then we end up with different Judaismisms, lacking the analytical tools needed in order to compare different groups with each other, and sects in comparison with common Judaism (Luomanen 2002: 118). As historians studying religions, we need generalizations. We need categories that set one system of beliefs and practices, or religion, apart from another. For this, we need to take an outsider's perspective and study common traits within such a system. At the same time, Arnal's caution about generalizations is highly relevant when he argues that any reconstruction of a Galilean Jewish religiosity 'will provide us with a context of Jesus' teaching and activity – not with an indication of what that teaching and activity *must* have been' (Arnal 2005: 31; cf. Holmén 2013).

Overall I find Sanders's definition of a common Judaism persuasive, that is, what Jewish peasants and priests would basically agree upon in practice and belief, and his answer to that question. Hence, his description of a common Judaism is the theoretical framework I have adopted for this study of Jesus, without claiming that this is the only way that the issue can be addressed. Nevertheless, his definition is useful primarily concerning Judaism in Palestine, and to a lesser extent in the diaspora where Jews were in a minority and different social norms came into play (Barclay 1995: 118–20).

Torah observance

Before addressing Jesus's attitude to purity and the consequences of this for his Jewish identity, I will clarify what observance of Jewish laws entailed in the late Second Temple period. Living according to laws always meant taking part in a living tradition. Sanders poignantly affirms that Judaism was more a 'way of life' than a doctrinal system (Sanders 1992: 3). It is revealing that both Philo and Josephus employ the term 'the traditions of the fathers', 'customs' and similar expressions when referring to Jewish laws, just as Mark does ('tradition of the elders'; 7:3).⁴ Most people in Palestine would simply live according

4 Philo says about the Jewish customs, '... the particularity of their exceptional customs, not mixing with others to alter the ancestral ways' (Mos. 1.278). See Josephus *Ant.* 1.192; 4.114; *J.W.* 7.110.

to the traditions with which they were familiar. Living according to the traditions of the fathers also meant adapting one's lifestyle according to new situations however, and this required ongoing negotiations and interpretations. Some *halakhic* areas were hotly debated, for example, as we see in the Dead Sea Scrolls concerning temple practice, purity practice, and observance of the Sabbath laws. The fact that several different Jewish parties appeared in the late Second Temple period – such as the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes – that offered different interpretations of legal issues, attests to the diversity of views. The Pharisees were even divided between two houses, those of Hillel and Shammai, the latter often having a more stringent interpretation than the former. There is strong evidence that Jesus engaged in debates about the interpretation of laws, often about the Sabbath, when he often took a lenient position compared to the Pharisees (e.g., Mark 2:23–8, 3:1–6; Matt. 23). In the case of divorce, however, Jesus sided with the more stringent *halakhah* of Shammai in his prohibition of divorce (Matt. 5:31–2). In addition, his ethical teaching, which was also part of Torah observance, reflected a highly strict position (see Matt. 5:21–48). The Essenes (the Qumran movement) in turn, were often more stringent in their interpretation than others, and in some points agreed with the Sadducees. They accused the Pharisees for taking short-cuts in their legal traditions, calling them 'seekers of smooth things', where *ḥalaqot* (e.g., 4QpNah 3–4 i 7) is a play on the words 'seekers of *halakhot*'; which translates as 'seekers of correct laws'.

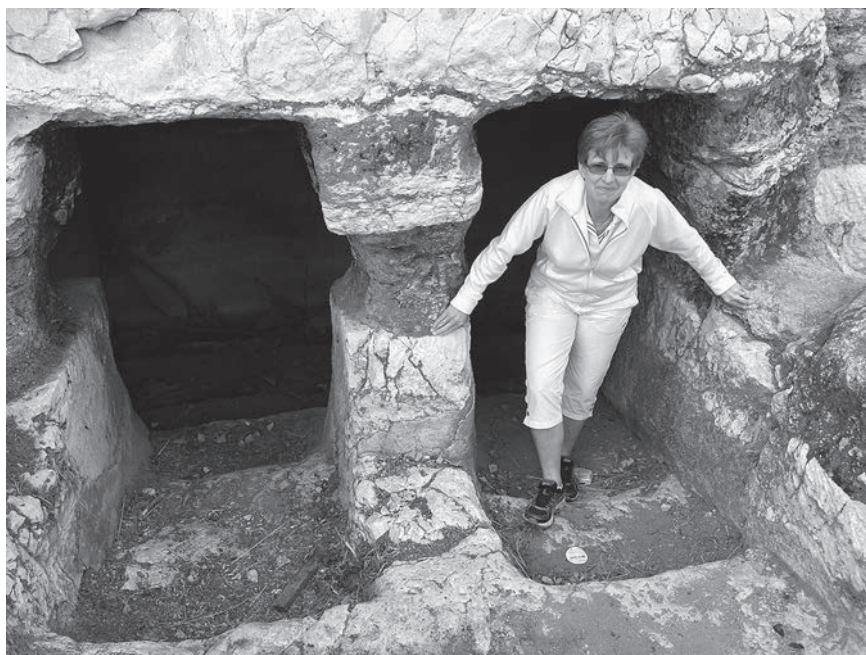
Purity

For most peoples in the ancient world, purity and impurity were part of a basic understanding of the world. This is evident in first-century Judaism which categorized people, objects, and places as either pure or impure, holy or profane. The overarching function of purity regulations was to prevent impurity from coming into contact with the holy; most importantly the temple in Jerusalem, but also consecrated food (Harrington 2004: 9–12). Nevertheless, the spread of ritual baths (*miqva'ot*) all over the country demonstrates that people far from the temple also cared about purity.

The laws concerning ritual impurity appear in Leviticus 11–15 and Numbers. The first thing to keep in mind is that impurity is an inescapable part of everyday life. Everybody was impure at times. The most obvious example is that of sexual intercourse, which rendered both the man and the woman impure; a couple would have to bathe and wait until the evening to be pure again (Lev. 15:18). Of course, this kind of impurity was not something people avoided

– on the contrary, procreation was a commandment. A woman was impure at childbirth for a length of time. Similarly, taking care of one's dead parent, which was an obligation, subjected that person to one of the most severe forms of impurity. In other words, by fulfilling certain obligations, such as the command to be fruitful and to bury one's parents, people became impure. Clearly impurity was a part of life. And, unless the source of impurity was chronic, as it would be in the case of lepers ('scale diseased') and permanent dischargers (the male *zav* and the female *zavah*), there was always a way to restore purity. We may notice as well, that biblical discourse in general conveys no negative sentiments about these carriers of impurity; instead their status as ritually impure is described in a neutral way and as a matter of fact. The basic view, as Jacob Milgrom observes, is that contracting impurity in itself was no sin (Milgrom 1991: 298). Transgressions or sin in connection to purity laws concern *defiling the sancta: the sacred sphere*, in other words, the temple and consecrated food. Jonathan Klawans reiterates Milgrom's position and accuses New Testament scholars of frequently misunderstanding the ritual impurity system by identifying impurity with sin (Klawans 2006: 267).

Biblical laws in general do not even prescribe avoidance of ritual impurity, except in connection to the sacred. There are very few verses that warn against



The author in an ancient *mikveh* outside Jerusalem. Photo by Jutta Jokiranta.

attracting impurity or that seek to prevent impurity from occurring. Instead, the biblical laws simply clarify how to handle impurity. At the same time, there is an alternative view according to which purity is seen as the ideal state also in connection to the profane, or secular, sphere. The attempt to control the spread of impurity within the realm of the secular sphere is evident in laws that exclude the people who are affected by a severe kind of impurity from the camp of the Israelites in Numbers 5:1–4; which includes the leper, the *zav*, and one who is defiled through contact with a corpse (cf. Lev. 13:45–6). There are two tendencies evident in the biblical texts, as Gedalyahu Alon (1977) explains; one that restricts impurity with regard to the sacred sphere, and one that attempts to limit impurity *also* within the secular sphere.

Purity practice is a fundamental part of common Judaism according to Sanders. He rightly claims that after circumcision, purity regulations were ‘the most obvious and universally kept set of laws’ (Sanders 1992: 214). The infected debate about purity among Jewish sects testifies to a deep concern over purity issues. The importance of purity is supported by archaeological evidence. Ritual baths (*miqva’ot*) were common in first-century Palestine, including the region of Galilee. About 850 *miqva’ot* dating to the turn of the era have been discovered in Israel (Adler 2011). Other typical Jewish artefacts are stone vessels (vessels, cups, and bowls) which likely also signify a concern about purity, since these could not become ritually impure. These have also been found in Jewish villages and towns all over Palestine (Mizzi, forthcoming; Berlin 2005). Both the spread of ritual baths and stone vessels testify to a general concern about purity, or even to ‘a purity wave’ in Jewish society according to Hørning Jensen (2013). Thus, if Jesus did not care about purity laws, it would put him in conflict with a fundamental aspect of Jewish practices, and make him ‘less Jewish’.

Scholarly views on Jesus’ attitude towards purity

Jesus’ actions concerning the sick and the dead, and the conflict over pure food (Mark 7), have traditionally been understood as evidence of Jesus’ rejection of the purity laws in general. Apart from touching sick, impure people, Jesus was also known for sharing meals with sinners, which also contributes to the assumption that Jesus rejected the purity laws. At the same time the very central description of Jesus’ own purification rite, that is, his baptism, has largely been ignored in interpretations of Jesus’ attitude towards purity issues. Importantly, some scholars – for example, James Crossley (2004) and Paula Fredriksen (1999: 197–207) – do not find evidence that Jesus challenged the purity laws, but this view remains a minority position.

A thorough study by Thomas Kazen (2002) of Jesus' attitude to purity laws; *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, subtitled, 'Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?' moved the discussion forward considerably. His study has encouraged scholars to debate not so much whether Jesus outright rejected the purity laws, but rather to what extent he *cared* about the purity system. Kazen's answer to his own question, 'Was Jesus indifferent to impurity?' is affirmative: 'Jesus' behavior may be understood as indifferent, and there are signs that it was interpreted as such by his adversaries' (Kazen 2002: 344; cf. Kazen 2013: 118).⁵ Kazen's study has been highly influential, and major historical Jesus scholars, such as James Dunn (2002: 461 and 2003: 789) and John P. Meier (1991–2009, IV: 415), tend to agree with Kazen. According to Dunn, touching a leper in Mark 1:40–5 is a primary example of Jesus' disregard for purity concerns in that gospel, and he adds a whole list of instances that demonstrate Jesus' 'casual approach to impurity' in Mark which is 'firmly rooted in tradition' (Dunn 2003: 789). For Meier the 'seeming indifference' to purity laws on Jesus' part that Kazen finds, becomes 'a studied indifference' (Meier 1991–2009, IV: 415) for which Kazen criticizes him (Kazen 2010: 167). Recently, Holmén, one of the two editors of the massive, four volume *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Brill), argues that Jesus understood his dealings with the ritually impure as 'making the unclean clean', thus, in effect inverting the ordinary purity rules so that Jesus would transfer purity to others rather than himself being susceptible to impurity (Holmén 2011). In his book *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God*, Bruce Chilton (1996) emphasizes that purity is at the centre of Jesus' vision for the kingdom. But according to Chilton, purity for Jesus is something completely different than traditional ritual purity and applies to everyone who enters the kingdom. Purity was not attained by merely washing; rather the whole person was either clean or unclean: 'Jesus asserted that purity was a matter of the

5 At the same time, Kazen does not claim that Jesus rejected the purity system altogether, but that he 'relativized' it and to some extent 'disregarded' impurities. Kazen asserts that Jesus still operated within the basic purity paradigm, though pushing the boundaries to breaking point for many onlookers (2002: 346). These points that weaken Jesus' 'indifferent' stance towards impurity are rarely noted. Also Holmén (*ibid.* 236–7) argues that Jesus was indifferent to purity laws, but that he could also comply with them e.g., when he entered the Temple at Passover. Holmén (*ibid.* 237) concludes, 'He [Jesus] found generally no hindrance in complying with the laws, but could defy them just as well. Correct words to describe this kind of attitude are disinterest and depreciation.' I disagree with him that there is any evidence that Jesus defied purity laws.

totality of one's being.⁶ The idea that Jesus somehow spread purity and holiness to others through his healings and acceptance of sinners has become increasingly popular among Jesus scholars, such as Bruce Chilton (1998: 58–71), Craig Evans (1997: 368–9), Crispin Fletcher-Louise (2007: 65), James Dunn (2002: 461), and Michael Bird. According to Fletcher-Louise there is even an 'emerging consensus' among scholars that Jesus' healings implied a contagious purity (2007: 65). For example, Bird (2008: 24) argues that Jesus radically redefined purity on the basis of his conviction that the eschatological promises of cleansing and forgiveness (Zech. 13:1; 14:8, 20–1) had been fulfilled:

This Zecharian vision of holiness has arguably become a controlling principle for Jesus' ministry where it drives the redefinition of purity within Judaism as it is holiness rather than impurity that acts as a contagion. Much like the gushing out of water from Jerusalem in Zechariah, Jesus 'by touching people turns them from impure Israelites into pure Israelites'. (Bird 2008: 24)

There is no room to enter into a discussion on these suggestions; suffice it to say that *their* Jesus has a thoroughly different view of purity compared to his fellow Jews. Consequently, Kazen dismisses the notion of a dynamic purity as advocated by Holmén and Chilton as speculative (Kazen 2013: 122).⁷ In traditional Judaism, impurity was transmitted between people, but purity was obtained through divine agency, that is through God or the Holy Spirit. If Jesus had actually believed that he was transmitting purity to others, then this Jesus would have had an extremely elevated view of himself as a divine representative, a suggestion that I find highly problematic.⁸

6 According to Chilton (2000: 87) Jesus interpreted such a mission based on Ezekiel's vision in Ezek. 36:25–6 of God pouring out his spirit and purifying Israel; see also Chilton 1992: 123–5, 142.

7 Kazen compares Holmén's views with those of Chilton and concludes: 'Chilton's views are accepted by few, however, because of their fanciful and overly detailed reconstructions, which in any case have little to do with purity halakah' (Kazen 2013: 122).

8 There is, unfortunately, no room in this short article to go into questions of Jesus' self-understanding. I can only point to Kazen's convincing conclusion that Jesus' engagement in debates over legal issues 'does not demand a portrait of Jesus as displaying the unique kind of authority that is often ascribed to him'. Instead, as an eschatological prophet Jesus was motivated by a utopian vision of restoration and the model of his mission was informed by prophets of the past who like Jesus were offering social critiques. (Kazen 2013: 293–302)

The key Gospel texts concerning Jesus and purity

The key stories that have been interpreted by scholars as showing Jesus disregarding purity concerns are: the healing of a leper (Mark 1:40–5), the healing of the haemorrhaging woman and the raising of the girl (Mark 5:21–43), and the hand-washing controversy (Mark 7:1–7, 14–23). For most part, I will not go into the tricky questions concerning what specifically may be historically accurate or not. I will simply take these and other stories about Jesus' healing activities as early accounts of a person who did not shy away from healing the ritually impure, including people with a serious form of skin disease ('lepers'), and from entering the houses of the dead – I think this general recollection is accurate (e.g., Dunn 2003: 789). That Jesus also had meals with 'sinners' is widely attested in the Gospels.

The first 'evidence' of Jesus' casual approach to impurity is the story about his healing of the the man with skin disease in Mark 1:40–5:⁹

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, 'If you choose, you can make me clean.' Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I do choose. Be made clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them'.

In this story, Jesus commands the healed leper to act according to the prescriptions in Lev. 13–14 concerning a leper who is free of his or her symptoms. First, we should note the obvious: the story is not presented as one portraying a conflict in any way. In other words, Mark does not lead his audience to interpret the story as an example of how Jesus challenged Jewish laws (contra e.g., Chilton 2000: 89–90). Instead, the story is a testimony of Jesus' healing power. It is also evident that this record shows Jesus respecting and encouraging observance of the laws concerning the purifications which include examination by a priest and the offering of a sacrifice (Lev. 13–14). Even Dunn takes this part of the story as evidence that 'Jesus himself shared at least some purity priorities' (Dunn 2002: 449). It is quite amazing that some scholars still manage to construe the story to show the opposite; namely that Jesus disregarded purity rules. Hence, Holmén focuses on the wording of Jesus: 'be clean', *katharisthēti*,

9 All biblical citations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

emphasizing that Jesus declared the man clean prior to his cleansing rituals (Holmén 2011: 2715–16). Several aspects of this line of interpretation are problematic, however. First, I find the heavy reliance on Mark's precise wording (in Greek!) that is placed in Jesus' mouth quite remarkable. Second, in this context the verb 'to cleanse' functions as a synonym for 'to be cured'.¹⁰ But, the overall mistake is to assume that all Jews would have avoided impurity to the greatest extent possible (and since Jesus did not, he would have been different), an assumption that I find faulty. Similarly, Crossan argues that Jesus' words 'sets Jesus' power and authority on a par with or even above that of the Temple itself' (Crossan 1991: 321–3). In his view, the command by Jesus to the leper to observe the purification laws commanded by Moses contradicts the first part of the story. He solves the 'problem' by dismissing the second part as a later addition to the first, allegedly original part. The interpretive agenda behind this kind of reasoning is quite obvious.

It is evident that Jesus physically touched sick people in the course of his healing activities, even when they were impure. But there is no example in any of the healing stories that Jesus' touching them is noted as anything strange, or that he in any way would have challenged contemporary norms concerning ritual purity regulations (Levine 1996: 379–97). Nevertheless, the secret touch of the haemorrhaging woman is an important aspect of the plot in Mark 5:27–32, but only to highlight Jesus' magical nature and powers. Given that the woman is suffering from an impure discharge (*a zavah*, see Lev. 15:25–30), and touches the fringes of Jesus' cloak she would perhaps also transmit impurity to him, although this is uncertain (Wassen 2008: 641–60). Either way, the aspect of impurity is simply ignored by Mark. Mark has placed this story within a different story of Jesus raising up a dead girl (Mark 5:21–24a, 35–43), thus linking the two. In the latter story by entering a house of a dead person, Jesus would have attracted corpse impurity, a circumstance that, again, is not mentioned by Mark. Neither is Jesus' proximity to a corpse singled out by Mark as strange or noteworthy behaviour. This silence on matters of impurity does not prevent interpreters from surmising that purity is a key part of the story anyway, as I will exemplify by engaging with Craig Evans's (1997) interpretation. To him both stories (Mark 5:21–43) send a strong message concerning Jesus' stance on purity: 'Issues relating to purity are also [just like faith] common to

10 It should be noted that both Jesus and the 'leper' use the verb (Mark 1:40, 41). See also LXX 2 Kings 5:10–14 where the term *katharizō* is used four times with reference to the healing of Naaman who has suffered from leprosy. He is miraculously 'cleansed' from his leprosy by immersing seven times in the River Jordan.

these stories, for in the one Jesus is touched by an impure woman, and in the other Jesus touches a corpse.’ And further, ‘The healing of the woman with the haemorrhage is as much a purity miracle as anything else. Instead of conveying uncleanness to Jesus, whom she touches, cleanness is conveyed to her.’ Concerning the story about the girl, Evans explains that Jesus was under no obligation to ‘render himself unclean through contact with a corpse’, since he was not related to the family. He concludes, ‘His [Jesus]’ willingness to touch the unclean and make it clean appears to have been a major element in his ministry’ (Evans 1997: 368–9). In contrast to many commentators who take the opportunity to explain the alleged negative consequences of purity laws of the Jewish society, Evans is careful not to say anything to that effect. Still, his Jesus espouses a very different view of purity compared to views prevalent within common Judaism; Jesus in person and through his presence offers purity to his followers, which is far removed from standard, ritual purifications.

Evans fails to take into consideration that it would have been normal for a healer to touch the people whom he was attempting to heal; healing the patient by means of touch would have been as normal then as it is today (Wassen 2016). The reason why no Gospel author notes that Jesus acted strangely when he touched the impure, was probably because they did not see anything odd in his behaviour concerning purity. Furthermore, as Sanders and others emphasize, it was no sin to become impure. Impurity was a common part of life. One important feature in the story of the dead girl is ignored by commentators like Evans; namely, the crowd in the house. Jesus forced all but the girl’s parents (and his closest disciples) out of the house. Apparently, like Jesus, the villagers were not concerned about contracting impurity. This facet of impurity is simply part of the backdrop, a common part of Jewish life. In general, Mark appears to have good knowledge of Jewish society in the first century, and I assume that his general description of what would happen in a village when someone died is accurate.

Mark 7:1–23 is a key text concerning purity. In this story Jesus’ disciples are asked by the Pharisees why they do not wash their hands: ‘Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?’ Here the issue of purity is explicitly addressed. Subsequently Jesus accuses the Pharisees of hypocrisy, and implies that the rule concerning hand washing is not a biblical law, but a one traditional one: ‘You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition!’¹¹ After chastising the Pharisees he gives a speech on pure and impure food:

11 Mark 7:10–13 reads: ‘For Moses said, “Honor your father and your mother”; and, “Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die”. But you say that if anyone

Listen to me, all of you, and understand: (15) there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile. (17) When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. (18) He said to them, ‘Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, (19) since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?’ (Thus he declared all foods clean.) (20) And he said, ‘It is what comes out of a person that defiles. (21) For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, (22) adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. (23) All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.’

Mark 7:1–23 includes a combination of disparate topics, but scholars disagree as to the precise division of them. In agreement with Roger Booth and Kazen I accept that Jesus’ replies in verses 6–7 and 9–12 are distinct from each other and have been put together by Mark (Booth 1986: 71–4; Kazen 2013: 117, 179). Kazen makes a strong argument in support of the idea that the criticism concerning the conflict between biblical law and human traditions and the Isaiah citation (7:6–9) reflects the period of the early church (*ibid.* 179). A key feature of the debate, concerning *corban* (7:9–12) however, may stem from Jesus’ time (Booth 1986: 71–4; Kazen 2013: 179–80), but it is not related to purity. Furthermore, the explanations that follow 7:15, that is, 7:18–23, comprise pre-Markan material that Mark has edited (Kazen 2013: 189–91) and do not originate with the historical Jesus (*ibid.* 187–91). Hence we are left with a debate about hand washing and the central issue of the saying in 7:15, which plausibly reflects Jesus’ actions and words concerning purity.

In the Hebrew Bible only priests washed their hands and feet before approaching the altar (Exod. 30:17–21). In Mark 7 we hear of the Pharisees washing their hands prior to meals, which is most likely historically accurate, especially given that the practice had developed considerably by the time the Mishnah was written down (c. 200 CE). The idea that washing hands would remove impurity is a non-biblical innovation and aimed at preserving the purity of the people eating the food (Furstenberg 2008: 189–90). It assumes that impurity of the hands could be disassociated from the rest of the body. We do

tells father or mother, “Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban” (that is, an offering to God) – then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.’

find a similar idea in connection to the male discharger, the *zav*, who would not transmit impurity with washed hands according to Lev. 15:11. Either way, the point in Jesus' critique is that he does not agree with the Pharisaic innovation of hand washing. This tradition affirms that Jesus did not agree with the expansionist view concerning purity of the Pharisees. It does not indicate, however, that he was indifferent (or 'seemingly' so) to matters related to purity.

Jesus' words in Mark 7:15 are at the centre of the scholarly debate: 'There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.' Traditionally there has been a consensus in New Testament scholarship in favour of the authenticity of Jesus' saying in 7:15 (Svartvik 2000: 3–8; Räisänen [1982] is an exception). Since discontinuity with Judaism was considered an argument in favour of authenticity in an earlier period of modern scholarship, Jesus' words were also considered genuine. As Norman Perrin argued in 1967, '[t]his is perhaps the most radical statement in the whole of the Jesus tradition, and, as such, it is certainly authentic' (Perrin 1967: 150). Jesus' words were also considered to be radically different from common views on purity in Judaism (see Räisänen 1982). Today the authenticity of Mark 7:15 is hotly debated. John Meier asserts the unlikelihood that Jesus annulled the food laws based on a different principle: 'Coherence with Jesus' own sense of being a prophet sent to his people Israel—and not to the Gentiles—as well as coherence with first-century Palestinian Judaism (however varied and sectarian it was) would seem to argue against the authenticity of 7:15' (Meier 1991–2009, IV: 385). He also points to the controversy in the early Jesus movement concerning Jewish food laws, asking how the followers could have forgotten Jesus' message had he actually overturned the food laws in a revolutionary way? Sanders dismisses the authenticity on similar grounds (Sanders 1985: 260–1). A different perspective is offered by Jesper Svartvik and Kazen who consider the saying to be authentic, but argue that it communicates a *relative* value judgement, comparing inner and outer impurity, that is, 'A man is not so much defiled by that which enters him from outside as he is by that which comes from within' (Kazen 2002: 66, 228–31; cf. Kazen 2013: 190; Svartvik 2000: 405–11). In Kazen's words, 'the idea that Jesus would have intended to abrogate food laws in general is out of the question' (Kazen 2013: 182).

But if we take the saying in an absolute sense, a different message may yet emerge. Yair Furstenberg (2008) argues that Jesus' central saying makes sense in a first-century Jewish debate about purity *halakhah*. In a continuation of the dispute on the rinsing of the hands prior to meals (Mark 7:1–5), Jesus' statement in 7:15 is directed against the Pharisaic view that defiled food would render a person impure (Furstenberg 2008: 184). In Pharisaic *halakhah*, washing hands

prior to meals was a safeguard against polluting the food (especially moist food) that in turn would pollute the body (of self and others). This understanding of the transmission of impurity, which Jesus disputes, is novel compared to the laws in Leviticus. Therefore, Jesus contrasts the intake of defiled food that does not contaminate with things that go out of the body (bodily fluids) that defile a person, that is, menstrual blood, semen, and discharges (Lev. 15). The saying likely does not refer to prohibited food such as pork, which is not a debateable issue in the first century (Kazen 2002: 86) (although, technically prohibited food does not usually render a person ritually impure; see Furstenberg 2008: 183). As mentioned, the subsequent explanations belong to later elaborations in stages. Jesus is therefore saying that defiled food does not transfer impurity by ingestion in contrast to regular, bodily discharges, which do. Since the subsequent elaborations likely reflect a later, spiritualised interpretation of Jesus' halakhic statement, his saying should not be understood in light of them. Even if we were to accept a relative understanding of the saying (ritual purity is less important than moral purity) there is still no evidence of a critique *per se* of the purity system.

Like many other scholars I take Mark's explanation 'Thus he declared all foods clean' (7:19) as reflecting Mark's own view in the context of the debate over food at the time of his writing (c. 70 CE). In comparison, Matthew chose to skip Mark's comment in his rewriting of the story (Matt. 15:17). Matthew's interpretation, which he provides at the end of the discourse, however, may be closer to the original sense of Jesus' teaching: 'These are what defile a person, *but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile*' (Matt. 15:20, my italics).

In addition to these specific gospel stories (the healing stories; the hand-washing controversy; and the sayings about food) scholars point to the firm tradition that Jesus ate with 'sinners' (e.g., Mark 2:15–17; Matt. 11:19), and since these people most likely included those who did not observe the *halakhah* properly (and did not purify according to norms), Jesus would have become ritually impure. Bird, for example, finds Jesus' lack of concern about contracting impurity 'shocking and anti-social' (Bird 2008: 16n58). On this issue I will first simply clarify that eating with morally and ritually impure people was not a sin (see Crossley 2006: 75–96). Second, the whole argument rests on the assumption that Jews in general actively avoided impurity. Given that most married men and women had sex on a regular basis and therefore quite often were ritually impure, this assumption appears faulty. It is evident that certain groups in the society of the time would have made more of an effort than others to avoid contracting unnecessary impurity; that is, priests, the Pharisees, and the

Essenes – but their lifestyle was quite extreme compared to the people in general (which the name ‘Pharisees’ – separated ones – seems to imply).

If Jesus’ practice concerning purity issues were shocking at the time, then we should expect to find traces of this in the gospels. Instead, there is no hint that his kind of ‘open table’ fellowship raised concerns about purity issues; Jesus is rather being criticized for defying social norms, according to Matt. 11:19 (Luke 7:34), and for being ‘a friend of toll collectors and sinners’ (cf. Mark 2:15–16; Matt. 9:10–11; Luke 5:29–30). In the gospels we also find accusations against Jesus for being ‘a glutton and a drunkard’ (Matt 11:19) and for being possessed by a demon (Mark 3:21–2), but there is no critique against him for transgressing purity norms. Furthermore, there are traditions in the Gospels that demonstrate that Jesus accepted the purity system. I have already mentioned that the Gospels record how Jesus underwent a purification bath – at his baptism – which establishes that Jesus did, like others, occasionally undergo purification rituals. In addition, two passages demonstrate that Jesus worked within a common purity paradigm, just as in the case of Mark 1:40–5. The saying in Matt. 23:25–6 shows that Jesus distinguished between ritually pure and impure vessels; ‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean.’ And finally, the saying in Matt 23:27 implies that Jesus accepted the concept of corpse impurity: ‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of impurity.’¹²

Conclusion

There is no evidence that Jesus transgressed, challenged, or disregarded purity laws. Still, most New Testament scholars attempt to argue in different ways that he did. In many cases, such conclusions are based on the, in my view faulty, assumption that Jews in general went to great lengths to avoid impurity – but we only have to consider the fact that having sex rendered a couple impure

12 These sayings belong to the Q-tradition, which is early. The ending of Luke 11:39–41 (= Matt. 23:25–6) reads: ‘So give alms for those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you.’ Only Matthew’s version is historically plausible in light of the legal debates in Jesus’ time. Luke 11:44 (= Matt. 23:27) reads: ‘Woe to you! [the Pharisees] For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it.’ The latter saying differs quite dramatically from Matt. 23:27, but both sayings (Luke 11:44 and Matt. 23:27) presuppose that graves are inherently impure.

to realize that people did not actively avoid impurity. In some cases, however, underlying scholarly biases towards purity laws play a part. Meier's conclusion is highly revealing in this regard. Summarizing his findings at the end of a substantial chapter on 'Jesus and Purity Laws' he states, 'the authentic Jesus tradition is completely silent on the topic of ritual purity', adding, 'apparently, for Jesus ritual purity is not a burning issue, it is not an issue at all'. Still, according to Meier (2009: 414–15), Jesus' silence on the issue of purity is significant, a point that he stresses in his final conclusion: 'In short, Jesus' studied indifference to ritual impurity must be seen within this larger framework of his claim to be the charismatic prophet of the end time'. It is unclear how the silence on the topic of ritual purity translates into Jesus 'studied indifference'. Such a conclusion demonstrates a scholarly desire, unconscious or not, to attribute to Jesus a negative attitude towards purity laws.

Scholars rarely explain their own agendas when it comes to reconstructing the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, in some instances the reconstructions reveal negative attitudes towards purity laws on the part of the interpreters. For Marcus Borg (2007: 112–13, 135–55), for example, purity stands at the opposite end of compassion, whereas Karen Wenell (2007: 101) contrasts purity with love. For many feminist scholars, purity laws are seen as discriminatory against women (Getty-Sullivan 2001: 69). For some, notions of purity divide people into categories of pure and impure, whereas Jesus was inclusive of all (e.g., Dunn 2002: 467). In one strand of the scholarship on the historical Jesus, scholars go to great lengths to present Jesus' alleged negative attitude towards traditional purity laws as a part of his Jewishness. Jesus' rejection of purity laws and invention of a new process for transmitting purity becomes a 'redefinition' of traditional Jewish laws. For these scholars, Jesus' 'Jewishness' is central, but the religion of this Jew, in fact, has little in common with other strands of Judaism. Sanders includes purity concerns as a key component of common Judaism, that is, what everybody agreed upon. Given this definition of Judaism, one could say that the portrayal of a Jesus figure who rejects, or disregards, purity laws, is not very Jewish at all, at least not in a traditional sense. Such reconstruction would make him, in Crossley's terminology, 'Jewish, but not that Jewish'. In agreement with Arnal, I hold that it is important not to presuppose that Jesus could not have been a distinctive figure in some ways in the context of his environment, given that he started a movement that would eventually break away from Judaism. Nevertheless, the specifically distinctive traits of Jesus have to be found elsewhere; they cannot be detected in the area of purity.

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Jesus-oriented visions of Judaism in antiquity

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This article argues that the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27-72, the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* – third and fourth century-texts, which combine adherence to Jesus with Jewish law observance – would have made sense to Jews in antiquity as Jewish, *although non-rabbinic* visions of the history and calling of the people of Israel, and that they ought to be considered as part of the history of Judaism. Recent years have witnessed an emerging trend to reread texts previously regarded as ‘Jewish-Christian’ or ‘heretical Christian’ as *Jewish* texts, and as evidence of diversity within Judaism in the post-70 period. This understanding emerges from the related insights that rabbinic Judaism was not the only, or even the dominant form of Judaism during the early centuries CE, that there was no definitive early split between a well defined Christianity and an equally well defined Judaism, and that Jewish self-identity in antiquity seems to have allowed for adherence to Jesus as an option *within* Judaism. Abandoning the practice of using rabbinic Judaism as the sole criterion for defining Jewishness in this time period allows us to see the theologies developed by such Jesus-oriented groups with a Jewish self-identity as profoundly Jewish, *although non-rabbinic*, visions of the history and calling of biblical Israel.

The main argument of this article is that the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27–72, the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* – third- and fourth-century texts, which combine adherence to Jesus with Jewish law observance – would have made sense to Jews in antiquity as Jewish, *although non-rabbinic* visions of the history and calling of the people of Israel, and that they ought to be considered as part of the history of Judaism. Traditionally seen as ‘Jewish-Christian’, that is to say, as expressions of a non-orthodox, heretical Christianity, the place of these texts within the history of Judaism has only recently begun to be explored in light of the scholarly insight that Jesus-orientation was not the clear demarcation line between Jews and ‘Christians’ that it was previously made out to be, but rather an option *within* Judaism for several centuries (Boyarin 2012, Frankfurter 2007). We are used to seeing Judaism and Christianity as two mutually exclusive categories, but this was not necessarily the case in antiquity. People seem to have combined

adherence to Jesus with Jewish practices for several centuries, at least in some locations (Kimelman 1999).

In addition to claims already made as to the Jewish nature of these texts (see Fonrobert 2001; Jones 1995; Marcus 2010; Reed 2007, 2008),¹ I argue that their theologies *as a whole*, not just particular traditions, ideas or interpretive practices, would have made sense to Jews in antiquity as coherent Jewish visions of the history and calling of the people of Israel, provided we allow for expressions of Judaism other than the rabbinic one. First, I will provide a brief outline of each of the texts, focusing on their views of Jesus, baptism, and the inclusion of Gentiles in the covenant with Israel's God, and then attempt to show that during the fourth century these features, commonly associated with Christianity, may still have been perceived as being part of Judaism. *Recognitions* 1.27–71 is the shortest text, which is why it takes up less space here than the other two.

In order to not automatically exclude the possibility that the authors/redactors of these texts and their communities may have had a Jewish self-identity while at the same time embracing Jesus, I refer to them as 'Jesus-oriented' rather than 'Christian'. Even in cases where a text itself uses the term 'Christian' we must keep in mind that the author may simply be using it in the sense of 'Jesus-oriented', without the connotation of 'non-Jewish' that the term 'Christian' would later have. For the same reason, I will translate the Syriac *ḏt* and the Latin *ecclesia* literally as 'assembly' rather than 'church' as opposed to most translations. Depending on the text and context, *m'mwdyt/baptisma* refers either to a one-time initiation rite, in which case I translate it as 'baptism', or to regular ablutions, either for the remission of sins or purification from bodily defilement, in which cases I translate it as 'immersion'.

1. The Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27-71

According to F. Stanley Jones (1995: 163–67), *Recognitions* 1.27–71 was composed c. 200 CE by a 'Jewish Christian', probably in the area of Judaea. Apart from small fragments of Greek, larger portions of *Recognitions* 1.27–71 are preserved only in a Latin (Rehm 1965) and a Syriac (Frankenberg 1937) version.² The author(s)/redactor(s) (henceforth author) represents a Judaism that sees

- 1 F. Stanley Jones, however, continues to regard *Recognitions* 1.27–71 as a Christian text, contrasting it with Jewish tradition, see Jones (2012) pp. 267–8, 275.
- 2 Translations are taken from Jones 1995 but are occasionally modified upon consultation with the original.

Jesus as the Messiah, and for which adherence to Jesus is true Judaism (Jones 1995: 160). Features adduced by scholars as indicating that the author was a Jesus-believing Jew include concern with the land of Israel, praise of Hebrew as the original language of humankind, depiction of Jesus-adherents as an inner-Jewish movement, interest in Jews who secretly believe in Jesus, and a generally sympathetic portrait of non-Jesus-oriented Jews (*ibid.* 157–68; Reed 2007: 204–13).

Jesus; a prophet like Moses

Recognitions 1.27–71 is a retelling of Israel's history from the creation to Jesus, who is seen as a second Moses and the future prophet promised by God through Moses; 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me. Listen to him in all matters' (1.36.2). The identification of Jesus with the future prophet promised by God in Deut. 18:15–18, in whose mouth he will put his words, gives him unparalleled authority in the eyes of the author of *Recognitions* 1.27–71.

Completing the work of Moses, Jesus institutes immersion in the place of sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, '[i]n order that they do not think that they were being deprived of the forgiveness of sins that accrued through sacrifices ... immersion in water [*m'mwdyt'/baptisma*] for the forgiveness of sins was instituted' (1.39.2). The commandment to sacrifice was instituted by Moses as a means of keeping the Israelites from worshipping foreign gods (1.36.1), but it was to be in force only until the coming of the future prophet promised by God, who would make the Israelites 'understand that God desires kindness, not sacrifices' (1.37.1) (Syriac).

Like Moses, Jesus performs signs and miracles (1.41.1–2; 1.57.5; 1.58.2–3), but as both prophet and Messiah, he is greater than Moses (1.59.2–3). In a statement placed in the mouth of the apostle Peter the author asserts that, 'it is impossible to know the things that are pleasing to God without the prophet of truth' (1.44.5), and that recognition that Jesus is the Messiah is a necessary condition for salvation (1.63.2) (Reed 2007: 213).

However, non-Jesus-oriented Jews are not blamed for their failure to accept Jesus. This state of affairs is explained as being part of the divine plan as announced by the prophets (1.50:2–5), or as the result of the numerous schisms among the people (1.54.8), and to the interference of Paul, who just as James had succeeded in persuading 'the whole people and the chief priests' (Latin 1.69.8) that Jesus was the Messiah, instigated a great commotion among the people, ending with the death of James (1.69.8–70.7).

Jews and Jesus-oriented Gentiles

The author's focus is on the Jews, Jesus-oriented and otherwise, and although he believes that Gentiles may be included in the covenant with Israel's God this is only because they get to fill the slots left empty by those Jews who have not embraced Jesus (1.42.1). The calling of the Gentiles is described as 'necessary' (Latin) and is said to have resulted in 'confusion' (Syriac) (1.42.1), terms, which seem to indicate the author's lack of enthusiasm for the mission to the Gentiles.

Statements to the effect that adherence to Jesus is the only difference between 'us and those among our people who do not believe' (1.43.2) suggest that the community was Torah observant and that they believed that the only laws abolished by Jesus were the laws of sacrifices, laws which would not have been practised by non-Jesus-oriented Jews either. This is also indicated by the author's assertion that God at the end of time 'will please those who have kept and performed the law' (1.51.4). Unfortunately, the text reveals nothing about the author's view of law observance among the Gentile Jesus-adherents. He may have thought, with the Jesus-believing Pharisees in Acts 15:5 (and possibly the author of the Gospel of Matthew), that they must be circumcised and obligated to observe the Torah like Jews, or he may have believed they should remain Gentiles and keep some Torah commandments. We simply do not know, but of interest in this context is Jones's tentative claim that *Recognitions* 1.27–71 was originally composed under the name of Matthew (Jones 1995: 155).

In sum: Jesus is seen as a Messianic prophet, a second Moses who has come to complete the work of Moses, abolishing sacrifice and instituting in its place immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. He represents a new stage in the history of the people of Israel and the fulfillment of God's promises to them. The author could perhaps be said to embrace a 'remnant theology' but without condemning those Jews who do not accept Jesus as the Messiah. In this messianic age, Gentiles may be included in the covenant with Israel's God, but only by filling the slots left empty by non-Jesus-believing Jews.

2. The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*

The *Homilies* is the older of the two main works included in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, which relate a fictitious tale of the life of Clement of Rome and his travels with the apostle Peter. It is commonly believed to have originated in Syria and was redacted in the early fourth century, but is a reworking of an earlier, no longer extant, source dating from the early third century. The original Greek of the *Homilies* is preserved (Rehm 1953) as well as a Syriac

translation of chapters 10–14, extant in a manuscript written in Edessa in 411.³ The other main work of the Pseudo-Clementine writings is the *Recognitions*, a slightly later reworking of the same early third-century source. The *Recognitions* survives in full only in a Latin translation from c. 406. There are also later epitomes of the *Homilies* and/or the *Recognitions* in Greek, Arabic, Georgian, and Armenian suggesting a rather widespread circulation (Brenner 2010: 1–12; Jones 2012: 3–16).

The *Homilies* is mainly concerned with the spreading of the message of the one God to the Gentiles (*Hom.* 3.59), with Clement, a former ‘pagan’ who through the teachings of Peter embraces belief in the one God and in ‘the doctrine of the Prophet’ (*Hom.* 2.4) as one of the main protagonists. A focus on Gentiles, although often taken by scholars as an indication of non-Jewish authorship, fits well within a Jewish theological construction of Israel as a light to the nations of the world. The Jewish outlook of the *Homilies* is further indicated by the authors’/redactors’ (henceforth author) division of the world into Jews and Gentiles/Peoples/Nations (*ethnē*) and his view of the latter as idolaters and subject to the power of demons. Citing the author’s emphasis on the importance of Moses, the Torah, halakhic observance, and assertions of the continued ‘chosenness’ of the Jews as indications of a Jewish self-identity, Annette Yoshiko Reed has persuasively argued that the *Homilies* in its redacted form represents a Jewish identity that included adherence to Jesus (Reed 2007: 213–24; Reed 2008: 182–96; Reed 2013: 885–91). Below I will attempt to show how his focus on Gentiles, his view of Jesus, and immersion for the remission of sins (baptism) would have made sense within a Jewish worldview.

Baptism and the inclusion of Gentiles

Unlike *Recognitions* 1:27–71, the *Homilies*’ main concern is the Gentiles and their inclusion in the covenant with the God of the Jews. ‘Polluted in body and soul’, and ignorant of the law and through evil deeds, they are utterly lost and subject to the power of demons and Satan (8.22). However, if they abandon idolatry, turn to the one God and take it upon themselves to observe a limited number of Torah commandments, they can be granted privileges that the Jews have long enjoyed. Addressing Gentiles Peter says:

3 Translations are adapted from Roberts and Donaldson (1870) with modifications upon consultation with the original.



John the Baptist preaching to a multitude at the river Jordan. Engraving by F. Spierre after G. L. Bernini. Wellcome Images.

Choosing, therefore, to worship one God, and refraining from the table of demons, and undertaking chastity with philanthropy and righteousness, and being immersed with the thrice-blessed invocation for the remission of sins, and devoting yourselves as much as you can to the perfection of purity, you can escape everlasting punishment, and be constituted heirs of eternal blessings. (9.23)

Through immersion, perceived as an initiation rite ‘with the thrice-blessed invocation’ for the remission of sins and through observance of the Law they may be saved from ‘superstition with respect to idols, and wickedness, which reigns over them’ (2.33). Through worship of the one God and immersion Gentiles are able to drive away evil spirits and demons and become more like (law-observant) Jews, over whom demons have no power (9.19–20).

Immersion for the remission of sins was practised by the Qumran community (IQS 3.4–9), and according to Josephus and the synoptic gospels, also by other first-century Jews. John the Baptist is described as a preacher of repentance proclaiming ‘a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins’ (Mark 1:4; *Ant.* 18.117), and is said to have immersed people in the Jordan River, ‘And people from the whole of Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins’ (Mark 1:5; cf. Matt. 3:5; Luke 3:3).

When practised by Gentiles wishing to join a Jesus-oriented community, however, it seems to have had a slightly different significance. While John immersed individual Jews who wished to repent, immersion of Gentiles as an initiation rite (baptism) in the *Homilies* seems above all to signify a switch of categories. The Gentile leaves the category of ‘Gentiles’, and being cleansed of the sinful nature of Gentiles as Gentiles, the person becomes potentially able to observe the commandments of the Torah and obtains a status equal to that of Jews. Provided the ‘convert’ now keeps the commandments that apply to him/her, he/she can escape ‘everlasting punishment’ and ‘become heirs of eternal blessings’. Both Jews and Jesus-oriented Gentiles are judged on the basis of their actions, but while Jews are born into the covenant with Israel’s God, Jesus-believing Gentiles are included through baptism, a ceremony by which they are cleansed of their old sinful nature and become potentially salvable.

Jesus-oriented Gentiles do not seem to become Jews however, and for them belief in the God of Israel and Jesus, the prophet of truth, is perceived as a kind of Judaism for non-Jews. In general, the author of the *Homilies* prefers the term *theosebeia* (‘fear of God’) rather than ‘Judaism’ as the designation of the way of

life its protagonists practise and teach (2.1; 12.11),⁴ a term that by the third century may have been appropriated by groups of Jews as a self-designation. They preferred *theosebeia* over the more general *eusebeia* used by ‘pagans’ to denote piety – probably because it points more directly to Jewish worship of the one God and rejection of idolatry – and the term often seems to refer to Jews (Lieu 1995: 493–7).⁵ In one passage our author seems to use ‘God-fearer’ and ‘Jew’ as synonyms:

For he is a God-fearer [*theosebēs*], of whom I speak, who is truly God-fearing [*theosebēs*], not one who is such only in name, but who really practices the Law that has been given him. If any one acts impiously, he is not pious; in like manners, if he who is of another tribe keeps the Law, he is a Jew; but he who does not keep it is a Greek. For the Jew trusts God and keeps the Law. ... But he who keeps not the Law is manifestly a deserter through not trusting God; and thus as no Jew, but a sinner, he is on account of his sin brought into subjection to those sufferings which are ordained for the punishments of sinners. (*Hom.* 11.16.2–4)

According to this passage a Jesus-believing, law-observant Gentile is a Jew, which – considering the emphasis on law observance here – probably means that he is like a Jew. This is not a ‘halakhic’ redefinition of who is a Jew, but rather an argument about the importance of living in accordance with the Law, where ‘Jew’ stands for an ideal, Torah-observant Jew. A Jesus-believing Gentile who keeps the Law is a Jew, meaning that he or she behaves ‘jewishly’, whereas the non-law-observant, Jesus-believing Gentile reverts to the status of a ‘pagan’ Greek. It is noteworthy that a Jew who is not Torah-observant, that is a Jew who does not behave ‘jewishly’ is not called a Greek, but a sinner.⁶

- 4 The term *theosebēs* (‘God-fearer’) is often used as a designation for Gentiles who affiliate themselves with Judaism without undergoing conversion, but it can also be used to denote any pious person, Gentile or Jew; see the discussion in Reynolds and Tannenbaum (1987). However, most of the evidence discussed dates from the first and second centuries with only a few examples from later centuries.
- 5 See also Jones (2012: 150–1), who discusses *theosebeia* and *theosebēs* as self-designations for the author of the early third-century source of the *Homilies*.
- 6 See Nanos (2014: 26–32), who discusses the importance of distinguishing between the ethnic identity of Jews and behaviour that characterizes Jews (behaving ‘jewishly’) when reading Paul. Paul makes a point similar to the one above in Rom. 2:17–29, see *ibid.* 39–51.

The requirements for Gentiles who want to join a Jesus community are summarized in the following way:

And this is the service He has appointed: To worship Him only, and trust only in the Prophet of truth, and to be immersed for the remission of sins, and thus by this pure immersion to be born again unto God by saving water; to abstain from the table of devils, that is, from food offered to idols, from dead carcasses, from animals which have been suffocated or caught by wild beasts, and from blood; not to live any longer impurely; to wash after intercourse, that the women on their part should keep the law of purification; that all should be sober-minded, given to good works, refraining from wrong-doing, looking for eternal life from the all powerful God, and asking with prayer and continual supplication that they may win it. (7.8)

In addition to the laws prescribed by the Decree of the Apostles (Acts 15:20), the author of the *Homilies* also wants Gentiles to observe some Jewish food and purity laws in order to have a place in the Jesus movement.⁷

Jesus the prophet of truth

Jesus and Moses are seen as two earthly manifestations of the Prophet of truth (2.15–16), sent by God to teach the same truth to two different peoples, Moses to the Jews and Jesus to the Gentiles: ‘Since, therefore, both to the Hebrews and for those who are called from the Nations, believing in the teachers of truth is of God’ (*Hom.* 8.5).

Although the ideal is to believe in both Moses and Jesus, the Jews who do not accept Jesus as the Messiah are not at fault. This is all part of the divine plan, according to which God has chosen to conceal him from them in order that he may be known among the Gentiles, ‘For on this account Jesus is concealed from the Hebrews who have taken Moses as their teacher, and Moses is hidden from those who have believed Jesus. For, there being one teaching by both, God accepts him who has believed either of these’ (8.6). The *Homilies* represents an ‘addition theology’, according to which Jesus-oriented Gentiles are added to the original people of God, but not at the expense of non-Jesus-oriented Jews

7 Thus, like the rabbis the authors/redactors of the *Homilies* attribute ritual impurity to Gentiles, see Reed 2013: 891. For ritual laws incumbent upon Gentiles in the *Homilies*, see Zellentin 2013: 94–125.

who remain in the covenant even though they have not embraced Jesus as the Messiah.

The author of the *Homilies* has a special interest in prophecy, which is considered the only reliable knowledge about God. Jesus, the prophet of truth, is the last in a line of a series of prophets, including Adam and Moses (2.15–16; 3:17–21) and he is the only source of true knowledge about God: ‘For apart from Him ... it is impossible to learn the truth’ (2:4).

Hence, O beloved Clement, if you would know the things pertaining to God, you have to learn them from Him alone, because He alone knows the truth. For if any one else knows anything, he has received it from Him or from His disciples. (2.12, cf. 2.5–6; 3.11)

As the only reliable source of knowledge about God and the prophet of truth, Jesus’ teachings are the guide to a correct understanding of Scripture. Jesus as the prophet of truth has supreme authority to interpret the Law and proof of his ultimate authority is his identification with the prophet proclaimed by Moses in Deut. 18:15–19:

But also a witnessing voice was heard from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him’ [Matt. 17:5] ... Still further He [Jesus] said, ‘I am he concerning whom Moses prophesized, saying, “The Lord our God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you.” And everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be rooted out of the people’ [Acts 3:22–23 citing Deut. 18:15]. (3.53)

The teachings of this prophet promised by God through Moses must be followed (2.11). They are transmitted via Peter, who by virtue of being the apostle of the prophet of truth speaks the truth (7.11; 17.19), and transmission continues through James and the Jerusalem church (11.35) to the bishops (3.60–72). Proper succession vouchsafes the faithful transmission of the teachings of Jesus (Reed 2008: 186–7).

In spite of its insistence that Jesus is the only source of knowledge about God, the *Homilies* recognizes the continuance of proper succession among non-Jesus-oriented Jews on the basis of Jesus’ assertion that the Pharisees ‘sit in the seat of Moses’ and are entrusted with ‘the key to the kingdom of heaven, which is knowledge’ (Matt 23:2; *Hom.* 3.18, 47). Prophecy is the only means by which one can know God, but somewhat surprisingly rabbinic Jews – like adherents



'Christ and the scribes' in *Our day in the light of prophecy and providence* by William Ambrose Spicer (Canadian Watchman Press, 1921).

to Jesus – have access to prophetic truth by virtue of being heirs to Moses and the Pharisees. Accordingly, prophetic truth seems to be transmitted along parallel lines of prophetic succession, through the Pharisees in the ‘seat of Moses’ (3.18) on the one hand, and through Peter’s bishops in the ‘seat of Christ’ on the other (3.60) (Reed 2008: 191–4; Reed 2013: 887–92). It is noteworthy that rabbinic Jews are considered to be in the possession of truth by virtue of their link to prophecy.

3. The *Didascalia Apostolorum*

The *Didascalia Apostolorum* purports to be teachings by Jesus’ original apostles, but is a third-century community-rule text that seems to have undergone several redactions, of which the latest took place in the early fourth century, most likely in Syria. Originally written in Greek, it was translated into Latin, Syriac, Ethiopian, and Arabic, indicating a wide circulation (surveys in Stewart-Sykes 2009: 3–55; Vööbus 1979: 23–33). I mostly cite from the Syriac edition (Vööbus 1979), since Syriac was likely the language in which the Jews of Syria and Mesopotamia encountered these ideas.⁸ Scholarly attempts to capture the combination of Jesus-centeredness and Jewish character of the text include defining the authors/redactors (henceforth author) as ‘a Christian of Jewish birth’ (Marcus 2010: 606), the text as a ‘Mishnah for the disciples of Jesus’ (Fonrobert 2001: 483), and as ‘a Christian legal document with affinities to Judaism’ (Zellentin 2013: viii–ix).

Although the author claims to be a Jew, calling himself a disciple ‘from the House of Judah’ (*DA* 26 407:248/408:230), this is often dismissed by scholars as being part of the literary fiction that attributes authorship to Jesus’ original disciples (Stewart-Sykes 2009: 24n45). However, some scholars have argued that his extensive knowledge of Jewish traditions and practices beyond what is found in the Bible, and his use of ‘rabbinic-like’ hermeneutics indicate that the author was a Jew (Fonrobert 2001: 502–6; Marcus 2010: 606–7).

He calls the members of his community ‘Christians’, a fact that would seem to make the *Didascalia* difficult to claim for Judaism, but we should not automatically assume that ‘Christian’ here means non-Jewish. For us, ‘Jewish’ and ‘Christian’ are mutually exclusive categories, but the author of the *Didascalia* rather seems to use ‘Christian’ in the sense of a specific kind of Judaism – a

8 Translations are adapted from Vööbus 1979 with modifications upon consultation with the original. The Syriac text appears in vols. 401 and 407, and the English translation in vols. 402 and 408.

subgroup within Judaism who believes that Jesus is the Messiah. He betrays a Jewish outlook in the way he addresses the two groups in his audience as ‘us who were called from the people’ and ‘you, who were called from the peoples’ (*DA* 26 407:251/408:231), and although such a Jewish division of the world into Jews, referred to as ‘the People’ (*m*) and non-Jews, referred to as ‘the Peoples/Nations’ can also be dismissed as part of the narrative framework, its consistency throughout the work is noteworthy. It seems to me that the insistence that the author is not Jewish prevalent in much earlier scholarship derives from the assumption that belief in Jesus is considered irreconcilable with a Jewish identity. Leaving the precise identity of the author aside, I wish to focus here on whether his theology would have made sense to fourth-century Jews as a coherent vision of the mission of the people of Israel.

Assuming that the author addresses a real community, it appears to have been made up of a mixture of Jesus-oriented Jews and Gentiles. He calls the Jews ‘dear brothers’ who ‘trust in God our saviour Jesus the Messiah’ but criticizes them for maintaining Jewish practices such as food and purity regulations and for giving priority to the Sabbath over Sunday (*DA* 26). At the same time he repeatedly claims that Jesus has affirmed the Law, not abolished it, indicating that he has a different view on which commandments of the Torah that are binding than some members of his community.⁹

Jesus as lawgiver

The author/redactor of the *Didascalia* seems to perceive a straight line connecting the giving of the Torah at Sinai (Exod. 19–24) with the coming of Jesus whose main function is to restore the Torah (Syriac *nmws*) to its original state, as it was before the Israelites worshipped the golden calf (Exod. 32). According to the *Didascalia*’s reading of the Book of Exodus, the Israelites were given two sets of laws at Sinai. The first set, consisting of ‘the ten sayings’ (Exod. 19–20) and ‘the judgments’ (Exod. 21ff.), is good and eternal, whereas the second set given after they worshipped the golden calf is temporary – detailed regulations

9 Zellentini (2013: 85–96) warns against automatically equating the *Didascalia*’s construction of its audience with actual social-historical circumstances, but concludes that the ‘Judaizing’ group is described in such detail and addressed at such length that it seems to reflect actual practices rather than being a heresiological construct. However, noting that the issues under debate in the *Didascalia* correspond to the list of observances incumbent upon *Gentiles* in the *Homilies*, he suggests that the debate concerns Gentile Jesus-adherents and considers fictitious the author’s attribution of these practices to Jewish Jesus-adherents.

concerning sacrifices, dietary laws and purifications – and imposed in order to keep them from reverting to idolatry. Making a distinction within biblical law, he calls this second set ‘the second law’ (Syriac *tnyn nmws* ‘Greek *deuterosis*) and argues that these laws, as opposed to the ‘first law’ (*nmws’ qdmy*), are temporary and in force only until Jesus comes to abolish them:

Let this be before your eyes, that you know what in the Law [*nmws*] is the Law and what are the bonds that are in the second law [*tnyn nmws*], which after the Law, were given to those who, in the Law and in the second law, sinned in all those sins in the desert. For the first Law [*nmws’ qdmy*] is that which the Lord God spoke before the people made the calf and served idols, that is the ten sayings and the judgments. And after they have served idols, He rightly set upon them bonds, as they deserved, but do not therefore set them upon yourself for our Savior came for no other reason than to fulfill the Law and release us from the bonds of the second law ... (DA 2 CSCO 401:18/402:15)¹⁰

The second law is said to have been imposed ‘in the heat of his [God’s] anger – yet with the mercy of his goodness’ (DA 26 408:226), which seems to indicate that it was not so much a punishment as a necessary means to make the Israelites focus their attention on Israel’s God and preventing them from reverting to idolatry. That the worship of the golden calf is Israel’s cardinal sin is a view he shares both with the rabbis and the author of *Recognitions* 1-27-71 (*t. Shabb.* 1:16; *t. Meg.* 3.36-7). Through Jesus, God has released his people from the second law, and in doing so he has affirmed the validity of the first law, also defined as the ‘simple Law’ (*nmws’ pšyt*), whose content and spirit agree with the prophets and the Gospel:

...[F]or our Savior came for no other reason than to fulfill the law and release us from the bonds of the second law ... Thus, he called those who put their trust in Him and said: ‘Come to me, all who labor and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest’ [Matt. 11:28]. Therefore, without the weight of these burdens, read the simple Law, which agrees with the Gospel; and again the Gospel itself, and the Prophets... (DA 2 401:18-19/402:15)

10 The term *deuterosis* is used in fourth-century patristic sources to refer to extra-biblical teachings of the Jews, but the *Didascalia*’s use is different, see the discussion in Yadin-Israel 2013: 921-6, 933-5.

Those who insist on keeping the commandments of the second law after Jesus has restored the Law to its original state demonstrate their lack of trust in Jesus' power to release them from it, and by implication their lack of trust in the God who has sent him: 'Those, therefore, who do not obey him, that he may lighten and save them from the bonds of the second legislation, do not obey God, who has called them to come forth unto release and rest and relief...' (DA 27 408:230). Such lack of trust in God is what caused the Israelites' worship of the golden calf and accordingly observing the second law is the equivalent of idolatry: 'If you take upon you the second law, you are also taking up idolatry, the reason why the second law was imposed. ... And do not load yourselves again with something which our Lord and Savior has taken away from you' (DA 26 408:242-3).

The idea that lack of trust in Jesus is the present-day equivalent of calf-worship, explains why it is so important for the author that the members of his community refrain from practices that are based on the second law. Clearly, though, the rejection of the second law is not an attack on the Law itself, but an argument about its scope and correct interpretation. Jesus has come not 'to abrogate the Law, nor the Prophets, but to fulfill them' [Matt. 5:17] (DA 26 407:242/408:224). He has the power to abolish the second law and reestablish the first, original Law that signifies the pre-calf covenant, and in doing so he becomes the hermeneutic key for the interpretation of the Torah.

Baptism and the inclusion of Gentiles

The Law given to the Israelites ('the first people')¹¹ before the golden calf episode now also applies to the Gentiles ('the peoples'). These two groups – Jesus-oriented Jews and Jesus-oriented Gentiles – together make up 'the present assembly of God':

The Law is said to be a yoke because, like a yoke used for plowing, it is laid on the first people [*m' qdmy*] and also upon the present assembly of God [*dt' d'lw*]. And now it is upon us, upon those who were called from the People [*m*] and upon you and on those who are from the Peoples/Nations [*byt 'mm' pl.*] who have received mercy. So it governs and unites us in a single accord. (DA 26 407:249/408:231)

11 Vööbus (1979) 408:231 has 'former people', which seems to presuppose a classic replacement theology. Notably, he does not translate *nmws' qdmy* as 'former Law'.

In contrast to the author of the *Homilies*, who preserves the distinction between Jesus-oriented Jews and Jesus-oriented Gentiles, the *Didascalia* dissolves the two groups into one, prescribing a common practice for all. Calling his audience ‘the elect assembly of God’ (DA 9 401:103) the *Didascalia* seems to embrace a ‘remnant theology’ reminiscent of that found in some of the books of the prophets and Qumran texts, the only difference being that his remnant also includes Jesus-oriented individuals of Gentile origin.

The author of the *Didascalia* explains the fact that all Jews did not embrace Jesus and accordingly did not join the ‘elect assembly of God’ as a result of a blindness that God caused to fall upon them and because he ‘hardened their hearts like that of Pharaoh’ (DA 26), so that they did not understand that Jesus marked a new era in their history. This blindness was imposed on them because of their failure to keep the laws of the second law: ‘However, in not one of them did they abide, but they again provoked the Lord to anger. On this account he yet added to them by the second law a blindness worthy of their works...’ (DA 26 408:227). Although harsher, it bears some resemblance to the theory of concealment in the *Homilies* and is completely in line with what the biblical prophets accuse Israel of – indeed the author appeals to Isaiah to prove his point of Israel’s blindness.¹²

Because of the failure of non-Jesus-believing Jews to recognize Jesus as Israel’s Messiah, ‘all the activity of the Lord our God has passed from the people to the congregation through us the apostles’ (šlyh’) (DA 23 408:209), a statement that appears to be in line with a classic remnant theology as we know it from the Hebrew Bible and Qumran literature. Even the continuation of the passage, according to which God has ‘abandoned the people of the Jews and the temple, and has come to the congregation of the peoples’ is consistent with the idea of a righteous remnant to whom God’s blessings have been transferred. Our instinct to see in the remnant theology position an expression of Christian supersessionism is the consequence of the projection of a later reality onto these texts. At the time the *Didascalia* was composed it may have been perceived as anti-rabbinic, but hardly un-Jewish or anti-Jewish.

Entrance into the elect ‘assembly of God’ is achieved through immersion (m’mwdyt’), perceived as an initiation rite through which (Jesus-oriented) Jews and Gentiles alike are ‘set free from idolatry, and from the second law’ (DA 26 408:228). Through immersion the Jew who has turned to Jesus is absolved of his/her sin of idolatry (= lack of trust in God) – for which the second law

12 E.g. Isa. 6:10 and Matt. 13:14–15, quoting Isa. 6:9–10, DA 26 408:228.

was imposed – and released from the obligation to keep it. This means that Jews are no longer subject to the laws of purity, rendering purification from menstrual and other impurities unnecessary. The Gentiles, for their part, are cleansed of their idolatrous practices and generally sinful nature, making it possible for them to become part of the people of God: ‘But these things he [Christ] endured for our sake, that he might redeem us, those who are of the people from the bonds of the second law ... and that he might redeem you also, who are of the Gentiles, from the fear of idols and from all iniquity, and make you inherit’ (*DA* 19 408:172.11–15). For both Jews and Gentiles, immersion in water procures forgiveness of sins (*DA* 25 408:221; *DA* 20 408:183),¹³ and being an initiation ceremony representing the beginning of a new life it is to be performed only once (*DA* 24 408:215).

In sum, the *Didascalia* portrays Jesus as a lawgiver with the authority to renew and fulfill the Law by reinstating its original form. In his new saving act God also includes Gentiles, who along with Jesus-oriented Jews are to observe the first Law (but that law only), understood with Jesus as the hermeneutic key. Thus, the distinction between Jew and Gentile gives way to a common identity of the Jesus-adherents who make up ‘the congregation of God’, the present-day embodiment of the people of Israel.

4. Gentiles, prophecy and baptism within a Jewish context

Belief in prophecy and the Messiah, concern with Gentiles and the practice of immersion for the forgiveness of sins are all features of first-century Judaism which have roots in the Bible. One of the reasons we tend to regard them as Christian (i.e. non-Jewish) is that they did not live on in rabbinic Judaism, the form of Judaism that eventually became the sole criterion for determining Jewishness. Another reason is that we automatically assume that what is Christian cannot also be Jewish. Such a separation between Judaism and Christianity did eventually take place of course, but the recent scholarly insight that the parting of the ways was a very slow and messy process, in which adherence to Jesus did not demarcate a major dividing line, makes it unlikely that these developments of first-century phenomena in the third and fourth centuries were regarded, even by rabbinic Jews, as having no relation to Judaism.

13 ‘But again, sins are forgiven by baptism also to those who from the gentiles draw near and enter the holy congregation of God’ (*DA* 20 408:183).

The concern with Gentiles appears to have been a prominent feature of first-century Judaism, shared by Jesus-oriented Jews but not unique to them.¹⁴ It originated much earlier, however and goes back to the time when the Israelites began to see their God as the God of the whole world. 'For all the earth is mine', is the reason God gives for choosing Israel as his special people in Exod. 19:5, a clear indication that the author of this passage believed that in entering into a special relationship with Israel, God also had the other nations in mind. The fate of these nations at the end of time is an issue that occupies the biblical prophets, who foresee that 'all the nations' will come to 'the House of the God of Jacob' in Jerusalem 'in the days to come' (Isa. 2:2–3). Eschatological expectations of the late first century, along with the fact that many Gentiles joined the Jesus movement, must have appeared to the Jesus-adherents as the fulfillment of such prophecies.

Thus, the fact that the communities behind the *Homilies* and *Didascalia* (assuming there were communities) included Gentiles does not mean that these authors and communities could not have claimed a Jewish self-identity. The identity of the non-Jewish members of the Jesus movement in the first century seems to have been largely defined by their self-understanding as participants in Judaism and the Jewish communal way of life that applied even to the non-Jewish members (Nanos 2011: 67), and in light of the outbursts by the Church Fathers over Christian participation in Jewish festivals and synagogue services, some affiliation with Judaism seems to have continued for several centuries, at least in some places. Many Gentiles who joined the Jesus movement seem previously to have adopted Jewish customs and Torah observance (Kimelman 1999, Murray 2004), and it does not seem far-fetched to assume that a Jewish identity persevered for several centuries, not only in groups of purely Jesus-oriented Jews, but also in Jesus-oriented groups made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Although the view of Jewish identity and vision of Judaism in Jesus-oriented groups differed from the rabbinic one, they nevertheless have deep roots in the Hebrew Bible and we should be careful not to dismiss them as un-Jewish by using rabbinic Judaism as the sole criterion of Jewishness.

The first-century practice of immersion to procure the forgiveness of sins is developed in slightly different ways in our three texts. The author of *Recognitions* 1.27–71 regards it as having replaced the sacrifices in a post-Temple era and presumably sees it as a practice of atonement for individual Jews. In his view,

14 Similar expressions of a universalistic trend are found within rabbinic Judaism in the R. Ishmael school in tannaitic literature (Hirshman 2000: 101–15).

immersion also seems to function as an initiation rite of sorts, marking adherence to Jesus:

Then he [James] instructed the people, demonstrating that unless one wash in the name of the glorious Trinity in the waters whose flow is living, just as the prophet of truth showed, there will be no forgiveness of sins for him and he will also not enter into the kingdom of God. (*Recognitions* 1.69.5)

The idea that adherence to Jesus, of which immersion ‘in the name of the glorious Trinity’ is the mark is a necessary prerequisite for entering the kingdom of God (1.69.9, cf. John 3:5) is consistent with the ‘remnant theology’ of *Recognitions* 1.27–71, according to which belief in Jesus is true Judaism.

The author of the *Homilies* seems to perceive immersion both as an initiation rite for Gentiles whereby they are cleansed from the general sinfulness inherent in all pagans due to their worship of idols, *and* as a regular ritual ablution for the purification of the body after defilement (11.27–30). Possibly, this is a continuation and development of a first-century ideology according to which notions of ritual and moral impurity had become blurred and immersion was practised as a means of purification from both. According to Jonathan Klawans (1997: 144–69), impurity and sin had merged in the Qumran community, leading to the identification of purification and atonement. Accordingly, immersion (*tbykh*) was a means of purification from both ritual and moral impurity, and the two were intertwined so that repentance was seen as necessary for the cleansing from ritual impurity to take effect, and likewise atonement was considered incomplete without purification.

Similar ideas are found in the *Homilies* where purity of body and soul are dependent on each other and where immersion as a means of purification from ritual impurity continues to be practised (11.28–30, 33). After having undergone the initiation rite of immersion for the remission of sins (baptism) Gentile Jesus-believers are subject to the laws of purity just like Jews (7.8).

According to the author of the *Didascalia*, both Jesus-believing Jews and Gentiles should undergo immersion for the forgiveness of sins, and for both categories it is a one-time initiation rite marking the beginning of a new life. He argues vehemently against female members of his community who continue to practice ritual purity and immerse after menses (*DA* 26). In contrast to the author of the *Homilies*, who insists on the importance of *both* ritual and moral purity, the *Didascalia* takes a step further abolishing the need for ritual purification altogether, since these laws are part of the second law abolished by Jesus.



Excavation of Qumran community, Dead Sea. Photo by James Emery, 2007. CC-BY-2.0. Wikimedia Commons.

The idea of Jesus as the Messiah, and above all, as a prophet and lawgiver is a continuation of the eschatological- and prophecy-oriented Judaism of the first century that saw Jesus as a prophet with divine authority to teach and interpret the Law. The passage from Deut. 18:15–18 that the authors of both *Recognitions* 1.27–71 and the *Homilies* refer to in order to assert the divine authority of Jesus through his identification with the future prophet promised by God through Moses, serves the same purpose in the synoptic gospels: ‘While he [Peter] was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my son, the beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”’ (Matt. 3:17; cf. Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).

In spite of the rabbinic insistence that prophecy had ceased from Israel with the last biblical prophets (*t. Sot.* 13:3; *y. Sot.* 9:14; *b. Sot.* 48b; *b. Yoma* 9b; *b. B. Bat.* 12b; *S. Olam Rab.* ch. 30), the gospels and Josephus provide evidence that belief in prophecy and prophets continued among first-century Jews (*B. J.* 2.259–263; *A. J.* 20.97–98, 20.169–71; Matt. 14:5; Mark 11:32; Luke 24:19; John 4:19) (Horsley 1985: 435–63). In light of this, the rabbinic sources seem to attest more to a desire of the rabbinic movement to establish the authority of its own elite, the rabbis, by claiming that the divine will was now found only in

the interpretation of the Torah, than to a reflection of reality. It seems likely that some Jews never ceased to believe in prophecy, or perhaps a revival occurred in the first century due to the widespread belief that the end-time was imminent (Sommer 1996: 31–47).

Given a number of texts dating from the second to fourth centuries, which combine a strong interest in prophecy with a Jewish, or even priestly self-definition (e.g. *Ascension of Isaiah*, 5 and 6 *Ezra*, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Lives of the Prophets*, 4 *Baruch*) and recent claims that the diversity of Second Temple Judaism continued into the early centuries of the common era (Goodman 1994: 347–56; Magness 2012: 69–89; Reed 2006: 323–46) it seems that belief in prophecy was alive and well in non-rabbinic forms of Judaism well into the fourth century. These texts are also oriented towards Jesus in some way, but rather than dismissing them as non-Jewish ‘Christian’, David Frankfurter (2007) has suggested that they represent forms of prophetic Judaism whose adherents at some point adopted belief in Jesus as the Messiah. In his words: ‘Thus, far from seeing a Christian “importation” of Jewish texts, or even a self-consciously “Christian” appropriation of Jewish traditions, we should posit a multiform “prophetic sectarianism” that continued with a fairly consistent identity and impulse from a Jewish stage into a Jewish and Christ-oriented stage’ (*ibid.* 139).

If we are ready to at least consider the possibility that belief in prophecy and Jesus continued as orientations within Judaism and that rabbinic Judaism, rather than being the only form of Judaism and the sole criterion for Jewishness, was one group among many others (although admittedly increasingly dominant), a different picture of Judaism during the early centuries of the common era emerges. Given the growing scholarly trend arguing that the rabbinic movement gained in importance and influence only in the third to fourth centuries, or even later (Hezser 1997, Himmelfarb 1993, Schwartz 2001), we ought to consider the possibility that some Jews embraced non-rabbinic forms of Judaism, among them Jesus-orientation.

Although all adherents to the groups I have discussed, combining law observance with belief in Jesus, would not have been considered Jews, even by these groups themselves, the ideas of the mission of the people of Israel envisioned by their authors seem to be part of a thoroughly Jewish worldview. They represent a way of life for Jews and Jesus-oriented non-Jews with the God of Israel at its centre that I, for the lack of a better term, have chosen to call Judaism. Given the ethnic component in the rabbinic view of Jewish identity, leading them to view *minim* (heretical Jews) as retaining their distinctive identity as Israel in spite of their heretical beliefs and practices (Stern 1994: 111–12; Alexander

1992: 4–6),¹⁵ I tend to think that provided the authors of these Jesus-oriented texts and a substantial part of their communities were Jews, it is likely that their ideas and ideologies would have been seen as part of Judaism (albeit of the wrong kind) even by rabbinic Jews.

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15 t. *Shabb.* 13.5; t. *Hull.* 1.1; b. *Gitt.* 45b; b. *Hull.* 13b.

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Celsus, *Toledot Yeshu* and early traces of apology for the virgin birth of Jesus

ANTTI LAATO

In this article New Testament passages referring to the birth of Jesus are related to Celsus' anti-Christian arguments and the Jewish *Toledot Yeshu* tradition with a new question: *Why it was so difficult to speak about the virgin birth of Jesus?* It is argued that the concept of the virgin birth of Jesus was seen to be problematic for two reasons: 1) The concept was liable to result in scurrilous rumours, even scoffing and parodic episodes revolving on its sexual aspects. 2) Every attempt to explain that God was in some way the agent when a young girl conceived came too close to Gen. 6:1-4 – the text which explained in ancient Judaism the origin of the demonic world. Therefore, some New Testament authors (for example, the writer of the Gospel of John) deliberately avoided speaking about the virgin birth and instead presented the birth of Jesus in terms of the idea of an incarnated, personified, divine Wisdom. In order to avoid erroneous connotations relating to Gen. 6:1-4, Matthew and Luke followed a tradition where the Holy Spirit (a feminine word in Hebrew and Aramaic) played an active role in the pregnancy.

New question

The miraculous birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary is an essential belief in the Christian Church.* Exegetical discussions have mainly focused on the problems concerning the origin of idea of virginal birth and its meaning in the early Christian belief system. It is argued that Paul did not know about Jesus' virgin birth, it being formulated only later in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (e.g. Matlock 2000: 45–57; Brown 1993). The witness statements of these two gospels of the birth of Jesus by the Virgin Mary soon became the cornerstone of the Christian faith (see for example Gambero 1999). In scholarly discussion new ideas can emerge when new questions are presented on the material. In this article I shall re-evaluate the New Testament references to the birth of Jesus by suggesting that the main question is not 'When and why was the idea of the

* This article was written in 2015 when I was granted Professor Pool scholarship by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland that is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

virgin birth introduced?’ but rather *Why it was so difficult to speak about the virgin birth of Jesus?* The relevance of this question becomes apparent when one notices that the virgin birth is not mentioned in the Gospel of John even though it was certainly written after Matthew and Luke, and the concept itself would have fitted well into the framework of the high Christology of that gospel.¹

The new question presented here implies that there were reasons as to why the concept of the virgin birth was so difficult. From at least two different perspectives the concept was open to criticism. Firstly, common sense indicates that a young girl cannot conceive without the help of a man. Every attempt to argue in that direction laid the story open to scurrilous rumours, even scoffing and parodic episodes revolving on the sexual aspects of the situation. The relevance of this problem is well attested in early anti-Christian critiques of the virgin birth, documented from the second century AD onwards (in the text of Celsus, as quoted in Origen’s *Contra Celsum*) and manifest in the so-called Jewish *Toledot Yeshu* literature. A second and more serious problem is that every attempt to explain that God was in some way the agent in the case of a young girl conceiving came too close to Gen. 6:1–4. This text was understood in early Judaism to explain the origin of the demonic world, as becomes clear from First Enoch (Hanson 1977, Nickelsburg 1977, Bhayro 2005 and 2006) and the Book of Jubilees (VanderKam 1999).² Therefore, all expressions concerning the virgin birth where the activity of God was emphasized came dangerously close to blasphemy against God. The relevance of this problem becomes apparent in the formulations of the virgin birth in Matthew and Luke where no reference is made to the agency of God the Father in the pregnancy of Mary; rather to that of the Holy Spirit (a feminine word in Hebrew and Aramaic). Starting from these two difficulties I shall discuss how the concept of the birth of Jesus is presented in the New Testament texts.

- 1 The Gospel of John emphasizes three important elements in Christology. 1) Jesus is the Son of God who had pre-existence before his advent. The world is created through him (John 1:1–14). 2) God sent his Son to the world in order to save it from sin (John 3:16–17). 3) After his resurrection Jesus took up his glorious position beside God in heaven (cf., Ps. 110:1) where he reigns over the world. Against the background of such high Christology it would be curious if the writer of the Gospel of John thought that Jesus’ birth was an ordinary event. However, all the three Christological elements are already represented in the theology of Paul: 1) 1 Cor. 8:6; Phil. 2:5–10; 2) the ‘God sent his Son’ formula in Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4 (cf., John 3:16–17; 1 John 4:9–10); 3) 1 Cor. 15:25–7 with reference to Psalm 110. For these connections between John and Paul see Hengel 1992: 425–48.
- 2 See further the contributions in Fröhlich and Koskenniemi 2013.

Toledot Yeshu literature: a parodic counter-narrative to the Gospels

A good example of parodic treatment of the virgin birth of Jesus can be found in the *Toledot Yeshu* (TY) literature. It consists of Jewish counter-narratives to the Christian Gospels where the case of Jesus is revealed to Jewish readers in a parodic way.³ Research into the TY tradition has benefitted enormously from the recent publication of a comprehensive edition of the various TY stories.⁴ It is a well known fact that in its literary form the TY tradition was produced only from the Byzantine period onwards – something which was emphasized in Samuel Krauss's monograph of 1902 and has recently been confirmed in several articles edited by Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson and Yaacov Deutsch (2011; see also Schreckenberg 1999: 483–4). Meerson and Schäfer (2014, I: 6–7) argue that Agobard's (c. 769–840 CE) reference to a Jewish story about Jesus is the earliest clear example of the existence of a written version of the TY (see also Schäfer 2011: 27–48) – in that case the tradition which is similar to that in Aramaic documents from Cairo Geniza (corresponding to the tradition of the Early Oriental A in Group I). They admit that some independent Jewish counter-arguments concerning the life of Jesus are detectable in patristic literature, but argue that none of them contain such details that will prove that a written version of the TY tradition ever existed. For example, Celsus' Jewish source on Jesus was not a TY version. The only real parallels to the TY tradition are provided in the Talmud which calls Jesus the son of Panthera, and contains stories about the trial of five disciples of Jesus (bSanh 43a), Jesus' atrocious behaviour in an Alexandrian hostel (bSanh 107b) and Miriam's confession to Rabbi Aqiba concerning Yeshu's parentage (Kallah 18b). (See Schäfer 2007: 34–40, 75–81)

The central topic in the TY tradition was the means by which Mary became pregnant. It was presented in a parodic way. Precisely this detail in TY has been the topic of earlier counter-exegetical arguments against Christianity, especially in Celsus' Jewish source where reference is also made to Jesus as the son of Panthera (*Contra Celsum* I.28, 32, 33, 69).⁵ David Rokéah and Philip Alexander

- 3 Concerning the genre of counter-narrative in Jewish sources, see Funkenstein 1993 and Biale 1999. Concerning the use of parody in Jewish texts from late antiquity see Zellentin 2011. Holger Zellentin deals with rabbinical parodies about Christians or Jesus on pp. 137–212.
- 4 See Meerson and Schäfer 2014. In Meerson and Schäfer (2014, I: 28–39) all available manuscripts have been divided into three different main Groups I–III. Group I 'represents the earliest developments of all of the the *Toledot Yeshu* versions' (I:31).
- 5 Scholars have discussed whether or not Celsus has fabricated his Jewish sources as Origen states (see I.28, 34, 44, 49, 55, 67; II.1, 28, 31, 34, 53). For example Meerson

have argued that the idea of Jesus as the son of Pandira/Panthera was developed in Yabneh during the second century BC (Rokéah 2002:12, 40n37, 107–8, 118; Alexander 2011: 599–600). According to Nicholas de Lange, the fables about Jesus which Celsus' Jew formulated were later used in the TY tradition.⁶ Even other Jewish counter-exegetical arguments used by Celsus are similar to those which were later presented in early versions of the TY literature.⁷ Alexander in the study referred to above has suggested that TY literature should be regarded as one relevant apocryphal viewpoint on the four gospels which may add to our understanding of the early traditions about Jesus. What kind of interpretive scenario does the TY tradition and its pre-stages in Celsus's text and rabbinical writings give to the birth of Jesus?

Mary's harlotry with Panthera

In his work *Contra Celsum* Origen explains that Celsus would have used an early (Alexandrian) Jewish source in which Jesus was presented as the son of Mary and the Roman soldier Panthera.⁸ According to Origen, Celsus claims to

and Schäfer (2014, I: 7n25) emphasize that 'it is impossible to ascertain whether or not Celsus' Jew was a fictive character'. Nevertheless, several scholars have argued that Celsus must have known Jewish sources. For this see Niehoff 2013. She does not refer to the *Toledot Yeshu* tradition apparently because she has evaluated the situation in such a way that all references to it would be anachronistic. See further Bammel 1986: 265–83; Baumgarten 1990: 37–44; Hargis 1999: 36–9; Triggs 1998: 58. See also Blummell 2007: 297–315 where he notes that 'it is impossible to determine whether Celsus' Jew was a real person' (p. 309), but he nevertheless argues that views presented by this possible 'conglomeration of many Jews' differ from those otherwise presented by Celsus. See p. 299: '... there are compelling reasons to believe that embedded within Celsus' *True Doctrine* are authentic Jewish arguments against Christianity from the latter part of the 2nd century'.

- 6 De Lange 1978: 66: 'Celsus next puts forward, in the person of a Jew, some of the fables about Jesus which were already current, and were later woven together to form the *Sepher Toldoth Yeshu*'. See also p. 69: 'It is an early source for the slanders against Jesus which appear in the *Sepher Toldoth Yeshu* but have left little trace in the tannaitic writings and the earliest of the Church Fathers'. See further also Meerson and Schäfer 2014, I: 5–8.
- 7 These parallels I shall deal with in another article; 'A cold case reopened: a Jewish source on Christianity used by Celsus and the *Toledot Yeshu* literature. From counter-exegetical arguments to full-blown counter-story'.
- 8 Methodologically we must be aware of the fact that Celsus' text is not given; rather it must be reconstructed. Concerning the attempts to reconstruct Celsus' text the following works and translations (where Celsus' quotations are marked) should be mentioned; see Bader 1940, Chadwick 1953, Hoffman 1987, Lona 2005. In this recon-

have used a Jewish source in which a Jew engages in a personal dialogue with Jesus (I.28). On this occasion Origen paraphrases Celsus' text where the latter has used his Jewish source and presents the following details about the birth and the life of Jesus are presented:

For he [i.e. Celsus's Jewish informant] represents him disputing with Jesus, and confuting Him, as he thinks, on many points; and in the first place, he accuses Him of having invented his birth from a virgin, and upbraids Him with being born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child (*skotios*), who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God. Now, as I cannot allow anything said by unbelievers to remain unexamined, but must investigate everything from the beginning, I give it as my opinion that all these things worthily harmonize with the predictions that Jesus is the Son of God. (*Contra Celsum* I.28)

The Greek word *skotios* carries the meaning 'bastard' and this keyword is interesting because in the TY tradition Jesus has been referred to by the cognate Hebrew (or Aramaic) words *zimmâ* or *mamzer* and also the expression *ben/bar niddâ* which indicates that Miriam (Mary) was not yet purified from her menstruation when a villain made love with her or raped her.⁹ In I.32 by paraphrasing Celsus' text Origen informs us more about Celsus' Jew who accounts for the circumstances in which Jesus was born. On this occasion the name of

struction we must take into account how Origen has quoted his source, that is, Celsus' critical treatise on Christianity. Scholars often answer this methodological case by noting that Origen, in many points, has cited his source verbatim even though he may also have shortened Celsus' text. Nor did he always give a very precise picture of Celsus' arguments. See, e.g., Thomas 2006: 72–3.

- 9 A woman is impure for seven days after she has menstruated all blood (Lev. 15:19–30). This detail has been used as an argument that Jesus was born in circumstances which were not according to the instructions of the Torah. See further Lockshin 1993: 226–41, esp. 235.

Jesus' father is given as Panthera (I.32; the name Panthera is also mentioned in I.33, 69):¹⁰

But let us now return to where the Jew is introduced, speaking of the mother of Jesus, and saying that when she was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera; and let us see whether those who have blindly concocted these fables about the adultery of the Virgin with Panthera, and her rejection by the carpenter, did not invent these stories to overturn His miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost: for they could have falsified the history in a different manner, on account of its extremely miraculous character, and not have admitted, as it were against their will, that Jesus was born of no ordinary human marriage. It was to be expected, indeed, that those who would not believe the miraculous birth of Jesus would invent some falsehood. And their not doing this in a credible manner, but (their) preserving the fact that it was not by Joseph that the Virgin conceived Jesus, rendered the falsehood very palpable to those who can understand and detect such inventions.

The name of Panthera is significant because in rabbinical writings (e.g. Tosefta Hullin II.24; bShabb 104b),¹¹ as well as in the *Toledot Yesu* tradition, the name Pandira or Pantira has been used. Two of the earliest versions of the *Toledot Yesu* tradition, the so-called early Yemenite and the Byzantine version, contain the birth story of Jesus (Meerson and Schäfer 2014, I: 147–66; II: 65–78).¹² The early Yemenite text calls Jesus Yesu ben Pandera ha-Notsri and adds the attribute *zimmâ ûbar niddâ*, ‘abomination (bastard) and the son of

- 10 I.69: ‘But he [Celsus] disbelieves the accounts of His conception by the Holy Ghost, and believes that He was begotten by one Panthera, who corrupted the Virgin, because a god’s body would not have been so generated as you were. But we have spoken of these matters at greater length in the preceding pages.’
- 11 Concerning the interpretation of bShab 104b see Schäfer 2007: 15–24 where it is also noted that the rabbinic term is parallel to Celsus’ ‘Jewish’ tradition of Panthera. See further mShabb 12:4; tShabb 11:15; yShabb 12:4/3. Note also Johann Maier’s (1978: 249–67) evaluation of the origin of the Jesus ben Pandira tradition.
- 12 It is significant that the Early Oriental B version (New York JTS 8998) does not contain the birth story of Jesus, but nevertheless the manuscript begins with reference to Jesus as the son of Pandera: ‘This is the Book of the Nazoreans, as decreed concerning Yeshua^c, the son of Pandera’. See Meerson and Schäfer 2014, I: 137–44. The Early Oriental A manuscripts and the Early Oriental C are both fragmentary at the beginning (Meerson and Schäfer 2014, I: 127–36, 145–6) so we do not know whether or not the birth story has been recounted in them.

menstruating woman'. The story begins with the observation of how rabbis realize that Jesus was interested in gambling. They want to know more about this man and so Rabbi Yehoshua^c ben Perahiah receives information from the mother of Jesus. She tells the following story which explains the expression *zimmâ ubar niddâ*: 'Once I went out at night to launder my shawls after menstruation and I still was impure. Then, someone approached me, and I did not recognize him, and he raped me, and so I conceived this boy.' This being the case the story connects the name of the father of Jesus with the rapist who violated the mother of Jesus during her period of menstrual impurity. The story continues to characterize the mother of Jesus in the following way: 'And the mother of Yeshu was

an extremely important woman, although a frivolous one, and because she used to go out alone without (a man) who would keep her safe, she brought this misfortune upon herself.' The early Yemenite version does not mention anything about the father of Yeshu, but implies his name in the introductory words of the text: 'The story of Yeshu ben Pandera ha-Notsri (may his name and memory be blotted out), who was an abomination and the son of a menstruating woman.'

The Byzantine version also contains a story of rape but in this case the story begins with a positive characterization of Miriam and Yosef. Yosef 'feared God more than most people in his generation'. But one day he quarrelled with a Jew who decided to destroy Yosef by committing adultery with his wife. One Sabbath eve this wicked man 'climbed into his [Yosef's] bed and lay with Miriam, who thought that he was her husband Yosef'. She became pregnant and Yosef later noticed this. It became clear for him and then also Miriam what had taken place but 'from his great love for Miriam, for she was very [beautiful] he did not reveal what happened, so that the matter would not have to go before a court'. The story is certainly ironical in assuming that Miriam made love without recognizing who the man was, and Yosef who feared God after all did not reject adulterous Miriam. The story then goes on to tell how Yosef, Miriam and Yeshu went to Egypt and how Miriam had more children



Our Lady of Vladimir, twelfth century, the holy protectress of Russia, now in the Tretyakov Gallery. Wikimedia Commons.

there ‘again by harlotry (*biznūt*), more than once’ and how Yeshu learned there ‘Egyptian wisdom, in illusions and sorcery’. In this connection the story states that ‘they called him Yeshu^c the son of Yosef’. Only later in the story is Yeshu called ‘ben Pandera’ indicating again the way in which the name of the father has been interpreted in this *Toledot Yeshu* version. The Byzantine version may imply a schism between Yosef and Miriam, especially when it notes that in Egypt Miriam had more children as a result of harlotry.¹³ It is interesting that such a separation between Joseph and Mary is accounted in Celsus’ texts (I.28, 32) already quoted and we may also add I.39:

I do not think it necessary to grapple with an argument advanced not in a serious but in a scoffing spirit, such as the following: ‘If the mother of Jesus was beautiful, then the god whose nature is not to love a corruptible body, had intercourse with her because she was beautiful’; or, ‘It was improbable that the god would entertain a passion for her, because she was neither rich nor of royal rank, seeing no one, even of her neighbours, knew her’. And it is in the same scoffing spirit that he adds: ‘When hated by her husband, and turned out of doors, she was not saved by divine power, nor was her story believed. Such things’, he says, ‘have no connection with the kingdom of heaven’. In what respect does such language differ from that of those who pour abuse on others on the public streets, and whose words are unworthy of any serious attention?

Interestingly these paraphrases from Celsus’ Jewish source (I.28, 32, 39) reveal two important points about Jesus and his parents which were later developed in the *Toledot Yeshu* tradition. Mary was beautiful and she was actually rejected by Joseph.¹⁴ This rejection implies that the birth of Jesus was an argument for his not having anything to do with the kingdom of heaven (I.39).¹⁵

13 In later *Toledot Yeshu* versions Yosef actually leaves Miriam because of her harlotry with Pandera.

14 The text which Origen quotes states that Mary was ‘hated’ (*misoumenē*) by Joseph. The expression ‘hate’ is, in fact, a juridical term in Jewish divorce documents as can be seen from the evidence of Elephantine papyri. For this see Bammel 1986: 270–1.

15 When Celsus uses this Semitic expression ‘kingdom of heaven’ (appears also in III.59; VI.17; VIII.11) we may assume that it originates from the Gospels and could well be a part of his Jewish source which contains critical evaluations of Gospel stories. On the other hand, as Günter Stemberger has noted to me in an e-mail (17.5.2015), the ‘kingdom of heaven’ is customary in rabbinic texts and can also originate from Jewish contexts.

Finally, it should be noted that the Early Oriental B version characterizes Miriam by means of an expression which indicates that she was a prostitute: 'Her name is Miriam, and she grows the (long) hair of women'.¹⁶ In addition, the story accounts the words of Yeshu: 'I am a Jew, and also a bastard (*mamzer*)', as well as 'the name of my father was Pandera, and he was a foreigner in Israel', indicating that the Early Oriental B version parallels with Celsus's counter-exegesis in *Contra Celsum* I.32 (so also Meerson and Schäfer 2014, I: 138n9).

The picture of Mary in the early versions of *Toledot Yeshu* tradition

I have argued above that the tradition of Celsus accords well with the evidence of rabbinical writings and TY tradition. Nevertheless, it is significant that Meerson and Schäfer argue that none of 'the earliest versions of *Toledot Yeshu* develop the story described by Celsus'. They continue that 'in fact, all early texts of *Toledot Yeshu* in the East and the West completely ignore the question of Yeshu's origin except for the single fact that he is "ben/bar Pandera" which alone does not imply much. Not a word about Yeshu's pedigree is said by the Aramaic fragments (the Early Oriental A and C) and the passage in Agobard'.¹⁷ If this is the case, then TY tradition would be an example of how the picture of Mary was transmitted differently in Jewish contexts where the aim was to oppose the virgin birth. After examining the early versions of TY literature I have come to a different conclusion.

All five versions in Group I available now in Meerson and Schäfer TY refer to Jesus as the son of Pandera. That the concept of 'the son of Pandera' is related to the adulterous origin of Jesus in the Talmud is noted by Schäfer (2007: 19). So it is difficult to see why the situation would have been different in the TY tradition where this concept has been used from earlier versions onwards. The Early Oriental A and C versions are fragmentary at the beginning (as presented in Meerson's and Schäfer's edition) and it is impossible to know whether or not they contained the birth narrative. On the other hand, the Early Oriental B version indicates clearly that Miriam was regarded as a prostitute and Jesus as a bastard. Therefore, we have good reason to argue that something similar was stated at the beginning of the Early Oriental A and C. The Yemenite version blames Miriam because she 'used to go out alone' (the point is that there were no witnesses to the rape and Miriam could have fabricated a convenient story about her pregnancy) and the Byzantine version states that Miriam made

16 Concerning this metaphor see bShabb 104b and bErub 100b and Schäfer 2007: 16–18.

17 Meerson and Schäfer 2014, I: 45–56. Both quotations are from p. 47.

love with a man without recognizing who he really was – a detail which must be a parodic element. In addition, the Byzantine version notes that Miriam later had more children in Egypt ‘again by harlotry, more than once’, reiterating what happened the first time. This being the case, it is difficult for me to regard the early Yemenite version as one which ‘contrasts with’ the Early Oriental B version (in the case of Jesus’ birth) as noted by Meerson and Schäfer (2014, I: 138n9). Rather they are good parallels to each other.

We can hardly use Agobard’s references as an argument that Jesus’ adulterous birth was unknown in early TY versions. After all, Agobard only recounts Jewish stories as he heard them from those who knew Hebrew (as noted in Schäfer 2011: 27–48, esp. p. 38). In addition, Agobard’s successor Amulo (as noted by Schäfer) referred to Jewish ideas about the origin of Jesus: ‘he is impious and the son of an impious, namely (someone), of uncertain origin, whom they call Pandera: with whom they say the mother of (our) Lord committed adultery, and in this way he, in whom we believe, was born’.¹⁸ So it is hardly possible that such a detail was lacking in TY versions in Agobard’s time.

This being the case the only relevant conclusion is that Miriam was regarded more or less as a prostitute or an adulterous woman in the early versions of TY. No sympathetic view of Miriam can be detected.¹⁹ In the counter-narratives such as TY the main point was to show the falsehood of the Christian concept of the virgin birth of Jesus. Miriam’s pregnancy is recounted in the early TY versions in quite a similar way as is found in Celsus’ counter-exegetical themes of the life of Jesus.

The early versions of TY indicate how they have related the birth story of Jesus to the name Pandera. It is clear that the ‘ben Pandera’ tradition is something which has been transmitted in rabbinical circles. It denoted the suspicious origin of Jesus in a similar way to Celsus’ counter-exegesis. But the historical details of this suspicious origin were not clearly indicated in rabbinical traditions which opened up the possibility of developing different explanations, as

18 This is noted in Schäfer 2011: 45–6. It is worth noting that Schäfer writes on p. 47: ‘Although we cannot know whether Amulo had access to Celsus (through Origen) or – admittedly less likely – to the Babylonian Talmud’s brief reference to Pandera as Miriam’s lover, one thing seems clear: Amulo’s *Toledot Yesu* was focused on Jesus’ death and not in his birth and life.’ However, the Early Oriental B version is a nice parallel to Amulo’s version because it contains ideas that Jesus is a bastard, the son of an adulterous relationship between Miriam and Pandera.

19 For a sympathetic view of Miriam, see Gager and Ahuvia 2013.

is already indicated in early versions of TY (belonging to Group I). In later texts (Group II and III) there were more sophisticated variations.²⁰

An attempt to date the history of the Panthera tradition earlier than Celsus gives us no firm results. As does Justin Martyr (*Dial* 43, 50, 63, 67) so does also Origen (I.34) discuss Isa. 7:14 and the meaning of the Hebrew word *‘almâ* (translated *parthenos* in LXX). While arguments presented in Justin’s and Origen’s texts are similar, the former never refers to the alleged ‘Jewish’ story concerning Panthera as the father of Jesus. *Acts of Pilate* II.3. is another early text which contains reference to the illegitimate birth of Jesus as expressed by his Jewish opponents: ‘you were born of fornication’. Nevertheless, the date of Acts of Pilate cannot be firmly traced back to earlier than the beginning of the fourth century.²¹

This being the case, we have a coherent interpretive tradition from the Jewish points of view which depicts the pregnancy of Mary as an adulterous act, presumably with the Jewish villain Pandira or the Roman soldier Panthera. Could it be possible that a similar interpretive scenario was already countered in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke?

Apology for Virgin Mary in the Gospel of Matthew

Felix Scheidweiler has suggested that the genealogy of Matthew may indicate that scurrilous rumours about the birth of Jesus prevailed (among the Jews). The genealogy in Matt. 1 mentions four women each of whom were – in some ways – suspicious cases in the Hebrew Bible: Tamar (gave birth as a consequence of harlotry, Gen. 38), Rahab (was a harlot, Josh. 2 and 6), Ruth (was a Moabite woman, see Deut. 23:4–5) and Batsheba (committed adultery with David, 2 Sam. 11–12).²² These four examples are listed in the Gospel of

20 For different versions of *Toledot Yesu* note Alexander 2011: 588–616. He is well aware of the fact that scholars should wait for the publication of all *Toledot Yesu* manuscripts. Nevertheless, he has made several important remarks on this tradition.

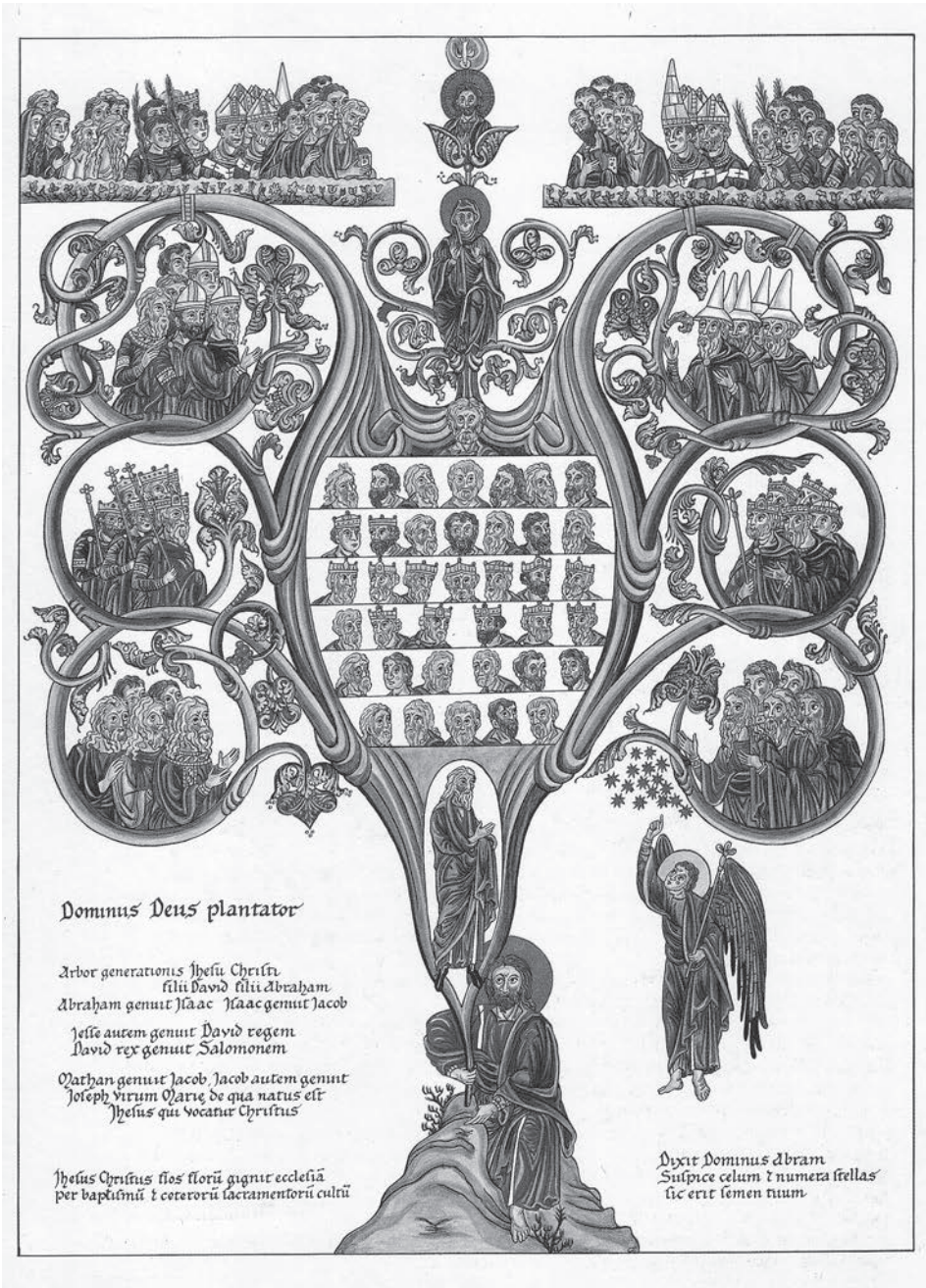
21 See the text and its date in Scheidweiler 1991. Scheidweiler notes that Epiphanius (about 375/6) clearly refers to Acts of Pilate and, therefore, it certainly existed at that time, apparently even earlier. The problem is that there are different references to texts where Pilate plays a role and their relation to the Acts of Pilate remains unclear.

22 According to Origen, Celsus maintained in his work that Christians have fabricated the genealogies of Jesus (II.32): ‘But he asserts that the “framers of the genealogies, from a feeling of pride, made Jesus out to be descended from the first man, and from the kings of the Jews”. And he thinks that he makes a notable charge when he adds, that “the carpenter’s wife could not have been ignorant of the fact, had she been of such illustrious descent”.’

Matthew in order to explain why it is no wonder that in the case of Mary and the infant Jesus there are also rumours concerning Jesus' origin.

At first sight the case of Ruth seems to be an exception. Even though she was a Moabite woman she nevertheless had a good reputation. However, it is worth noting that Deut. 23:4–5 excludes Moabites from the community of Israel. In addition, just before these verses there is a statement (Deut. 23:3) that no bastard (*mamzer*) can be taken into the congregation of God. It is precisely this verse which has been used in the Byzantine version of TY to argue the case that Jesus cannot be accepted in the congregation.²³ So what we have in

- 23 Meerson and Schäfer 2014, I: 156: 'They said to him this, A bastard shall not enter the congregation of God (Deut. 23:2 [sic]). He said to them, "And even if it were as you say, I am wiser than you and fear the Lord, and I will not hold back his rebuke from you, You shall surely rebuke your kinsman" (Lev. 19:17). They replied to him, "From now on, we will not accept your words, and you will not even dwell among us, because you are a bastard." He tried to appease them, but they did not relent until he gave in and went away in his zeal. And Jeroboam turned to evil ways.' While a modern reader may find sympathetic elements in the story and regard the Jews here as being in the wrong in this case, the point is that there was something fundamentally amiss in Jesus' behaviour. The earlier Byzantine story noted that Jesus learned 'Egyptian wisdom, in illusions and sorcery' and this explains why he was so wise. While Christians may argue that Jesus' wisdom was due to his divinity and his supernatural birth was therefore set in high relief, the *Toledot Yesu* tradition argues, as it were, parodically, that Jesus was indeed wise, but this was due to his being a bastard and having escaped to Egypt with his mother (who continued her harlotry there); there he learned magic and sorcery. It is worth quoting Origen, *Contra Celsum* I.33 who argues that the birth of Jesus must be supernatural: 'Now if a particular soul, for certain mysterious reasons, is not deserving of being placed in the body of a wholly irrational being, nor yet in that of one purely rational, but is clothed with a monstrous body, so that reason cannot discharge its functions in one so fashioned, which has the head disproportioned to the other parts, and altogether too short; and another receives such a body that the soul is a little more rational than the other; and another still more so, the nature of the body counteracting to a greater or less degree the reception of the reasoning principle; why should there not be also some soul which receives an altogether miraculous body, possessing some qualities common to those of other men, so that it may be able to pass through life with them, but possessing also some quality of superiority, so that the soul may be able to remain untainted by sin? And if there be any truth in the doctrine of the physiognomists, whether Zopyrus, or Loxus, or Polemon, or any other who wrote on such a subject, and who profess to know in some wonderful way that all bodies are adapted to the habits of the souls, must there have been for that soul which was to dwell with miraculous power among men, and work mighty deeds, a body produced, as Celsus thinks, by an act of adultery between Panthera and the Virgin?! Why, from such unhallowed intercourse there must rather have been brought forth some fool to do injury to mankind—a teacher of licentiousness and wickedness, and other evils; and not of temperance, and righteousness, and the other virtues!'



Hortus Deliciarum, Der Stammbaum Christi, c. 1180. Herrad von Landsberg, CC-BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

Matthew 1 is clearly an attempt at an apology for the Virgin Mary. Her pregnancy was not due to harlotry. On the other hand, scurrilous rumours against her can be explained typologically. There are many other women in the lineage from Abraham to the Messiah whose bad reputation has not obstructed the historical salvation plans of God.

In order to argue that the virgin birth was indeed part of an essential plan of salvation Matthew uses Isa. 7:14 which in the Septuagint translation refers to the virgin (*parthenos*) who will give birth to the son whose name is Immanuel (meaning 'God is with us'). The rumours concerning Mary and her pregnancy almost led to her rejection by Joseph, but this proof based on prophecy confirmed to him that the pregnancy of Mary was part of the divine plan. At the end of the Gospel the reference is made anew to the Immanuel prophecy (Matt. 28:18–20). Jesus promised to be among his disciples. He really is Immanuel; 'God is with us'.

Another important detail in the Gospel of Matthew is the description of the manner in which the virgin birth of Jesus is presented. The writer never refers to the 'Father', but rather the Holy Spirit (so also in the Gospel of Luke). There is reason to believe that this way of speaking about the virgin birth is based on the traditions formulated in Hebrew or in Aramaic where the Spirit is grammatically feminine. In this way the early Christians expressed the birth of Jesus in terms which distanced it from the idea of a sexual act between Mary and the divine masculine power. In that way also the blasphemy (with an association to Gen. 6:1–4) was avoided. However, 1 Tim. 3:16 indicates that the Christians even had to encounter the criticism that Jesus' (virgin) birth was demonic event.

Apology for the virgin birth in 1 Tim. 3:16

Jukka Thurén (2008: 512–15) argues that 1 Tim. 3:16 speaks about the incarnation of Jesus in a way which contrasts it with the interpretation of Gen. 6:1–4 in the First Book of Enoch. He remarks that in 1 Tim. 3:9 the writer speaks about 'the mystery of belief' but in 1 Tim. 3:16 he uses a parallel term, 'the mystery of godliness':

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great (*mega estin to tēs eusebeias mystērion*):

He appeared in the flesh,
was justified by the Spirit,
was seen by angels,

was preached among the nations,
 was believed in in the world,
 was taken up in glory.

Where has the writer taken this parallel expression ‘the mystery of godliness’ from? According to Thurén, an attractive possibility is that the writer wants to contrast the incarnation of Jesus with 1 Henoch 8, according to which the fallen angels came from Heaven and revealed all kinds of ungodliness (*asebeia*) to human beings. The Letter of Jude refers to 1 Henoch, probably to 1 Hen. 1:9 (Jude 14) and, in addition, mentions the fallen angels as salutary examples to its readers. In the Letter of Jude Christians are warned four times about *asebeia* (vv 4, 15 [2x], 18) indicating that the Greek word is a key concept in the letter. I am inclined to interpret 1 Tim. 3:16 in such a way that it provides a counter-argument for those who have understood the birth of Jesus to be an example of the scenario outlined in Gen. 6:1–4; that is, the way in which the son of God sinned with Mary and gave birth to a demonic Jesus.

1 Tim. 3:16 explains why it was difficult to speak about the miraculous pregnancy of Mary, performed by the divine power. Such an idea was associated with the activity of the sons of God in Gen. 6:1–4. Once some Christians had found a way of expressing the virgin birth of Jesus with reference to the Holy Spirit (a feminine word in the Hebrew language) it was easier to begin to speak about the pregnancy of Mary. This apparently took place quite early because two strikingly different traditions of the infancy stories were recounted in Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2. Nevertheless, both writers have the same theological emphasis: Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary whose pregnancy was due to creative action on the part of the Holy Spirit. It is significant that such a tradition was not adopted in the Gospel of John (written later than Matthew and Luke’s gospels) and a good explanation for this is that the writer deliberately avoided referring to the virgin birth of Jesus. He estimated that such a concept would come dangerously close to Genesis 6.

Incarnate wisdom:

an alternative way of speaking about the miraculous birth of Jesus

So far I have proposed that there were theological problems relating to the virgin birth of Jesus. Every explanation which suggests that God was in some way an active agent in the birth of Jesus would have immediately evoked Gen. 6:1–4, which was interpreted in Jewish writings (the Book of Jubilees and the First Book of Henoch) as an explanation of the origin of the demonic

world.²⁴ Therefore, the first Christians resorted to other ways of speaking about the incarnation of the Son of God. This explanation was based on Proverbs 8:22–31, according to which a personification of Wisdom assisted God in the creation. It was argued that this personified Wisdom was the Son of God (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:14–18; John 1:1–3; Heb. 1:1–3) and this Son of God became a human being (Gal 4:4; Phil. 2:7). Both expressions ‘born of a woman’ in Gal. 4:4 and ‘taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness’ in Phil. 2:7 are Semitic ways of saying that the Son of God became a human being. The Christological formulation in Rom. 1:3–4 should not be interpreted to mean that the title of ‘Son of God’ would be given to Jesus only after the resurrection. Its aim was to emphasize that after his resurrection Jesus was made Son of God *in power* – an idea which was based on Ps. 2:7. This Old Testament passage was interpreted in the New Testament as referring to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:32–3). As the Davidic prince (the potential king) had once, during his enthronement ceremony, acquired a powerful position next to God and became an actual king, so also in Rom. 1:3–4 Jesus is depicted as the son of David who through resurrection becomes a powerful king next to God, a Son of God in power (Ps. 2:7 and 110:1).²⁵ It is obvious that early Christians (such as Paul) believed that the birth of Jesus was in some way extraordinary, particularly if Jesus was regarded as a personification of the Wisdom of God through whom the world was created (earliest evidence is 1 Cor. 8:6).

Conclusions

Scholars often explain the birth stories of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as later attempts to explain the origin of Jesus in terms of the concept of the virgin birth. This may be true as far as the formulation of the virgin birth taking place with the aid of Holy Spirit is concerned. On the other hand, it is more difficult to argue that the birth of Jesus would have been understood as

- 24 It is worth noting that Celsus’ Jew, who apparently knew the Gospel of Matthew and its presentation of the virgin birth of Jesus, nevertheless presents it in terms of God making love to Mary (I.39): ‘If the mother of Jesus was beautiful, then the god whose nature is not to love a corruptible body, had intercourse with her because she was beautiful’; or, ‘It was improbable that the god would entertain a passion for her, because she was neither rich nor of royal rank, seeing no one, even of her neighbours, knew her.’
- 25 For this common understanding of Rom. 1:3–4, that Jesus was already the incarnate Son of God before his death and was made Son of God *in power* through resurrection, see e.g. Wilckens 1978: 64–6. Concerning the traditio-historical background of Rom. 1:3–4, see Eskola 1992.

miraculous only in the time of Matthew and Luke onwards. After all, the concept that Jesus was the Son of God and Wisdom incarnate (Prov. 8; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15–20; John 1:1–3; Heb. 1:1–3) must have contained some sorts of ideas concerning how Jesus was born. And as far as I can see, the birth of Jesus was in some way regarded as miraculous in this Christological model, too.

In this article I have argued that the virgin birth of Jesus was the target of two sorts of criticism. The first of these was related to negative rumours or even parodies of how Mary became pregnant. The parodies in the *Toledot Yeshu* literature and Celsus' Panthera episode were post-New Testament traditions, but I have suggested that in the genealogy of the Gospel of Matthew there are negative rumours concerning the pregnancy of Mary, as indicated in Matt. 1:18–19. Other references in the Gospels indicate that similar rumours may have alluded to Jesus who is referred to only as the son of Mary (Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55–6; John 1:45, 6:42). Origen thought along similar lines when he argues that Mary and close family members of Jesus had to hide Mary's pregnancy in order to avoid scandal. Origen presents the following historical scenario in his *Homilies on the Gospel of Luke* (only preserved in Latin) when he interprets the passage of Ignatius (Eph. 19:1–3), concerning the meaning of the words *principem saeculi huius latuit virginitas Mariae* ('the virginity of Mary was hidden from the prince of this world') and explains them: *latuit propter Ioseph, latuit propter nuptias, latuit quia habere virum putabatur* ('hidden for the sake of Joseph, hidden for the sake of marriage, hidden because it was believed that she had a husband').²⁶

Secondly, I have proposed that 1 Tim. 3:16 was an answer to the criticism that the virgin birth of Jesus must be interpreted as some sort of demonic event, according to the model of Gen. 6:1–4. In this criticism Mary's pregnancy is seen as being the work of a demonic angel or similar monster. It was precisely this problem which led to the alternative way of speaking about the birth of Jesus. According to this model Jesus was God's Wisdom (the Son of God) who was incarnated and became human. This model is followed in the earliest documents of the New Testament, that is, in the letters of Paul as well as in one of the latest New Testament documents – the Gospel of John. Both Matthew and Luke were courageous enough to formulate the idea of the virgin birth by using an older Hebrew or Aramaic tradition according to which it was the (feminine) Holy Spirit not God the Father which was active in the pregnancy of Mary.

26 See the text in Crouzel 1962: 144–6.

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‘Āqēdōt

The binding of Isaac in early modern Polish-Lithuanian Karaite poetry

RIIKKA TUORI

This article deals with early modern Polish-Lithuanian Karaite poems which are based on the biblical narrative of the binding of Isaac (Gen. 22). These liturgical poems (‘āqēdōt) were recited during the ten days between the New Year and the Day of Atonement, known in Karaite tradition as the ten days of mercy. Their main function is to express the frame of mind of the congregants during this yearly period of repentance, eventually culminating in the sounding of the Shofar on the Day of Atonement. The article demonstrates that the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite poets do not only draw from the biblical narrative but rewrite it by using later midrashic and medieval interpretations of the binding of Isaac.

In this article I will offer a first introduction to a group of Karaite Hebrew poems (‘āqēdōt, Heb. ‘bindings’) which deal with the biblical narrative of the binding of Isaac (Gen. 22:1–19). The poems had a special function in Karaite religious observance: they were recited during the ten-day period of repentance extending from the first day of the month of Tishri until the Day of Atonement. The corpus contains eleven ‘āqēdōt by seven seventeenth- to eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Karaite authors, and all of them are published in the Lithuanian Karaite prayer book (*Siddūr ha-tēfillōt kē-minhag ha-qārā’im*, Vilna, 1890–2).¹ I will discuss the position of these Karaite poems in the wider context of Jewish liturgical poetry, as well as study their relationship to later Jewish re-interpretations of the biblical narrative.

Karaite Judaism and the Karaites of Eastern Europe

Karaite Judaism represents an alternative version of Judaism. Its origins lie in ninth-century Iraq (Babylonia), where the interpretation of central Jewish

1 The Karaite *Siddur* contains four volumes, edited by Felix (Pinehas) Malecki. On the printing of Karaite prayer books in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, see Miller 1993.

writings became an object of dispute. In the midst of divergent opinions on who has the ultimate authority in halakhic decisions, the early Karaite² movement rejected rabbinic tradition (Mishna and Talmud) as the divinely ordained oral Torah and promoted the right of each intellectually skilled individual to interpret the scriptures.³

Karaite Judaism – like its sister strand, rabbinic (or ‘normative’) Judaism – developed into a multifaceted movement that defies simple descriptions. During the first centuries of its existence, Karaism represented a competing alternative to rabbinic Judaism. Karaites engaged in intra-Jewish missionary activity, and small Karaite communities sprang up as far as Spain in the west and, by the late fourteenth century, even Lithuania in the north. In the course of time the Karaite movement crystallized into three subgroups, each with its own distinct history and language: Arabic-speaking Karaites in Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt; Greek- and later Turkish-speaking Byzantine and Turkish Karaites; and Karaites in the Crimea, Poland, and Lithuania, who employed a Turkic vernacular language, Karaim.⁴

Medieval Jewish texts are, for the most part, written by male authors of the elite. Women or otherwise marginalized groups rarely use their own voice in sources available to us. Karaite Jews, for example, appear in rabbinic Jewish texts as feared enemies or as derided renegades.⁵ Even today, Karaites are offhandedly addressed as ‘heretics’ or ‘sectarians’. Because these terms evoke negative images, I have opted to use less loaded terms: in this article, as elsewhere, I refer to the Karaites as a ‘movement’, or, simply, as a ‘group’.⁶ Then again, the problem has never been the *absence* of a Karaite voice in medieval and pre-modern sources.

2 The origin of the word ‘Karaite’ (Heb. *qārā’ī*) is most likely to be found in the Hebrew root *qr*, ‘to read’, referring to their ‘return’ to the biblical scriptures (*migrā’ūt*); on the origins of the name and alternative interpretations, see Gil 2003: 109; Polliack 2002: 313.

3 For the origins, history, exegetics, and philosophy of Karaite Judaism, see the wide-ranging articles collected in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Studies*, edited by Polliack (2003); for Karaite practice and customs (including modern Karaism), see Yaron and Qana’i 2003.

4 The Karaim language belongs to the north-western Kipchak group of Turkic languages and is closely related to the Tatar languages. How and where a group of medieval Karaites acquired the Karaim language remains a mystery; see, e.g., Shapira 2003, Jankowski 2003.

5 On Karaites as the ‘Other’ of Judaism, see Lasker 2001.

6 On the problematic terms ‘sect’, ‘sectarian’, ‘schismatic’, and ‘heretic’ and their history in Karaite Judaism, contra ‘normative’, or ‘mainstream’ rabbinic Judaism, see, e.g., Rustow 2011; Cohen 2006: 119–31.

Medieval Karaites in the Middle East and in the Byzantine Empire composed a vast selection of exegetical and linguistic works, including rhymed works and liturgical poetry. In recent years a myriad of these Hebrew and Arabic texts have been published in critical editions.⁷ Eastern European Karaites and their multilingual works are also gradually attracting more and more interest.⁸

The Karaites of Eastern Europe form a distinct group of their own, with their distinctive vernacular language (the Turkic Karaim) and centuries-long habitation of the northern areas of Europe. In terms of numbers this cluster of Karaism was always minuscule: at its peak, before the nineteenth century, only a few thousand Karaites lived in Eastern Europe (Akhiezer and Shapira 2001: 21).⁹ In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795), Karaites lived in three major areas: Lithuania (especially Troki and neighbouring towns), Galicia (Halicz and Kukizów), and Volhynia (Łuck and Derażne). Like their other Karaite brethren, Eastern European Karaites employed Hebrew as the primary language in their scholarly and religious works, and it was also the language of administration and commerce. Polish-Lithuanian Karaite literary culture experienced a cultural and literary renaissance during the early modern period: archives in Lithuania and Russia contain plenty of religious literature, philosophical treatises, private letters, proceedings from their joint meetings, and poetry in *lēshōn ha-qodesh*, the holy tongue.¹⁰

7 On medieval Karaite exegesis, especially during its ‘Golden Age’ in the Middle East, including such authors as Daniel al-Qūmisī (9th c., Persia/Palestine), Salmon ben Jeroḥam (10th c., Iraq/Palestine), Jacob al-Qīrīsānī (10th c., Iraq), Yefet ben ‘Eli (10th c., Iraq/Jerusalem), and Joseph ben Noah (11th c., Palestine), see, e.g., Goldstein 2011, Zawadowska 2012, and Robinson 2012. For an overview of the history of Karaite exegesis, including also its later development in the Byzantine Empire, see Frank 2000. Recent publications on medieval Hebrew Karaite poetry include, e.g., Yeshaya’s (2011, 2014) two volumes of secular and liturgical Hebrew poetry by the twelfth-century Egyptian Karaite Moses Dar’ī.

8 The most recent works on Eastern European Karaite history and literature include, e.g., Akhiezer and Shapira 2001, Akhiezer and Lasker 2006, Kizilov 2009, Shapira and Lasker 2011. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Firkovich archives, stored in the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg, have opened up countless new avenues for the study of Karaite Judaism. For more on these archives, see, e.g., Sklare 2003: 905–9.

9 Today there are approximately 30,000 Karaites in the world. Most of them are Egyptian-born Karaites living in Israel or USA. Karaites (also known as Karaims) of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics number a few hundred only.

10 For Eastern European Karaite works in Hebrew and in Karaim (including research literature, journal articles, etc.), see Walfish and Kizilov 2011: 127ff. For a brief overview on Karaite literary culture in Poland-Lithuania, see Tuori 2013a: 52–6.

For Polish-Lithuanian Karaite scholars, Hebrew poetry was an instrument for expressing devout feelings, and discussing intricate theological, philosophical, and mystical topics. With their use of quantitative-syllabic metres and their choice of strophic structures, the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite poets follow the Sephardic (Andalusian) tradition of poetry and poetics.¹¹ A close reading of their poetry offers an opportunity to understand their culture and view of the world, their literary choices, achievements, and desires, and even their version of Judaism from a renewed perspective.¹² In Eastern Europe Karaites also wrote *‘āqēdōt*: penitential poems on the theme of the binding of Isaac. These poems will be our next focus.

Recreating the liturgy of repentance: *‘āqēdōt* in Hebrew poetry

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him: ‘Abraham’; and he said: ‘Here am I’ (Gen. 22:1).

The binding of Isaac (Gen. 22:1–19) is one of the most well-known biblical narratives, and certainly one of the most emotionally loaded ones. In this passage, God commands Abraham to take his son Isaac to the land of Moriah, where he must sacrifice the beloved child as the ultimate trial of faith. At the end of the journey, Abraham binds his son and prepares for the deed when a divine voice of an angel halts him from the final act of killing. A ram is sacrificed instead of the son. Abraham has now established his unwavering loyalty to God. The angel delivers the divine blessing to Abraham: God will multiply his seed as the stars of the heaven and the sand on the seashore.

Told in nineteen verses in the Book of Genesis, this perplexingly concise tale leaves a lot to imagination. It is hardly surprising that countless Jewish commentators have tackled with the complexities of a father sacrificing his child.¹³ In the Mishnaic tractate *Avot* (5:3), the binding is mentioned as one of the ten trials of Abraham,¹⁴ and in rabbinic literature the motives and emotions of the

11 A short review of the multifaceted history of Karaite Hebrew poetry and its research, see Tuori 2011: 372–9 and 2013b; and Weinberger 1998: 408–31.

12 For poetry as a valid source for understanding Jewish history, see Tanenbaum 2002: 4–6.

13 On the myth of *‘āqēdā* in Jewish traditions, see, e.g., Spiegel 1993, Sagi 1998, and van Bekkum 2002. The harrowing narrative has inspired countless artists, poets, and authors, especially after the Holocaust.

14 While in *Avot* the trials are not listed, later commentators, including Maimonides in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, mention the binding as the final, tenth trial of

protagonists are carefully studied and re-interpreted. In the early Palestinian targumim (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible), for example, Abraham reveals to Isaac that he will be sacrificed, Isaac himself requests to be bound, and Abraham entreats that God will remember his sacrifice and Isaac's willingness (Davies and Chilton 1978:



Sacrifice of Isaac, Beit Alpha Synagogue. Photo: Talmoryair, 2007. Wikimedia Commons.

540). In the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 89b) rabbis reveal that it is actually Satan himself who challenges God to test Abraham, thus echoing the misfortunes of Job (van Bekkum 2002: 87). Isaac, the helpless victim of the Book of Genesis, in particular, gains agency. In an early Palestinian midrash,¹⁵ Isaac is a 37-year-old man, thus possessing enough strength and maturity to put up some resistance to his father. However, rather than remaining a passive victim he willingly prepares himself for slaughter (Elitzur 1999).

In the Mishnaic tractate *Ta'anit* (2:4),¹⁶ the binding of Isaac is referred to in connection with the so-called remembrance prayers (*zikhronot*) for the New Year, Rosh ha-Shana. In a similar vein, in the Babylonian Talmud (*Rosh ha-Shana* 16a) the sounding of the Shofar (ram's horn) on Rosh ha-Shana is associated with the ram sacrificed instead of Isaac (Fleischer 1975: 470). According to P. R. Davies and P. D. Chilton (1978: 534), '[t]he links between the Aqedah and the New Year liturgy are the theme of remembrance and the ram's horn': God will remember his promises to Abraham, and the ram will be sacrificed instead of the son. Thus, the narrative was used in similar contexts by the first post-biblical Hebrew poets responsible for the creation of liturgical poetry (Heb. *piyyūṭim*) for the embellishment of nascent Jewish prayer service

Abraham. For a concise paraphrase of the narrative, extracted from the available mid-rashic and aggadic sources, see Ginzburg 2003: 225–33.

15 *Genesis rabba* 56:8; see also Ginzburg (2003: 228–9), where Isaac exclaims: 'Blessed is the Lord who has this day chosen me to be a burnt offering before Him.'

16 'For the first [ending] he says, "He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah will answer you and hear the sound of your cry this day. Blessed are you, O Lord, redeemer of Israel."' (Translated by Neusner 1988: 309)

(Münz-Manor 2010: 354),¹⁷ and eventually the liturgical environment of the *‘āqēdā* became fixed around the additional (*musaf*) prayer of Rosh ha-Shana (Davies and Chilton 1978: 534).

In the ensuing medieval Hebrew poetic tradition, *‘āqēdōt* were included under the sub-category of *sēliḥōt*, penitential poems, which are recited on specific fast days and, most poignantly, during the penitential period between the New Year and the Day of Atonement (Schirmann 1997: 696). One of the most famous *‘āqēdōt*, *‘Ēt sha ‘ārē rāṣōn lē-hippātēah* (‘When the gates of favour will open’) is attributed to the North African poet Yehuda ben Shemu’el ibn Abbas (Fez, later of Baghdad, 12th c.) (Davidson 1970, III: 296, no. 1053; Schirmann 1997: 280–1; Zunz 1865: 216). The poem is part of the Sephardic liturgy of the New Year and recited immediately before the sounding of the Shofar.¹⁸ The poem rapidly spread all over the Jewish world, and even the eminent Moses Maimonides (Egypt, 1138–1204) wrote a poem following ibn Abbas’s style (Schirmann 1997: 281n8).¹⁹

Nevertheless, the crystallization of the *‘āqēdōt* as a specific poetic genre in the wider context of *sēliḥōt* occurred relatively late. Because the themes from the biblical story are frequently used in liturgical poetry, many poems merely referring to Gen. 22 were later understood as genuine *‘āqēdōt* and eventually published in specific sections in Ashkenazi and Sephardic *Siddurim* (Fleischer 1975: 470). Ezra Fleischer (1975: 470) suggests that the initiators of the genre were not Sephardic but Ashkenazi Jews in Western Europe. Me’ir ben Yiṣḥaq of Worms (11th c.) and Ephraim of Bonn (1132–1200) were among the first Ashkenazi poets to write penitential poetry (*sēliḥōt*) focusing on the binding of Isaac.²⁰ The themes of sacrifice and martyrdom were particularly pertinent for the Ashkenazi communities of the period, ravaged as they were by the Crusades.

17 The classical period of Hebrew liturgical poetry is dated to the 6th–8th century (Palestine and Babylonia), and includes anonymous poems, and poetry by known authors such as Qallir, Yannai, and Yose ben Yose.

18 In the popular Israeli site dedicated for medieval *piyyūṭim*, there are as many as twenty-five liturgical melodies for Yehuda ibn Abbas’s poem, including recent recordings from Jewish communities in Kurdistan, Salonica, Italy, Iraq, Turkey, Tunisia, Yemen, and Israel.

19 *Ānī mazkīr hay-yōm* (Davidson 1970, I: 306, no. 6742; Zunz 1865: 462); for a later Italian imitation of *‘Ēt sha ‘ārē rāṣōn*, see Schirmann 1997: 441n61. According to Hayyim Schirmann (1997: 281n8), imitations of ibn Abbas’s poem mainly by Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews soon acquired the Hebrew adjective *‘abbasī* (‘in the style of ibn Abbas’).

20 For an English translation of the *‘āqēdā Et āvotay ānī mazkīr* by Ephraim of Bonn, see Carmi 1981: 379–84.

Chillingly, Gen. 22 provided legitimization for the killing of one’s children as part of the sanctification of the divine name (*qiddūsh ha-shēm*) rather than subjecting them to the violence of the Gentiles and forced conversion. Indeed, the implications of this tragic narrative have been rather dire in the course of Jewish history (Sagi 1998: 52).

Notes on ‘āqēdōt in early modern Karaite tradition

The burnt offering, the one offering the sacrifice, and Mount Moriah (the refrain in the ‘āqēdā of Yehuda ben Zerubbabel).

The Karaite ‘āqēdōt are published as the last section of the third volume of the Karaite *Siddur* (pp. 318–30), which contains the Karaite prayers for the Day of Atonement. The poems are printed after other penitential poems, *šēliḥōt* (pp. 294–318). This particular section in the Lithuanian *Siddur* only contains poems by Karaite authors.²¹ The most famous Rabbanite ‘āqēdā, Yehuda ibn Abbas’s ‘Ēt sha ‘ārē rāšōn, is published twice in the Lithuanian *Siddur*: in the first volume of the Karaite *Siddur* (pp. 408–9) among the liturgical poems for the Sabbath when the weekly Torah portion of *Vay-yērā* (Gen. 18:1–22:24) is read,²² and in the fourth volume (pp. 252–3) among the prayers for pilgrims heading towards Jerusalem. That rabbinic poetry is published in Karaite *Siddurim* is not surprising: while Karaites of any given time have been prolific Hebrew poets, rabbinic liturgical poems had already become an integral part of Karaite liturgy early in its history (Weinberger 1998: 409).²³

- 21 In addition, ‘āqēdōt in the third volume of the *Siddur* include two Karaite poems that are not of Polish-Lithuanian origin: an ‘āqēdā by ‘Ezra ben Eliyyahu Firūz (15th–16th c., pp. 323–4 in the third volume of the *Siddur*, עזרא בן אליהו פירוז), and an ‘āqēdā by Mevorakh bar Natan (unidentified Karaite poet, p. 323, מְוֹרַח בֶּרֶךְ נָתָן). The Karaite family name Firūz was originally Persian, and members of the family were scattered all around the Middle East (Walfish and Kizilov 2011: 66).
- 22 Karaite and Rabbanite Torah readings have followed the same yearly cycle, beginning in the month of Tishri, ever since the fifteenth-century rapprochement of the Byzantine Karaism with rabbinic Judaism (Attias 1992: 290).
- 23 The early formation of the Karaite liturgy and its relationship to poetry remains obscure: early Karaites preferred biblical texts (especially Psalms and Lamentations) as the only legitimate source for liturgy. According to Yeshaya (2014: 14), the twelfth-century Egyptian Karaite poet Moshe Dar’ī represents one of the earliest known Karaite sources writing liturgical poetry.

All of the poets are Polish-Lithuanian Karaites, who lived between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁴ A complete list of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite *‘āqēdōt* and English translations of their titles follow:

1. Yehuda ben Zerubbabel (Troki, 17th c.):

אב רחמים חונן עלי כל בריה

(‘Merciful father who pardons all creatures’)

2. Zerah ben Natan (Troki, 1578–1657/8):

אֶזְכֹּר לְאַבְרָהָם וְאֵת נִסְיוֹנָיו

(‘I will remember Abraham and his trials’),

אֲנֵא אֱלֹהֵי רֵם וְקָדוֹשׁ שׁוֹכֵן מְרוֹם

(‘Please, high and holy God, dwelling in heights’)

3. Yoshiyahu ben Yehuda (Troki, d. c. 1660):

אֲנֵא פָנַי אֵלַי כְּרוּב הַסִּדֵּךְ

(‘Please, turn towards me in the multitudes of Your mercy’),

אֲנֵא אֱלֹהֵי עַד מֵאֵד גְּדֻלָּתְךָ

(‘Please, my Lord, how great You are’)

4. Abraham ben Aharon (Nowomiesto, Lithuania, 17th c.):

אֶזְכִּיר לְנִסְיוֹן אָב נְקִי כַפַּיִם

(‘I will keep in remembrance the trial of the innocent father’)

5. Shelomo ben Aharon (Troki, 1670–1745):

שׁוֹכֵן זְבוּל מְרוֹם וְנִשְׂא

(‘The one dwelling in the heaven is elevated and high’),

אֲנֵא אֲדֹן עוֹלָם בְּחֻמְלָתְךָ

(‘Please, Master of the Universe, in your grace’)

6. Yosef ben Yiṣḥaq (Troki, 17th c.):

יְרוֹם וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח אֲדֹן שָׁמַיִם

(‘May the Master of the heavens be high and praised’),

שְׁמַעָה אֱלֹהֵי חַי לְקוֹל רִנָּתִי

(‘Hear, o living God, the sound of my joy’)

7. Moshe ben Shemu’el (of Szaty, or of Troki, 17th c. or 18th c.):²⁵

24 On biographical details of these Polish-Lithuanian Karaites (excluding Moshe ben Shemu’el), see Tuori 2013a: 60–82.

25 The identity of Moshe ben Shemu’el is unclear. The Polish Karaite Mordokay ben Nisan (d. c. 1709) wrote a lamentation on the death of one Moshe ben Shemu’el of Troki (Mann 1931: 1257–62). Moshe ben Shemu’el of the Lithuanian town of Szaty (Šėta) asks Yosef ben Yiṣḥaq (see above) to decorate a liturgical text in green, black, and red (Mann 1931: 735, 1231–3).

אָנא אֱלֹהִים הִי אֲדֹנָי הָעוֹלָם

(‘Please, the living God, the Master of the Universe’)

The Lithuanian Karaite *Siddur* is the only place where these eleven Polish-Lithuanian Karaite ‘āqēdōt have ever been published. The editor of the Vilna *Siddur*, the Troki-based Pineḥas Malecki (1854–1928), used local, old manuscripts while preparing the prayer book for publication.²⁶ For example, the heading of the ‘āqēdā by Moshe b. Shemu’el (p. 329) indicates that the manuscript Malecki used belonged to the poet himself. Identification of the poets is based on the headings added to the poem by Malecki, and the acrostics of the poems, which reveal the name of the author and his patronym, or, alternatively, names of friends or relatives. Some of the headings also contain the date and year of the poem’s composition.²⁷

Leopold Zunz (1865: 216) notes that Karaites had adopted Yehuda ibn Abbas’s poem *Ēt sha ‘ārē rāṣōn* as part of their liturgical repertoire.²⁸ Furthermore, there is an intrinsic connection between ibn Abbas’s poem and Karaite ‘āqēdōt: all the Polish-Lithuanian ‘āqēdōt are written to resemble the metric structure of this twelfth-century Rabbanite poem, as demonstrated by the following example:

The first line of the first stanza: עַת שְׁעָרֵי רְצוֹן לְהַפְתָּח by the Rabbanite Yehuda ibn Abbas:

‘ēt sha ‘āre rāṣōn lē-hippāttēāḥ²⁹

— — ^ — / — — ^ — / — — —³⁰

26 See the title page of the Vilna *Siddur* (vol. IV). Some of the manuscripts Malecki most likely used as a source are still extant; see, e.g., manuscript A 259, עקדות וחמירות מנהג קראים (in 28 fols.) at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy in Saint Petersburg. Because I have not had access to any of these manuscripts, comparison between different versions of these poems is not yet possible.

27 For example, Yehuda ben Zerubbabel wrote his poem in 1640/41, and Abraham ben Aharon in 1686/87. Nevertheless, one must always be cautious when studying texts printed in later, modern sources. It is a well-known fact that editors often changed the contents of Hebrew texts in nineteenth-century Karaite *Siddurim* for various ideological and religious reasons, including political sensitivity (Goldberg 1957: 108; Miller 1993: 17).

28 Alongside the Lithuanian *Siddur* (1890–2) it is also published in the Crimean Karaite *Siddur* (*Siddūr hat-tēfillōt kē-minhag haq-qārā’im* 1836: 145).

29 Short syllables are in boldface.

30 Read from left to right; — represents a long syllable, ^ a short one (i.e., a syllable with a *shewa mobile* or one of the *ḥāṭāfīm*); in the transliteration the short syllable is in

The first line of the second stanza: מַצְרָה יִצְרִי אֲנִי בְּאֶתִי קְרֹא מִצְרָה by the Lithuanian Karaite Yehuda ben Zerubbabel:

yoṣ-ri â-nî ḥā'-tî qē-rō' miṣ-ṣā-rā
 -- ^ - / -- ^ - / ---
 feet:³¹ *mitpa 'ālīm / mitpa 'ālīm / nif'ālīm*

This originally Andalusian Hebrew poetic metre is known in research literature by the Hebrew name *ha-shālēm* II, originally adapted from the classical Arabic metre *kāmil* by tenth-century Spanish Jewish poets (Yellin 1972: 48). Furthermore, much like the poem 'Ēt sha 'ārē rāṣōn by ibn Abbas, Karaite 'āqēdōt are strophic; that is, they are made out of a certain number (between 4–5) of lines grouped into stanzas, which always share a common rhyme, ending with a refrain: AAAAA A, BBBBA A, etc.³² In the refrain of the 'āqēdā 'Merciful father', Yehuda ben Zerubbabel writes:

עֹלָה וְהַמִּעֲלָה וְהָר מוֹרִיָּה
 The burnt offering [Isaac], the one doing the sacrifice [Abraham],
 and Mount Moriah

The refrain bears a striking similarity to the refrain in ibn Abbas's poem: 'The binder [Abraham], the bound [Isaac], and the altar!' (Heb. הָעֹקֵד וְהַנֶּשֶׁקֶד וְהַמִּזְבֵּחַ). Both refrains refer to the two main protagonists with epithets (Abraham as an active subject, Isaac as a passive object) as well as the place of action (Mount Moriah and the altar, which in later Jewish interpretations is equated with the place of the future Temple).

It is probable that the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite poets, knowing ibn Abbas's poem as part of their liturgical tradition, used this rabbinic poem as a source of inspiration and probably even sang all the 'āqēdōt to an identical melody. Such imitation (or, to use a more neutral term, modelling) of prestigious poems is very typical in pre-modern Hebrew poetry.³³ New poems are formed by follow-

boldface. For the basic units of the Andalusian Hebrew quantitative metre, see, e.g., Fleischer 1975: 341–3.

31 On feet in medieval Hebrew poetry, see, e.g., Pagis 1976: 113, 116–17; Weinberger 1998: xxii–xxiii.

32 This strophic structure is known in research as pseudo-*murwashshah* (Fleischer 1975: 349–52).

33 On medieval Jewish poets (Moshe ibn 'Ezra, Yehuda ha-Levi, Abraham ibn 'Ezra etc.) who composed imitations of Arabic strophic poetry, see Stern 1974: 78–9. On

ing the poetic form (e.g., prosody, rhyme schemes) of, and even taking wordings from, the model poem. This productive poetic technique always respects the source of inspiration, and the ‘original’ names were often added to the headings of new creations as instructive details.

Drawing much from the Bible, the language of the ‘āqēdōt is not ‘pure’ biblical Hebrew,³⁴ but, rather, represents a mix of biblical



Sacrifice of Isaac. Photo: Israeliarthistorian, 2014. Wikimedia Commons.

citations, allusions, paraphrases, and merged rabbinic and medieval linguistic structures.³⁵ While Karaite Judaism draws its primary religious authority from the written Torah and its interpretation, this has never stopped Karaites from employing post-biblical Hebrew.³⁶ The quantitative-syllabic metric system affects the linguistic choices: the metre rigidly demands the syllables to appear in a prescribed order and quality, often at the expense of minor grammatical errors, such as mixed gender forms. The biblical narrative of the binding is a strong component in the language of the poems, and the verbs and nouns taken from Gen. 22:1–19 are particularly pervasive. One example suffices:

imitation as a technique by early modern Eastern European Karaite poets, see Tuori 2013a: 115ff.

- 34 This remark is pertinent because of long-lasting statements of Karaites using only biblical idiom; see, e.g., Allony 1969: 32. Then again, even the noun ‘āqēdā of the root ‘qd (with the biblical verb ‘to bind’) is non-biblical. For the first time the noun appears in the Mishna, referring to the tying of the sacrificial lamb (Davies and Chilton 1978: 514–15).
- 35 Non-classical elements include: Mishnaic and medieval words זך, ‘purity’, בְּרִיָּה, ‘creature’, בְּקִיָּה, ‘cry’, בְּקִיּוֹ, ‘cry’, צְבִיּוֹן, ‘desire’, קֶדֶשׁ, ‘mystery’, שֶׁשֶׁר הַחֹב, ‘bond’, שֶׁנִּי, ‘change’, יְחִיד, ‘unity’; and the use of the preposition לְ as a marker of object, the use of Mishnaic shortened infinitives (לְהַמְחוֹת לְמַחֲוֹת, ‘to erase’), and the poetic use of dual forms as rhyme-endings. Once even the use of Aramaic is attested: Yosef ben Yiṣḥaq in his ‘āqēdā (‘May the Master of the heavens be high and praised’, p. 327) employs an Aramaic phrase רִמְשָׁא צִפְרָא (‘night and day’), a phrase that occurs in *Targum Onqelos* (Ex. 18:13). On the use of non-biblical Aramaic in Polish-Lithuanian Karaite poetry, see Tuori 2013a: 218–20.
- 36 On Karaite Hebrew in general, see Maman 2003, Tirosh-Becker 2012; on Polish-Lithuanian poetic idiom and its post-classical elements, see Tuori 2013a: 177–9.

עַתָּה הָעֹלָהוּ אֵב לְעֹלֹתִים

When father *offered* him (Isaac) as a *burnt offering*³⁷

In this example the verb ‘raise, offer’ (הָעֹלָה) is an allusion to the biblical narrative, when Abraham is ordered to offer his son as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2), and finally when a ram is offered instead of the son (Gen. 22:13).

The function of the ‘*āqēdōt* in Karaite liturgy

The function of the ‘*āqēdōt* – the actual performative context where the poems were recited – is coded into the second stanza of the ‘*āqēdā* ‘Merciful father who pardons all creatures’ by Yehuda ben Zerubbabel:

יוֹצְרִי אֲנִי בָאתִי קְרוֹא מִצָּרָה / לְשֹׂאוֹל סְלִיחוֹת מִמֶּךָ בְּעֶשְׂרָה
יָמִים אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶם תְּהִי כִפָּרָה / עַל כָּל עֲוֹנוֹת שָׁב בְּנֶפֶשׁ בָּרָה

My Creator, I have come to call from (my) trouble, / to ask Your forgiveness
on these ten / days during which atonement will befall / on all the sins –
returning with a pure soul.

Karaites – like Rabbanite Jews – recited ‘*āqēdōt* in the month of Tishri during the ten days between the Day of Trumpeting and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). In Karaite tradition, the first day of Tishri is known by its biblical name, ‘the Day of the Trumpeting’ (Heb. *yōm tēṣṣū‘ā*), as opposed to the established rabbinic term, Rosh ha-Shana (New Year).³⁸ Parallel to the rabbinic days of awe (*yāmīm norā’im*), the Karaites knew the period as the ten days of mercy (*‘āsārā yēmē hā-rahāmīm*), a period of atonement when the gates of mercy are opened for those who repent (Weinberger 1991: 430–1990). The Day of the Trumpeting launches the period of repentance, when the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac are remembered as the paragons of steadfastness. The image of gates opening is referred to in the ‘*āqēdā* ‘Please, turn towards me in the multitudes of your mercy’ by Yoshiyahu ben Yehuda:

37 The noun ‘burnt offering’ is in the dual form for poetic reasons: all the fifth lines in this poem are rhymed with the syllable *-tāyīm*, grammatically the feminine dual form.

38 On the changes in the concept of the Day of Trumpeting (from a day of joy into a day of repentance) in medieval Karaite tradition, see Miller 1999. Initially Karaites opposed the use of the term ‘new year’ for the Day of the Trumpeting, since Tishri is the seventh, not the first month of the year (Miller 1999: 538).

שְׂדֵי שְׂעִה שְׂוֶהָ וְהַט אָזְנִים / יוֹם זֶה פָּתַח נָא שְׁעֵי שָׁמַיִם
 דִּלְתֵי תְּשׁוּבָה עַל בְּנֵי אֶפְרַיִם / יִזְכּוּ לְבָנֵינוּ עִיר יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
 הִרְאֵם גְּבוּרָתְךָ וְעוֹז יְדִידְךָ

Almighty, perceive my cry and incline your ears: / (On) this day, please,
 open the gates of the heavens, /
 the doors of repentance for the Children of Ephraim,³⁹ / may they be
 entitled to (see) the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.
 Display them Your might and the strength of Your hands!

Thus, ‘*āqēdōt* represent a cry of repentance: poems typically begin with expressions of a deep sense of guilt, and end in a plea to remove this guilt. God will have mercy on the wretched congregants on account of the good deeds of previous generations. In the Babylonian Talmud (*Rosh ha-Shana* 16a), the binding of Isaac and God’s remembrance are connected: on account of the steadfast faith of Abraham, his descendants, the Jewish people, may also be kindly remembered. Indeed, two of the Karaite ‘*āqēdōt* begin by evoking the memories of the past: ‘I will remember Abraham and his trials’ by Zerah ben Natan, and ‘I will keep in remembrance the trial of the innocent father’ by Abraham ben Aharon. In the Zerah’s poem, the refrain goes as follows:

הַפֶּלֶא זָכוֹר יִצְחָק וְאֵת רַעְיוֹנָיו / גַּם לְאִשֶּׁר עוֹמֵד בְּמֶרְבְּכֵינוּ

Marvellous one, remember Isaac and his strivings, /
 as well as the one who stood with his bitter cry [Abraham].

That the good deeds of the forefathers redeem the children is mentioned already in the Mishnaic tractate *Avot* 2:2.⁴⁰ The loyalty and good deeds of Abraham and the divine promise are a blessing for the future generations:

39 The epithet ‘the children of Ephraim’ (referring to the people of Israel, from Ps. 78:9, and here especially to Karaites) appears in the ‘*āqēdōt* three times.

40 ‘For the merit of their fathers strengthens them, and their righteousness stands forever’ (translated by Neusner 1988: 675). Although Karaites did not esteem the Mishna on the same level as the written Torah, they did study rabbinic works as much as was possible. Mishnaic tractates such as the *Avot* were easily approachable; the Babylonian Talmud, written in Aramaic, less so. As noted by Golda Akhiezer and David Lasker (2006: 1529), Polish-Lithuanian scholars often quote from certain central rabbinic texts, especially *Avot*.

according to the rabbis,⁴¹ the Torah was given solely on account of the good deeds of Abraham. Accordingly, Abraham ben Aharon writes in his poem:

אֶזְכִּיר לְנִסְיוֹן אָב נָקִי כַפִּים / נֶאֱמָן מִצָּאוּ יְהוָה אֲדוֹן שָׁמַיִם
וְזִכּוֹת בְּרִית אֲשִׁים לְלִבּוֹתָיִם / לְהִיזֹת לְמַלְיָן יוֹם תְּשׁוּבוֹתָיִם

I will keep in remembrance the trial of the innocent /
and loyal father, whom the Lord, the Master of the heavens had found, /
and on account of this covenant I will keep in (my) heart / (for Abraham)
to be the intercessor (cf. Job 33:23) (on) the day of repentance.⁴²

The poem by Abraham ben Aharon focuses on the merits of the fathers, whose example will help erase the abominable sins of the inherently inferior current generation.

Anyone who has visited a Karaite synagogue – known in the Karaim language as a *kenesa* – knows that the Karaite liturgy differs from the rabbinic service mainly because it draws the bulk of its material directly from the Bible. Another, more visible difference is that Karaite service requires physical participation.⁴³ The physical postures of Karaite prayer include standing, bending, inclination, kneeling, prostration, and spreading the hands, each derived from biblical examples (1K 8:22, 2C 20:5, 2C 29:29, and Ps. 134:2) (Frank 2003: 572; Goldberg 1957: 8–29).⁴⁴ In the *‘āqēdā* ‘I will remember Abraham and his trials’, Zerah ben Natan describes physical aspects of prayer:

אֶבְרָךְ עָלַי בְּרַכְי וְעַל אֲפִים / אֶפּוֹל וְאֶפְרוֹשׁ נָא לָךְ כַּפִּים
אֶשֶׂא לְבִי לָךְ וְשִׁרְעִפִים / אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ בְּמַר שִׁיחִי לָךְ כַּמִּים

I will *kneel down, prostrate* / *face down* and *spread my arms* for You,
I will raise my heart to You, and my worries /
I will pour to You with the bitterness of my complaint like water.

41 *Exodus rabba* 28:1: לא נתנה לך תורה אלא בזכות אברהם: ‘The Torah was given to you only on account of the good deeds of Abraham’ (my translation).

42 ‘Heart’ and ‘repentance’ appear here in dual form due to rhyme (*-tāyim*, *-tāyim*).

43 In rabbinic service, prostration occurs during the liturgy of Rosh ha-Shana and Yom Kippur.

44 Muslim influence was key in the development of early Karaite theology, philosophy, and literature; there have been speculations on the affinities between Karaite and Muslim prayer, especially in connection with physical postures (Frank 2003: 572).

In ‘I will keep in remembrance’, Abraham ben Aharon describes the postures of the repentant congregant:

רחם לַמִּתְנַפֵּל עַלֵּי אָפִים / אִישׁ דָּךְ מֵאֵד נִכְלָם בְּאַשְׁמוּתָּיִם

Have mercy on the *one who prostates*, /
the exceedingly oppressed and ashamed man in his guilt.

These subtle allusions to Karaite liturgy in the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite ‘*āqēdōt* are not just figures of speech: they also reflect the reality of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite synagogue service during the ten days of mercy.

Characters: Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, angels, and the Land of Moriah

The main protagonists in the Karaite ‘*āqēdōt* are Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and the representative of the divine voice (an angel of God, or a band of angels). In addition, minor roles are played by the sacrificial ram and the two servants Abraham takes with him to the Land of Moriah.

The status of Sarah, in particular, is worthy of further investigation, because she is absent from the original biblical narrative. In ‘Merciful Father who pardons all creatures’ by Yehuda ben Zerubbabel, Sarah opens her mouth:

הִיא אֲמָרָה תַעֲשֶׂה לְבִנְךָ כְּטוֹב / גַּם כְּאֲשֶׁר יִישֶׁר בְּעֵינֵי הַטּוֹב
יִשָּׁר וְהַחֲנוּן עָלֵי רַךְ וְטוֹב / יִחְמוֹל וְאֵל נָא יִחְסְבֵהוּ חֵטּוֹב
לְמִד לְבִנְךָ דָּת וְגַם תּוֹשִׁיָהּ

She [Sarah] said: ‘Do to your son as is good, /
as well as what is fair in the eyes of the Good [i.e. God]. /
He who is upright and merciful to the young and tender (Gen. 18:7) /
will have mercy – may He please not cut him [Isaac] down.
Teach the Law to your son, as well as wisdom.’

Here Sarah is answering Abraham, who in the previous stanza has offered her a blatant but merciful lie: that he is taking their young son away to teach him how to properly serve God: ‘He will learn it [divine wisdom], and will pray in front of Him [God].’ It was only in the previous chapter in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 21) that Isaac was born to the ninety-year-old Sarah, and now God is claiming this miracle child.

Using Sarah as a character is not an original idea on the part of the Karaite poet. In the *‘āqēdā* of Yehuda ibn Abbas, Abraham uses an identical excuse.⁴⁵ Abraham’s need to explain to his wife the absence of their son is taken from the early aggadic Midrash *Tanḥuma* on Gen. 22 (Elitzur 1999).⁴⁶ In Yehuda ben Zerubbabel’s poem Sarah has a bitter inkling of the future:

הָלְכוּ וְהָאֵם סוּעָרָה וְעָנִיָּה

They (Abraham and Isaac) left, and the mother was afflicted
and tossed with tempest (Is. 54:11).

In the same poem Abraham sheds tears on account of his bloody mission immediately after Isaac asks the famous question (Gen. 22:7): ‘Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’

דִּמְעָה בְּעֵינֵי אָב

A tear in the eye of the father...

Once again, that Abraham weeps is a motif present also in ibn Abbas’s poem.⁴⁷

In the biblical narrative (Gen. 22:11 and 22:15), only one voice of an angel (‘the angel of the Lord’) is heard: the voice orders Abraham to halt in the midst of the killing. In the midrashim, angels turn up in plural, and even the archangel Michael is summoned to help (Ginzburg 2003: 229). In Yehuda ibn Abbas’s poem, as well as in some of the Karaite *‘āqēdōt*, one angel is not enough; multitudes of them enter the scene. In ‘Merciful Father’ by Yehuda ben Zerubbabel, angels take the forms of the mystical creatures (*ar’el* and *hashmālīm*)⁴⁸ described in the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah:

45 Thus Yehuda ibn Abbas: שָׁחַק / גָּדַל וְלֹא לָמַד עֲבוּדָה שְׁחָק / אָמַר לְשָׂרָה כִּי תִמְוֹדֶר יִצְחָק (‘He said to Sarah: ‘For your sweet one, Isaac, / has grown and has not yet learnt the service of the heaven’, (my translation) (Karaite *Siddur*, vol. I: 409).

46 *Tanḥuma*, *Vay-yērā*’ 22. For an English paraphrase of Abraham’s excuse, see Ginzburg 2003: 225–226.

47 Thus Yehuda ibn Abbas: וְהִמּוֹן דִּמְעָיו נִזְלִים בְּחֵיל (‘and his abundant tears flooded with force...’) (Karaite *Siddur*, vol. I: 409). On Abraham’s tears in early rabbinic lore, see Ginzburg 2003: 229.

48 Both biblical nouns are used as epithets for angels in early liturgical Hebrew poetry (David 2001: 39, 112).

וַיִּצְרְחוּ צָרַח וּמָר זָעָקוֹ / אֲרָאֵל וְחַשְׁמֶלִים בְּכַפָּם סָפְקוּ
מִמֵּאֲכָלֶת תִּפְשׂוּ כִּי חָשְׁקוֹ / צָדִיק וּמִיתָרָיו מִהֲרָה נִתְקוּ
נִפְשׁוֹ טְהוֹרָה הִיא מְאֹד וְנִקְיָה

They shouted loudly and bitterly cried, /
the valiant one (Is. 33:7) and electrums
(Ez. 8:2) clasped with their hand(s) (Num. 24:10): /
they grasped the knife because they loved /
the righteous one, and swiftly his ropes [binding Isaac] were cut.
His (Abraham's) soul is very pure and untainted.

The angels do not merely cry loudly but also physically grasp the knife Abraham has raised. The angels with teary eyes are familiar from *Genesis rabba* (56:5):

Now at the moment at which our father, Abraham, stretched out his hand to take up the knife to slaughter his son, the ministering angels wept. That is in line with this verse: ‘Behold their valiant ones cry outside’ (Is. 33:7).⁴⁹

It is noteworthy that both in *Genesis rabba* and in the Karaite poem, the angel giving the divine order to Abraham is known as ‘the valiant one’, *ar’el*.⁵⁰

In Gen. 22:2 we are informed that the destination, the Land of Moriah, where Abraham must sacrifice his son, will eventually be shown to him by God. This was too vague for the early rabbis, who added that Abraham and Isaac recognize their destination by ‘a column of fire from the earth until heaven’.⁵¹ The name Moriah appears in the Bible only twice.⁵² Whether these names refer to the same place is uncertain. Because the Land of Moriah in later Jewish thought was understood to be identical with Mount Moriah, the place where Solomon builds the Temple (2 Chr. 3:1) in Jerusalem, the idea of a divine light emanating from there makes perfect sense. In *Genesis rabba* (55:7), for example, one of the rabbis explains Moriah as ‘the place from which light (אור) enters the world’ (Neusner 1985: 272). In Yehuda ibn Abbas’s poem, Moriah is the

49 Translated by Neusner (1985: 282).

50 In Yehuda ibn Abbas’s poem, the angels are *ofānim* and *galgālīm*, originally biblical nouns for wheels and whirls of Ezekiel’s visions (cf. Ez. 1:16, 10:2), but used in early liturgical Hebrew poetry as epithets for angels (David 2001: 26, 68).

51 From *Pirke di-rabbi Eliezer*, quoted in García Martínez 2002: 52.

52 As the Land of Moriah in Gen. 22:2, and as Mount Moriah in 2 Chr. 3:1.

mountain where ‘the glory shines forth’ (2nd stanza). Likewise, according to Yehuda ben Zerubbabel, Abraham and Isaac recognize Moriah because it emits a luminous light, compared to the light of the moon:⁵³

קָרְבוּ וְרָאוּ אֹר מֵאֵד זֹרֵחַ / בַּיּוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי מִמֵּאוֹר יָרַח

They approached (the mount) and saw a brightly shining light /
on the third day, (like) from the light of the moon.

Yehuda ben Zerubbabel further elaborates the destination with ‘fragrant spices, myrrh, nard, and henna’; an exegetical interpretation of Moriah as the place of incense offering in the Temple, derived from the noun *mor*, ‘myrrh’.⁵⁴

From the discussion above we may conclude that the Karaites are rewriting the biblical narrative of the binding after models supplied by the Rabbanite poet Yehuda ibn Abbas in his popular *‘āqēdā* and by early Jewish legends discussed in medieval rabbinic and Karaite exegetical works:⁵⁵ the silent wife and mother, Sarah, has a voice, weeping angels with mystical forms function as divine messengers, and the mythical destination Moriah is the shining dwelling-place of God.

Conclusions: Karaite poetry and prayer in early modern Poland-Lithuania

In this article I have introduced the readers to Polish-Lithuanian Karaite poems recited during the penitential period between the Day of the Trumpeting and the Day of Atonement. The poets retell the story of the binding of Isaac with selected themes from rabbinic and medieval Jewish traditions, thus offering new perspectives and motives for the characters of the originally biblical narrative.

- 53 Incidentally, in ibn Abbas’s poem the Moon symbolizes Isaac, one of the lights shining to the world (Elitzur 1999), and the angels are chanting: אֵל נָא יְהִי עוֹלָם בְּלִי יִרַח (‘May the world not exist without the Moon [Isaac]’, my translation).
- 54 See Rashi’s commentary on Gen. 22:2:
אֲנֹקֵלוֹס תְּרַגְּמוּ עַל שֵׁם עֲבוֹדַת הַקְּטוֹרֶת שֶׁיֵּשׁ בָּהּ מִזְרַח וְשֶׁאֵין בָּהּ מָוֶה (Moriah) with the name of incense service, because it contains myrrh, nard, and other spices.’
- 55 Despite various examples above from rabbinic literature, we should not downplay the indigenous exegetical interpretations of the topic in medieval Karaite interpretations of Gen. 22.; for example, for Yefet ben ‘Eli’s (10th c., Iraq/Jerusalem) commentary on the Book of Genesis, see Zawadowska 2012.

In addition, I suggest that Eastern European Karaites did not create Hebrew poetry out of thin air: their works have a legitimate place in the larger context of Hebrew and Jewish religious poetry. In terms of form and content, these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ‘āqēdōt are dexterous imitations of the popular Sephardic poem *‘Ēt sha ‘ārē rāṣōn*, written by the twelfth-century Rabbanite poet Yehuda ibn Abbas. To name one formal connection, each of the eleven Karaite ‘āqēdōt adhere to the same poetic metre and strophic form as ibn Abbas’s poem. Karaite ‘āqēdōt may therefore be added to the long list of medieval and early modern poems written in the style of ibn Abbas.⁵⁶ Ibn Abbas draws from midrashic sources with fresh interpretations of Gen. 22, and the Karaite poets happily follow suit, without ever losing their own voices.

This introductory article does not aim to be an exhaustive review of the genre of ‘āqēdōt in Polish-Lithuanian Karaite use. First, these intriguing poems require a thorough philological analysis, aided by Eastern European manuscripts. Second, Karaite religious poetry requires familiarity not only with rabbinic literature, but also with original Karaite works, especially exegetics. In future these poems must be analysed again in the light of medieval Judeo-Arabic and Byzantine Karaite exegetical classics.⁵⁷

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56 Cf. Schirrmann 1997: 281n6.

57 *Sefer ha-mivhar*, a commentary on the Torah by the Byzantine Karaite Aharon ben Yosef (1250–1320), in particular, was a must-read also among Polish-Lithuanian Karaite scholars.

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Trauma, memory, testimony

Phenomenological, psychological, and ethical perspectives

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How can severely traumatized persons re-present the past and its impact on the present if (due to blackout, repression, or dissociation) they could not witness what they went through, or can hardly recall it? Drawing on Holocaust testimonies, this article explores the crisis of witnessing constituted by the Shoah and, more generally, problems of integrating and communicating traumatic experiences. Phenomenological, psychological, and ethical perspectives contribute to a systematic investigation of the relation between trauma, memory and testimony. I will argue that preserving personal continuity across the gap between past and present presupposes not only an 'inner witness' – which can, according to a long philosophical tradition, be identified with a person's conscience – but also a social context in which one is addressed and can respond. An attentive listener can bear witness to the witness by accepting the assignment of responsibility implied in testimonial interaction, and thereby support the dialogic restitution of memory and identity.

How can severely traumatized persons re-present the past and its impact on the present if (due to blackout, repression, or dissociation) they could not witness what they went through, or can hardly recall it? ¹ The Greek word τραῦμα means 'wound'. As the embodied minds of survivors of trauma are wounded, it

- 1 This text is based on the following four lectures: 'Witnessing self-transformation: conscience, communication, and co-presence' presented at *Witnessing: Cultural Roots, Media-Related Forms and Cultural Memory* (International Symposium) at the Villa Vigoni, Menaggio (Como), organized by the University of Bochum and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (27.–30.4.2008); 'The challenge of witnessing: memory, trauma, and (re)presentation between co-presence and absence' presented at *Cultures of Transition: Presence, Absence, Memory* (16th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Religion, Literature and Culture), which took place at the Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen (19.10.2012); 'Trauma, memory and problems of self-recognition' presented at a research seminar at the Center for Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen (30.4.2013); 'How to relate to a traumatic past? Language, silence, and hopeful imagination' presented at *Holocaust Memory and Re-Presentations of the Past* (Alumni event) at the University of Copenhagen (13.3.2014).

becomes difficult for them to account for what has happened to them – all the more because ordinary language proves to be inadequate *vis-à-vis* the incomprehensible. ‘No one can describe it’ and ‘no one can understand it’ are typical statements from Holocaust survivors (cf. Felman 1992: 244, quoting Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah*, 1985: 6). Trauma research confirms that unbearable events tend to be pushed to the margins of consciousness. Yet that which cannot be acknowledged in the first generation of survivors might impose itself on the second in undefined absences or enacted repetitions (cf. Kellermann 2009; Fridman et al. 2011). In what follows, I will explore the crisis of witnessing constituted by the Shoah and, more generally, problems of integrating and communicating traumatic experiences.² How can personal continuity be preserved despite massive traumatization?

The first section of the article focuses on the process of witnessing, the second section on the (in)ability to transmit traumatic memories, and the third section on the essential role of dialogue in working through and coping with trauma. While witnessing normally proceeds ‘from seeing to saying’, this order can be reversed when the witness is traumatized: irretrievable experience is reinvented in recounting. Based on the hypothesis that we need to consider different levels or dimensions of consciousness when determining to what extent traumatic memories can be integrated, known, and communicated, I will show why psychoanalytic and mnemonic models of trauma are not incompatible, but complementary approaches to one and the same problem. Drawing on Holocaust testimonies, philosophical accounts of conscience and dialogue, trauma theory and memory studies, I will combine phenomenological, psychological, and ethical perspectives in a systematic investigation of the relation between trauma, memory and testimony.

Phenomenology describes everything that appears and presents itself to consciousness in the ‘how’ of its experiential (cognitive, emotional, perceptual, etc.) givenness to someone; that is, as a phenomenon. As human beings do not have any direct access to things, persons or events as they are ‘in themselves’, but can, as witnesses, only testify to the fact that, and the modality in which, these events, persons, or things were experienced by them, this method seems appropriate. Furthermore, traumatic experiences in the context of the Shoah cannot in any adequate manner be described as being purely ‘intra-psychic’ because they originate in and have an effect on the realm of intersubjective interaction

2 This endeavour is part of the research agenda of *CJMC: Center for the Study of Jewish Thought in Modern Culture*, University of Copenhagen. See <http://teol.ku.dk/cjmc/english/research_focus/> (accessed 11.1.2016).

where they are displayed, conveyed, and acted out. This realm ‘in-between’ us, the social sphere, is also the place where ethical theory and praxis unfold. I will argue that preserving personal continuity across the gap between past and present presupposes not only an ‘inner witness’ – namely, a person’s conscience – but also a social context in which one is addressed and can respond. An attentive listener can bear witness to the witness by accepting the assignation of responsibility implied in testimonial interaction, and thereby support a dialogic restitution of memory and identity. Let me elaborate on how this is possible.

1. Witnessing

In order to describe the process of witnessing performed by individual, mortal eye-witnesses who are personally present in flesh and blood – as opposed to ‘media witnessing’ that is performed *in, by, and through* mass media bridging the spatiotemporal distance between events, agents, and an audience watching the events and agents (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009: 1) – I will first try to clarify in what sense the Shoah constitutes a crisis of witnessing, and then zoom in on the *sine qua non* of all forms of witnessing that do not depend on technical devices such as cameras: the human mind’s capacity to register what happens.

Holocaust testimonies and the crisis of witnessing

The Shoah has shown the necessity of witnessing, and made it more urgent than ever. Yet it has also made us more aware of its limitations and inherent problems. A witness may be defined as ‘an observer or source possessing privileged (raw, authentic) proximity to facts’ (Peters 2001: 709). Holocaust testimonies show that such proximity made witnessing impossible in the death camps, since those who were closest to the ‘facts’ died first, and those who have survived can witness only vicariously with the help of ‘fiction’. However, the witnessed events can, of course, not be reduced to fiction and fancy. Their (f)actuality resists any reduction to ideality. Insofar as traumatizing events ‘blind’ those who have seen too much, witnesses of such events can at best bear witness to the breakdown of witnessing. Since all too many lives, loves, and stories of irreplaceable others are forever lost, the Shoah caused a radical and irresolvable crisis of witnessing. The narrative of the past cannot be told by those whose past it was; the perspectives of those who have lost their lives are forever excluded (cf. Bartov 2000: 3, 229).

While conceding the impossibility of deputizing for the dead, Primo Levi (1988: 64) nonetheless tries to tell some aspects of the (hi)stories of those

who could no longer speak for themselves – aspects that could only be seen by others, from a certain distance: ‘Even if they had paper and pen, the submerged would not have testified because their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before being snuffed out, they had already lost the ability to observe, to remember, to compare and express themselves.’ Those who have seen the Gorgon have not returned to speak about it. The survivors witness by proxy. The *Muselmänner* – the living dead – became mute long before they died. The others ‘had lived for months and years at an animal level’ and found that ‘a space for reflection, reasoning, experiencing emotions was wiped out’ as their days were encumbered by hunger, fatigue, cold, and fear (*ibid.* 56). Levi reports the survivors’ feelings of guilt and shame. The survivors accuse themselves of ‘having omitted to offer help’ and having failed to meet the demand for solidarity, ‘for a human word, advice, even only a listening ear’ (*ibid.* 59). Levi is not the only survivor who is troubled by the disproportion between the privilege of surviving and the outcome of his testimony.

Even those convinced that testifying to the destruction of the ‘true witnesses’ of destruction is necessary in order to avoid potential repetitions of the past experience witnessing as a challenge. Lawrence Langer (1991: 183) refers to the ‘wounded identity’ of the victims and their attempts ‘to come to terms with memories of the need to act and the simultaneous inability to do so’ which continue to haunt the survivors. Neither their dignity nor their self-esteem could be preserved, for whatever they did or omitted to do, whether they tried to flee or protest, whether they stole bread in order to survive or remained passive, their fate was decided by others, often randomly (cf. *ibid.* 167, 173, 176). This created humiliating, un-heroic memories. As the witness Chaim E. explains, no one had a choice in the death camps, and no one could think over what to do. The prisoners were just driven to do whatever they did. They were like robots rather than human beings (cf. *ibid.* 177–8). Another witness, Luna K., reminds us that under the Nazi system, not even martyrdom was an option, for it was not a question of ‘I’m not going to obey it, therefore you can shoot me’, but rather ‘I’m not going to obey it, you can shoot me and another hundred people’ – and she asks: ‘who wanted this kind of responsibility?’ (*ibid.* 181). The survivors of atrocity were caught in a double bind: if they wanted to take action in order to stop the killing, this would cost their own life and, in addition, many others’ lives; yet, not taking action meant that the killing continued unimpeded.

This double bind was designed to ruin interpersonal relations. Moreover, it also compromised the self-relation of the victims: inmates of death camps either lost ‘contact’ with themselves and their inner lives (by numbing their feelings and trying to ignore their needs) or were, to say the least, alienated from

themselves as they were no longer being treated as human beings. Dori Laub, himself a child survivor, medical doctor, clinical professor of psychiatry at the Yale University of Medicine and co-founder of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, has for years been working with victims of massive psychic trauma. In a chapter with the telling title 'An event without a witness' in *Testimony* (1992), Laub analyses the problem as follows:

There was no longer an other to which one could say 'Thou' in the hope of being heard, of being recognized as a subject, of being answered. The historical reality of the Holocaust became, thus, a reality which extinguished philosophically the very possibility of address, the possibility of appealing, or of turning to another. But when one cannot turn to a 'you' one cannot say 'thou' even to oneself. The Holocaust created in this way a world in which one *could not bear witness to oneself*. The Nazi system turned out therefore to be fool-proof, not only in the sense that it convinced its victims, the potential witnesses from the inside, that what was affirmed about their 'otherness' and their inhumanity was correct and that their experiences were no longer communicable even to themselves, and therefore perhaps never took place. This loss of the capacity to be witness to oneself and thus to witness from the inside is perhaps the true meaning of annihilation, for when one's history is abolished, one's identity ceases to exist as well. (Laub 1992: 82)

If wondering how it could happen that there was not a single person among thousands of camp inmates to whom one could say 'Thou' in the hope of being heard, one ought to take into serious consideration the hindrances to communication: a Babylonian confusion of languages as people arrived from all over Europe; those who did not 'disappear' soon after having arrived had to struggle for survival, which fostered competition rather than solidarity among strangers; most of them were physically and mentally exhausted, separated from their loved ones, and suffering from daily humiliations and bone-grinding slave work.

In reflecting upon the impossibility of saying 'Thou' to another or oneself under such circumstances, Laub makes use of the terminology of Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue. In a footnote, he explicitly refers to Buber's *I and Thou* (1923). However, while Buber has another person in mind who can be addressed as a 'Thou' and, in the Third Part of his book, refers to God as 'the eternal You' (1996: 123) in whom the lines of all other relationships intersect, an 'inner Thou' does not occupy an important place in his thought. By contrast, the notion of an internal or internalized You is central in Dori Laub's writings. For instance, one of his articles is entitled 'Reestablishing the internal "Thou"

in testimony of trauma' (2013). As we can read in the abstract, at the core of extreme traumatic experience is 'the obliteration of the internalized, empathic communicative dyad' (Laub 2013: 184). The internal 'Thou' is here presented as the addressee with whom an inner dialogue takes place. Furthermore, the 'inner Thou' is characterized as a prerequisite to symbolization and internal world representation.

What exactly is the difference between an inner, or mental, and an outer 'Thou' in the external world? In an emailed response to this question, dated 16 September 2015, Dori Laub answered that the internal 'Thou' is 'the internal, mental representation of Buber's external other. One can also call it the internal good object.' Accordingly, in the just-mentioned article, Laub proposes a phenomenological formulation of traumatic memory emanating from psychoanalytic 'object relations theory' as developed by Sigmund Freud, Donald W. Winnicott, Heinz Kohut, and others. The lack of human responsiveness in the death camps and the state of utter loneliness – being abandoned even by oneself – is here regarded as a state of objectlessness in the sense of an 'absence of communicable thought' (Laub 2013: 186). In other words: the camp inmates did not just lose others who would respond to their basic needs, but they also lost themselves as their very last companions and interlocutors in interiority. 'Faith in the possibility of communication died; intrapsychically there was no longer a matrix of two people, a self and a resonating other. This ... diminished the victims' ability to be in contact and in tune with themselves and to be able to register their own experience or reflect upon it' (*ibid.*). This description dovetails with Primo Levi's account of the *Muselmänner* who died in apathy. Yet, the (temporary) loss of the 'inner Thou' also affected the survivors: post-traumatic numbness can partly be explained by the fact that some of the horrible events they went through were not fully accessible to themselves.

Once the victims discovered that there was no longer an addressable 'Thou' outside or inside themselves, the intra-psychic matrix, which enables an individual's internal dialogue, was destroyed. Thus the dissolution of personal bonds, which makes it impossible to entrust oneself to another person, eventually leads to the diminution or destruction of the ability to witness oneself. Interestingly, the capacity to witness from the inside concurs with philosophical, theological, and psychological descriptions of conscience as an 'inner witness'. Although the link between the phenomenon and concept of conscience on the one hand and bearing witness on the other hand is largely overlooked in the literature on witnessing, I will argue that it is key to a better understanding of how witnessing works and why it ceases functioning in certain contexts. An exploration of prominent concepts of conscience can open up new avenues in this research

field because it provides us with the ‘missing link’ between intra- and interpersonal witnessing.

Conscience as ‘inner witness’

The Greek and Latin etymologies suggest that conscience is a knowing-with (*syn-eidesis*, *con-scientia*) in a double sense (cf. Reiner 1974: 575–6): First, it can be knowledge shared with another whose action one has watched and witnessed. Second, conscience can be a knowing-with-oneself. As an inner witness of all one’s thoughts, decisions, actions and emotions, it is integral to self-awareness – albeit also more than that. That which one experiences in and through one’s conscience cannot be reduced to self-monitoring; rather, it could be described as ‘experience with experience’, which also involves an affective and/or intellectual assessment of that of which one is aware. For this reason, the process of witnessing in and through conscience, which mirrors oneself in one’s relations to others, is normatively loaded.

Obviously, physical presence alone is not enough in order to be a witness to oneself or another. Witnessing also requires presence of mind, which is, however, dependent on bodily presence. We cannot bear witness to something that has eluded our attention or slipped our memory. An absent-minded, sleeping or unconscious witness is not a good observer. Yet we have to take into account that most observers do not know that they are witnesses when the event is happening: ‘Testifying has the structure of repentance: retroactively caring about what we were once careless of’ (Peters 2001: 722). The virtue of the witness is vigilance: watchfulness, wakefulness, or alertness. It is striking that the witnessing function of conscience has been described in exactly these terms. According to Emmanuel Levinas, the state of mind that corresponds to conscientiousness is ‘wakefulness or keeping watch [*la veille*], which does not consist in keeping watch over [*veiller-à*] (something)’ (Levinas 2002: 208; Levinas 1993: 241); rather, it is an opening prior to intentionality, an awakening on demand of another within oneself, which takes place without intentionality, ‘an impossibility of hiding in oneself’, an ‘*insomnia*’ – and ‘we can never envision speaking of an *insomnia-over* [*insomnie-à*]’ (*ibid.*).³ Conscience presupposes passive syntheses (retentions and protentions) allowing one to be on the alert without already

3 This description of insomnia and non-intentional consciousness, which is ‘something higher or earlier’ than (intentional) ‘consciousness’ (Levinas 2002: 208), corresponds well with the chapter on ‘Bad conscience and the inexorable’ in Levinas 1998: 127–32. For a more detailed account of Levinas’s position, cf. Welz 2008.

being directed at something specific. Intentionality comes into play as soon as one feels remorse for one's wrongdoing in the past, becomes aware of an imminent danger, or fears a mistake in the future. Thus, conscience demands two kinds of embodied presence of mind: non-intentional pre-reflective vigilance *and* self-evaluative awareness of certain contents of experience, either reproaching or justifying the responsible agent (or, respectively, the 'patient' suffering the uncontrollable 'call', crisis or compunction of conscience).⁴

It follows that the quality of conscientious co-presence in witnessing is special in two respects, both in regard to temporality and to affectivity:

(1) As to temporality, conscience is, on the one hand, always present and awake, even in one's dreams. When it speaks, its 'voice' speaks in the present. On the other hand, the 'acoustic mirror' of conscience (cf. Welz 2011b: 142) does not only reflect events that are past, or attitudes performed right now, but also the person one wishes to become. 'Bad conscience' points precisely to the tension between one's *status quo* and *terminus ad quem*, the tension between who one is and who one ought to be. Therefore conscience cannot be taken as a detached observer within the psyche. One's conscience is not separable from oneself. It remains identical with oneself at least to some extent, even in situations in which one would like to get rid of it. If this were not the case, the self-obligating quality of conscience would be inexplicable. 'Having' a conscience means being conscientious, which is crucial not only ethically in regard to one's

4 James G. Hart (2009: 97–159) has developed a Husserlian account of conscience in his opus magnum *Who One Is*, Book 2, Chapter 3. For him, conscience is 'the I myself decentered' witnessing oneself at a distance through passive synthesis and the call of one's ideal true self: 'It is a witness of who I am and have been and who I have committed myself to be and how my present action or purported action is or is not coincident with these' (*ibid.* 136). Since 'conscience is pervaded by admonitions and painful humiliations', it is also associated with the conflicted self, and therefore, 'temptations to self-deception and dissociation surface here in a way that is not normally the case with retentions and memory' (*ibid.* 138). May we conclude that passive synthesis is combined with (more or less) active commitment to values? Hart has commented critically on my description of the experiential dimension of conscience as 'self-mirroring' and 'self-mediation', arguing that one runs the risk of thinking of conscience 'as the result of affective, perceptual, and intellectual acts' (*ibid.* 131). Nonetheless, he has taken up the mirror metaphor because a mirror reflects back without the mediation of position-taking acts. The question is whether we should restrict the concept of conscience to an, as it were, 'automatic', sub-personal, pre-propositional process of presencing, or include the voluntary response to this process – the part that Heidegger called *Gerwissen-haben-wollen*. I would like to argue for the latter option because otherwise cases of self-deception including 'wilful blindness' (instead of facing oneself) could not be explained. Cf. Welz 2011a.

relations to others, but also in regard to one's personal development. 'Bad conscience' may induce a sort of self-revision in regard to the past and guide us to a 'better version of ourselves' in the future. Repenting as well as promising presupposes a presence of mind that is not bound to the present moment. With the help of memory and imagination we can 'travel' in time. As Søren Kierkegaard's pseudonym 'A' explains in *Either/Or* (1843), 'The Unhappiest One' is the one who does not have this possibility, but is always absent from himself, never present to himself, neither in love, nor in hope, or recollection (Kierkegaard 1987: 222–6). This means that he cannot preserve personal continuity across the gap between past and present, that he cannot assume responsibility for his own deeds or misdeeds, and that he will not be a reliable partner of interaction because he cannot keep his word. Needless to say, this counter-image to the conscientious person portrays an unethical stance, which lacks the presence of mind that is part and parcel of the phenomenon and concept of conscience.

(2) Since it is *our* present, past, and future, that is at stake, we cannot *not* care about how our lives have been and will become. Witnessing self-transformation involves a passionate relation to time. Time is not just determined by one's self-relation or by some observation that comes down to introspection. Rather, one's self-relation is determined by one's relations to others and the way one engages with them emotionally. The affectivity of conscientious co-presence comprises that the witness is present to him- or herself *in* being-present to others. It matters whether one is present in an unconcerned, indifferent manner, or in *sympathy and empathy*, taking to one's heart what one gets to know. The co-presence of a cold spectator has not the same value as the co-presence of a person who participates in others' pain and pleasure. It is essential to remember this when Holocaust survivors or their children impart their testimonies. Conscientious co-presence involves compassion, condolence, or fellow feeling – which enables the witness to better understand another's situation, based on a more profound impression of and participation in the other's life.

One of the insights formulated by Paul Ricoeur in the very final chapter of his book *Oneself as Another* is the following (1992: 340, 351): as self-inherent alterity, conscience is equally self-attestation and an injunction by another. The attestation of the self takes place in one's response to another. In being responsive to the other by whom one is requested, one witnesses both the other and oneself (cf. Liebsch 1999: 173–4). The aforementioned quotes by Dori Laub illustrate the problem that arises when this interrelation between selfhood and otherness is torn apart. As Burkhard Liebsch has argued, *Selbst-Bezeugung* or self-attestation cannot be kept within the boundaries of one's most personal self-relation because it is addressed to others. Through the other I witness

myself, and through me the other is attested. One's testimony to others reveals not just these others, but also one's self: the kind of person one is. Yet one's testimony remains precarious, without proof, depending on persons who might or might not be willing to give credit to it (cf. Liebsch 2012: 35).⁵

Hence, the *address-ability* and *response-ability* of subjectivity depends not only on conscience as 'inner witness', but also on an inter-subjective process of witnessing (cf. Oliver 2001: 5, 7, 17).⁶ Conscience mirrors the self in its communication with others. Conscience, the witness within oneself, cannot be sustained without an external witness, an addressee. As Kelly Oliver points out, without dialogic relations to others there can be no dialogue with oneself (cf. *ibid.* 85–9, 91). Bearing witness to one's own oppression is paradoxical because, on the one hand, the subject's sense of agency is annihilated when the subject is objectified. Objects do not speak and do not act. Yet, on the other hand, while witnessing recalls painful memories of the objectification, it allows the trauma to be worked through and reinstitutes subjective agency as the ability to respond or address oneself (cf. *ibid.* 95, 103–5). Regaining subjective agency after trauma means more than 'the ability to transform the world' (Sax 2006: 474), and it cannot be reduced to 'the sociocultural capacity to act' (Ahearn 2010: 29). It also involves the individual's mental power of resilience and resistance to victimization, which pertains to post-traumatic growth (cf. Welz 2015). Nonetheless, once the traumatic event is worked through and a process of healing has begun, one may have the feeling that 'it was not me who made it happen' (cited in Utriainen 2013: 253), or at least not oneself alone.

5 One of Liebsch's motto-texts is the following by Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt (1994: 51): 'Durch den anderen werde ich mein eigener Zeuge, und durch mich wird der andere bezeugt'.

6 I do not agree with Kelly Oliver's statement that subjectivity is the 'the result of the process of witnessing' (2001: 7) – for, if there was no subject to *initiate* the process of witnessing, who could then bear witness to subjectivity *resulting* from this process? Subjectivity cannot just be the result of this process without also being its origin. Furthermore, it is inconsistent to claim, on the one hand, that subjectivity depends on the process of witnessing – which, for Oliver, is identical with (one's own) 'address-ability and response-ability' – and, on the other hand, to identify the 'inner witness' mentioned by Dori Laub with 'an addressable other' (*ibid.* 17), that is, another person. Oliver refers to Levinas's notion of vigilance or insomnia, of selfhood opened onto otherness, which keeps the self awake because of the other's demand (cf. *ibid.* 134), but she is not aware of the link to Levinas's concept of conscience. It is this lacuna in the literature about witnessing that I wish to fill.

As my previous considerations have shown, the self-other-conscious inner witness needs to be restored in survivors of atrocities, so that their experiences can be told and heard. But how can severely traumatized survivors tell others about experiences that partly elude memory and verbal language? This brings us to the next section.

2. Traumatized memory

Let us first have a close look at the symptomatology of traumatized memory and then consider its implications for witnessing and the (in)ability to integrate and communicate memories of trauma.

PTSD and witnessing: 'from seeing to saying' or 'reinventing in recounting'?

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a syndrome that may follow the experience of a traumatic event. The diagnostic criteria for PTSD have been revised in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* by the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-5, released in 2013), now comprising the following features (applying to persons older than 6 years):

- A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence (directly experiencing or witnessing the traumatic event(s), or learning that they occurred to a close family member or friend);⁷
- B. Intrusion symptoms (such as recurrent, involuntary, distressing memories or dreams of the traumatic event(s), dissociative reactions in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring);
- C. Avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s) (e.g. thoughts, places, situations);
- D. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood (e.g. inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic event(s), inability to experience happiness, feelings of detachment from others, persistent fear, anger, guilt, or shame);
- E. Alterations in arousal and reactivity (e.g. irritable behaviour, hypervigilance, problems with concentration, sleep disturbance);
- F. The duration of the disturbance (criteria A–E) is more than one month; and

7 Criterion A2 from DSM-IV-R (2000) requiring that fear, helplessness or horror happen right after the trauma is removed in DSM-5.

G. Causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

The PTSD diagnosis lists a number of re-experiencing symptoms, which imply that traumatized memory, time and again, ‘catapults’ the patient back into a past that imposes itself also in the present. What does this mean for the process of witnessing when conditioned by trauma? Following John Durham Peters (2001: 709), it has often been taken for granted (1) that witnessing ‘has two faces: the passive one of *seeing* and the active one of *saying*’, (2) that seeing is equivalent to observing, while saying is equivalent to possessing and producing knowledge, and (3) that ‘an active witness first must have been a passive one’, since what one has seen authorizes what one says. However, this threefold statement is not as self-evident as it seems to be – for the following three reasons:

First, it overemphasizes the visual components of witnessing. Since senses are inter-modal, the visual system is coordinated with the vestibular and motor systems of the body, and vision itself is embedded in synaesthetic experience; the witness is not only a *testis oculatus* (cf. Oliver 2001: 12–15, 212–22, referring to Gallagher and Meltzoff 1996; Hurley 1998; Irigaray 1999: 166–7). Vision, touch, and basic orientation to the earth work together in producing sight. Sight is the result of the circulation of various forms of biosocial energy through the media of air, light, language, and so forth. Further, the fact that the process of self-witnessing *vis-à-vis* others is experienced in a holistic way – involving all cognitive, perceptual, volitional and emotional capacities of consciousness – forbids ocularcentrism. Fortunately, human beings are and will always be more than what they can see of themselves.

Second, insofar as seeing with the bodily eyes (perception) includes imaginative seeing with the mind’s eye (mindsight, conception), it is not merely passive. In seeing, we not only receive sense impressions, but we also contribute meaning to what we see. Without the hermeneutical ‘as’ in *seeing-as* we could not say much about what we see. Even if perception itself is passion rather than action, the seen at some point raises the question, ‘In what way does it matter to me?’ This question, in turn, provokes an implicit or explicit interpretation of the perceived and establishes patterns of significance. At least the visual experiences that stem from the mind’s eye are subject to the will. According to Colin McGinn (2004: 46), seeing ‘can be something that you *do* (and do intentionally)’. In the case of imaginative *seeing-as*, the dichotomy between perception and conception collapses in the hybrid of bodily and mental ‘vision’. The *seeing-as* experience is a joint product of the outer eyes and the inner eye (cf. *ibid.* 50). Worldviews are at once the prerequisite and the result of visual

experiences. Moreover, the seer does not normally remain mute, but becomes immersed in communication. Whenever this is the case, seeing is interacting with saying.

Third, the order 'from seeing to saying' or 'from perceiving to recounting the perceived' can be reversed. In extreme cases, it is first in the process of giving testimony that survivors of traumatic events come to 'know' their experience (cf. Bernard-Donals 2003: 197, 201, 205–6, 214). If traumatic events are not fully registered when they occur and, for this reason, can hardly be recalled, trauma ruins the certainty of knowledge. Experience that is irretrievable 'as it actually was' must be reinvented in its communication. Then the memory of trauma evolves in the telling of fragmented and troubled narratives, and the movement goes from saying to seeing, from recounting to beholding.

As Cathy Caruth points out with reference to the third chapter of Sigmund Freud's book *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920),⁸ catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves in an uncanny way for those who have passed through them. The capacity to continually, in flashbacks, reproduce a traumatic event in exact detail, appears to be connected with the way it escapes full consciousness as it occurs. The infliction of trauma 'is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again' in nightmares and repetitive re-enactments (Caruth 1996: 4). Due to its unassimilated and incomprehensible nature, trauma was not known in the first instance and returns to haunt the survivors later, reappearing in a belated address, which is 'the story of a wound that cries out' (*ibid.*).

As Dorte Berntsen characterizes the current debate in her study on *Involuntary Autobiographical Memories* (2009), the Freudian idea of an impaired processing and encoding and/or repression of traumatic memory, which remains disintegrated because it is stored in ways that render it difficult to access through voluntary recall, has received strong criticism. Consistent with neurobiological research showing that emotional arousal enhances rather than impairs memory, behavioural studies have revealed that memories of trauma are usually highly accessible to voluntary recall. Moreover, clinical research literature demonstrates that the problem following most forms of trauma is an inability to forget rather than an expulsion from awareness (cf. Berntsen

8 In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, section III, Freud mentions, e.g., the recurring dreams experienced by those suffering from 'traumatic neurosis' as exceptions to the pleasure principle. Building on his 1914 article 'Recollecting, repeating and working through', Freud highlights the patients' compulsion or obligation to 'repeat' the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of ... remembering it as something belonging to the past' (Freud 2001: 18).

2009: 147ff., with detailed references to studies in the respective fields of specialization). Further, thought suppression has the paradoxical effect of enhancing rather than reducing the accessibility of involuntary memories (*ibid.* 164). Berntsen concludes that ‘the more accessible and central the traumatic memory is to the organization of the person’s life story and identity, the more likely it is to generate intrusive memories, flashbacks, and other PTSD symptoms’ (*ibid.* 180). This way, Berntsen’s mnemonic model of PTSD arrives at the result that traumatized persons remember too well, although they may not include the traumatic events in their life scripts because they do not know how to make sense of them.

Yet, while these new findings indicate that involuntary memories called forth by traumatic events can be governed by the same mechanisms that govern involuntary memories with a positive mood impact in daily life, these findings do not contest the fact that traumatic memories are usually tied to *difficulties in (re)telling* the story of the wound and its cause. Articulations of traumatic memories often seem inconsistent or even self-contradictory and disconnected from other contexts of meaning (see, e.g., Sack 2010: 28–31). This might be due to these memories’ specific modes of appearance: while ‘normal’ biographical memories can be made explicit with the help of ordinary language, traumatic memories cannot be expressed as easily or virtually resist verbalization when manifesting themselves in the form of dislocated ‘visual pictures, olfactory, auditive, or kinaesthetic sensations’ (van der Kolk 1996: 229). What, then, can turn the scales as to whether traumatic memories can be integrated (like a ‘landmark’ in one’s mental ‘coordinate system’) or remain unassimilated (like ‘unknown territory’ or ‘strange islands’ in the ‘stream’ of consciousness)?

In the following section, I will argue that, despite appearances, Caruth’s and Berntsen’s accounts are not mutually exclusive in regard to how they define the relation between trauma and consciousness, but refer to different aspects of traumatic experience that are mixed up in the English term ‘experience’, which is an equivocal. Further, I will propose that we have to take into account different levels or dimensions of consciousness when determining to what extent traumatic memories can be integrated, known, and communicated – yet without operating with a notion of the ‘unconscious’ in the sense of a hidden, intrapsychic reality ‘outside of’ consciousness.⁹

9 Following Rudolf Bernet’s phenomenological analysis of Sigmund Freud’s concept of the Unconscious, I assume that consciousness can bring something ‘unconscious’ (i.e., something foreign or absent to consciousness) to appearance, yet without incorporating it into or subordinating it to the conscious present, for ‘consciousness can appear to

Shattered trust and the (in)ability to integrate and communicate traumatic experiences

The ambiguity of the English word ‘experience’ comes to the fore when one tries to translate it into German, at which point one has two options: *Erlebnis* or *Erfahrung* (plus the corresponding verb forms). One can experience (*erleben*) many things without knowing that one experiences them at the time of undergoing or living through the experience – for example radioactive radiation. Seen from a reflective distance, the immediate experience (*Erlebnis*) can acquire a certain meaning and is then experienced in the sense of *erfahren*: it is seen *as* something, for example as harmful to health. Additionally, one can try to understand one’s experience (*Erfahrung*), that is to say one can relate the meaning of this experience to the meaning of other experiences, interpret it anew and transform it into more general knowledge, for example about the impact of nuclear reactor disasters.¹⁰

When discussing ‘traumatic experiences’, it is crucial to maintain the distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, notwithstanding the fact that both aspects are intermingled in the concept of ‘trauma’. A traumatic *Erlebnis* happens to the experiencing subject that undergoes a traumatizing event as *Widerfahrnis*, that is, as an adversity that is opposed to anything wished-for – in such a way that the content of the experience is beyond mnemonic control because it cannot (or at least: not yet) be captured by reflective consciousness. A traumatic *Erlebnis* is overwhelming and, at first, ‘beyond understanding’. One can, at best, understand that one cannot understand. Nonetheless, when trying to understand the immediate experience by thinking about it, it slowly changes. In the course of time it can be appropriated and added to one’s treasure trove of experience despite remaining foreign: *as* something adverse, shocking, undesirable. The hermeneutical ‘*as*’ indicates that the initially inaccessible can later be included into a higher-order consciousness, through which the experiencing subject can relate to what (s)he undergoes or underwent.¹¹

itself as something alien’ and behave toward the Unconscious in such a way that it ‘can neither exclude it nor immediately and completely appropriate it’ (Bernet 2002: 349, cf. abstract).

- 10 As for a more detailed elaboration on the distinction between *erleben*, *erfahren* and *verstehen*, cf. Jung 1999: 228.
- 11 Following Wenjing Cai (2013), I do not want to oppose pre-reflective experience (defined as fully determined original datum, which ought to be matched and recovered by reflection) and reflective experience (defined as a non-essential secondary layer that is subsidiary to a meaningful foundational substratum or bottom layer, which is only to be explicated, described, or articulated) according to a dualistic model, which presupposes that pre-reflective experience constitutes a self-sufficient realm and primordial

In short, my suggestion is that traumatic experience remains un-integrated as long as it persists as an 'undigested' *Erlebnis*. As soon as it has become an intentional object of reflection and interpretation, the *Erlebnis* can be turned into an *Erfahrung*. Then the human being actively processes the event he or she underwent passively as a *homo subiectus*, that is, a subject that was subjected to this event.¹² Although reflection is always late, happening after the fact (*nachträglich*), subsequent to the traumatizing event, this does not necessarily imply that *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* are arranged in a chronological sequence, which starts with 'not knowing' and ends with full-fledged 'knowledge'. PTSD might also unfold as a confusing combination or entanglement of simultaneous knowing and not knowing, or it might encompass a paradox: knowledge of what cannot be known or fathomed out. Tumbling into the abyss of human beings' inhumanity can at best be conducive to an orientation about disorientation.

Therefore we are not confronted with an either/or of 'integration vs. non-integration' of traumatic memories, 'knowledge vs. ignorance' of the event that triggered the trauma. Rather, we have to soften or qualify the strongest claims of both (seemingly opposed) trauma theories – namely, Caruth's psychoanalytic and Berntsen's mnemonic model. Neither is it correct to assume that the experience of traumatized witnesses is not at all available to them because it is pushed to the margins of consciousness where it is *in toto* encapsulated or dissociated, nor that they can easily remember all experiential contents.

Martin Endreß and Andrea Pabst have investigated the social implications of traumata caused by interpersonal violence, which negates sociality, impairs one's physical and/or psychic integrity, and shatters 'basic trust' (Endreß and Pabst 2013: 89, 102–3).¹³ They define basic (operating) trust as a constitutive,

form of human life. Cai is right in her critique of this epistemological model, which downplays the existential dimension of reflection, i.e. the capacity to submit one's experience to normative inquiries calling one's deeds into question (cf. *ibid.* 339, 344, 351, 353). While conceding that the pre-reflective is the origin of reflection, Cai also sees it as the *telos* of reflection, which implies that pre-reflective experience is not fully determined on its own; rather, its meaning is unfolded in and through reflective interpretation, which opens up novel perspectives (cf. *ibid.* 350–2). Cai points out that this possibility is unique to human experience. Her suggestion to 'read' and interpret pre-reflective experience like a text reminds us of the fact that tacit understanding is open to reflection as 'the sole medium in terms of which one faces, examines, and values oneself' (*ibid.* 353).

12 On the ambiguity of activity and passivity within subjectivity, cf. Grøn 2011: 19–33.

13 I am happy to see that the methodology I presented on behalf of the Copenhagen research group on 'Trust, Conflict, Recognition' at the interdisciplinary conference *Vertrauen im Streit der Interpretationen – Hermeneutische und methodische Probleme*

pre-thematic mode of trust, which forms the background of both ‘habitual trust’ (i.e. the pragmatically effective fundament of routine and the product of interaction) and ‘reflexive trust’ (i.e. a cognitive mode of trust that can be thematized as a strategic resource of action). While habitual trust can be (re)established through training, and reflexive trust refers to the rational calculation of risks, basic trust cannot be ‘established’ as such (cf. *ibid.* 90, 95).¹⁴ If basic trust is shattered by traumatic experiences, this entails alterations of memory including ‘amnesic experiences of forgetting crucial incidents’ (*ibid.* 101, cf. Fischer and Riedesser 2003: 83). Usually, language makes it possible to evaluate, classify, and share experiences with others. However, traumatizing experiences can lead to speechlessness, since the persons concerned can neither find words for what they went through, nor be empathic listeners. This inability can isolate and alienate victims of trauma from those around them (cf. *ibid.* 97–103).¹⁵

What I miss in this account is an explication of the natural nexus between such symptoms and their root: the shattering of basic trust. If trauma induces shattered trust, there might be one more reason why communication breaks down: victims of life-threatening trauma no longer dare to entrust themselves to others without hesitation, but live in a state of anxious (or even suspicious) watchfulness and try to guard themselves against possible danger, as they have lost the feeling of ontological security. The term ‘basic trust’ is misleading insofar as it conveys the impression of there being a ‘fundament’ or ‘basis’ for other forms of trust, while, in fact, it is not available in the sense that we could establish or re-establish it – neither in ourselves nor in others. In its ‘groundlessness’¹⁶ it is not at our disposal and escapes our acts of volition – just as traumatizing experience does, as long as it is not codified in language. Coping with traumatic experiences means turning the traumatic *Erlebnis* into an *Erfahrung*. This process requires reflective consciousness, by means of which traumatic memories can be worked through. As a result, they can be acknowledged and

heutiger Vertrauensforschung at the University of Zurich on 6 November 2010 – namely, an approach to trust *ex negativo* (via experiences that negate or challenge trust) – proves fruitful also in a sociological context. Cf. Welz 2010 and Grøn 2012.

- 14 I think it would be more appropriate to speak of ‘reflective’ rather than ‘reflexive’ trust, as the authors obviously do not speak of trust that is *reflexartig* or *rückbezüglich*, but rather based on rational reflection.
- 15 Endreß and Pabst (2013: 96–7), too, operate with the distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* and link it up with an opposition of ‘traumatizing’ vs. ‘traumatic’ experiences. Yet I do not want to follow their idiosyncratic use of terms, which goes along with an unexplained identification of ‘conscience’ with ‘consciousness.’
- 16 As to the ‘groundlessness’ of this ‘fundament’, cf. Welz 2010: chapter III and V.1.2.

communicated to the extent that the psychosomatic marks that a traumatizing event left on a person are put into words.

As long as trauma is encoded primarily on a sensorimotor level (as body memory) – which can be defined as ‘the totality of implicit dispositions of perception and behavior mediated by the body and sedimented in the course of earlier experiences’ (Fuchs 2011: 86) – it persists not in the form of explicit memory, but as a style of existence. The latter manifests itself indirectly and remains hidden to the one who is traumatized, but becomes visible to others: in the form of panic attacks, actions that a person avoids without being aware of it, overlooked opportunities, and other ‘blind spots’ in day-to-day living, which belong to the ‘corporeal and intercorporeal unconscious’ (*ibid.*).¹⁷ The traumatic *Erlebnis* needs to be brought to mind and ‘translated’ if it is to be retrieved linguistically. Although it is rarely possible to include Holocaust trauma in a neat, coherent historical account of what has happened – which would, in its neatness, empty history of its horror and trivialize the problems of witnessing the Shoah – traumatic experiences may acquire some meaning in the context of the conscious framework of the victim’s life. By contrast, if the capacity to formulate a communicable testimony is lost, it is difficult to recover from Holocaust trauma. In this case, the accurate registration and preservation of what happened comes at the cost of ongoing pathology: being forced to live through again and again what has not become part of the retrievable and renewable ‘plot’ of autobiographical memory. Nonetheless, we have to keep in mind that witnessing goes beyond the verbal communication and putting-into-words of

- 17 Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1986: 308–9), Fuchs defines the unconscious as ‘absence in presence, the unperceived in the perceived’, which expresses itself in the following ambiguity of consciousness: ‘One does not know something *and* does not want to know it; one does not see something *and* does not want to see it – in other words, one looks past it intentionally-unintentionally. Consciousness is not fully transparent to itself because it hides itself from itself’ (Fuchs 2011: 101). Remarkably, Fuchs (*ibid.* 98) cites the memoirs of the Jewish writer Aharon Appelfeld, who from his seventh to his thirteenth year of age experienced WWII hiding in the woods of the Ukraine: ‘More than fifty years have passed since the end of the second world war. I have forgotten a great deal, especially places, dates and people’s names, but nevertheless I feel that time in my entire body. ... Sometimes it is enough to smell food, to feel dampness in my shoes or hear a sudden noise to bring me back to the war’ / ‘Seit Ende des zweiten Weltkriegs sind bereits über fünfzig Jahre vergangen. Vieles habe ich vergessen, vor allem Orte, Daten und die Namen von Menschen, und dennoch verspüre ich diese Zeit mit meinem ganzen Körper. ... Manchmal reicht der Geruch eines Essens, Feuchtigkeit in den Schuhen oder ein plötzliches Geräusch, um mich mitten in den Krieg zurückzusetzen’ (Appelfeld 2005: 57, 96).

experiences, beyond their thematization and representation. Silent waiting can also be a way of patiently coping with trauma (cf. Welz 2015).

3. Dialogic restitution of memory and identity

Bearing in mind the impact of trauma on the workings of memory, the next step is to address the role that inter- and intra-personal dialogue plays in the preservation of personal continuity. The latter includes a restitution of memory and identity in terms of self-recognition over time. Let us first examine the dialogue with another and then the dialogue with oneself.

In dialogue with another: listening, recounting, and the saying beyond the said

Before any content of a testimony can be told, one needs to participate in a relationship with someone who will listen. The Yale project of recording Holocaust testimonies has proved therapeutic: the testimonial process in the presence of a listener who accompanies the survivors on their journey into the past not only takes them back to the pain, horror, and sadness that is associated with that past; rather, it also engages them ‘in claiming a story of their own which holds together the fragments of their memory’ (Laub 2009: 139). The testimonial process ‘functions as a dialogue, not only between the listener and the survivor, but also internally in the survivor’, with him- or herself, and therefore testimony ‘is a step in the restoration of one’s own humanity’ and ‘in the rebuilding of mutuality and of trust’ (*ibid.* 141). In the therapeutic action of testimony, trauma-induced fragmented memories and psychic disruption begin to be repaired (cf. Laub 2013: 189, 196).

Witnessing also involves non-verbal communication (‘saying without the said’). Emmanuel Levinas emphasizes this pragmatic dimension of witnessing (i.e., ‘the saying’, *le dire*, the proximity of persons, one-being-for-another) more than the semantic dimension of witnessing (i.e., ‘the said’, *le dit*, the propositional content it conveys, the information transmitted). There is an overflowing of the said by a surplus of meaning, which is not just the convergence of speech with acts, but an ethical openness or exposure to the other, a gift implied in the giving of signs by an ego ‘led to sincerity’, ‘responsibility’, and ‘non-indifference’ for the other (Levinas 2004: 144–5).¹⁸

18 According to Levinas, this ‘saying’ is inspired by ‘the glory of the infinite’, which calls for a self that is ready to be there for another, expressing its readiness by saying ‘here I am’. See Levinas 2004: 152: ‘Transcendence owes it to itself to interrupt its own

Not just in exceptional cases, but in everyday encounters, too, the witness cannot always fully account for what (s)he lives through, since *pathos* precedes *logos* and is always already past compared to the conscious present. One is affected before one can grasp what is going on. Although one can only belatedly (or not at all) find words for a *Widerfahrnis*, the process of transforming surprising or traumatic experiences is, in any case, determined by one's relationship to others. No one could be and become him- or herself without significant others. Without an attentive and supportive 'Thou' it becomes difficult to preserve one's dignity, and even more difficult to bear witness of one's being-declined.

Dori Laub imagines someone saying to him: 'I'll be with you in the very process of your losing me. I am your witness' (1992: 92).¹⁹ Thereby the listening other becomes the witness of the witness. Even if the other leaves or dies, he or she will remain present *within* oneself, lingering in one's memory. However, the mental representation of another (the 'inner Thou') is, of course, not equivalent to the other who is met in an external reality and who is capable of questioning one's mental representations of him or her. There is a decisive difference between the other as a speaking subject and agent in a more or less shared world – and the image of this other in one's mind. In what ways, then, does the 'inner Thou' interact with the 'outer You'?

In *Testimony*, Laub describes how the encounter between the survivor-narrator of Holocaust testimony and the interviewer-listener makes it possible for the witness to reconstitute 'the internal "thou", and thus the possibility of a witness or a listener inside himself' (1992: 85). The appearance of the 'inner Thou'

demonstration. Its voice has to be silent as soon as one listens for its message.' But in the saying of a subject responsible for the other, 'the said and being are stated, but also ... an overflowing of the said itself by a rhetoric which is not only a linguistic mirage, but a surplus of meaning of which consciousness all by itself would be incapable'. As for the distinction between the saying and the said, cf. Pinchevski 2005: 80–4.

- 19 Laub here quotes the following poem by Paul Celan (1980: 181):

To stand in the shadow
of the scar up in the air.

To stand-for-no-one-and nothing.
Unrecognized,
for you
alone.

With all there is room for in that,
even without
language.

seems to depend on the prior meeting with another person ‘out there’ in the social world. This can be illustrated by the case of young vagabond Menachem: a boy who was separated from his parents during the war, but managed to survive with the help of other people and a photograph of his mother, to which he talked when he felt alone in the streets of Krakow. According to Laub, this story ‘exemplifies the process whereby survival takes place through the creative act of establishing and maintaining an internal witness who substitutes for the lack of witnessing in real life’ (*ibid.* 87). Menachem compensated for the loss of his mother by speaking to her picture. While he waited for the re-union with his mother, her internalized image was his ‘inner Thou’. By looking at the photograph, he kept her memory alive, which, in turn, kept him alive. As Dori Laub explained in an email of 16 September 2015, the photograph through which Menachem addressed his mother functioned as a ‘transitional object’: ‘had he not had such a mother, he would not have been able to create this ever present internal thou.’

Thus the presence of the ‘inner Thou’ is conditioned by emotional bonds between people. Such bonds evolve and can be maintained only if one experiences a dialogue partner who is *not* identical with oneself. To put it another way: the ‘inner Thou’ that was earlier classified as an internal *object* is, in reality, a mentally represented *subject*. There cannot be an *intra*-personal dialogue without *inter*-personal dialogues between people who really exist and know each other. For this reason, psychoanalytic ‘object relations theory’ works only if supplemented by a philosophy of dialogue that takes seriously the inter-subjective dimensions of communication.

It is not a coincidence that Laub refers to Buber when claiming that one cannot say ‘thou’ even to oneself when one cannot turn to another ‘you’ (cf. Laub 1992: 82). As he expounds elsewhere in regard to the Shoah, the ‘inner Thou’ as a means for self-dialogue ‘ceases to exist’ when others fail to show empathy in the external world, which leads to ‘the shutdown of the mental registering process’ and the erasure of thought and memory (Laub 2013: 187). A listening companion is indispensable for an individual to resume ‘dialogic narrative flow’ – but if the yearning for an internal good object, with whom the experiencing ‘I’ can be in constant dialogue, finds no resonance in ‘the passionate interest of a listening other’, then the mental representation of an ‘inner Thou’ cannot reemerge (*ibid.* 197).

Is it, then, better to remember and bear witness, or to keep silent, move on and forget? Prima facie the answer seems obvious; yet the simple alternative between remembering or forgetting, bearing witness or keeping silent is untenable. There is a time to speak and a time to be silent, a time to remember and a

time to forget. Speech and silence, remembrance and oblivion may alternate – and yet the latter cannot occur without the former. One may wish to remember and bear witness *in order to* be able to move on and forget. Even the dream of *tabula rasa*, of a new beginning based on the oblivion of the past, presupposes the presence of burdensome memories (cf. Welz 2013). In any case, bearing witness brings relief to the victims only if there is someone who listens carefully and receives their memories.

This has wide-ranging implications also for difficult dialogues between enemies and for all other cases in which people are *not* willing to listen to one another. How to move on in the lack of mutual understanding? Aleida Assmann has investigated this problem in a recent article on the transformative power of ‘dialogic memory’ (2015). While the policy of forgetting has for ages served as a strategy for containing conflicting memories, and while the public sphere in postwar Germany was shaped by a ‘pact of silence’,²⁰ a therapeutic concern with the abiding impact of violent, traumatic pasts prescribes something different, namely reengagement with the past in order to overcome it (cf. *ibid.* 200–1). The shift from monologic to dialogic memory policies marks the recognition of the victims’ memories as well as the integration of ‘two or more perspectives on a common legacy of traumatic violence’ (*ibid.* 208). Following the former concentration camp prisoner and later writer Jorge Semprún, Assmann argues that in order to forge a common future we need to share our past (cf. *ibid.* 209).

Thereby it becomes clear that the phenomenological and psychological perspectives discussed earlier do also touch upon ethical issues because they affect the (pre)conditions, norms, and limits of human action and interaction. In regard to our interaction with others, we have the obligation not to be indifferent to their suffering. In regard to our self-relation, we need to think about the retroactive effects of our actions and omissions on our self-understanding. Can we bear the consequences of what we have done or omitted to do? How do we later relate to what we underwent passively? Can we recognize ourselves in our deeds and decisions? In these questions our personal identity is at stake.

In a silent dialogue with oneself: self-witnessing and self-recognition

Personal identity and continuity across the gap between past and present can be preserved only if one’s ‘inner witness’ remains intact or has been repaired. Otherwise one does not know with oneself what has happened and how one

20 Elsewhere Assmann (2013: 201) calls this pact of silence ‘dialogic forgetting’ (*Schweigen als dialogisches Vergessen*).

has reacted, and then one is neither able to give an account of oneself nor of others' fate. So far, we have become acquainted with two different descriptions of this 'inner witness': conscience as one's knowing-with-oneself in one's relations to others and the 'inner Thou' as mental representation of a You in the external world. Accordingly, the loss of the capacity to witness from the inside can be described in two different ways: on the one hand, the figure of 'The Unhappiest One' in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, who is always absent from himself, embodies the lack of conscientious presence of mind; on the other hand, self-witnessing becomes impossible when the inner dialogue with an internalized other has stopped and, as a consequence, deliberation in dialogue with oneself has ended as well.

Hannah Arendt has termed thinking a 'silent dialogue of myself with myself', an 'inner dichotomy in which I can ask questions of myself and receive answers' (Arendt 2003: 98). For Arendt, this Socratic-Platonic description of the process of thinking implies that human beings exist in the plural and, even when alone, are in company. In thinking we become 'two-in-one' (*ibid.* 96). Remarkably, when being addressed by another who wants to talk to us, we immediately become one again and listen to the other outside of us. In Arendt's view, the fear of losing oneself is legitimate, 'for it is the fear of no longer being able to talk with oneself' (*ibid.*). This inability to talk with oneself and to return to the complex, internally differentiated oneness that includes otherness in itself, is one of the symptoms of trauma-induced pathology. It implies not only that one is abandoned by an empathic other, but also that one is deserted by oneself.

It is my contention that, just as the dialogue with oneself requires a dialogic relation to another, the cognitive conditions of self-witnessing are related to its social conditions. Witnessing can be conceptualized as the companionship of an 'inner' and an 'outer' witness, an 'inner' and an 'outer You' – with conscience establishing conscious co-presence between the two.

Yet there is a conspicuous difference between conscience and the 'inner Thou': while conscience functions as an 'inner witness' by registering everything one perceives, thinks, feels, and does in relation to others, the 'inner Thou' as internalized object or mental representation of another cannot do anything on its own. Being the mental image of an 'outer witness' or a listening You, it only reflects what the other does or has done. What about conscience – is it a kind of 'subject within the subject'? It is noteworthy that conscience is not a dialogue partner, but rather the faculty by which we are aware of ourselves. Conscience as a dimension of reflective or pre-reflective experience is neither a subject nor an object, but mediates between self and other by mirroring oneself even against one's will. Thereby conscience reveals one's non-coincidence with oneself, while

nonetheless being identical with oneself. One cannot negotiate with one's conscience as one can with another person because its 'voice' comes from oneself and yet over oneself. It turns against oneself when one is not true to oneself.

'Bad conscience' indicates when we are at odds with ourselves. Then the inner dialogue becomes a dispute, with our thoughts accusing or excusing ourselves. Conscience is not only the indicator of a conflicted self, but also the 'guardian' of self-identity in relation to alterity. As we already saw in regard to Ricoeur, alterity is not just 'out there', but self-inherent. Through conscience, one can experience oneself as another. Preserving one's personal identity does not mean that one remains the same, but that one recognizes oneself despite having changed.

The problem of self-recognition is one of the key problems to be dealt with when recovering from trauma. Semantically, self-recognition has a double meaning: it can both be taken in the sense of self-respect and in the sense of re-cognizing oneself as identical to oneself. As Paul Ricoeur notes in *The Course of Recognition*, 'it is indeed our most authentic identity, the one that makes us who we are, that demands to be recognized' (Ricoeur 2005: 21). It would be a mistake 'to mis-take oneself, to take oneself for what one is not' (*ibid.* 257). Ricoeur underlines that self-recognition requires, at each step, the help of others in interlocutory situations (cf. *ibid.* 69, 91, 96).

Further, as self-recognition involves the possibility of identifying 'oneself' despite one's self-transformations over time, it presupposes that one has a memory of one's past self, which can be linked up with one's present self, and a vision of who one wishes to become in the future. The above-mentioned alterations of memory affect episodic memory, which is responsible for the recollection of autobiographical events and experiences that occurred at a particular time and place. The term 'episodic memory' was coined by Endel Tulving in 1972, who counted 'autonoetic' consciousness amongst its key properties, that is, a special kind of consciousness accompanying the act of remembering and enabling one to be aware of oneself in subjective time, making possible mental time travel (Tulving 2002: 2–5, 20).²¹ Normally, episodic memory has (or can acquire) a narrative structure, which gets confused in the case of traumatization.

In what follows, the problem of self-recognition will be discussed from two angles: (1) seen from the point of view of the traumatized victim, it is explicated as a problem of identifying and respecting oneself; (2) seen from the point of

21 Tulving distinguishes between episodic and semantic memory. The latter is responsible for a record of factual information and concept-based general knowledge as well as shared meanings and traditional understandings.

view of the recipient of the victim's testimony, the problem of self-recognition is formulated as a problem of how one can identify with another while retaining a certain distance from this other, so that self and other do not fuse, but remain distinct from each other.

(1) The paradigm case of a victim who is at the same time an eyewitness giving a first-person account of evil and the suffering it produces is the case of the 'moral witness' as described in Avishai Margalit's *Ethics of Memory* (2002: 148–50, 163, 168). Moral witnesses have to live in order to serve – and to preserve the sober hope that in another place or another time there exists, or will exist, a moral community that will listen to their testimony (cf. *ibid.* 154–5). In Margalit's view, the minimal moral community is between oneself and one's future self (cf. *ibid.* 158–9). The authority of moral witnesses depends on their sincerity, which Margalit defines as a strong congruence between their emotions and avowals. 'But sincerity is only part of it; authenticity is another. An authentic person is one who gets rid of all his personae (masks) and gives expression to his "true self," especially in the extreme circumstances of being unprotected by a civilized moral environment' (*ibid.* 170). Here self-respect and self-identity are dependent on the extent to which a person lives up to the norm of truthfulness.

For Margalit, the relation of witnessing, like the relation of loving, is non-reflexive: 'it is possible, but not necessary, for one to witness oneself' (Margalit 2002: 175). However, if one's authority is shaped by the fact that one is identical with the one who went through and remembers the suffering of which one gives an account, it is hard to see how the relation of witnessing can remain non-reflexive. Furthermore, if Ricoeur is right in claiming that self-recognition is linked to self-attestation in the encounter with another, and if Laub is right in pointing out that a person's internal witness can only be re-established in dialogue with an external interlocutor, then self-awareness and the awareness of another are inseparable in the actual process of witnessing.

(2) The recipient of another's testimony can be confronted with the problem of secondary traumatization, through which his or her own self-recognition becomes endangered by over-identifying with the sufferer-victim. Following Susan David Bernstein (2003: 150, 158–9),²² my suggestion is to develop further the notion of 'disidentification', which does not see the limits of empathy and identification as a deficit, but valorizes the distinction between sympathizer and sufferer; the notion of 'thwarted identification', where the testimonial 'I' does not invite the viewers to identify with it because there is no pretence of universal human experience; and the notion of 'dissonant identification', which

22 With reference to Teresa de Lauretis and Doris Sommer.

captures the value of affective engagement, but at the same time recalls the differences that remain between sympathizer and sufferer.

When the sympathizer and sufferer are present for one another in shared attention, they are united in trying to avert the danger of internalizing the perpetrator's view – for, in this case, conscience becomes an inner tyrant and torturer. Then the victim is caught in a double bind, which can be overcome only if someone else enables him or her to take up a new position towards him- or herself. The victim's own self-image or world picture needs to be transcended by a hopeful outlook towards something unexpected. In order to preserve personal continuity, one needs a view that, paradoxically, is discontinuous to one's own – redeeming one from self-contempt and permitting one to see beyond what one can see.²³ One's memory of 'who one is' must be 're-written' like a palimpsest: being at once transformed and restored. Whether or not this happens is contingent; but if it happens, it is a gracious event. Then one can find oneself *and* the other in a genuine dialogue.

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23 Cf. Grøn 2010: 223, who quotes the following prayer of a South African ex-convict, who, almost without hope, sought some sort of reconciliation with his own family: 'Lord, help us see beyond what we see'.

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Repatriation and restitution of Holocaust victims in post-war Denmark

SOFIE LENE BAK

Jewish Holocaust survivors faced severe economic and emotional difficulties on returning home to Denmark in 1945. Jewish families had used their savings, sold valuables and property and obtained improvised private loans in order to finance their escape to Sweden. Homes, businesses and property had been subject to theft and abuse. During and after the German occupation, however, Danish authorities worked to mitigate and ameliorate the consequences of Nazi persecution and the Danish government implemented one of the most inclusive and comprehensive restitution laws in Europe, taking into account Jewish victims of deportation as well as victims of exile. The restitution process underlines the dedication of the Danish authorities to the reintegration of the Jewish community and their interest in allaying potential ethnic conflict. Furthermore, the process is a remarkable – but overlooked – missing link between the social reforms of the 1930s and the modern Danish welfare state.

Amidst the horrors of the Holocaust, the case of Denmark is exceptional, and celebrated for the fact that 98 per cent of the Jewish population survived persecution, the vast majority of them taking refuge in Sweden. The story of the rescue of the Danish Jews is a truly world-famous chapter of Danish history – possibly its only one. Research studies, as well as media reports and works of fiction have been, and continue to be, fuelled by a fascination with the story of the rescue in Denmark, where survival was the norm, as was a response of solidarity and aid for the Jews amongst the population. Yet historiography is almost exclusively limited to events which occurred in the autumn of 1943, when 95 per cent of the Jews in Denmark were rescued and taken to safety in Sweden. Little attempt has been made to expand the framework of historiography to include the experience of exile as well as the return of the Danish Jews and the aftermath of the Holocaust. But how can we measure the impact of the Holocaust on the victims and on society as a whole without knowledge of the effects of exile, deportation and repatriation and the long-lasting effects of trauma?¹

1 The following is based on Bak 2011 and Bak 2012.

The round-up

On October 1, 1943, the telephone lines in Copenhagen were cut off. Columns of open platform lorries manned by German police drove out onto the streets from the German Headquarters in City Hall Square. The German police brought along detailed lists of the addresses of Jewish families and were assisted by Danes who knew the locality, among them volunteers from the Waffen-SS, home in Denmark on furlough. At least 1,500 German policemen were available for the round-up of the Danish Jews. The aim was a surprise attack on the Danish Jewish community, which consisted of approximately 8,000 individuals mostly living within the environs of the capital. Within three hours 198 had been arrested in Copenhagen. By the morning of October 2, the total number who had been arrested in the country during the round-up was 281. Despite the heavy police presence less than 5 per cent of the Jews had been arrested; the Jewish families had already left their homes in alarm following a warning that had come from high up in the German hierarchy.²

Even more surprisingly, the available German police force was not mobilised to persecute the Jews after the round-up on October 1. The German army remained on the whole passive, despite receiving orders to support the police. In the German headquarters in Copenhagen, pursuit of the fleeing Jews was assigned to a small group of men in the German security police department IV-B-4, which dealt with Jewish issues. They were completely dependent on Danish informers. The limited resources assigned to the persecution affected the results. The total number of the arrests *after* the round-up of October 1 was 197.

As a consequence, 472 people were deported from Denmark because of their Jewish descent. 470 were sent to KZ Theresienstadt, north of Prague. During the course of the 19 months they spent in the camp, 53 died. Yet according to a deal agreed between the Third Reich's Plenipotentiary in Denmark, Werner Best and Adolf Eichmann, in charge of the mass deportation, all Jews deported from Denmark were to stay in the Theresienstadt camp and were not selected for transport to the extermination camps. Only one Dane was deported on from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, presumably by mistake. From February 1944 the prisoners were allowed to receive food parcels from Denmark and

2 For a lengthy discussion of the warning from Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, the ship-ping expert at the German Legation, and his relationship to the Plenipotentiary in Denmark, Werner Best, see Bak 2001 and Kirchhoff 2013.

the remaining prisoners were liberated from the camp in April 1945 and conveyed to Sweden in a joint operation by the Swedish Red Cross and the Danish authorities.

In Sweden they were united with family and friends. In the course of just a few weeks in October 1943, 7,742 persons had fled to Sweden, including children of mixed marriages and Gentile spouses; all victims of persecution by the Germans.

Safeguarding property during the occupation

On 3 October 1943 – two days after the round-up of Danish Jews – the municipality of Copenhagen dispatched a group of civil servants to the Copenhagen synagogue:

The Germans had used it as a collection point during the round-up of the Jews and it still exhibited the signs of this. Prayer shawls were thrown over the seats of the chairs and prayer books were spread over the floor. On the elevated area the floor was strewn with cigarette butts, and the trustees' top hats, which were usually kept in a cupboard in the entrance, had been used as footballs and kicked across the floor and underneath the rows of benches. The Social Service removed what they assessed to be of value: some Torah scrolls, various silver objects and books. These effects were moved, along with some boxes of items from the Museum of the Jewish Community, to the crypt of one of Copenhagen's old churches with the help of the Museum of Copenhagen. And from there they were delivered back to a representative of the Jewish community after the German capitulation.³

This account of the disrespectful behaviour at the synagogue is reminiscent of the behaviour of the German occupation forces all over Europe, where Jewish property was vandalized and destroyed. But it also tells of the exceptional conditions under occupation that were in effect in Denmark, where neither the destruction nor theft of Jewish property was tolerated.

The action in the synagogue was the first instance of many which were carried out by the civil servants acting under the unsuspecting name *Socialtjenesten* ('the Social Service'). On 2 October 1943, the municipality of Copenhagen received an unusual request from the Ministry of Welfare. The ministry requested that

3 Report dated 25 June 1946, The Social Directorate Information Service: The Social Service 1943–5, Copenhagen City Archive.

the municipality safeguard the belongings of the Jews who had fled their homes and property. The choice of the municipal agency of the Social Service was not incidental. The agency had originally been set up in the spring of 1943 with the intention of providing shelter for people whose homes were destroyed, or had to be abandoned temporarily because of incidents of war, primarily air raids. Moreover, the agency carried out crisis planning for mass evacuations, water and food supplies. Now in October 1943 its responsibilities were extended to cover abandoned belongings and property. In the months to follow the Social Service dealt with 1,970 inquiries about empty homes and other suspicious circumstances around the city. When the Social Service received an inquiry, its agents visited the residence, checked conditions and made a complete inventory of the household effects. If it was possible to retain the flat, the Social Service paid the rent for the rest of the occupation. Had the flat already been rented out again, or circumstances indicated that it was being sub-let (for example, if the rent was high), all personal property and furniture were put in storage. Contracts with trustees for property and businesses were established with neighbours, relatives and employees preventing thefts and larceny. In all the Social Service paid rent and all other costs for 97 flats, while storage was provided for the goods of 350 households through municipal efforts. The work of the Social Service was unique: during the German occupation a Danish public agency managed to protect the abandoned property of the Jews. The rationale behind the work of the Social Service was that the Jews should have homes to return to; no less remarkable was the fact that the arrangements were partly due to an agreement with the German authorities. Although the agreement with the German security police concerned safeguarding the property and flats of deported Jews only, the Danish authorities interpreted the agreement loosely as covering 'anyone, who because of the circumstances has deemed it necessary to remove themselves out of harm's way, whether in this country or abroad'.⁴

The flats that the Social Service inspected had only in a very few cases been vandalized by the German police. There were no cases of looting. The frequent cases of theft discovered by the Social Service were apparently carried out by other Danes.

4 Letter of 23 October 1943 to the chief administrative officers in the regions in Denmark from The permanent under-secretary of the Ministry of Welfare, Archives of the Ministry of Welfare, National Archives.

Immediate needs and relief

Denmark was liberated on 5 May 1945 after five years of German occupation, and a coalition government with equal representation from the political parties and the resistance movement assumed power on the same morning. The coalition government established a new Ministry for Special Affairs which was primarily intended to deal with the demobilisation of the resistance movement and to assist the members of the resistance in their return to normal life. 'Offices for Special Affairs' were set up in all the larger towns to carry out practical matters. A joint office for Copenhagen and its suburbs – the 'Central Office' – led the way for the rest of the country.

The Central Office for Special Affairs opened on 16 May 1945 to provide immediate help, restitution and compensation for the victims of the occupation. The Central Office supplied economic assistance to meet the costs of food, rent, clothing, furniture and debt relief, in addition to immediate help to re-establish jobs and livelihood, either by supporting the re-establishment of private workshops or firms, or providing subsidies for work clothes and tools. The costs were substantial: in 1947 assistance amounted to 8.8 million Danish Crowns (DKK) in total (approx. 1.18 million euros).

Jewish victims turned out to be a substantial proportion of the clientele taking up this assistance. A group designated 'former Jewish refugees' formed 25 per cent of all recipients of help, and included a total of 4,200 persons who received temporary economic assistance from the Central Office. The Jewish refugees were the largest single group and thus the most substantial group of recipients of help from the Central Office. The numbers indicate that on return at least half of the Danish Jews needed, and received, economic help.

Displaced persons

The Second World War had decimated the population of Europe. Millions had fled or been forcibly removed or deported across the borders of the continent. When Germany capitulated 10 million people, primarily civilians forced to labour in German territories and survivors from the KZ camps, were categorized as 'displaced persons' (DP).

When repatriated a total of 1,534 former refugees and deportees passed through a DP camp in Denmark before they were able to establish a new home. Ninety to ninety-five per cent of the residents were Jews. This means that close to one in five Jewish victims stayed in a DP camp in Denmark.

The first camps for returned refugees in Denmark were sited in school buildings in the suburbs of Copenhagen. During the period from the end of May 1945 to May 1946 the Central Office for Greater Copenhagen managed six camps in all. Residents were housed in overcrowded dormitories in converted gyms and classrooms. At first men and women were separated. Food for the camps was delivered by the soup kitchens of the City of Copenhagen until September 1945, when the food service of the Jewish community took over. Some of the food which the city provided turned out to be wasted, 'since a great many of the residents of the camps were Orthodox Jews, and as a result, could not partake of a food service that also served pork'.⁵ Care for the residents in the camps did include respect for special religious needs. Furthermore, financing this special service was considered a responsibility of the state, and the expenses of the Jewish Community were refunded according to a precisely agreed-on tariff. When the Central Office brought up the question of shutting down the DP camps towards the end of 1945, negotiations were initiated with the community regarding an actual takeover of the camp. The community bridled at the proposal: 'They had long ago discontinued charitable support and would prefer to avoid taking on this responsibility'.⁶ The Central Office did not push the question further. 'Long ago' was an overstatement. The Jewish community had actually financed and distributed poor relief until 1932, when the municipality of Copenhagen had assumed the responsibility in preparation for the social reforms. Furthermore, throughout the 1930s economic relief and food for the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany had been left to the Jewish community.

For many families placement in a DP camp in Denmark was the last straw. They had endured flight, exile and deportation. But to return to Denmark and end up in yet another refugee camp crushed their confidence and morale. Conditions in the camps were chaotic and nerve-racking. Quarrels, fights, vandalism, thefts and a stream of complaints were all part of life in the DP camps. The residents experienced the irritation and resentment of the local community, who wanted to use their school buildings for their children's education, and rising impatience with both the authorities and the personnel. Antisemitic

5 Food deliveries in October 1945 to the two remaining camps ran up to 8,649 DKK (1,159 euros), Letter to the Jewish Community 27.11.1945, The Central Office for Special Affairs, The Provisional Archives of Zealand.

6 Letter to the 3rd magistrates department 15.1.1946, the Central Office for Special Affairs, the Provisional Archives of Zealand.



This photograph from the Danish Displaced Persons (DP) camp 'Trepilelaagen' in 1945 was taken by the The Central Office for Special Affairs to document the everyday life of the camp. The romantic impression of cosy and relaxing situations was in blatant contrast to the grievances and conflicts that characterized the camp. The Provisional Archives of Zealand.

reactions were frequent among neighbours and personnel unfamiliar with post-traumatic behaviour.⁷

Even so, other staff members worked unceasingly to alleviate the troubles of the residents. They begged the municipal housing committees and the housing agency to procure flats and increasingly employed nationalistic arguments – with references to the sufferings that these *Danes* had had to endure during the occupation. During the autumn of 1945 the DPs were moved to villas in affluent neighbourhoods in the north of Copenhagen. Although elegant in looks and surroundings, the conditions here nevertheless put strain on the privacy and family lives of the residents.

Construction activity in Greater Copenhagen was intense in the early post-war years. In the suburbs northwest of Copenhagen new flats were completed in 1946, and room was found here for the homeless families. One such

7 Similar reactions occurred among allied relief workers in hospitals and DP camps in Germany, see Steinert 2010.

residential neighbourhood even went under the nickname 'Little Jerusalem'. The last residents moved out of the DP camps in August of 1946 – 16 months after the liberation.

Conflict

The Central Office functioned as a mediator and support for the efforts Jews made to overcome the consequences of deportation and flight. This involved situations when the return home resulted in conflict with former friends, acquaintances, colleagues and neighbours who had either over-interpreted their power of attorney and dealt with the belongings and property of the Jews more freely than was originally intended or when there had been actual misuse and theft. This unanticipated problem was quickly resolved by providing free legal aid through *Studentersamfundets retshjælp* (the Legal Aid Bureau). Contrary to the routine of the Legal Aid Bureau, where only 4 per cent of all inquiries were handled by a lawyer, all cases concerning Jewish victims were evaluated by a lawyer even though only 50 per cent came to court and most ended with a settlement. Yet the cases enacted by the Legal Aid Bureau is only a fraction of the total number of civil lawsuits concerning theft and misuse which were initiated by Jews, since this service was only available to persons of limited means.

Obviously, the disagreements relating to homecoming were a painful experience for all concerned. All over Europe such conflicts occasioned displeasure and anger, not only among the accused, but also the authorities, witnesses and in the local neighbourhoods. Jews, who had never been expected to return, now demanded the recovery of their housing, property and employment. Many of these conflicts were hardly unique to returning Jews. People who had fled or been deported as a result of political activities also experienced difficulties in re-establishing themselves in Denmark. The conflicts depended to a considerable degree on whether their surroundings acknowledged the cause of their exile or imprisonment. Several witnesses describe the initial responses they encountered when they returned home to their old neighbourhood dressed in their nicest clothes in honour of the happy day. Danish society was worn down after five years of occupation. Textiles were rationed, and the Danes had been forced into resorting to incredible improvisations to maintain and renew their wardrobes. The neighbours construed the fine clothes of the returnees as the expression of a luxurious life in Sweden which had been enjoyed at an agreeable distance from occupied Denmark. Gifts from Sweden were perceived as offensive handouts. Even though such episodes may seem petty and insignificant, they were etched in memories as part of the experience of returning home.

The Danish authorities, represented by the Central Office for Special Affairs, attempted to minimize conflicts associated with returning home. In part because the Central Office acted as a mediator, in part because the temporary help and the attempts to obtain housing and work made actual legal action – which no one desired – less than absolutely necessary. This comprehensive assistance eased the demanding transition from war to peace and assured the re-integration of the Danish Jews into Danish society. The Central Office was not abolished until October of 1947.

Compensation

On October 1, 1945 the Danish parliament passed the *Lov om erstatning til besættelsestidens ofre* ('Law of Compensation to the Victims of the Occupation') in recognition of a considerable need for public assistance for those people whose existence had been shattered by the events of the war. The law was primarily aimed at members of the resistance and political deportees but included 'Persons persecuted because of their descent'. 'Descent' as a concept had the linguistic and social advantage of disassociation from Nazi racist ideology – and with it the politically problematic concept of race – and it did not preclude anyone from compensation. A definition of Jews, regardless of whether halakhic, legal or racial, would have excluded some victims from seeking compensation. The compensation law did not discriminate in relation to definitions of who was a Jew. The issue was whether the person had in practice been a victim of persecution, and the reasons for flight stated by the applicants were taken at face value.

The law guaranteed *compensation for death and disability* due to events of war, including persecution, imprisonment, internment and deportation carried out by the Germans. *Tort compensation for imprisonment, internment and deportation* was paid out as a fixed amount for every week the imprisonment had lasted. In addition, the law allowed for the possibility of compensation for *damage to property and support to begin or continue business activity or education as well as restoration of particularly severe losses*.

In 1958, when the Compensation Board took stock, a total of 15,640 persons had applied for compensation. A total of 113 million Danish Crowns (DKK) (more than 15 million euros) had been paid out in compensation under the law. 1,280 people had applied for compensation because they had been persecuted due to their descent. This number includes both men and women, but women most often only applied if they had been deported or were single parents, whereas men applied on behalf of their entire family. The total number

of people who applied for compensation was therefore considerably higher than 1,280 if other family members and children are also counted. One in four of the applications were for tort damages for deportation to Theresienstadt and 95 per cent of the applications were accepted. A total of 1.1 million Danish Crowns (DKK) – close to 150,000 euros – were paid in tort damages to the deported from Theresienstadt. To grasp the current value of these amounts, the numbers must be multiplied by a factor of 12.

Jewish victims were also eligible for educational assistance grants. The provision for assistance to start or continue studies was a new initiative and an important political signal to the young people who had participated in the resistance movement. Otherwise the cost of education was a private matter and made the future of young people dependent on the economic means of their parents. The compensation law gave young people access to a monthly support payment, which allowed them to manage on their own and concentrate on their studies. The applicants had to provide substantial evidence that events during the war had either delayed or hindered their education. Both deportation and exile in Sweden were recognized as delaying factors.

Seventy-five per cent of the claims made by the Jews related to theft, damage and economic loss due to flight and deportation. A total of 1,058 persons of Jewish descent had suffered a material loss which they hoped would be covered by the compensation law. These numbers give only a hint of the true costs of the Nazi persecution. To this number should be added all those who never became aware of the legal possibilities concerning compensation, or held back from applying because they were either ashamed to receive public assistance, were wary of public authorities, or had given up hope.

The provision for restitution of severe losses made it possible to apply for help to cover the expenses Danish Jews had borne in connection with the flight to Sweden. The law granted support for repayment of loans taken to pay for the journey and compensation for the use of one's own means – both ready money and the sale of personal effects and property. The files reveal that people literally sold everything, from furniture and carpets, grand pianos and bicycles to jewellery, silver and tools – most often not at the market rate. The average price for the illegal transport to Sweden was 1,000 DKK (Danish Crowns; 134 euros) per person in 1943; the present-day value would be 20 times that amount. By way of compensation the Danish state thus contributed to financing the flight of the Danish Jews to Sweden with an estimated sum of more than 700,000 DKK (or approx. 94,000 euros). This is a small amount in relation to what has been calculated as the total costs of the exodus, with estimates ranging from 12 up to 20 million DKK. But it was a very important political contribution for



Chief Rabbi Max Friediger returns to Denmark in June 1945. The return of the Danish refugees from Sweden in the summer of 1945 was treated as a national holiday and thousands of people went to Copenhagen Harbour to greet and welcome the refugees. For the Jewish families, the festive mood was soon overshadowed by discovery of misuse and theft of their property. The Chief Rabbi had been deported to Theresienstadt and never recovered. He died in 1947. Photo by courtesy of the Museum of Danish Resistance.

Jews who had been severely affected by persecution and it put an effective end to the political and moral discussion of the legitimacy of the price of the rescue.

The total compensation paid out to Jewish victims was 2.2 million DKK (approx. 300,000 euros). The amounts were considerable – as compared to the average monthly wage for a skilled worker of 400 DKK. And the amount doesn't include invalidity pensions which are still being paid out under the provisions of the original law.

Exclusions

However, the percentage of rejections was high. A total of 45 per cent of the Jewish victims received a negative response to their application. The number is significantly higher than the total rejection rate of 22 per cent for all applications. All over Europe compensation and pension measures generally discriminated Jewish victims on the grounds of a distinction between political

and 'arbitrary' victims, a hierarchy of victims that gave special honours and benefits to combatants (Lagrou 2005, Caetecker 2005). The Danish law was no exception.

A special 'Award of honour in acknowledgement of efforts in Denmark's fight for liberation' were granted to persons who had either participated in the resistance, or been imprisoned, interned or deported for their political activities or service in the police force. The Jewish group was ineligible for the award of honour, which resulted in a 100 per cent rejection rate in this category. The distinction between 'combatants' and 'arbitrary victims' was also applied to the paragraph on lost and damaged property. Theft was only covered by the law if the applicant had been a member of the resistance, or had been imprisoned or deported. Ninety-seven per cent of the applications for compensation for theft or vandalism from Jewish victims were rejected. The legal gap resulted in embarrassing and painfully conspicuous conflicts.

Additionally, the law only covered Danish citizens. Stateless Jewish refugees were excluded from compensation whether or not they had a residence permit and regardless of their loss. Furthermore there was only access to compensation for persons who were over eighteen years of age. This was an obvious injustice. The 51 children and young people who had been deported to Theresienstadt were not included. Though many children had become victims due to the deeds and political activities of their parents during the occupation, the children in Theresienstadt were victims in their own right but were excluded from compensation.

The law had socially lopsided effects. It was routinely checked whether the applicant had received public assistance before fleeing to Sweden. Those who were considered to have been dependent on public assistance regularly received rejections of their claims, particularly if it was found that the applicant was 'unreliable', 'unsuited to independent living' or known as a 'con artist'. Another aspect of the evaluation was how long the person had stayed in a refugee camp in Sweden. The longer the time in the camp, the more unreliable and lacking in independence the applicant was judged to be. This practice affected the weakest of the former refugees who had had difficulties in establishing themselves in Sweden.

Furthermore payments depended on an interpretation of the law's condition of 'severe economic loss'. If the possessions lost didn't represent any material value compensation were denied even though it was everything the family owned. Shabby furniture chopped for firewood and clothes torn to make polishing cloths were not considered a severe loss and not compensated. It left poor families in situations where they had lost everything and owned nothing.

The distinction between political and 'arbitrary' victims was gradually erased. An amendment in 1973 expanded the provisions on the award of honour to include persons who had been deported because of their descent and were disabled as a result of the imprisonment. And in 1993, yet another revision of the law was passed, under which the requirement that work disability had to be reduced by at least 50 per cent in order to receive the award of honour, was revoked. The last discriminatory distinction among the victims was gone.

Collective memory

According to the national collective memory not only were the Danish Jews enthusiastically welcomed home by their countrymen, but their living conditions, housing and material status also had remained untouched despite flight and exile, thanks to the care given to their homes and possessions by fellow citizens.⁸

Many families came home and found their home and property well cared for and intact. A great number of private individuals among the Danes had unselfishly and carefully kept an eye on the property of their Jewish neighbours and friends. However it was the City of Copenhagen – through the efforts of the Social Service – that was in large part responsible for this thoughtfulness. Thus public authorities played an important role in guaranteeing that Danish Jews had homes to which to return and their efforts prevented large-scale theft and larceny.

Only very few witnesses remember that they, or their families, received compensation. If the children are omitted, 77 per cent of the deportees to Theresienstadt actually received compensation from the Danish state when they came home, and to this must be added the millions paid out to cover re-establishment and the expenses of the flight. Failure to speak about compensation received was presumably due to the shame commonly attached to receipt of public assistance. Even though it was carefully emphasized that the compensation was not a social measure, accepting public assistance was at odds with the ideal of the father of a family who provides for his own. The money was perceived as a charity handout.

As the fact that a significant segment of the Danish Jews received compensation for the losses they suffered during the war was erased from individual memory it never became part of collective memory either. The explanation is

8 See a prominent example in the memoirs of the Chief Rabbi Marcus Melchior (1965, 1968); see also Bak 2001: 109ff.

political. To a great extent the original losses were caused by theft and misuse: families came home and found that all valuables and desirable objects had disappeared from their homes or they had had to sell furniture, jewellery, silver and shops far under the market value. They were grateful for the price they could get, which was most advantageous for the buyer. Loans and re-purchase agreements were made, which, at best, were on market terms and, at worst, were an exploitation of their wretched situation. The compensation cases involved painful conflicts, which, accompanied by a discussion of the reasonableness of the sums the Jews had been charged for crossing to Sweden, could have driven a serious wedge into Danish society. The politicians of the day wanted to avoid this at any cost. The restitution process underlines the dedication of the Danish authorities to the reintegration of the Jewish community and their interest in silencing potential ethnic conflict.

The missing link

The process of repatriation and restitution of Jewish victims in Denmark is just as extraordinary in a European context as the saving of their lives in 1943. Compared to other European countries the process which took place in Denmark is exceptional in terms of its timing, extent and inclusivity. The obvious question is *why*? Why was Denmark different? Was it the extraordinary national spirit of the Danes (as even serious scholars seem to suggest)? Or rather, was the aid driven by individuals dedicated to easing the plight of the Jews; or did the existing structural factors make a difference – first and foremost the legislative framework and the development of the welfare state in Denmark?

The answer is not either-or, but rather an attempt to determine the preconditions of rescue and relief during and after the Holocaust. Structural factors were decisive in determining the Danish restitution process. Not only was the legal framework behind restitution based on existing legislation. It also represented an extension and development of existing principles of social welfare. This means that the extraordinary social welfare programmes pertaining to the Second World War had a lasting impact on Danish society and facilitated a new understanding of the state's responsibilities to its citizens.

Reference to existing legislation lent legal and political legitimacy to the process. The aid provided by 'the Social Service' of the City of Copenhagen in safeguarding the homes and property of Jewish families during the exile, and the Central Office for Special Affairs providing immediate help and restitution, were both legally grounded in social welfare legislation of 1933. The Law of Compensation to the Victims of the Occupation, enacted in 1945, was based on

principles in the pre-war Law on Invalidity Pension to Casualties in Conscript Forces (1934) and wartime laws on State Insurance Subsidy to War Damage (1940) and the 'Award of honour to families of casualties and wounded on the 9th April 1940' which were both enacted as a result of the German occupation in 1940. The legal foundations of the restitution process thus reveal a continuity of social reform from the 1930s.

However, new norms were evident in practice as well as legislative principles. They reveal a development from the principle of modest aid to avoid social risk into a set of more generous and universalistic services. Thus, an investigation into the relation between the legislative and administrative measures with regard to the victims of persecution and the principles of the modern Danish welfare state is required.

International research on the relationship between war and social change and between war and changes in social policy is a well-established discipline, but Danish historiography on social history and the development of the welfare state insists on passing over the occupation years as an anomaly which curbed social development. Social changes which occurred during the occupation are referred to only as short term transitional effects (Schädler Andersen *et al.* 2012, Kolstrup 2014). Historians concerned with the occupation history, on the other hand, largely exclude the post-war perspective and the political, social and psychological effects of the occupation have never been integrated into Danish occupation history. If the object is to investigate the long-term and permanent consequences – positive as well as negative – of the Second World War, the two disciplines should be bridged and developments which occurred during the German occupation must be considered as an integral part of the history of the Danish welfare state, just as the war years must be analysed in proportion to the social problems of the post-war period.

Firstly, the legislative and administrative measures aimed at the victims of persecution reflected an expansion of state responsibility and care for individual citizens. In Sweden during the exile, the Danish refugee administration appointed under the Danish legation concluded that running the refugee camps as a business arrangement was inappropriate to the needs of the refugees and converted the camps, whenever possible, into public institutions. Furthermore refugees, who depended on their hands (musicians as well as tailors), were exempted from hard manual labour in the refugee camps and income subsidies to families were provided without individual assessment of previous income or status. The policy of the Danish refugee administration differed not only from that of the Swedish authorities which had initially managed the camps, but also from the Norwegian Refugee Administration (Møller and Secher 1945: 113ff.).



During the first weeks of June 1945, 1200 former refugees arrived from Sweden to Denmark every day. All had to be registered at the Copenhagen Central Station, where they were provided with money, rationing cards and accommodation by The Central Office for Special Affairs. Photo by courtesy of the Royal National Library.

Back in Denmark, the Social Service considered that it was its task to fully reconstruct and remedy the situation of the Jewish families, which meant doing the dishes and returning library books, and they were urged not to limit the aid according to formal or legal considerations. In other words, the remit was: anything goes. In the DP camps, respect for the religious needs of Jewish DPs not only meant delivery of kosher food from the Jewish congregation but also led to the dismissal of a leader of a DP camp who had commandeered an extra kitchen for kosher purposes without permission from his superiors.

Secondly, more generous services were provided to the victims of persecution. The Law of Compensation to the Victims of the Occupation not only specified higher rates for pensions and subsidies; the higher rates were also considered to be a precondition for rehabilitation and the victim's ability to rejoin the work force. Previously, the breakthrough for this welfare principle of rehabilitation in Denmark was considered to be The Law on Tuberculosis in 1949. By insisting on continuity, the breakthrough can now be dated to 1945.

Thirdly, the services were universal. There were no income or assets limitations for receiving compensation and subsidies and medical care were independent of income level. The Compensation Law even introduced a minimum income level on which basis the services were calculated – a helping hand not least to young people who had little or no income prior to their deportation. The precedent for this universal principle has previously been considered to be the reform of old-age pensions in 1956 that rescinded the legal distinction between worthy and ‘unworthy’ recipients and guaranteed a minimum threshold for all citizens, independent of previous income. The principle was finally abolished in general in 1960. Yet the feeling of gratitude towards the resistance that fostered the Compensation Law and the inclusion of Jewish victims suffering from the economic consequences regardless of social class neutralized the traditional distinctions between those who had no fault of their own and whose difficulties were self-inflicted and between the capable and incapable.

Another crucial distinction was finally abolished as a result of the war. Until 1932, it was the Jewish community who had financed and distributed poor relief to members of its congregation. Until 1940 economic relief and food for the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany was left to the Jewish community. In 1945, even though the food service of the Jewish community took over delivery to the DP camps, the state financing of this special service was never questioned. The need of the Jewish citizen was a state responsibility.

In sum, these considerations led to two remarkable conclusions. Firstly, that the form and extent of aid and assistance to the Danish Jews during and after the Holocaust is largely explained by the social reforms of the 1930s that set out the state’s responsibility for all citizens – including Jewish citizens – and by the development of the modern Danish welfare state. Secondly that the precedents for the modern principles of welfare came earlier than has been hitherto established – as they were introduced by wartime and post-war legislation.

Conclusions

The severe economic and emotional difficulties that Jewish survivors were faced with on returning home to Denmark in 1945 was only too similar to those of the Jews in the rest of Europe where homes, businesses and property had been subjected to theft and abuse.

But the prompt and inclusive state assistance provided to the Danish Jews on their return in 1945 is unique in an international context and underlines Denmark’s status as the special exception during the Holocaust. Not only did the Law of Compensation include Jews as a matter of course, it also included

the exiled Jews and the losses they had suffered in Denmark in their absence and the price they had paid for the illegal transport to Sweden. The compensations were an extension of the efforts by the Social Service and the Central Office for Special Affairs to mitigate and ameliorate the consequences of Nazi persecution. Danish politicians and authorities had attempted to prevent persecution. When it did finally occur, from the very beginning all legal means were used to ward off its results. Without the compensation payments a significant number of people would have been impoverished and would have had severe difficulties in re-establishing themselves. A most important political signal was sent, which undoubtedly increased the gratitude of the Danish Jews. The compensation payments were integral to their understanding of Danish society. It also contributed to the integration and assimilation efforts which became even more apparent in the Danish Jewish community in the post-war years. Yet the compensations were also a factor in the veil of silence that fell over the considerable economic costs of the flight.

The help had its limits. Stateless Jews and children were excluded from compensation and tort damages. But in the end the Danish state's solicitude for its Jewish citizens and its considerable contribution to the financing their escape, is nevertheless an exceptional chapter in the history of the Danish Jews.

The social welfare principles in Denmark provided a legal foundation for aid and assistance to persecuted Jews. And the experiences of civil servants in the refugee administration in Sweden, in Copenhagen City, in the offices of the Special Affairs and the Ministry of Welfare facilitated a new understanding of state responsibility and social welfare, principles that were later essential aspects of the modern Danish welfare state. Although the development was fuelled by enormous gratitude towards the resistance movement, Jewish victims benefited from the same provisions aimed at mitigating the consequences of Nazi persecution. The result was a successful reintegration of the Jewish community into Danish post-war society.

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The faith of the fathers, the future of the youth

Being Jewish on the periphery of the diaspora

VIBEKE KIEDING BANIK

The article aims to analyse the various descriptions of crises among Norwegian Jewry as they were expressed in Jewish magazines and organizations in the interwar period. By analysing social, organizational and religious work I ask how Jews emigrating from Eastern Europe handled the transition from the Jewish *shtetl*/life to the homogeneity of the Scandinavian societies. Further, I discuss the various solutions to these crises. I suggest that by utilizing fixed ideas of Jewishness, such as 'traditions' and 'Zionism', the Norwegian Jews in fact created a versatile Jewishness that they labelled 'national work'. This paved the way to becoming 'Jewish Norwegians'.

It is way too clear that the sign of the times indicates that our Scandinavian Jewishness is severely damaged. (Editor, 'Hvad vi vil', *Israeliten*, 1/1920)

The Jews that immigrated [to Norway] many years ago have become mammon hunters – they have completely torn themselves apart from the chain that our people constitute – they have lost our people's sense of honour and consciousness, ideals and pride ... (J. T. Birsén, no title, *Israeliten*, 5/1917)

Arrive any Friday to one of our synagogues and a great sorrow will fill your heart: Where is the youth? (Editor, 'Hvem har skylden?', *Israeliten*, 4/1918)

The danger these days is that Jewish knowledge is vanishing and the will to a Jewish education is lacking. (M. F., 'Noen ord til de jødiske foreldre. Chanukka-betraktninger', *Hatikowh*, 1/1929)

These quotations demonstrate a great concern for the future of Jews, Jewish culture and Judaism in Norway in the interwar period. However, while minutes from Jewish organizations and periodicals communicate that a sense of the loss of an authentic Jewishness was on many minds throughout the period, definitions of a Jewish authenticity, or Jewishness, varied, as did the solutions

suggested by the authors and organization members. In this article I will analyse the various descriptions of a perceived crisis among Norwegian Jewry as well as the solutions to their particular version of the Jewish problem of the time. By analysing organizational, social and religious work I will ask how Jews emigrating from Eastern Europe handled the transition from a relatively consistent, but gradually decreasing, Jewish life in the *shtetls* to the secular but Lutheran-influenced societies of Scandinavia. In the light of postcolonial theories and scholarly research on the Jewish diaspora, I ask what the different generations perceived as being Jewish, how they felt that their Jewishness was threatened and what solutions they considered to be the best ones to solve these issues at the time. In addition, when possible, I compare my findings to scholarly research carried out on the other Scandinavian Jewish communities.

As most organizational archival material disappeared during WWII, I have relied on minutes and articles printed in Jewish periodicals at the time. The minutes cover the most important organizations in prewar Jewish Norway, such as the Mosaic Women's Organization, the Jewish youth organization and the Zionist association, as well as records from the different religious congregations in Norway. I have also included letters to editors and articles written by individual members of the community, and in combination they constitute the closest thing possible to a representative Jewish voice in the interwar period. And while there were, as I will discuss below, certain differences in opinion, the sources are mostly oriented in the same directions on the topic discussed in this article. Hence, when I use expressions such as 'the Norwegian Jews argued', it is not without substance.

In the periphery of the diaspora

In contrast to the other Nordic countries, the vast majority of the group that was to become the Norwegian Jews had emigrated from Eastern Europe from the last two decades of the twentieth century onwards. While many may have wanted to go to the United States of America, *di goldene medina* of the time, some ended up in Norway instead. The migration to Norway had the character of a chain migration where whole families and on several occasions two or three generations settled. While some had lived for a period in other Scandinavian countries, most arrived directly from Eastern Europe. Norway at the time was a very religious and ethnically homogeneous country, which only in 1851, after a constitutional ban in 1814, allowed Jews to cross its borders. The debates preceding, and the enforcement of, the ban clearly demonstrate that anti-Jewish sentiments were a part of a Norwegian discourse at the time, and these opinions did not disappear after the ban was lifted (Harket 2014, Ulvund 2014).

However, once allowed to settle, Jews enjoyed nearly full civil rights, and until the ban on kosher slaughtering in 1929, they were never discriminated against judicially because they were Jews (Snildal 2014). This does not mean that Jews were always socially accepted, and there were, for example, strong tendencies towards antisemitism among parts of the bureaucracy in the Ministry of Justice and among the Oslo police, both being key agencies in gaining a Norwegian citizenship (Johansen 1984, 2005). Further, anti-Jewish attitudes were visible within the Lutheran state church, in trade organizations, in literature and in certain political parties at times (e.g. Moe and Kopperud 2011). Despite these occurrences, antisemitism was a phenomenon of the written word and mostly a latent feature. And compared to other minorities, such as the Sami people, the Roma population and the Travellers, the Jews were treated well by the authorities.

A great majority of the Jews, men and women alike, worked in trade (Gjernes 2007, Banik 2015a). They owned their own retail businesses selling clothes, fruit, tobacco or cheap trinkets. Many had worked in trade, mostly as peddlers, while living in Sweden, and most likely they had also had trade-related jobs whilst living in Eastern Europe. In addition, Norway, and in particular Oslo, where the majority of Jews settled, was a country undergoing transformation. It was becoming industrialized, urbanized, in need of ready-made goods and people who knew retail. The Eastern European Jews had this kind of experience, and while its demand for knowledge in trade may not have been the reason for coming to Norway, it may certainly have played a part in the decision to stay.

Eventually many of the men went into the import or wholesale business, and a few obtained an academic education. It is important to note that the kinds of ethnic economy or niches, known among trading Jews in other countries, did not occur in Norway (e.g. Godley 2001: 68). While on occasion they sold goods primarily meant for Jewish customers, such as *tomor*, a kosher butter, for the most part their customers were non-Jews. The small number of Jews, always less than 2,000 individuals, did not allow for Jews-only dedicated shops. Moreover, and in contrast to the Jews of Stockholm and Copenhagen, who ran their own schools, Norwegian Jewish children attended local public or private schools. This implies that while the Jewish community certainly was close-knit, many interacted with non-Jews on a daily basis. Lastly, mastering the Norwegian language was important, and the children of the immigrant generation often spoke Norwegian to their Yiddish-speaking parents.

It was the number of newly-arrived Jews from Eastern Europe and a change in the laws concerning religious dissidents that made the founding of religious congregations possible in 1891. Later, social and cultural organizations

followed, and Oslo and Trondheim became the two centres of Jewry in Norway. The *Ostjuden* were a part of the Jewish social establishment from the beginning, although there is no doubt that the general social standing and a solid economy were important factors when the leadership was elected. Nevertheless, the frictions between established Jews and the Eastern European newcomers were less frequent and profound than in most other Western European countries at the time.

An unresolved existence

The social and cultural transformation of European Jewry that took place after the emancipation constituted a profound and irreversible change in Jewish lives. The breakdown of the influence of rabbinic Judaism in the Eastern European *shtetls* and the growing influence of a non-Jewish secular world made the Jews, as well as non-Jews, question their Jewishness, faith and position in society at large (Birnbbaum and Katznelson 1995). The Jewish Question, which was asked by non-Jews, and, among other things, debated what civil, legal, and national status Jews as a minority group should have within European societies, also contributed to a sense of dissolution among European Jews from the last half of the nineteenth century. And while they took an active part in society and eventually gained social positions, a growing sense of a failure of the Jewish emancipation developed. Jews continued to be scapegoats when scapegoats were needed and anti-Jewish accusations and attitudes which were now attributed to the Jewish race and thus considered to reflect an unchangeable aspect of the Jewish nature, flourished periodically. In addition, many Jews felt that despite the fact that Jews in general toned down or completely eradicated their 'Jewishness' publicly, they were still defined and regarded first and foremost as Jews, not as a part of the majority population. It became evident that legal equality did not imply social acceptance. Further, a number of Jews argued that Jewish acculturation in fact occasioned contempt from non-Jews because it implied that Jews were trying to become something they could never be.

The feeling of an unresolved existence as a Jew, both individually and collectively, in Europe was also felt among the Norwegian Jews. The many perceived dangers of assimilation were a dominant feature of their discourse in the interwar period, and characterized as the 'biggest enemy of the Jewish world'.¹ Some argued that Jews, in order to become socially accepted and to avoid

1 Speech given by Aron Grusd on the Scandinavian Jewish Youth Association's congress, July 1919, minutes in *Israeliten*, 7–8/1919.

antisemitism, spent too much time becoming involved in the culture of their country of birth at the expense of knowing their Jewish background. Others claimed that some Jews regarded their Jewishness as inferior to other cultures.² In a speech made to the Oslo Jewish youth in 1920, the Swedish Chief Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis likened the Judaism of his times to an ailing patient, and he characterized the times as being one of the biggest crises that Jews and Judaism had ever experienced. One of the reasons for the disease was, among other things, the breakdown of 'Old Russia', which had caused the destruction of Eastern European Jewish communities and hence of their role as a cultural and spiritual centre.³ He also emphasised 'the moral and spiritual' dissolution of Jews in general.

In addition, Ehrenpreis argued that the consequences of World War I, and in particular the antisemitism that occurred during the war and in its immediate aftermath, led to Jews becoming cowards; an anxious, nervous and a far less resistant group. Others claimed that, as a result of the war and the increase in anti-Jewish sentiments, Jews lacked ideals that could guide them and give them a belief in the future, thus bringing about 'moral confusion'.⁴ Characterized as a 'plague that wreaked havoc on everything Jewish', antisemitism, either in the form of pogroms or other actions or as attitudes, also loomed large when explaining the position of the European Jews in society.⁵ Headlines such as 'A plea concerning the persecutions of the Jews in Berlin', 'A call to the Scandinavian Jews for immediate help to our brothers of faith in Kovno' and 'The pogroms in Lemberg' all demonstrate that readers of Norwegian Jewish periodicals closely followed what was happening to European Jewry and that there was fear concerning their physical and spiritual future throughout the interwar period.

While the concern for European Jewry was often of a very general nature, they also reflected an actual experience of Scandinavian Jewry. There is no doubt that Swedish and Danish Jews had undergone a process of acculturation

2 For example, A. L. 'Vår närmste uppgift', *Israeliten*, 1/1918.

3 Abstract of a speech titled 'Jødedommens fremtid' made in Israelitisk Ungdomsforening 26.12.1920, *Israeliten*, 7/1921. It is important to note that the expression 'Jødedommen' in my sources was used to denote Judaism or the Jewish people, its culture and traditions in general. While this may imply that they saw no difference between the religious and cultural aspects of being a Jew, I believe that a more accurate interpretation is that they regarded both as being a part of Jewishness, while at the same time recognizing that the emphasis between the two shifted over time and space.

4 Unknown, 'Kongres-betragtninger', *Israeliten*, 1/1921.

5 Unknown, 'Den nye ungdom', *Israeliten*, 4/1920.

that the Norwegian Jews read as a warning sign for future development. In a speech at the Scandinavian Jewish Youth Congress in 1932, Hugo Valentin admitted that while the Jewish congregations in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Copenhagen completely lacked a 'positive Jewish programme', the Jews in Finland and Norway were still 'instinctively disposed to Jewishness'.⁶ And there was some substance to his claim. For example, among the affluent Western or Central European Jews living in Stockholm in the latter half of the nineteenth century, there was an increasing tendency towards intermarriage and baptism, inevitably resulting in assimilation (Bredefeldt 2011: 69). In Denmark, half of the non-Eastern European Jewish population was married to a non-Jew in 1921 (Trap 1922: 8). In addition, a far wider range of opinions in terms of how a Jew should be defined, what Judaism and/or Jewishness was and whether the Jews constituted a nation were present in the Swedish Jewish discourse at the time. The Swedish economic historian Eli Heckscher was not alone in being convinced that the Jews did not constitute a nation and that his Jewishness was an entirely private matter. Thus, he argued that assimilation was the only solution to the Jewish Question of his times (e.g. Flakierski 1982).

In addition, there was a widespread feeling that the Scandinavian Jews were far from constituting a Jewish centre. With the exception of arguments made in a Zionist context, they were usually not defined geographically. However, a sense of a cultural, spiritual and geographical isolation prevailed throughout the interwar period, as exemplified by the treatment of the Norwegian Jews by the Zionist organization. In 1925, Israel Cymbal, a representative of the Zionist organization in Trondheim wrote to the headquarters of Keren Hayesod asking them to assist him in the publication of a Norwegian version of the Zionist pamphlet 'The Promised Land'. He scolded them for not replying to his initial letter on the matter, and emphasised that the lack of 'propagandists' or delegates from the international Zionist organization, as well as information regarding Zionism, made Zionist work extremely difficult. Further, he stressed that 'It is a crime on the part of the Keren Hayesod to overlook the importance of propaganda work among the Jews in Scandinavia', a complaint that was often made by Norwegian Zionist representatives in the 1920s and 30s.⁷ Lastly, except for the Scandinavian Jewish Youth, a formal cooperation between the Nordic Jews was non-existent, further enforcing a sense of isolation. The Norwegian Jews

6 Minutes from meetings at the S.J.U.F. congress, speech held by Hugo Valentin, *Hatikvoh*, 1/1932.

7 Central Zionist Archives, Z4/2577, letter from J. Zimbal to Keren Hayesod, 6.1.1925.

were certainly situated on the periphery of the diaspora, few in numbers and uninteresting to most in terms of everything Jewish.

The Jews of Norway rarely blamed or accused their non-Jewish surroundings for their uneasy existence. It was more a case of feeling vulnerable outside the culturally and religiously, albeit never physically safe *shtetls*. In addition, a constant sense of being a very tiny minority in a new country, that the small numbers worked against them and inevitably would lead to too great a degree of acculturation, characterized the group. However, an important exception to the abstract threat of assimilation was how they perceived the works of the Israelsmissionen ('Israel Mission') among the Oslo Jews. Established in 1844, before Jews were allowed to settle in Norway, it was a part of a European organizational attempt to promote the love of Israel (i.e. the Jews) among Christians, and the love of Christ among Jews. While their main task was to work among Jews in Europe and Palestine, a unit that focused mainly on Jews in Oslo was founded in the late 1870s (Skarsaune 1994: 157). They initially offered relief for poor Jews, and later also summer camps for Jewish children. Their work was a constant thorn in the side of the organized Jewish community, and considered a major threat as they took advantage of impoverished Jews in their work to convert them. The summer camps were regarded as being a particular nuisance. The children attending had to eat *treif*, non-kosher food, and were forced to attend religious studies classes and sing Christian hymns.⁸ The Jewish community punished the parents of these children by exposing their names in the monthly magazine *Israeliten*, and they were also threatened with exclusion from Jewish organizations.

Not surprisingly, the work of the Israel Mission bothered the Jews throughout the interwar period, and it illustrates the particular concern for the youth on the part of the Jewish community. They were the 'future of Judaism', the ones that would inherit their forefathers' culture, customs and faith, the ones connecting the past with the present.⁹ Depriving them of a Jewish upbringing was like poisoning them and was fought by every means possible.

However, the contempt for the work of the Israel Mission was also a part of a much bigger picture. Throughout the period there was a general agreement that the quality of the religious teaching in the Jewish community, both on the part of the congregations and the parents, was poor, and hence that the children were not raised in the 'right Jewish spirit' (Mendelsohn 1986: 538ff.).¹⁰

8 Minutes from a meeting, 25.12.1925, IUF, *Israeliten*, 4/1925.

9 'Feriekolonisaken. Opprop', *Israeliten*, 10/1921.

10 'Blir de herværende jødiske barn opdrat i den rette jødiske aand?', *Israeliten*, 5/1917.

The contrast with Jewish life in Eastern Europe was striking: Jewish schools, literature and friends were examples of what the youth living in Norway missed out on. As they lived in a society where Jewish knowledge was not transmitted in schools and other learning institutions, the community and the parents had an extra responsibility to teach the youth all the 'beautiful things our men have created' in order for the 'youth of today to be raised as 'national Jews'.¹¹ Just as in an ordinary school, learning was regarded as a case of maturation and personal development. And by the facilitation and the selection of topics done with the national spirit in mind, there was a belief that the children were being moulded and processed so that they would, in the end, albeit unconsciously, form a true reflection of the national spirit. Hence, the value of teaching was twofold, providing empirical knowledge and a sense of national belonging and pride. And while the community appreciated the national work and knowledge that formed the Norwegian sense of belonging of their offspring, they were concerned about the quality of the Jewish aspect. There was a general belief that after years of learning, the relationship of the children (i.e. the boys; for girls the *cheider* was optional) to religion was, at the best, impersonal. As a preparation for Bar Mitzvah, according to a parent, they recited prayers like parrots in Hebrew, a language they did not understand, and were taught from books written in other languages than Norwegian.¹² In addition, the teachers were accused of lacking pedagogic skills and being without knowledge of what happened outside the Jewish community. For example, Jo Benkow recalls his years in *cheider* at the beginning of the 1930s as a 'continuous nightmare', during which he tried to copy the swaying and gestures of the most pious men in the congregation when learning his prayers. He repeatedly feigned stomach illnesses in order to be exempted from tuition and was incredibly relieved when he had become a Bar Mitzvah (Benkow 1985: 85, 88, 96).

If Jo Benkow's experiences are representative of the rest of the Jewish youth at the time, and judging by the periodicals there is every reason to believe that they are, it is not surprising that a result was that 'the youth did not attend the synagogue' on the Sabbath.¹³ How then, did they define and maintain their Jewishness?

11 Aron Grusd, 'I.I.F.s maal og plikter', *Israeliten*, 5/1917.

12 Unknown, 'Vor skole og dens undervisningsformer', *Israeliten*, 12/1917.

13 Schochet, 'Hvem har skylden?', *Israeliten*, 6/1918.

The faith of the fathers?

While organized religious teaching seems to have been a disappointment to most throughout the period, preserving a Jewish belonging for those above the age of Bar Mitzvah was still an important task. However, only a few argued that religious adherence alone could provide such a belonging and the number decreased as time went by. As stated earlier, secularization was something many experienced while still living in Eastern Europe, but in addition there are some causes specific to the Norwegian context for the diminishing religious influence of the group. Firstly, membership in any religious congregation in Norway was voluntary. In the case of the Jews, it meant that many for different reasons did not become members. This implied that the congregations often struggled financially, as everybody, regardless of membership, was entitled to the same service from the congregations. This meant that the members had to pay a higher membership fee, something that was a challenge for many in an economically unstable interwar period. In addition, the fact that those with means constituted the secular leadership led to the impression that they also indirectly dictated the rules.¹⁴

Secondly, the Oslo community was periodically riddled with internal strife.¹⁵ Personal differences rather than any major religious disagreements resulted in the establishment of a second Orthodox congregation in 1917, making cooperation in religious affairs, such as the *cheider*, impossible. Each built their own synagogue in the 1920s, and periodically employed a rabbi. Given the small number of Jews in Oslo, and the fact that even fewer had the opportunity to be an active member and to pay membership fees, the split resulted in a waste of human resources and a relatively poor economy for both synagogues. In addition, some regarded Zionism and other political or religious organizations such as the Agudists as factions that prevented unity among the Oslo Jews and for that reason as disintegrating factors for the small community. Lastly, the fact that the congregations were Orthodox with largely non-Orthodox members caused friction.

While religion ceased to be the sole decisive factor in defining Jewishness, it is worth noting that a flat rejection of religion was unheard of. Being a 'Yom Kippur Jew'; that is, attending synagogue services only on the high holidays, was disapproved of. Also, admitting publicly that religion was irrelevant and that attendance at the synagogue was out of the question, as the president of

14 Aktivt medlem, 'En interessant diskusjon', *Hatikvoh*, 10/1931.

15 For example, M. M., 'Nærmere til Maalet', *Israeliten*, 8/1923.

the youth association did in 1931, caused an outcry.¹⁶ Thus, there was a fine, but firm, line delimiting how one could define one's Jewishness, and being openly irreligious was outside any accepted boundary.

However, the above development illustrates the fact that there was a need for new ways of expressing Jewishness, and in Norway important developments took place in the organizations outside the realms of the congregations. The most influential and long-lasting of these was the Israelitisk Ungdomsforening (I.U.F.).¹⁷ It was formed as early as 1909, at a time when Jewish immigration to Norway was still quite substantial. The initiative was taken by a few individuals in their early 20s who were mostly born or grew up in Scandinavia. While I have not come across concrete evidence, it is possible that they shared the concerns later expressed by Hugo Valentin and quoted above, as some had grown up in Sweden or spent time in Germany before settling in Norway. Interestingly their parents' generation initially opposed the establishment. While the explicit reasons for the skepticism are unknown, it is likely that the I.U.F.'s emphasis on Jewish culture, in contrast to religious teaching, contributed to their parents' doubts.

In many ways the members of this organization were pivotal in creating the first generation(s) of Norwegian Jews. While they shared concerns for the quality of religious teaching, this was regarded as one of many tools for preserving a Jewish consciousness. By being non-political and non-religious, it aimed to unify the Jewish youth in *national work* in order to make sure that the youth remained Jewish and aware of their heritage and unity.¹⁸ In 1917 the I.U.F. stated that 'Our task is to unify the Jewish youth by means of parties and social gatherings, to provide Jewish youth with a national consciousness and to help our poor brothers in faith as best as we can'.¹⁹ By means of lectures, debates and charitable work, as well as social gatherings and theatrical productions in Yiddish, they sought to help, inform and enlighten the youth and make them realize that Jewish poets, academics and musicians, and Jewishness in general, were just as good as their non-Jewish counterparts, thus promoting Jewish cultural pride. As the Swedish Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis emphasized in a speech to the Scandinavian youth in Copenhagen in 1929, those who did not dare or want to admit their Jewishness publicly were also assimilationists – and he argued that there were quite a few such 'deserters' among young Scandinavian

16 Foreningsmøte in I.U.F., 5.11.1931, in *Hatikvoh*, 11/1931.

17 In 1933 the organization changed its name to Jødisk Ungdomsforening.

18 Tikvo, 'Et Tilbageblik', *Israeliten*, 10/1923.

19 Aron Grusd, 'I.I.F.s maal og plikter', *Israeliten*, 5/1917.

Jews.²⁰ Hence, when the Jewish Broadway actress and singer Madeleine Grey visited Oslo in 1931, she was described as a model Jew because of the way she promoted her Jewishness in a non-Jewish world. According to *Hatikvoh's* reporter she spoke readily about her background and heritage, and ensured that she included Yiddish songs in her repertoire.²¹ From the context it was clear that the Jews of Norway had a long way to go. The Norwegian Rabbi Julius Samuel argued along the same lines when he argued at Rosh Hashanah in 1934 – in the shadow of the Nazi regime in Germany – that the solution to the Jewish question was *dissimilation*; to become less similar to their non-Jewish surroundings.²² Later he elaborated on the issue, maintaining that the choice was rather simple; renewal, or the future of Jewish life in Norway was perdition.²³

In addition, Oskar Mendelsohn (b. 1912) maintained that for him personally, Judaism was insufficient as a definition of his Jewish belonging.²⁴ Defining the Jewish part of him as an amalgamation of religion, nation and culture, he argued that the Jewish youth reacted negatively to the many religious rules and obligations and proposed that some of them should be changed. While he did not elaborate on which of these he wanted to alter, this is a strong indicator that his generation defined Jewishness differently from previous generations. However, he was not alone in wanting a simplification of the Jewish faith. The following year, Marcus Melchor, at the time the rabbi of the largest congregation in Copenhagen, gave a lecture in Oslo arguing along the same lines.²⁵ He maintained that intricate rules and regulations were a feature of a bygone life, and that a simplification of Judaism was necessary in order to adjust to life outside the walls of the ghetto. Importantly, it was argued that many in the audience shared Melchior's view, as a reform would ease the guilt many felt at not being able to comply with religious rules and thus make their lives more harmonious, and Judaism the source of liberation rather than restraint.

While it was emphasized that 'national work' was something beyond Zionism, there is no doubt that the impact of Zionism as a tool for Jewish belonging increased in the interwar period (Banik 2007). Even though a few

20 Unknown, 'Skandinavisk Jødisk Ungdomskongress i Kjøbenhavn', *Hatikvoh*, 9/1929.

21 Aksel Scheer, 'Et intervju med Madeleine Grey', *Hatikvoh*, 10/1931.

22 Julius Samuel, 'Rosch Haschonoh 5695. Tilbakeblikk og utsyn', *Hatikvoh*, 7/1934.

23 Speech given by Rabbi Samuel at the Scandinavian Youth's conference, in *Hatikvoh*, 7/1934.

24 'En ny jødisk ungdom, dens tanker og problemer', lecture at the I.U.F., 15.3.1937, *Hatikvoh*, 4/1937.

25 Unknown, 'Fra Zion skal læren utgå', *Hatikvoh*, 1-2/1938.

regarded it as an explicitly anti-religious phenomenon, and hence as counter-productive for maintaining a Jewish identity, others regarded the ideology as an alternative – and modern – interpretation of Jewishness. Zionism was portrayed as dynamic, future oriented and the continuation of an ongoing creation of a Jewish culture.²⁶ Rabbi Ehrenpreis, an early adherent of Zionism and a participant of the first Zionist congresses, argued that the rebuilding of Jewish Palestine was an important tool for the future of the Jewish youth in the diaspora.²⁷ While actual Zionist work was often limited to financial support for Zionist causes, many subscribed to Ehrenpreis' view of *Erez Israel* as a cultural or spiritual centre for a group living on the periphery of the diaspora.²⁸ Zionism, either as an ideology or as a movement, was regarded as another way of gaining sorely needed Jewish knowledge, and hence a tool for maintaining Jewish identity. Hence, it was just as much a means of maintaining Jewish identity in a secular world as a national movement with the goal of establishing a Jewish state in the territory of the Palestine mandate.

In the first decade, 'national work' and religious adherence were parallel developments in defining Jewish belonging. While they were not mutually exclusive, there were also underlying tensions that sometimes surfaced between the two. However, that seemed to have changed when the Mosaisk Trossamfund hired (Isaak) Julius Samuel as their rabbi in 1930. Born in Germany, he personified a unification of national work and religion. He was an outspoken Zionist and involved in the Mizrahi movement, and had been an elected delegate to two world Zionist congresses as a representative of the Mizrahi youth movement.²⁹ In addition, he was trained at the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, during the period of the leadership of Rabbi Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg. Weinberg was an advocate of Jewish neo-orthodoxy, which sought to unite religious orthodoxy with modernity. From Samuel's work in Oslo there is no doubt that he followed in his mentor's footsteps. Among other things, he argued that religion should be 'naturally connected' with the 'real living life' – that the two were a unit rather than separate parts.³⁰

26 Unknown, 'L. Berson', *Israeliten*, 5/1917.

27 Abstract of a speech titled 'Jødedommens fremtid' made in Israelitisk Ungdomsforening 26.12.1920, referred in *Israeliten*, 7/1921.

28 For example, discussion in I.U.F. 10.1.1924 titled 'Om assimilasjon og avnasjonalisering', minutes referred in *Israeliten*, 5/1924.

29 For an account of his life, written by two of his children, se Ester Samuel-Cahn and Amos Samuel, nd.

30 Julius Samuel, 'Rosch Haschonoh 5695. Tilbakeblikk og utsyn', *Hatikvoh*, 7/1934.

As getting rabbis to work in Norway was a challenge throughout the inter-war period, we do not know whether the hiring of Samuel was a conscious decision based on his outlook, or if it was a mere coincidence. Nevertheless, Samuel actively supported the merger of a religious and national Jewish sense of belonging in lectures, sermons and by means of exemplification. While he scolded members of the community when they arranged non-religious events on Jewish holidays, he also took part in such social happenings when it was appropriate.³¹ He never downplayed the importance of the religious congregation, but often added that the Jewish question was also a national question and that Zionism was a 'new chance' for the future of Jews.³² It is doubtful that he advocated a reform of Judaism, as his Danish colleague Melchior did, but he certainly upheld that Jewish living had to relate to its non-Jewish surroundings.

Bridging two nations: becoming Jewish Norwegians

On the one hand, Samuel was stating the obvious when he advocated a life in close contact with society at large. Only a handful, and of those most were first-generation immigrants, expressed the view that isolation was the best solution to the problem of acculturation. However, Samuel seems to have been the first religious leader to deliberately participate in public debates, and thus break ranks with the strategy of a 'low profile integration' previously upheld by the community (Gjernes 2007). He expressed his opinions readily in the media; he wrote for non-Jewish magazines and lectured to non-Jewish audiences. Hence, while in Samuel the Oslo Jews were exposed to a continental Jewishness that to a certain extent broke with their Eastern European background and views, most members of the community did not regard isolation as an option.³³ One example is that a will to integrate seems to have guided them in preferring public instead of Jewish-run schools, as the only Scandinavian Jewish community to do so.³⁴ At times, the Norwegian Jews were so preoccupied with their Norwegian-ness that attending the yearly Holmenkollrenn (an international ski jumping competition held in Oslo) was stated as the reason for the low attendance at an I.U.F. meeting.³⁵

31 Letter from Rabbi Julius Samuel, *Hatikwoh*, 1/1936.

32 E.g. Julius Samuel, 'Rosch Haschonoh 5695. Tilbakeblikk og utsyn', *Hatikwoh*, 7/1934.

33 For example, Israel Levin, 'Zionismen og Golusspørsmålet', lecture given at the I.U.F., 8.12.1925, in *Israeliten*, 1/1926; Moriz Rabinowitz, 'Hatikwoh (håpet)', *Hatikwoh*, 9/1939.

34 'En ny jødisk ungdom', lecture at the I.U.F., 15.3.1937, in *Hatikwoh*, 4/1937.

35 Minutes from a meeting held at the I.U.F., 13.3.1931, in *Hatikwoh*, 3/1932.

On the other hand, there were limits to the amount of contact it was deemed appropriate to make with the outside world, and the most visible of these was a firm resistance to mixed marriages. The prevention of such relationships was one of the main reasons for establishing the I.U.F. and later its Nordic counterpart, as stated by the rules of the organizations. Further, such marriages caused expulsion from the same associations. While the main reason for this resistance was the matrilineal definition of a Jewish person being a child born of a Jewish mother, it was also firmly believed that these marriages inevitably led to complete assimilation. Given that the community regarded the impact of the majority society to be so strong that they developed conscious strategies to counteract it, the attitude is hardly surprising. In addition, as mentioned briefly above, they knew from first-hand experience what these relations had resulted in in Sweden and Denmark. Conversions to Judaism seem to have been rare, and not completely accepted.

It was believed that the correct choice of a spouse was vital for the maintenance of a Jewish home. In this respect women had a specific role; to give the children a Jewish upbringing and hence teach them 'where they belong' at an early age.³⁶ Therefore, men marrying non-Jewish women, who seem to have been more frequent than their gender opposites, were problematic. Further, as in the case of the *cheider*, an important concern involved the children of such relationships. It was presumed that these would receive a much weaker Jewish upbringing, if any at all, and unavoidably lose their Jewishness.³⁷ Children were regarded as the link between the past and the future, and it was of the utmost importance, in particular because of the modest number of Jews in Norway, that they were able to continue the Jewish legacy.³⁸

Interestingly, the attitude towards mixed marriages changed profoundly in the second half of the 1930s. From being the most proactive in the Nordic Youth Association regarding the prevention of such relationships, and defenders of the exclusion clause in particular, leading members of the I.U.F., including its *grand old man* Aron Grusd, spoke in favour of abolition of the rule.³⁹ He maintained that over the years he had seen several examples of intermarriages that did not lead to assimilation and that eventually had convinced him that

36 Ed., 'Hen til jødedom', *Israeliten*, 1/1922. For the role of women in Jewish families in the first decades of the twentieth century, see, e.g., Kaplan 1991.

37 For example, I. Levin, 'Assimilation', *Israeliten*, 11/1918. The article was reprinted because of its relevance in *Hatikvoh*, 6/1931.

38 Unknown, 'Feriekolonisaken', *Israeliten*, 10/1921.

39 Unknown, 'Jødisk Ungdomsforening', *Hatikvoh*, 1/1936.

the clause was unnecessary. In addition he argued that they could not afford to be selective – every individual was needed to preserve the Jewish community.

Another important boundary against the non-Jewish world was the maintenance of the Sabbath – at least publicly. While it was tolerated that many needed to work or keep their shops open on Saturdays for economic reasons, not observing the Sabbath otherwise was frowned upon and the Scandinavian Youth Association tried to help those who did not want to work on Saturdays to find jobs. Hence, when pious individuals observed Jewish children doing errands for their parents, or youths attending sports events on that day, it was criticized publicly.⁴⁰ In fact, the main reason for setting up Jewish sports associations was to prevent community members from participating or competing on Jewish holidays and the Sabbath.⁴¹ However, when Jews did well in sports as members of non-Jewish teams, it was duly, and with a sense of pride, noted in *Hatikvoh*. Lastly, the issue of obligatory schooling on Saturdays was resolved by the community coming to an agreement with the authorities that Jewish children would attend, but not be forced to write, on Saturdays.

The future of the youth

The narrative of loss, operationalized, among other things, in the concept of ‘assimilation’, was for a long time a common feature of Jewish history writing dealing with the transition to modernity and post-emancipatory developments in Europe (van Rahden 2005, Frankel 1992). Further, the historian Bernhard Wasserstein has argued that the dissolution of a Jewish Europe began in the 1880s, when the large-scale emigration of Jews began (Wasserstein 1996: 283ff).

However, as Todd M. Endelman argues, such understandings have been ‘ideologically predisposed’ by the predominant Zionist rejection of the diaspora of the time, and in the last couple of decades the concepts have been re-evaluated and nuanced (Endelman 2011: 51). Guided by gender studies and other disciplines, there is now a common acceptance that processes of assimilation were less common compared to acculturation, and that the idea of assimilation has often had a moralistic undertone that characterizes unwanted developments within Jewry, be it religious, national or cultural (e.g. Hyman 1995).

Despite the scholarly development of the concept, this article demonstrates that there was a genuine concern among European Jews in the interwar period

40 For example, Bob, ‘Blir vor ungdom fordærvet?’, *Israeliten*, 11/1918.

41 Aron Grus, remark made at S.J.U.F.’s Congress, July 1919, in *Israeliten*, 6/1919.

concerning the future of the Jews, and that this was also shared by the newly immigrant Jews of Norway. However, the Norwegian case clearly demonstrates that the concept of loss is indeed inadequate when explaining their concerns. Instead of mourning the past, the Norwegian Jews, and in particular the children of the immigrant generation, also looked to other constructions of Jewishness for conceptualizing their future as Jews. Interestingly, by utilizing phenomena such as 'traditions' or 'Zionism', which are essentialist in nature, they in fact created a versatile version of Jewishness fit for the future and labelled it 'national work'.

Further, I have not discussed in depth how external factors, such as the religiously and ethnically homogeneous Norwegian society, or its attitude towards Jews and other strangers, played a part in defining their Jewishness. It is clear that the adoption of a low profile, previously mentioned, was to some extent caused by a society that did not encourage Jewish immigration, but there were relatively few openly hostile incidents, and all were of a written or oral nature. While there is no doubt that the fear of antisemitism guided the public behaviour of many Jews (Banik 2015b) they did not succumb to the fear by becoming assimilated.

Drawing on the inspiration of the postcolonial works of Stuart Hall, we see that their identity as Jews had a cultural starting point and was shaped not only by a fixed idea of origin but also by history's ruptures and discontinuities, such as the dissolution of the *shtetl* life and migration from east to west, and how these shaped them in the present and thus also in the future (Hall 1990). Being Jewish in the interwar period was an ongoing process of positioning along parallel, and sometimes convergent or crossing lines, consisting on the one hand of religious, traditional, national and cultural understandings of Jewishness, and, on the other hand, the attitudes and actions towards Jews and Jewish perceptions of 'Norwegian-ness'.

In contrast to Stuart Hall's work on Black Caribbeans, the empirical evidence presented in this article strongly points to a group that were far from victims of its non-Jewish surroundings. While Jews certainly were constructed as an 'Other' in the period, and had been the European 'Other' for centuries, they only to a certain extent accepted that label. The Jews in Norway utilized their 'Otherness' to become Jewish in new ways.

The emphasis on 'national work' implies that the concept of *Galuth*, the diaspora experience as an entirely negative condition, as argued by Zionists of the time, was not generally recognized among the Norwegian Jews. The absence of such an understanding underlines my claim that Zionism was regarded as a tool for defining their Jewish identity as well as an expression of nationalist

aspirations as such. They regarded themselves as members of an imagined *Jewish* community, demonstrated by a concern for the victims of pogroms, antipathy towards the Israel Mission and pride in Jewish actresses, which they strove to preserve and support – a community defining itself beyond the narrow constraints of Zionism (Anderson 1991).

Nonetheless, Zionism became increasingly important, and while they rarely considered moving to *Erez Israel*, the idea of a cultural and spiritual centre in the lands of Biblical times was appealing to many. Lastly, the hiring of Rabbi Samuel unified religion and Zionism as a definition of Jewishness in a way that included most members of the community.

When compared internationally, the chosen 'survival strategies' are hardly surprising. However, it is interesting to discuss what were the strategies that were omitted as well. For example, the stress on Jewish culture and traditions did not include an emphasis on, or revival of, the Yiddish culture which did take place in other Jewish communities (Fishman 2005).⁴² Yiddish was a means of communication mostly for the first generation immigrants, less so for the subsequent ones. While they read I. L. Perez and other Yiddish writers, put on plays by them, and enjoyed the work of Yiddish performers visiting Norway, the relatively coherent ideology that constituted Yiddishism were absent. For example, their periodicals, as opposed to some in Denmark and Sweden, were always printed in Norwegian. Rather, the features of Yiddish culture seem to have been subsumed into the much larger 'Jewish culture' or 'national work' analysed above.

Related to the lack of interest in Yiddishism is the fact that while they sometimes expressed nostalgic views when they discussed the parlous state of the Norwegian Jews, there seem to have been few that longed for the actual life that they had left behind in Eastern Europe. In a report on his travels in Lithuania, submitted to *Hatikvoh* by Harry Koritzinsky, he expresses how he was fascinated to be part of the majority population in the first 'real Jewish village' he had ever visited.⁴³ However, he also saw its limitations as a provider of the Jewish life he wanted, and he characterizes the lives of those living outside the big cities as constrained.⁴⁴ He was also fully aware of the poverty that many lived in, and that antisemitic experiences were a part of their daily lives. It is evident that his Jewish future was perceived by him to be somewhere else.

42 For an interesting personal account on Yiddish pre-WWII Denmark, see Beilin (2001). For a brief overview of Yiddish in the Nordic countries, see Thing (2008).

43 Harry Koritzinsky, 'Fra en reise i Lithauen og Polen I', *Hatikvoh*, 8/1933.

44 Harry Koritzinsky, 'Fra en reise i Lithauen og Polen III', *Hatikvoh*, 10/1933.

Possibly, but not necessarily, related to the absence of *Yiddishkeit* among Norwegian Jews, is the absence of Jewish political parties. While there certainly were Jewish individuals with political sympathies, and while their social position implies that a substantial number would have socialist or communist leanings, they never initiated a chapter of Bund, the Jewish socialist movement. By contrast, the *Ostjuden* of Copenhagen initiated such a chapter as early as in 1905 (Thing 2008: 278). Again, as in the case of schooling, the Norwegian Jews chose to join the already existing organizations in the wider society in which they found themselves.

As the *Ostjuden* were already in the majority when the congregations and associations were established, the tendency to stigmatize these as the Jewish 'Other' was a less prominent feature than in most other places, including Sweden and Denmark. While there was a hierarchy based on income, cultural background was less important. The homogeneity of the group, despite its internal strifes and struggles, was most likely an advantage for them, as there seem to have been a kind of overall agreement of what constituted a Jew and how Jewishness was best maintained. Further, what the community at the time regarded as its major weaknesses; their modest numbers, their economic position, and their lack of social recognition, may also have worked to their advantage. From a very early stage they debated who they were as Jews, who they wanted to be and what was needed to do to become such an individual and community. While they did not always succeed, there is reason to believe that their efforts contributed to the fact that the Norwegian Jews were less acculturated than their Scandinavian counterparts at the outbreak of Second World War. They were, by their own choice, *Jewish Norwegians*.

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Name changes and visions of 'a new Jew' in the Helsinki Jewish community

LAURA EKHOLM and SIMO MUIR

This article discusses an organized name-change process that occurred in the 1930s in the Jewish community of Helsinki. Between 1933 and 1944 in approximately one fifth of the Helsinki Jewish families (c. 16 %) someone had their family name changed. We argue that the name changes served two purposes: on the one hand they made life easier in the new nation state. It was part of a broader process where tens of thousands of Finns translated and changed their Swedish names to Finnish ones. On the other hand, the changed family names offered a new kind of Jewish identity. The name-changing process of the Helsinki Jews opens a window onto the study of nationalism, antisemitism, identity politics and visions of a Jewish future from the Finnish perspective.

Names are individual and collective signifiers. We are identified as individuals by the combination of our given and family names. Simultaneously names carry connotations of a linguistic, religious and social background; thus names also denote membership and are an expression of belonging to a collective. Most certainly names affect the lives of the people carrying the names. Hence, naming patterns and ideas connected to names provide an intersection for analysing both individual and collective aims at once.

In this article, we will examine a relatively short period between 1933 and 1944 when many Jewish families in Helsinki had their surnames changed. We ask why did some Jewish families change their family names? What were their motivations?

There are lots of anecdotes relating to the arbitrary history behind Jewish family names. In Imperial Russia Jews were given family names by local authorities; a clerk behind a desk ascribed a proper name to a man who yet did not possess one (Verner 1994). To give one example, a common name for Jews in Russia was *Besprosvannij*, which literally translates into 'holds no name', as it was given by a military recruiter to a conscript who did not possess a name.¹

1 This is a family anecdote from Helsinki Jewish community but also mentioned by Andrew M. Verner (1994).

Similarly, the mass migration from Eastern European Jewish homelands to the Americas meant that a new name was chosen or given *ad hoc* upon immigration to a new country. Abraham Stahl (1994) has noted that in the early years of modern Israel it was a common practice to impose Hebrew first names, but sometimes also family names upon immigrants. All in all, receiving the family name was an arbitrary process in which the receiver of the name often played a passive role.

The literature on name changes among European Jews approaches the theme through the framework of assimilation. According to Tamás Farkas (2012) the mass Magyarization of the Jewish names in Hungary from the mid-nineteenth century until 1938, for example, served as a means of fully assimilating them into Hungarian society. Neology (Reform Judaist) communities especially aimed to become Hungarians according to the Mosaic faith (Frojimovics 2003). James Jacob and Pierre Horn (1998: 13–15) have noted that in post-WWII France most names that were changed were foreign-sounding names, and especially family names that sounded 'Jewish', were 'Frenchified'.

In this article, we study an organized name-changing process in which the Jewish community promoted individuals to have their names fashioned according to nationalistic visions. While the decision to change a family name took place on an individual initiative, the local Jewish congregation was involved in selecting and approving the new names. Moreover, the process can be seen as part of a broader name-changing campaign in Finland. Therefore, the name changes facilitate an analysis of the interplay between individual motivations and collective visions of a Jewish future from a Finnish perspective.

To change one's name is a controlled and regulated procedure in modern societies and there are thus extensive sources to be consulted on what kinds of names people have wanted to change.

Name change in Finland was supervised by the County Administrative Boards (Fi. *lääninhallitus*, Swe. *länsstyrelse*), which consulted various other institutions, including Suomen Sukututkimusseura (the 'Genealogical Society of Finland'). Such institutions indicated whether or not the name should be considered suitable for Finnish language and that the name was not already in use. If a Swedish-speaking person wanted to change his/her name, the Swedish section of the Genealogical Society of Finland would undertake the evaluation.

The boards of the Jewish communities in Finland had a chance to regulate the name changes, as the County Administrative Board sent the name applications to them for approval. We have collected the original names from *Judisk årsbok för Finland 1930* (Jewish yearbook; in Swedish). We then use the protocols of the Board of the Jewish Community of Helsinki, 1933–44 (Finnish

Jewish Archives, National Archives of Finland) to see how many names were changed, in which years.

Due to the small numbers in the Helsinki Jewish community there is no need to take samples. For the same reason, we prefer not to publish lists of all the names changed, although name changes as such are public information and announcements of changed names can be found in contemporary newspapers.

To understand the aims of those who organized the name changes and to set the process into a broader social context, we use published guides on suitable names. Organizations such as Suomalaisuuden liitto (the 'Association of Finnish Culture and Identity') published guides with recommendations for suitable Finnish names. The Palestine Department of the Jewish community of Helsinki published their own guidelines.

The Helsinki Jewish community in the interwar period²

By the 1930s there had been Jewish families living in Helsinki for a century. The first Jewish families living permanently in Helsinki arrived in the 1830s. The Jewish communities in Helsinki (Helsingfors), Turku (Åbo) and Viipuri (Viborg) got organized and institutionalised three decades later, in the 1860s (Ekholm 2013: 49–52).³ The community remained small due to Finland's explicitly restrictive Jewish policy, which aimed to keep the communities as small as possible (*ibid.* 53–9).

Autonomous Finland banned Jewish subjects from staying in Finland, and Jews could get a residential permit only when serving in the Imperial Russian army. The status of Jews in Finland was debated from the 1870s, yet Jews were granted civil rights only with Finland's independence at the end of 1917. The debate on Jewish civil rights follows typical patterns of nineteenth century anti-semitism, with all of its inherent contradictions included; the fear of an invasion of 'Jewish masses' from Eastern Europe combined with the fear of a powerful Jewish network taking over the nascent Finnish domestic markets.

In the interwar period, there was no longer any legal discrimination against Jews. Those Jewish families who had residential permits in Finland were able to apply for Finnish citizenship.

2 For a brief history of the Jewish communities of Finland, please visit an online exhibition *Fenno Judaica* (see the list of references).

3 When parts of Finnish Karelia and Viipuri were annexed by the Soviet Union as part of the Moscow Armistice in 1944 a new Jewish community was soon established in Tampere with former members of the Viipuri community.

From the point of view of local Jewish life in Finland, the youths growing up in the interwar period were often second or third generation citizens of Helsinki, Turku or Viipuri, yet were the first generation in their families to enter adulthood as Finnish citizens. The Finnish Jewish community maintained Orthodox Jewish traditions and were Zionist-oriented.

There were around 200 households and less than 2,000 individuals in the three Jewish congregations of interwar Finland (*Judisk årsbok för Finland 5690–1930*). Despite the small size of the community there was a very active cultural life. In addition to religious services the Jewish community of Helsinki maintained a Jewish co-educational school (Muir 2004: 81–100). There were several Jewish associations and organizations for different age groups (*ibid.* 47–76). The young could do sports in a Jewish sport club Makkabi, join the Jewish scout club Kefir, or join the Jewish choir or theatre group, amongst other things. (*ibid.* 67).

At the same time, in many respects the Jewish youth resembled their peers – other young people from middle-class backgrounds in Helsinki: after Jewish school they continued to high schools, many used a nick name reminiscent of those favoured by Helsinki youths, whenever they were allowed to join, many young Jewish men were eager to participate in paramilitary defence organizations (Fi. *suojeluskunta*, Swe. *skyddskår*) (Jakobsson 1999: 186; Ekholm and Muir 2011: 45).

Civil rights reforms changed the legal position of Finnish Jews, but there is no doubt that Finnish society at large continued to consider Jews to be a ‘foreign element’; Jews were not considered to be part of the young nation state. There were deep-rooted prejudices and fears concerning (imaginary constructions of) Jews. In a Christian country, the ‘image’ of Jews was constantly present (Myllykoski and Lundgren 2005). Thus the idea of Jews was present even without any real connection to Jewishness.

There were fears that ‘Jewish masses from the East’ would find their way into Finland. An even more common concern was the ominous image of cunning Jewish businessmen with their all-powerful networks who would overrun the nascent Finnish domestic markets (Ekholm 2013: 59). And finally, a fear of Bolshevism blended with antisemitism. The impression that Jews were involved in the making of Soviet-Russia was very widespread and a commonly-held view in Finland (Silvennoinen 2009: 215–17). Russophobia or antisemitism? In many cases, it is impossible to distinguish between the two: perceptions of the enemy contained both aspects.

Jews in Finland were not just an ethnic or religious minority. They were generally associated with ‘Russians’, although most of the families came from

the Pale of Settlement (comprised of western areas of the Russian Empire). Furthermore, linguistic changes went from Yiddish (and in some cases Russian) to Swedish, which until the 1910s was the most commonly-spoken language in Helsinki (Muir 2009a). Consequently Jews in Finland were not only a religious and ethnic minority but also a linguistic minority, even if they adopted a local language. As elsewhere in the border regions of Eastern Europe, the language struggle became a burning political question in late nineteenth-century Finland.

The language question becomes a name question

In Finland Swedish was traditionally the language of the elite, industry, higher education and politics, whilst the majority of the population, apart from that of the coastal areas, had Finnish as their native tongue. In this sense, Swedish had a similar position in Finland as German had, for example, in Latvia and Estonia.

Naming practices varied within the country. The family names of noble families and the bourgeois were mostly Swedish or Germanic. Fixed family names had been known since late medieval times in eastern Finland while in western Finland both Finnish and Swedish speaking people were often called by the names of the houses they lived in. Thus if a person moved to a new house, the common practice was to give him or her a new name accordingly. The landless population in the countryside, especially, lacked fixed surnames.

The experience of a person without a fixed family name would be quite similar whether they were in the Russian or Finnish countryside. In large part the Eastern European landless population family names were ascribed by the local authorities – by a parish priest or clerk behind a desk who would decide upon a proper name for a man without a family name. Names could be misspelled because authorities did not necessarily master the vernacular of the local majority. It was not uncommon for a Finnish priest to write Swedish names into the parish books. There are number of anecdotes for brothers who each adopted a different family name upon arrival in rapidly industrializing towns, in order to find jobs. According to oral history, the local priest or teacher decided what kinds of low-profile names were proper for country folk (Mikkonen 2013). There were also priests who persistently gave Swedish sounding names in completely monolingual parishes or employees who required their employers to have Swedish names; even changing Finnish names into Swedish ones (*ibid.* 130–2).⁴

4 On similar cases in Russia, see examples collected by Verner (1994).

The law on surnames (Fi. *sukunimilaki*, Swe. *lag om antagandet av släktnamn*) made fixed family names obligatory in Finland as late as in 1921. By comparison, Jews in the Russian empire, for example, had already been required to adopt surnames in 1804 in order for the state to be able to control, and later, after 1827 conscript the Jewish subjects and collect their taxes (Avrutin 2005: 136). The Jews of the Habsburg Empire had been decreed to have a German-sounding family name since 1789 (Silber 2010).

This belated legislation in Finland did not mean that there was an absence of strong feeling concerning the issue of names used in the country. Names are naturally one of the core interests of any nationalistic movement, and this proved to be the case also in Finland. Many scholars in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century were devoted to finding real, original Finnish-language name-types.

In the late nineteenth century attention was given to practical questions, such as difficulties among the Finnish population to use and write names that were foreign to Finnish pronunciation. In addition to purely practical matters such as efficient, modern state administration, issues concerning a strong, shared national identity were emphasized. A shared family name would bind a family together in the same way that a shared language was thought to bind a nation (Paikkala 1999: 128). Scholars did not value the variations of naming patterns and traditions through history. Instead a general theory was promoted according to which the west coast of Finland had originally possessed an ancient naming-system that would have been corrupted and eventually forgotten under Swedish rule (*ibid.* 128).

In Finland a significant number of the ruling elite or upper strata decided to change their native language from Swedish to Finnish (Haapala 1995: 122–4). Parallel to the decision to take Finnish as the language of the family came a decision to change the family name into a Finnish-language form. Consequently, a major proportion of eminent Finnish authors, artists, politicians and scholars from the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century are known by their adopted Finnish names, instead of their original Swedish-language names.

By the early twentieth century, there were two elites in Finland; besides the traditional Swedish-speaking elite there was now a Finnish-speaking elite (Haapala 1995: 124). Family names became one manifestation of this division. Mass campaigns were arranged to help people to reach this goal.

1906 and 1935 mass campaigns for name changes

The first mass campaign to change family names from Swedish to Finnish took place in 1906 (Paikkala 2004: 502–8). It was organized by the Association of Finnish Culture and Identity. Students at the University of Helsinki, especially members of an extreme right-wing student movement, Akateeminen Karjala-Seura (AKS, 'Academic Karelian Society') played an active role in this process (Kortti 2009: 8–11). The year 1906 was the centennial jubilee of a nineteenth century statesman J. V. Snellman, who became a celebrated national figure, the 'father of the Finnish language program' (Paikkala 1999: 127). It has been estimated that some 70,000 Finns had their Swedish family names Fennified (Paikkala 2004: 514–22). For a country of *c.* 2.8 million inhabitants these were impressive numbers.

How did Helsinki Jews react to the nationalistic movement? The community activists within the Helsinki Jewish community dedicated themselves to questions of identity: what were the Finnish Jews like? What was the role of the Finnish Jews in the Jewish world? The community looked for ways to combine (an Orthodox) Jewish life with the calls of modern society in an increasingly nationalistic environment.

The language struggle itself was something that applied to Helsinki Jews in two ways: Firstly, the role and position of Finland's Swedish-language population and institutions was a question of great importance throughout the 1920s and the 1930s in the new nation state (Kortti 2009). A movement called Aitosuomaiset ('Genuine Finns') strove to displace Swedish speakers from any prominent position in Finnish society. In the most aggressive rhetoric, the Swedish speaking population of Finland would even be referred to as the 'Jews of Finland' (Grünstein 1988: 41).

Secondly, the Jewish world had its own language dispute; that between the old European Jewish vernacular, Yiddish, and the revived and recreated ancient language of the Holy Scriptures, Hebrew; and Jewish communities were shifting with growing speed from Yiddish to speaking the dominant languages of the countries they lived in (Muir 2009a; e.g., Katz 2004).

A second boom of name changes in Finland started in 1935, when Finland celebrated the centennial of the national epic *Kalevala*. This time the process was state-led. To promote the possibility of a new, 'genuine' Finnish name the law was changed for the period of 1934 to 1936 to make the name-changing process easier for Finns ('Laki nopeammasta menettelystä sukunimen muuttamisessa', no. 301/1934; Paikkala 2004: 525). The organizers counted that more than, '[a]ll in all, a total of 74,064 individuals participated in the name changes

to celebrate the *Kalevala* Jubilee' (*Suomalainen Suomi* 1936: 130–1, translated from Finnish by the authors).

Considering the Russophobic and anti-Soviet atmosphere of the interwar period, when the country was recovering from a fierce civil war, it is not surprising that many Russian family names were changed. This was also the period, when Jewish name changes began in Finland.

The Jewish name changes started at a time when the Helsinki community decided to change the language of instruction of the Jewish co-educational school from Swedish to Finnish (Muir 2004: 99–100). In the wake of the intensifying language strife the Jewish community, especially the young members, felt that it was too onerous to belong to a double minority; that is, to be both Jewish and Swedish speaking. The Jewish school was fully Finnish speaking by 1941, but the children continued to speak Swedish (and Yiddish) at home.

As the table shows, the first Jewish family name changes appeared in 1933 and continued to 1945 with a couple of peaks; one in 1935–6, the *Kalevala* Jubilee and another in 1941–2, a turbulent period when Finland was *de facto* allied with the Third Reich in a war against a common enemy, the Soviet Union. The table gives the number of names changed; however, it does not mean that everyone with the same name chose to have a new name.

The second peak was noted by an antisemitic periodical *Uusi Eurooppa* ('New Europe'). It paid attention to changed Jewish names arguing that Jews were trying to disguise their identities (*Uusi Eurooppa* 1943). The line of the argument, delivered in an ironical tone, reveals one feature of modern antisemitism; the idea that Jews pose a danger to society by blending in, making it impossible to distinguish Jews from non-Jews (Bauman 2000: 219–20).

The ethos among the active community members in the Helsinki Jewish community was, however, strongly against any kind of blending in. The visions attached to the new Jewish names rather reflected a cultural project of creating a 'New Jew' – a certain kind of counter-image to antisemitic stereotypes. The new Jewish character would be athletic, nationalistic and practical.⁵ It is thus no coincidence that young Jewish men in Helsinki were eager boxers, wrestlers and

Years	Changed names
1933–4	2
1935–6	10
1937–8	3
1939–40	5
1941–2	10
1943–4	4
Total	34

Source: Protocols of the Board of the Jewish Community of Helsinki, 1933–44; *Judisk årsbok för Finland* 5690–1930.

5 For the visions of 'New Jew' see, e.g., Wasserstein 2012; in Sweden Englund 1996: 3–8.

sprinters (Ekholm and Muir 2011: 45). The community awarded scholarships to young students to study 'useful' subjects such as agriculture (Ekholm 2013: 70). Such hobbies are reminiscent of activities associated with Max Nordau's *Muskeljude* (Stansilawski 2001, Mosse 1999).

A new Jew would no longer represent any kind of foreign element in society, rather he or she would be an active subject that held the future in his/her own hands. From the point of view of the Jewish community, the new Jewish names were designed to support these broader objectives.

Some of the interwar Zionist organizations in Finland oversaw matters concerning emigration to Palestine. Aid organizations such as Keren Kayemeth le-Israel, Keren Hayesod and the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) collected money for Jewish colonies in Palestine (Torvinen 1989: 114). The central Zionist association Hamerkas Hazoni b'Finland was established in 1932 (website of *Fenno Judaica: Kultur, Sionistiska föreningar*).

A majority of the Finnish-Jewish Zionists held moderate political opinions but there were also supporters of radical revisionists as well as some whose sympathies tended towards the Zionist left. Notably, there was no organized form of leftist opposition of Zionism among the Finnish Jews.

The name changes started to take place when Rabbi Simon Federbusch, an influential Mizrahi Zionist leader from Poland, was nominated Chief Rabbi of Finland in 1934. Mizrahi Zionism combined Orthodoxy and Zionism, and this became a trend which was followed by the Jewish community of Helsinki (Edelmann and Muir 2010). The Jewish community of Helsinki adopted the policy that new names had to have a Hebrew meaning.

Finnish and Jewish new names, practices and ideas

Finnish society in the interwar period did not approve of bilingual identities – the vision was to be able to neatly categorize and organize all citizens according to linguistic compartments.

The ideal was that a Finnish person could also show which part of the country he came from, so as to give a name that would reflect the distinctive Finnish family lineage. This comes up when looking at the pattern of changing Swedish names into Finnish ones in contrast to the names given to Finns who simply did not yet have any family name. The 'Fennified' names often follow a pattern where one can still recognize the original name and its prestige. Giving a new name to people from the landless peasant population was a different process (Mikkonen 2013: 102).

The rising, nationalistic Fennoman movement sought to use genealogical studies to reconstruct the 'original names'. The adoption of traditions could be quite selective. The tradition in eastern Finland according to which married women kept their patronymic name was seen as problematic and un-modern. The typical suffix '-(i)nen', used in eastern Finland, was adopted as a recommended form for a genuine Finnish family name. A western-Finnish style Finnish name was formed using similar themes but without any suffix and was adopted especially in the 1890s (Paikkala 1999: 132). In the making of new Finnish family names, the themes were often taken from nature: flora, soil, or natural phenomena in general (*ibid.* 129).

The organizations promoting Finnish language names published leaflets and newspaper lists of good and proper Finnish names. While the earliest lists collected for the 1906 campaign listed all kinds of names (see e.g., Koskimies 1907), the later lists gave more emphasis to differences between eastern and western Finnish name traditions.

The ideological background of the language enthusiasts becomes most evident when one looks at the suggested names for East Karelians for the period when the Finnish forces had occupied the area during the Second World War (from summer 1941 to summer 1944). East Karelians were supposed to change their Russian names into Finnish ones, but to such names that would still distinguish them as East Karelian Finns, not to be confused with other Finns. This comes up in a brochure published by the Association of Finnish Culture and Identity in 1942 which aimed to 'give guidelines for East Karelians who chose a new surname and thus furthered the rapprochement of East Karelian tribes for uniting with the rest of Finland' (Teppo 1942). East Karelians were recommended to change their Russian names to a Finnish form. If that was not possible, the booklet suggested a direct translation or the adoption of a name that 'was short and adaptable to a Karelian environment'. Interestingly, however, the booklet did not recommend name types that were typical of western Finland for East Karelians. Although this was only stated in passing and overall it was meant to be an inclusive policy, this reveals an underlying vision of a society where ethnic backgrounds were not to be mixed.

What about the Jewish names, then? The Board of the Jewish Community of Helsinki discussed each name individually and in most cases approved the suggested change (Protocols of the Board of the Jewish Community of Helsinki, 1933-44).

The main principle of the Jewish community was that Jews were not allowed to take a Finnish name or a name with a Finnish or Swedish meaning. As long as a Jew belonged to the Jewish community he or she could not adopt

a Finnish name; only resigning from the community would have made this possible. Possibly discussions of a suitable name had already been taken place beforehand with leaders of the community and with specialists in the Hebrew language. There were also lists of Hebrew names circulating in the community.

There were two models for constructing the new Jewish names. Often the name appears just to have been shortened, as in Besprosvanni > Vanni, or Matsoff > Matso. In its new form the name would be easy to pronounce and spell. Furthermore, it worked both in Finnish and in Swedish contexts. However, after taking off the Slavic ending in the latter case the name achieves a new Hebrew meaning. In the Ashkenazi pronunciation, the word *matso* means unleavened Passover bread, *matzah*.

Another way was to adopt a name that somehow resembled the original name but was in fact a totally new name and new word with a Hebrew meaning. A good example of this is the change of Jankelow to Jaari. The new name sounds and looks very Finnish, without meaning anything, but it has a meaning in Hebrew that alludes to the word *ya'ar*, 'forest'. The name change was successful in several ways. First it got rid of the stigmatized 'Russian' ending '-ow/-off', secondly it also disguised the stereotypical Eastern European Yiddish male first name Yankl (diminutive of Yankev, Jacob). The new name also possessed desirable connotations to agriculture and nature which, at least in terms of Zionist thinking, diverted attention from the *shtetls*, the poor, murky and stagnated Jewish 'ghettos' of Eastern Europe.

Some name changes were not as successful as the case of Jaari however, either from the Finnish or Zionist point of view. Many names did not blend into Finnish so well. Interestingly, the Genealogical Society of Finland seemed not object to them, although similar names for other Finns would most certainly have been rejected (records of name changes of the Genealogical Society of Finland 1922–65). In other cases, the name perhaps suited Finnish well, but the Zionist leaders of the Jewish community were unsatisfied with some of them, considering them to be clumsy and tasteless. This is why in 1943 the community's so-called Palestine Department published guidelines for changing names (Schur and Chosid 1943). This publication coincides with the Finnish Jewish leadership learning about the annihilation of Jews taking place in Europe (Muir 2016, forthcoming). The Jewish community could continue its life uninterrupted but was, nevertheless, afraid of possible deportations. The Jewish leadership considered the prospects of Jewish life in Europe to be non-existent and saw the only future to lie in a 'Jewish' Palestine. Efforts were concentrated on increasing Zionist education and preparations for Aliyah as soon as was possible (*ibid.*).

Motivation: antisemitism, Zionism or something else?

There was obviously a Zionist dimension to the name changes, but to what extent was it an aspect of individuals' motivations to change names? This can be evaluated by looking at the names that were changed.

The community had three kinds of names; Slavic, Germanic and those of Hebrew origin. It would be reasonable to think that if the intentions were purely Zionist, then both Slavic and Germanic names would have been changed. In practice, almost all – clearly over ninety per cent – of the name changes occurred with names that were of Slavic origin or bore Slavic endings, as in the above example '–ow/–off', or '–sky/–ski'. Moreover, hardly any names of Germanic origin – such names as Weinstein, Grünstein and Manteuffel – were changed.

This would mean that the chief aim was to get rid of the Slavic stigma, and that anti-Russian resentment rather than simply antisemitism was behind the urge to change names.

The Slavic names were perhaps more complicated, and more difficult to pronounce and spell in an increasingly Finnish-language dominated atmosphere. The German names, by contrast, had a certain prestige attached to them as the Baltic-German pronunciation testifies (Muir 2009a).

During this period many Finnish families with Russian names decided to get rid of their Russian names. The most manifest forms of Finnish antisemitism of the 1930s were thus an organic part of anti-Russian resentment and anti-Bolshevism; purely racially motivated, National-Socialist antisemitism did not gain so much of a foothold.

The pattern to change family names had stopped by the end of WWII. There were naturally individual cases where someone had a name changed, but there are no longer any signs of an organized name-changing project. Despite the fact that Aliyah was the expressed goal of the community members and that the Israeli state preferred Hebrew names, Israel's declaration of independence did not trigger any new wave of name changes.

Hence, the motivation to change family names seems to have been triggered, after all, by trends in Finnish society. In some parts of Europe the position of people with Jewish backgrounds was so remarkable that having one's name changed was associated with Jewishness. For example Farkas (2012: 6) has noted that Magyarization of names in Hungary was a Jewish trait.

In Finland, by contrast, 'half of the elite' had Fennified their names; the name change as such raised no associations. Those Jews who chose a new family name did not aim to translate their names into Finnish and efforts were rather made to find new names with a Hebrew meaning.

One cannot draw too many parallels with the fierce campaigns between, on the one hand Finnish and Swedish language activists in Finland, and on the other questions concerning Jewish languages among European and world Jewry. As to the Finnish and Finnish-Jewish family names, there are however certain factors that interlink the two phenomena: the new names – Finnish and Finnish Jewish alike – were consciously made, yet the motivation for changing a traditional name into a new one was to locate imaginary, lost, ancient roots.

What is notable, however, is the new naming tradition concerning first names among Finnish Jews. The post-war/post-Shoah generation were given names such as Margalit, Aviva, Dan and Rony, breaking the traditional Hebrew and Yiddish name-giving traditions.

Conclusion

Much of anecdotal evidence and oral history on Jewish names reflects the arbitrary and spontaneous elements of the history of Jewish family names. Our analysis gives an example of a name-changing process which was supported by the local Jewish congregation.

Along with the rise of nationalism, the so-called *language question* became a vexed issue in Finland. As the enthusiasm to change Swedish names into Finnish ones demonstrates, a certain kind of ideology of order within the nation state was involved in the name changes (Paikkala 1999: 126).

As Russian citizens Jews in Finland were unable to respond to the first mass campaign to change Swedish names into Finnish ones in 1906. At that time, the main question for the local Jewish communities concerned the lack of civil rights for Jews. The situation looked different when the second name-changing campaign started in 1935. Most Jews in Finland now had Finnish citizenship, yet still were generally considered to be a 'foreign element'.

The new Jewish names provide a parallel case with the new Finnish-language names. In both cases there was a shared vision where the advisedly formed new names would connect people of the future with a bygone, and forgotten historical glory. To this end, themes taken from nature were favoured. Furthermore, both shared a certain kind of vision of order where each language group and people would have their own category in human history, for a 'new Jew', preferably in Israel, for Finns in Finland.

At the local level, Finns who desired to be taken seriously by 'stronger' nations could quite easily relate to Jewish belonging to a heroic Biblical past in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. When parts of the Finnish national epic the *Kalevala* were translated to Hebrew in the 1930s, some Finnish commentators found

connections between the Biblical past of the Jews and the Finnish ‘Land of Kalevala’ and by so doing upgraded Finnish history to be on a par with ancient civilizations (Muir 2009b: 351–3). In this new setting a Finnish Jew would no longer be a ‘foreign element’ but a necessary mediator between two modern, new nation states.

The name changes provide an opportunity to evaluate the interplay between collective visions and individual choices in the context of different kinds of nationalisms. Thus, while Zionist organisations and activists concerned themselves with the construction of a Jewish state, at the local, everyday level of the individual in Helsinki there was an ongoing effort to attain a position in society where one no longer had to negotiate between Finnishness and Jewishness – or rather deal with the connotations with Eastern European Jewish heritage that the Slavic names manifested.

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Transnational Ashkenaz

Yiddish culture after the Holocaust

JAN SCHWARZ

After the Holocaust's near complete destruction of European Yiddish cultural centres, the Yiddish language was largely viewed as a remnant of the past, tragically eradicated in its prime. This article reveals that, on the contrary, for two and a half decades following the Holocaust Yiddish culture was in dynamic flux. Yiddish writers and cultural organisations maintained a staggering level of activity in fostering publications and performances, collecting archival and historical materials, and launching young literary talents. This article provides a cultural historical map of a Yiddish transnational network that derived its unity from the common purpose of commemorating and bearing witness to the destruction of the Jewish heartland in Central and Eastern Europe.

Yiddish culture after the Holocaust is an exemplar of the inherent ability of Ashkenaz – the Hebrew name for the thousand year old Yiddish speaking civilization in Europe – to regenerate and renew itself in response to destruction. The myth of 'the Holocaust as the end of Yiddish' has, in many ways, been more resilient than 'the myth of silence'. Recently, this 'myth of silence' and the absence of Jewish public responses to the Holocaust until the 1961 Eichman trial, has been rejected as being contrary to historical evidence (Diner 2009, Cesarani and Sundquist 2012). As I argue in my recently published *Survivors and Exiles: Yiddish Culture after the Holocaust* (Schwarz 2015), Yiddish writers' activities, initiatives, and forward-looking cultural work in response to the Holocaust demonstrate the exact opposite of 'the myth of silence'. The masses of Yiddish-speaking Jewry in Eastern Europe, along with their cultural infrastructures had indeed been annihilated by 1945. However, a transnational cadre of Yiddish cultural activists and survivors ensured that the 'golden chain' continued. *Di goldene keyt* ('The Golden Chain') was the title of a 1907 modernist drama in which 'the father' of Yiddish literature I. L. Peretz (1859–1915) depicted the decline of a multi-generational Hasidic dynasty. Avrom Sutzkever, the poet, partisan and survivor of the Vilna ghetto, used *Di goldene keyt* as the name for the Yiddish literary journal which he edited in 146 volumes between 1949–95 in Tel Aviv. In this way the poet highlighted the transmission of Peretz's vision for a modern Yiddish culture to the newly founded Jewish State.

The myth of ‘the end of Yiddish after the Holocaust’ is based on the expectation that the Yiddish cultural world map of 1939, with its almost eleven million Yiddish speakers on three continents, would remain the measure against which the post-1945 period would necessarily fall short (Wasserstein 2012). In fact, there was an actual increase in Yiddish cultural activity in the 1940s and 1950s, due to Yiddish writers’ urgent sense of mission to commemorate and memorialize the people and places that had been destroyed. In many cases, this collective sense of duty overcame the political fragmentation and balkanization of post-Holocaust Yiddish culture.

Recent studies of the main post-1945 Yiddish cultural centres – Moscow, Montreal, New York, Buenos Aires, Paris, and Tel Aviv – have enhanced our understanding of the dynamic interchange between the local and the global that has sustained Yiddish culture throughout its modern existence.¹ The transnational network enabled Yiddish writers to maintain their creativity, readership, and financial support after the Holocaust. Ultimately this multi-centred network provided the surviving Yiddish writers with escape routes to new locations overseas. After the Holocaust, the far-flung *ashkenazi* dispersion made it possible for Yiddish culture to recover some of its previous scope.

As they migrated from the Ashkenaz territories in Europe to the New World, Yiddish writers brought with them an inner cultural map of local, geographically dispersed Yiddish centres: a transnational Ashkenaz. In the post-1945 period, this map of the world became increasingly virtual. It became an ‘imagined community’ or ‘quasi-territory’ (*kemoy-teritorye*) consisting of Yiddish literary, musical, theatrical, and other artistic works that filled the void left behind after the destruction of Ashkenaz in Central and Eastern Europe.² This rich cultural outpouring articulated the collective, ‘phantom pain’ they experienced after the bodies of the Jewish nation had been burned to ashes in Europe. The ghostly presence of characters inhabiting a world that had ceased to exist resulted in the creation of Yiddish magical realism or supernaturalism in the stories and novels of Leib Rochman, Avrom Sutzkever, and Yitskhok Bashevis (Isaac Bashevis Singer in English). Similarly, the novelists Chaim

1 On Yiddish culture in Paris post-1945, e.g. Perego 2016, Paris de Bollardi re 2016 in Poland and the Soviet Union, Estraykh 2008, Murav 2011, Shneer 2011, and Gr zinger and Ruta 2008. About Yiddish in Israel, e.g., Chaver 2004, Pilowsky 1991, Pinsker 2007 and 2013, Bar-Am 2014. On post-1945 Yiddish culture in Montreal see Margolis 2010/11.

2 The Yiddish literary critic Borekh Rivkin coined the term *kemoy-teritorye* (‘quasi-territory’) to describe the deterritorialized Jewish diaspora as the paradigm for Yiddish cultural production and distribution (Rivkin 1948: 145–91).

Grade, Chava Rosenfarb, and Mordechai Strigler erected mimetic replicas in their search for lost worlds.

A transnational network gave a cadre of major Yiddish writers, and hundreds of minor ones, the support and impetus to create works at the highest artistic level, even as vernacular Yiddish was undergoing a rapid decline. The 'silver age' of the Yiddish book after 1945 represents the culmination of the great achievements of a group of literary artists who brought to fruition the cultural agendas, the visions, and the potential that originated in the golden age of Yiddish culture prior to and during World War II.³ The artistic achievements of these writers are independent of the decline of vernacular Yiddish. In fact, the increasingly post-vernacular character of Yiddish, the result of a major decline in Yiddish-language proficiency among second- and third-generation Israeli, American, European and Russian Jews, has been detrimental to the ability of scholars to access Yiddish source material. In the words of the late historian David Cesarani:

Millions of Jews around the world spoke Yiddish as their first language [post-1945]. The existence of the Yiddish-speaking Jewish Diaspora facilitated the rapid translation and distribution of key texts. Scholarship in Yiddish flourished. However, the precipitous decline of Yiddish and the contraction of language competency closed off much of this source material, finally creating the illusion that it had never even existed. Sheer ignorance and linguistic ineptitude, from the 1970s to the 1990s, was more important than prejudice in the 1940s and 1950s. (Cesarani and Sundquist 2012: 11)

The artistic treasures of Yiddish culture after 1945 will have a long afterlife, and almost all of them are available only in Yiddish. A small proportion of Yiddish sources have been published in English translation (estimated by the National Yiddish Book Center at less than 2 per cent of the total of published Yiddish books), but many of these are highly questionable in terms of quality and selection. There has been a tendency to translate a relatively small body of canonical works multiple times. As the historian Cecile Kuznitz points out: 'If, as some maintain, the future of Yiddish is in translation, this will be a much diminished version of a rich culture; it is the responsibility of Yiddish scholars to insist on presenting that culture in all its depth and variety' (Kuznitz 2002: 560). As a result, the role of the Yiddish scholar has increasingly become that of

3 Usage of the term 'Silver Age' to refer to the Yiddish works produced during the quarter century following the end of World War II was suggested by Zachary Baker (2004: iii).

guide, translator, and purveyor of certain culturally specific quality standards to a readership with almost no prior knowledge of Jewish languages and cultures. Similarly, *Survivors and Exiles: Yiddish Culture after the Holocaust* is an interpretative act of cultural transmission that includes many translated excerpts of Yiddish poems, prose, and critical writing. It contributes to post-vernacular Yiddish culture, while seeking to draw some readers to Yiddish primary and secondary sources.

According to the Jewish bibliographer Zachary Baker, Yiddish publishing after 1945 ‘continued to exert an incontrovertible force and vitality’; however, the irreversible demographic trend of aging writers and readers, and the lack of replenishment by a new generation, led to the creation of several Yiddish publication centres, ‘that functioned on a far more limited scale compared to what came before, centers that emerged suddenly, flourished for a decade or two, and then rapidly declined’ (Baker 2004: 60, 62). The Argentine book series *Dos poylishe yidntum* (‘Polish Jewry’) was a typical example of Yiddish publishing after the Holocaust, both in terms of its prolific output of 175 volumes over twenty years (1946–66), and in the way it was implemented by its main editor Mark Turkov, who took full advantage of the cultural and economic circumstances that benefitted Yiddish book publishing in Buenos Aires.

Contemporaneously, the Communist sponsored and controlled Yidish-bukh (‘Yiddish Book’) publishing house in Warsaw issued over 300 volumes of new and classic works in Yiddish during the 1950s and 1960s, until the antisemitic purges in 1968 put an end to Jewish culture in Poland (Nalewajko-Kulikova 2008: 111–45). In a 1947 article Abraham Mitlberg, secretary and co-editor of *Dos poylishe yidntum*, delineated the close co-operation between *Dos poylishe yidntum* and the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland. This led to the shipment of hundreds of books to survivors in Poland and the DP camps. In some cases, titles were published simultaneously in Yiddish and in Polish. The transnational scope of the book series was a significant departure from pre-Holocaust Yiddish publishing in Argentina, which had an almost entirely local character. The ascendance of Buenos Aires as an international centre for Yiddish publishing was made possible by a convergence of circumstances: the strong leadership of Mark Turkov and Abraham Mitlberg; the existence of a worldwide readership for Yiddish books about the literature, history, and destruction of Polish Jewry; and, most importantly, sufficient funds raised locally to support the endeavour. Mitlberg summarized the situation:

We feel deeply that we are implementing a historical mission in the Yiddish publishing industry, by elevating the importance of the Yiddish book;

by creating an address for Yiddish writers and familiarizing a worldwide Yiddish readership with the tragically terminated chapter of the martyr-logical history of Polish Jewry (Turkov 1947: 12).

Approximately 80 per cent of the 175 books in *Dos poylishe yidntum* can be more or less evenly divided into three categories: Holocaust memoirs and scholarship, life-writing and fiction. Most of the Holocaust books are memoirs and personal accounts and many of them are based on original documents (diaries and testimonies). Life-writing consists mostly of Jewish writers' recollections of Polish Jewish life including accounts of the writer's family background. Holocaust and life-writing are evenly distributed from the beginning to the end of the series. Some works of fiction overlap with the Holocaust category such as works by young surviving writers including Mordechai Strigler, Yehuda Elberg, and Eliezer (Elie) Wiesel, whose literary memoirs were based on their Holocaust experiences.

The discussion of novels and short stories began in earnest with Y. Y. Trunk's *Di yidische proze in poyln* ('Yiddish Prose in Poland', 1949, vol. 52) after which fiction regularly appeared in the series in the form of reprinted Yiddish classics that had originally been published before the Holocaust. Folklore consisted chiefly of Hasidic customs and stories; historical works included *yizker*-style books (commemorative volumes about the destroyed Jewish communities) as well as scholarly writing by historians such as Philip Friedman, Yankev Shatski, Bernard Mark and Emanuel Ringelblum. Three collections of first-rate poetry featured Chaim Grade and Rokhl Korn, who had survived in the Soviet Union.

In a brief introduction, Leibush Lehrer summarized the contents of the *Bibliography of Yiddish Books About Destruction and Heroism*, published by Yad Vashem in 1962. Of the 1,900 titles included in the bibliography, 83 per cent of them consisted of, in equal parts, documents and descriptions, fiction and other art forms. Only 274 of the titles examine the Holocaust in an analytical and scholarly manner. As is the case with the *Dos poylishe yidntum* series, it was the 'emotional history' of these books that made them a unique and authentic Jewish response to the catastrophe. In Y. Robinson's introduction to the bibliography: 'The importance of Holocaust literature in Yiddish is not predicated on its literary qualities, but on its unmediated depiction of personal experiences' (*Bibliography of Yiddish Books* 1962: xii).

As demonstrated in *Survivors and Exiles: Yiddish Culture after the Holocaust*, the history of post-war Yiddish culture is largely the history of a small cadre of surviving writers whose works, performances, and cultural leadership as editors of and contributors to the Yiddish press decisively shaped the Yiddish cultural

shifts after 1945, both in the original Yiddish and in translation. The individual came to stand in for the collective in the overseas Yiddish centres. Regardless of the surviving Yiddish writers' original institutional and political affiliations, however – be it YIVO in Vilna, the Yiddish Writer's Union on Tlomatske 13 in Warsaw, or Communist state culture in the Soviet Union – the memory of a transnational Yiddish cultural network remained dominant in the Cold War period. The term 'a culture of retrieval', coined by the Jewish historian Eli Lederhendler, characterizes Yiddish transnational culture as a paradigmatic memory site (Lederhendler 2001). Yiddish writers and cultural workers retrieved old ideological divisions, and re-figured them so that they would serve radically different ideological and commemorative functions in the post-war world. The surviving Yiddish writers became the primary bearers of the traumatic war experiences, embodying and articulating the 'phantom pains' which were all that remained in the absence of a living and breathing Ashkenazi civilization in Central and Eastern Europe.

Dos poylishe yidntum book series includes several memoirs about Tlomatske 13, the address of the Union of Yiddish Writers and Journalists in Warsaw between 1916–38. These memoirs indicate the importance of Tlomatske 13 in preserving the memory of a Yiddish transnational centre. Penning his memoirs of Tlomatske 13 as a refugee in Shanghai in June 1946, Ber Rozen begins:

Nisht New York un avade nisht – Moskve, nor Varshe mit ire beerekh fir hundert registirte feder-mentshn, mit ire bikher un tsaytungs-farlagn in Varshe vi oyf der provints, mit ir yerlekhn normal nokhvuks fun naye un yunge talantirte shrayber-koykhes un afile mit di hunderter grafomanen, vos hobn dem nokhvuks keseyder bagleyt; Varshe iz geven der velt-tsenter fun yidishn gaystikn shafn un Tlomatske 13 iz geven der nomen fun der firme.

Not New York and obviously not Moscow, but Warsaw with its approximately four hundred registered writers, with their books and newspaper-publishers in Warsaw and in the provinces; with its annual regular renewal of new and young talented writer forces and even with the hundreds of scribblers which constantly accompanied the renewal; Warsaw was the world center of Yiddish intellectual creation and Tlomatske 13 was the name of the company. (Rozen 1950: 9)⁴

4 Similarly a slew of memoirs in *Dos poylishe yidntum* and other publications recreate Tlomatske 13 as the world centre of Yiddish culture between the two world wars. They include Zusman Segalovitsh, *Tlomatske 13. Fun farbrentn nekhtn* (1946, vol.

Tlomatske 13 secretary Melech Ravitch reproduces in his memoir *Dos Mayse-bukh fun mayn lebn* ('The Book of Stories of my Life', 1975) a membership list and a record of the *shtetlekh* (towns in Central and Eastern Europe with a significant Jewish population) he visited on lecture tours of inter-war Poland. The former is an alphabetical list of 254 names of members of Tlomatske 13 compiled on March 20, 1928. Melech Ravitch gave lectures during the inter-war period in Polish towns and cities that are listed and marked on a map of Poland in his memoirs. Like the world map of YIVO branches that greeted the American Jewish historian Lucy Davidowicz during her visit to the YIVO headquarters in Vilna in 1938–9,⁵ Ravitch's dotted map of Jewish towns in Poland clustering around Warsaw's Tlomatske 13 graphically delineates the idea of Yiddish culture as a transnational centre, with a centre and a periphery:

In Rusland farfestikt zikh take di yidishe literatur vi a kestkind fun der melukhe. Ober in Poyln farfestikt zikh di yidishe literatur vi a kestkind fun der proletarisher yidisher gezelschaftlekhkayt. Bund, Poale-Tsien, Fareynikte, Folkistn un stam folk. Oykh di groyse tsienistishe masn leynen a sakh yidishe literatur. Do in Poyln zenen do gezelschaftleke yidishe farlagn, un es iz do a tsentrale yidishe shul-organisatsye Tsisho, un es iz do oykh a komertsiel yidish farlag-vezn. Men ken do lebn. Un es iz do stam pereferye. Un tsu di referatn, vos vern organizirt durkh dem Fareyn fun yidishn literatn un zshurnalistn oyf Tlomatske 13, kumen hunderter yunge mentshn un shlingn, shlingn dorshtike di naye yidishe literatur in zeyer loshn un zey orientirn zikh in ir problematik. Un zey vartn oyf dem nayem, dem derleyzndikn vort.

9), Nakhmen Mayzel, *Geven amol a lebn: dos yidishe kultur-lebn in Poyln tvishn beyde velt-milkhomes* (1951, vol. 71) and Ravitch's *Dos mayse-bukh fun mayn lebn* (vol. 161 and 171, 1962 and 1964), Y. Y. Trunk's memoir *Poyln. Zikbroynes un bilder* (1944–53) and memoirs by Yitskhok Bashevis including his 1943 article in the journal *Tsukunft*, 'Arum der yidisher literatur in Poyln', and 'Figurn un epizodn fun literatn fareyn', (serialized in *Forverts*, 28.7.1979–10.1.1980) and 'Der shrayber klub' (serialized in *Forverts*, 13.1.–28.12.1956).

- 5 'On the first landing, which we faced as we came into the vestibule, hung a huge colored map of the world, with markers indicating the location of YIVO's farflung branches'. 'The YIVO was no seedy relic of the past; it belonged to the future', Dawidowicz 1989: 78, 79. Aaron Zeitlin and Yitskhok Bashevis edited the literary journal *Globus* in Warsaw in 1932–4, the name indicating their transnational vision for Yiddish literature.

In Russia, Yiddish literature is essentially consolidated as a ward of the state. But in Poland, Yiddish literature is consolidated as a ward of the proletarian Jewish social body: Bund, Poale-Zion, The United, Folkists and regular people. Also, the great Zionist masses read a lot of Yiddish literature. Here in Poland, there are Yiddish publishers, and there is a Yiddish school movement, Tsisho, and there is also a commercial Yiddish publishing business. One can live here. And there is also a periphery. And for the lectures which are organized through the Organization of Yiddish writers and journalists at Tlomatske 13, hundreds of young people drink thirstily of the new Yiddish literature in their own language and they familiarize themselves with its issues. And they wait for the new redeeming word. (Ravitch 1975: 95)

Ravitch delineates the key elements of Yiddish transnational memory: anti-Communist, non-partisan, center-periphery, generational continuity, and the ideal of the artist as prophetic visionary. Like other memoirists of Tlomatske 13, Ravitch has a particular ideological axe to grind, continuing the inter-war Jewish *kultur-kampf* between Communists and anti-Communists, nationalists and assimilationists, modernism and *shund* (serialized pot-boilers). Retrospectively, Ravitch is summoning echoes and ghosts from the past, or as in the title of Aaron Zeitlin's poem, the *nokhklang* ('echo') of a great generation's cultural experiments in creating a modern Yiddish world culture.⁶ The American Yiddish poet Yankev Glatshteyn articulated poignantly this sentiment in his 1953 poem 'Yidishkayt':

בענקשאַפֿט-ייִדישקייט איז אַ וויג-ליד פֿאַר זקנים,
וואָס צעקניען אינגעווייקטע חלה.
זאָלן מיר צושטעלן די ווייכע קרישקעס,
די ווערטער אויסגעלעבטע און הוילע,
מיר וואָס האָבן געחלומט
פֿון אַ נייער אנשי פנסת הגדולה?

6 Zeitlin 1947: 128–32. The poem is dated February 1945. The full title of the poem: 'Nokhklang tsu "bay nakht afn altn mark"' ('Echo of "A Night in the Old Marketplace"'). The latter is the title of Y. L. Peretz's play from 1907.

Longingkayt-yidishkayt is merely a lullaby for old men
 whose gums knead soaked challah.
 Should we provide the soft shreds,
 the bare, the outlived words,
 we who dreamed
 of a new Great Convocation?⁷

Dos poylishe yidntum served a specific purpose for a well-defined readership in the quarter century following the Holocaust. Originating in the *Ashkenazi* homelands of Europe, its readers were intimately familiar with a unifying set of multilingual, geo-political, historical and antisemitic quandaries required for accessing the book series. For two generations of Yiddish writers and readers born between the 1880s and the 1930s, including survivors of the Holocaust and the Gulag, Holocaust memoirs and the 'world of yesterday' genre resonated deeply. Peretz's ideals of Yiddish as an indispensable vehicle for a transformation of the world based on humanist, socialist and aesthetic categories remained those of this historically particular readership. With its decline and inevitable departure, *Dos poylishe yidntum* and the rest of the Yiddish publishing industry faced a cultural wasteland, and eventually declined.

Although Yiddish writers were tremendously successful in creating 'a culture of retrieval' after the Holocaust, they were unable to bridge the generational gap and pass on their Yiddish cultural legacy to a younger generation. Only 13 works out of the 175 volumes in *Dos poylishe yidntum* were translated into other languages (mostly English, French, Polish, Russian and Hebrew). This would actually be a relatively high number were it not for the fact that many translations were done decades after the book series' reprint of Yiddish classical works (such as Scholem Asch, Yankev Glatshteyn and Yehoshua Perle). Only the translation of volume 117 in the book series Eliezer (Elie) Wiesel's *Un di velt hot geshvign* into *La Nuit* and then *Night* in respectively 1958 and 1960 succeeded in reaching an international readership.

In remaking *Un di velt* as *La Nuit*, Wiesel's work became a book with almost no Jewish references, stripped of most of its original *cum ira et cum studio* ('with anger and with bias'), the main characteristic of the Jewish Holocaust memoir

7 Glatshteyn 1987: 139–41. I changed Fein's translation of the word *anshe-kneses* *bagdoyle* to 'convocation'. The Hebrew words refer to the ruling body of religious leaders during the Second Temple Period. The poem was published in the volume *Dem tatns shotn* (1953).

according to the Jewish historian Yankev Shatski.⁸ Obviously, the artistic and ideological gains were considerable. By rewriting the Yiddish memoir for a non-Jewish readership *Night* has become a seminal text of Holocaust literature. This was primarily due to its aesthetic qualities of condensed storytelling and Wiesel's powerful indictment of the passivity of God and the world. This great achievement, however, would not have been possible without the Yiddish cultural revival after World War II when Wiesel was starting out as a Yiddish writer. Writers generally unknown outside the Yiddish and Hebrew literary world such as Mordechai Shtrigler, Yehiel Dinur, Chaim Grade and Avrom Sutzkever influenced and empowered Wiesel in his quest to discover his literary voice and response to his Holocaust experiences. Moreover, the book series editor Mark Turkov's interest in Wiesel in 1954 during the latter's visit to Montevideo and the subsequent publication of *Un di velt* in *Dos poylishe yidntum* provided the young writer with a Jewish readership. This happened at a time in the mid 1950s when 'Holocaust literature' in non-Jewish languages was still a rather marginal phenomenon.

Like I. B. Singer, Wiesel's bilingual *oeuvre* exemplifies the fact that only by engaging in translation, which often resulted in universalizing and muting the distinct Jewishness of their work, did they succeed in breaking out of the Yiddish cultural circuit to become writers of world literature (Damrosch 2013, Norich 2014). Of the more than 150 writers whose books are included in *Dos poylishe yidntum*, only Wiesel managed to reach an international readership in translation. Wiesel's success notwithstanding, the original Yiddish version *Un di velt hot geshvign* remained invisible outside of the Yiddish world until the 1990s.⁹ Until then, the English version of *Night* was universally perceived as a translation of work that had originally been written in French.

Dos poylishe yidntum is emblematic of Yiddish culture after the Holocaust, both in its diversity and prolific output over twenty years as well as in its

8 Yankev Shatski, 'Problemeyn fun yidisher historiografye' (lecture held at a YIVO conference, 15 January 1955; Shatski and Lifshits 1958: 248). The expression is derived from the final section of the lecture: 'What has happened to Jews is for a Jew not an objective material that exists outside him. The history of his people is his history. A piece of his own existence. The Jew responds to history as a personal matter. As a result, the contemporary Jew is against scholarship. Therefore he is either a believer in apologetics or an anti-scholar. The Jew is scientifically anti-historical. A Jew can only write history "with anger and with bias".' (p. 248)

9 See Roskies 1984: 263–4 and 301–2. It was Naomi Seidman's 1996 article that initiated a wide-ranging debate about the various versions of Wiesel's Holocaust memoir (1956) including the first Yiddish version (Seidman 2006).

almost complete invisibility outside the boundaries of its own linguistic and cultural parameters. The titles in the series were carefully selected as a result of a Herculean effort to collect key works from and about the Polish Jewish past informed by the *zamlar-gayst* (the spirit of collection); the ingathering of the cultural heritage (*kines*) that originated with the folklorist and playwright Sh. An-Sky and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in Vilna in the inter-war period. In contrast to the previous cycle of modern Yiddish culture that was future-oriented and primarily spanning the period from the 1880s until World War II – *di klasikers* (the three classical Yiddish writers Scholem-Aleichem, I. I. Peretz and Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh), modernism, theatre and mass media (particularly in the forms of journalism, serialized novels, and life-writing published in newspapers) – post-Holocaust Yiddish culture retrieved the past and mourned its tragic demise. Elie Wiesel and I. B. Singer, in contrast, broke with ‘the culture of retrieval’ through the act of translating and universalizing their literary personas and *oeuvre*, thereby reaching a worldwide readership. This would have been impossible without the Yiddish cultural infrastructure that initially enabled them to give literary voice to their experiences as survivors and exiles originating in Ashkenaz in Central and Eastern Europe. Post-Holocaust Yiddish culture encouraged these writers to utilize and develop distinctly Jewish genres and styles that responded to the post-war Yiddish readership’s ‘horizon of expectation’.

Yiddish culture after the Holocaust provides a case study of the re-figuration and post-vernacular transformation of a transnational network into a seminal memory site. The shift from a future-oriented culture with a steady influx of a younger generation to a past-oriented one, sustained by retrieval and memory, took place during the post-war period’s dramatic geo-political changes. These included the creation of the State of Israel, the expansion of the American Jewish community, and the division of Europe by the Iron Curtain. Particularly the two former contexts enabled Yiddish to flourish in a combination of its vernacular setting, translation, academia, and post-vernacular forms.

As mentioned, ‘the unmediated depiction of personal experiences’ is a primary characteristic of *Dos poylishe yidntum*. The distinctive Yiddish literary voices continued to exert a strong influence on literary works by Hebrew and American Jewish writers after 1945. Singer’s *oeuvre* in English, Cynthia Ozick’s novella *Envy; or, Yiddish in America* (1969) and the Israeli writer Aharon Megged’s novel *Foiglmán* (1989) exemplify the post-vernacular channeling of post-war Yiddish cultural concerns into Jewish American and Hebrew literature. Ozick and Megged transformed Yiddish vernacular content, figures and settings – respectively the Yiddish poetry readings at the 92 Street Y and the

Yiddish writer colony in Paris in the 1960s – into a drama of Yiddish culture’s impending demise, with the tragi-comic ramifications of this for the survivors and their native-born American and Israeli descendants. These works imagine and re-enact the post-Holocaust period’s re-figuration, and post-vernacular transformation of Yiddish culture, in literary works in Hebrew and English.

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Jewish history as a history of immigration

An overview of current historiography in the Scandinavian countries

CHRISTHARD HOFFMANN

This article provides a first critical overview of the historiography of Jewish immigration and integration in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. While the experience of immigration has been crucial for Scandinavian Jewry, scholarly interest in Jewish migration history only emerged during the 1980s in connection with the focus on migration and ethnicity in Swedish research and the adaptation of sociological concepts of migration in general historiography. By analysing key historiographical works, focusing on their approaches and main narratives, this article aims at a critical methodological self-reflection. It identifies two major approaches to Jewish immigration history in current Scandinavian historiography: the demographic and social history approach, focusing in particular on the role of Jewish immigrants in the labour market, their settlement and housing conditions and their social mobility; and the cultural history approach, reconstructing and preserving the vanished world of Yiddish immigrant culture.

1. Introduction

Jewish history in the Scandinavian countries (here understood as comprising of Denmark, Sweden and Norway) has been shaped considerably by the experience of migration. In Norway, the Jewish community was virtually formed only at the end of the nineteenth century when several hundred immigrants arrived from Eastern Europe. At the same time, in Denmark and Sweden, the established Jewish communities were transformed by the arrival of Eastern European Jews, and later by Jewish refugees from Central Europe.

Historical research on Jewish immigration in the Scandinavian countries gained momentum only in the mid-1980s, influenced by the focus on migration and ethnic history in general historiography and by the emergence of new national self-understandings of themselves as countries of immigration. From the perspective of immigration history, the Jewish experience (as the first non-Christian minority in Protestant Scandinavia) could be seen as a paradigm for contemporary developments, in particular for the integration of Muslim newcomers. The use of demographic methods and sociological concepts such as

assimilation, integration, identity and diaspora, widened the scope of Jewish historiography and allowed for a comparison with the histories of other immigrant minorities.

This article explores this field of research by analysing key historiographical works on Jewish immigration and integration in the Scandinavian countries, focusing on their approaches and main narratives. The critical review of the historiographical development aims at an increased conceptual and methodological self-reflection and a better understanding of the internal and external factors that have shaped the scholarly perceptions and interpretations of Jewish immigration history. Since the study of history is dependent on the existence and availability of relevant primary sources (as source criticism is its most important method), the use and critical analysis of the preserved source material will be a crucial point of the methodological assessment. At the same time, the interpretation of the sources and the writing of history are not done in a vacuum. Historical narratives are often shaped by current perspectives and are written with the present day in mind. By taking into account the contemporary contexts of historiography, this article can also shed light on the changing general perceptions of migration history and Jewish history in Scandinavia since the 1980s. Thematically, I will concentrate on historical works that deal with the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The history of the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe and their reception in Sweden has found much scholarly attention in recent years. It presents, in many respects, a topic in its own right and is, for pragmatic reasons, not included in my overview. As the research of Jewish immigrants in Scandinavia has been influenced by larger trends in Jewish and European historiography, the general background of the topic will be outlined first.

2. Migration in Jewish historiography

When, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, modern Jewish historiography developed in Central Europe, the topic of migration was hardly included, or even mentioned at all. There were several reasons for this. The emergence of a modern Jewish historiography was closely related to the processes of emancipation and social integration of the Jews in Western and Central Europe. In Germany, for example, the integration of the Jews took place essentially as a process of integrating into the educated German middle class (Hoffmann 2003). This process ran parallel to the development of a specifically modern concept of history that gave meaning to the changes in the day-to-day world,

legitimated these changes and thereby drove them forward. It was primarily the model of German historicism that changed the relation of Jews – or at least of a class of Jewish intellectuals at the forefront – to their own tradition: in the emerging *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* ('Science of Judaism') this relation was worked through and historicised along the lines of source-criticism, while the normative claim of the religious tradition was relativised (Schorsch 1994). At the same time, conceptions of time and history became more dynamic: past, present and future were experienced and interpreted as constituent parts of a comprehensive process of development (in contrast to the 'static' and typological concept of the past in traditional Jewish religious memory culture). The task of the newly emerging historiography was to represent the past in such a way that the unity of history and its 'meaning' became clear, thereby enabling purposeful action in the present. Teleological concepts, such as 'enlightenment', 'progress' and 'emancipation' were particularly prominent in this respect. The liberal narrative of Jewish history that became dominant in the nineteenth century redefined Judaism as a sort of middle-class religion of *Bildung*. In order to support the claim for Jewish equality and to ease the integration of Jews into the German educated middle class, it did not explore Jewish history in its entirety, but only focused on a 'respectable' selection of it. Among the topics that were left out was the Jewish experience of migration. This omission is not difficult to understand. In the polemical debates on Jewish emancipation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Jews were often confronted with the charge of being foreigners or even 'wandering nomads' who did not really belong to Germany (or any other European country, for that matter). To counter these attacks, Jews emphasised their long history of settlement in Germany, as did the Jewish lawyer and politician Gabriel Riesser in his famous reply to the theologian Professor Heinrich Paulus in 1831:

The charge that our forefathers immigrated here centuries or millennia ago is as fiendish as it is absurd. We are not immigrants; we are native born. And, since that is the case, we have no claim to a home someplace else. We are either German or we are homeless. (Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz 1995: 144)

When at the end of the nineteenth century, modern antisemitism emerged and, in its rhetoric, employed the image of the Eastern Jewish immigrant foe who had arrived as a poor peddler and, within a few years, turned into a mighty businessman dominating the German stock market, the issue of Jewish immigration was again to haunt native Jewry. For the acculturated German Jews,

whose pride rested on having left the ghetto behind them, the Yiddish-speaking *Ostjuden*, had to be representatives of the ghetto. The characterisation of the Eastern European Jews as 'ghetto Jews' can already be found in German-Jewish discourse in the middle of the nineteenth century (Aschheim 1982: 3ff.). It is thus found at a time when the German Jews had already gone far enough into their antagonistic acculturation 'away from the ghetto' to draw a line between themselves and the apparently un-liberated, uneducated, unassimilated and socially impoverished Jews of the East. These antagonistic identity formations, constructing an intra-Jewish cultural divide between 'East' and 'West', contributed to the fact that German-Jewish historiography never really explored the history of Jewish migration – neither in the early modern period when, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many Polish and Lithuanian Jews moved to the West, nor in the contemporary period, when Eastern Jewish mass migration surged after 1881.

There were, of course, other reasons as well. Since most European states did not think of themselves as countries of immigration, there were no historiographical models of how to integrate the history of immigrants into a national narrative. The hegemonic nationalist perspective excluded transnational phenomena in general: the history of emigration was not systematically researched either (with the exception of Sweden). Moreover, early twentieth century historiography, both general and Jewish, was still very much concerned with the history of elite actors, both in politics and in the realm of ideas and high culture, while social history, including the history of the working class (to which many Eastern Jewish immigrants belonged), made its breakthrough only after the Second World War.

While single demographic and overview studies on global Jewish migration were published during the 1940s (Kulischer 1943; Lestschinsky 1944; Wischnitzer 1948; see Brinkmann 2012: 117; Alroey 2006), historical research on the history of Eastern Jewish immigration into Western and Central Europe only evolved in the 1960s and 1970s. It is striking that this field of study was mainly developed by young North American scholars, who transferred the standards and methods of American immigration history and Jewish history to their European cases. These pioneer studies include: Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870–1914* (1960); Nancy Green, *The Pletzl of Paris: Jewish Immigrant Workers in the Belle Époque* (1986) and Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (1987).

Based on a thorough analysis of the Hebrew, Yiddish and English sources, Gartner's work on the Eastern Jewish immigrants in England effectively challenged the hegemonic liberal narrative of Anglo-Jewish history. A Jewish

'Whig historian', such as Cecil Roth, deliberately excluded the history of Eastern Jewish immigration from his *History of the Jews in England* (1941), and Vivian D. Lipman in his *festschrift* of the Jewish Board of Guardians (Lipman 1959) presented the role of Jewish institutions in helping their brethren from the East in the most positive light, thereby omitting their dubious role in sending them either back to Eastern Europe or further on to the United States. By contrast, Gartner explored the sensitive issue of immigration restriction within the Jewish community (see Alderman 2009). He also documented that the majority of Eastern Jewish immigrants in England were not refugees from the Russian pogroms, but migrants from Galicia who left their home towns for economic reasons. Perhaps most importantly, Gartner's study provided a model of how to write the history of an immigrant minority, exploring the causes and paths of the migration process, the political and social conditions in the receiving country, the reactions of the English and Anglo-Jewish establishment towards the newcomers and, finally, the political, social, cultural and religious history of the Eastern Jewish immigrants themselves.

While Gartner, a student of Salo W. Baron, was deeply rooted in Jewish historiography, other studies of Eastern European Jewish immigration to England were inspired by contemporary events, in particular the political debates about Commonwealth immigration in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. The public resentment towards Afro-Caribbean newcomers and the introduction of legislation that aimed at restricting further immigration resembled the agitation against Eastern European Jews at the end of the nineteenth century that culminated in the Aliens Act of 1905. In his book *The English and Immigration 1880–1910*, published in 1971 by the Institute of Race Relations, John Garrard took the parallels between these two immigrations as a point of departure. His historical study of English, in particular left wing, reactions to Jewish immigration around the turn of the century, could thus provide insight into the present-day issue of Commonwealth immigration. The focus was thus on English reactions to immigration in general. It was not so much about popular xenophobia as such as about the ways in which immigrant restriction was framed and justified among the left-wing public. The exclusion of both Jewish and Afro-Caribbean immigrants, Garrard argued, was made more complicated because open racial prejudice was not acceptable in these quarters (Garrard 1971: 105ff.).

Gartner's and Garrard's books exemplify, respectively, two different approaches to the study of Jewish migration history in Europe: while Gartner is concerned with the *Jewish* aspects of this history – that is the cultural-religious encounters and social conflicts between native and immigrant Jews, and the resulting transformation of the Jewish community, Garrard studies the *English*

aspects of this history, using the case of Eastern Jewish immigration as an historical example by which to explore English reactions towards newcomers in general. These approaches, the sectoral intra-Jewish perspective on the one hand, and the integral, and often comparative, external perspective on the other, can also be found in the historiography of Jewish migration in Scandinavia.

3. The historiography of Jewish immigration in Scandinavia

Sweden

In contrast to the liberal conceptions of Jewish history in Britain and Germany, Jewish historiography in Scandinavia did not totally ignore the experience of migration and the conflicts between native Jewry and Eastern European Jewish immigrants. To be sure, by focusing on Jewish emancipation and successful integration, Hugo Valentin's pioneering work on *Judarnas historia i Sverige* ('History of the Jews in Sweden'), published in 1924, followed the established liberal Jewish narrative. Only at the very end of his *opus magnum*, did Valentin briefly mention two considerably influential conditions of Jewish life in post-emancipation Sweden: increased assimilation and growing Eastern European Jewish immigration. While he referred to the negative reactions towards the immigrants, both from Swedish society in general and from established Jewry, he concluded on a conciliatory tone which suggested that there was no evidence whatsoever that the newcomers from Poland would adapt themselves less successfully or play a less significant role in Swedish and Swedish-Jewish life than those who saw themselves now as native Jews – but who actually were the descendants of earlier immigrants (Valentin 1924: 453). The experience of immigration and long-term integration was thereby inscribed as something integral to Swedish-Jewish history and identity. At the same time, the history of immigration was embedded in the master narrative of Jewish emancipation and progress.

After the Second World War and the destruction of Eastern European Jewry in the Holocaust, Valentin expanded on the history of Eastern Jewish immigrants in Sweden. In a shortened and updated version of his work, published in 1964 under the title *Judarna i Sverige* ('The Jews in Sweden'), he explored the relationship between native Jewry and Eastern European Jewish newcomers in greater detail (Valentin 1964: 141–6). In particular, he pointed to the fact that Jewish communal life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would have been rather insignificant and much less vigorous without the Russian and Polish Jewish immigrants. Valentin also addressed

the cultural and social clashes arising between the established Jewish families who adhered to the German-Jewish tradition of *Bildung* and their poor and supposedly uneducated brethren from the East. More clearly than in 1924, he criticised established Swedish Jewry for repressing its own history of immigration and consequently showing a lack of understanding for the situation of the newcomers:

A considerable proportion of those Jews who in our time have played, or still play, a significant role in economic and cultural life are the children or grandchildren of immigrants from Eastern Europe. The negative attitude of the old Swedish-Jewish families towards their fathers and forefathers was partly based on the contrast between assimilated and non-assimilated Jews. 'The Poles', as they generally were called, reminded the old Swedish-Jewish families of their own foreign origins and of a period in their history that they, however wrongly, did not like to be reminded of. In line with the general public in Sweden and Germany, they also held false and prejudiced opinions about Eastern Jewry. (Valentin 1964: 145; translated by the author)

While Valentin's clear-sighted presentation was based on the observations and experiences of his own lifetime, a thorough scholarly investigation into the topic of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and their reception by the Swedish Jewish establishment began only in the early 1980s with Anna Besserman's dissertation project at the University of Stockholm.¹ Based on an analysis of previously unseen sources, in particular the immigrants' applications for Swedish citizenship and the records of the Jewish community in Stockholm, Besserman studied the occupational and educational background of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants and elaborated on the social, cultural and religious differences between the established Jews who were predominantly acculturated, middle-class Reform Jews, and the newcomers who were predominantly lower class and deeply rooted in Jewish Orthodoxy and Yiddish culture. Besserman was particularly concerned to explain why the Jewish community in Stockholm, in two petitions of 1862 and 1905 to the authorities, took an initiative to restrict Eastern Jewish immigration and established a 'closed-door' policy within the community; that is, made Swedish citizenship a condition of community membership. While internal conflicts, such as for instance the wish

1 The dissertation was never finished due to the untimely death of the author. Some of the major findings of her study can be found in Besserman 1984.

to curb the influence of religious Orthodoxy or to exclude poor foreigners from the charity of the community, certainly played a role, Besserman concluded that the restrictive policy of the community also has to be seen in the context of the Jews' own insecure position within Swedish society. Faced with the negative reaction of the Swedish social environment towards the immigrants, the Jewish community felt compelled to demonstrate its loyalty and thereby try to prevent antisemitism. With growing numbers of immigrants arriving at the beginning of the twentieth century, the need for social assistance increased and was met by philanthropic societies that were later taken over by the community. The community was thereby transformed from a purely religious community into an institution with important social functions. At the same time, the norms of assimilation prevailed. It was expected that the newcomers would adapt to the norms and values of Swedish culture, in the same way that native Jewry had done before. The encounter with the immigrant brethren from the East thus demonstrated to native Jewry the limits of their own social and cultural emancipation (Besserman 1984: 36).

The impulse to explore the history of Jewish immigration in Scandinavia from an external and comparative perspective emerged largely in the context of a growing academic interest in the history of immigration and of ethnic minorities in general, which first took shape in Sweden in the late 1970s. After five years of preparation, the *Centrum för multietnisk forskning* (Centre for Multi-Ethnic Research) was established at Uppsala University in 1984. Under the leadership of the historian Harald Runblom, it pioneered the study of minorities and ethnic relations in an historical and contemporary perspective. As one of the first results, a comprehensive presentation of ethnic minorities in Sweden, was published in 1988 under the title *Det mångkulturella Sverige. En handbok om etniska grupper och minoriteter* ('Multicultural Sweden: An Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups and Minorities', Runblom and Svanberg 1988). It followed the model of the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980) and applied the concept of ethnicity as a basis for group identities. The article on the Jews, written by Harald Runblom and Matthias Tydén, included general information on Jews and Judaism as well as specific sections on the history and present situation of Swedish Jewry, as well as on antisemitism. The historical overview was informed by the categories of migration history: immigration and immigration restrictions, settlement, assimilation, the development of generations with specific experiences and identities, and not least the cultural clash between established Stockholm Jews and Eastern European immigrants, which was understood as a 'classic' conflict between older and newer immigrant groups:

Among the Swedified Jews there was a tendency to despise the newcomers from the East (mostly from Belarus, Poland and the Baltic countries) because they were poor, had unpolished manners, a supposedly inadequate school education and low social status. Between the groups, conflicts emerged on the religious, social and political levels. The new immigrants regarded the religious life of Swedish Jewry as shallow, while the established Jews tried, to a large extent successfully, to keep the newcomers out of the congregation and its board. (Runblom and Svanberg 1988: 195; translated by the author)

The issue of Eastern European Jewish immigration was also seen as one important factor in shaping Swedish attitudes towards Jews and towards immigration in general, that is to say, in the emergence of antisemitism and of a restrictive politics towards newcomers that took shape between 1913 and 1937 (Runblom and Svanberg 1988: 197).

Based on the handbook, Svanberg and Tydén published a comprehensive historical overview in 1992 of the history of immigration to Sweden, entitled *Tusen år av invandring. En svensk kulturhistoria* ('A Millennium of Immigration: A Swedish Cultural History'). The history of Jewish immigration figured prominently in this presentation; it was seen in a comparative perspective and integrated into the history of immigration to Sweden in general. In a chapter on Jews and Catholics at the end of the eighteenth century, for instance, the changing ideological framework for the treatment of religious minorities that developed with the idea of religious freedom was taken as common ground to compare the specific conditions for Catholic and Jewish immigrants and their different paths of emancipation (Svanberg and Tydén 1992: 180–9). Moreover the history of Eastern Jewish immigrants, their differences with native Jewry and the formation of different Jewish milieus in Stockholm (established 'Northern Jews' vs. immigrant Eastern European 'Southern Jews') were dealt with in great detail.

In her 1984 article, Anna Besserman suggested that the restrictive attitude of the Stockholm Jewish community had to be understood in the context of the negative reaction of the Swedish state and Swedish majority society towards the Eastern Jewish newcomers. This topic was taken up by Carl Henrik Carlsson in his doctoral thesis on *Medborgerskap och diskriminering. Östjudar och andra invandrare i Sverige 1860–1920* ('Naturalisation and Discrimination: Eastern Jews and Other Immigrants in Sweden, 1860 to 1920'), completed at Uppsala University in 2004. Based on a thorough analysis of thousands of applications for naturalisation, Carlsson documented systematic discrimination against

Eastern Jews. The approval rate of their applications was less than fifty per cent, while that for non-Eastern Jews was almost ninety per cent. There was no other immigrant group which was to the same degree unwanted in Sweden as the Eastern Jews, who generally were associated with peddling. This discrimination was not directly linked to antisemitic or xenophobic agitation; it was rather related to the ups and downs of the economic cycle: when the economic situation improved the approval rate for Eastern Jews went up; when the economy turned sour, as in the 'long depression' between 1873 and 1896, it became very difficult for Eastern Jews to obtain citizenship, which was necessary for pursuing trade freely in Sweden. Based on his statistical material, Carlsson could also draw a more nuanced picture of the treatment of the newcomers by established Jewry. There was no doubt that the Stockholm Jewish community harboured rather negative views of the newcomers in general, but when it came to the question whether the applications of individual Eastern Jews should be recommended by the elders of the community, who served as local referees for the authorities, these recommendations were predominantly positive (74 per cent). In this way, Carlsson's solid study contributed to a more accurate picture of the dimensions and the causes of discrimination towards Eastern Jews in Sweden. Furthermore, the detailed statistical information about the newcomers that Carlsson had gathered allowed him later to analyse the specific migratory patterns of Jewish immigrants and transmigrants coming to Sweden in the period between 1870 and 1920 (Carlsson 2013).

The processes of Jewish identity formation and assimilation have often been described exclusively in terms of religious (Reform vs. Orthodoxy) or political (Liberal-Socialist-Zionist) identity markers. In her innovative study *Judiskt liv i Stockholm och Norden. Ekonomi, identitet och assimilering 1850–1930* ('Jewish Life in Stockholm and the Nordic Countries: Economy, Identity and Assimilation, 1850–1930') the economic historian Rita Bredefeldt chose a different approach, focusing on the role of Jews in economic life as a decisive factor for Jewish identity and assimilation. Based on fresh sources, in particular the tax and electoral registers of the Stockholm Jewish community, Bredefeldt drew a new and more precise picture of Jewish adaptation strategies, the participation of Jewish women in the labour market, and not least, the integration of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. It showed that the identity formation that had been crucial for the integration of Western Jews in Sweden during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and that was defined by the ideals of economic success, benefits to society and self-cultivation (*Bildung*) as a strategy of winning social acceptance, also shaped the ways of integration for the Eastern Jewish immigrants who originally were mainly craftsmen and industrial workers.

Most Eastern Jewish immigrants were integrated into the Swedish social economy and in principle took over the Western Jewish self-image of the economic successful and cultivated Swedes of the Jewish faith. Upward social mobility now found its expression in the efforts of the younger generation to obtain academic careers and to educate themselves for 'useful' occupations that were always in demand. Over time, the Eastern Jewish immigrants and their descendants became the majority of Jews in Sweden. By then, they had taken over the definition of Jewish identity developed by their predecessors. (Bredefeldt 2008: 78; translated by the author)

Bredefeldt explained the pressure to assimilate and lack of pluralism by pointing to the forces of antisemitic prejudice in Swedish society that saw all Jews as one collective group regardless of their real social, religious and cultural differences. Jews reacted to that by choosing a strategy of cautiousness and defensive self-assertion. In such a climate, there was little room for the development of different Jewish identities. Bredefeldt's conclusion on this point thus confirmed the view of Hugo Valentin in 1924, quoted earlier in this article, which had emphasised the path of emancipation and integration of Western Jews in Sweden as a model for the Eastern Jewish immigrants (Valentin 1924: 453).

Denmark

In the decades preceding the First World War, the Danish capital became the city of arrival for several thousand Russian Jewish immigrants. While many of them were transmigrants and moved on to England and the USA, around three thousand settled permanently in Copenhagen. The history of this community has been researched, documented and narrated by two different historians: Bent Blüdnikow, in his pioneering and popular book of 1986, *Immigranter. De osteuropæiske jøder i København 1905–1920* ('Immigrants: The Eastern European Jews in Copenhagen, 1905–20') which focuses on the peak of Jewish immigration before the First World War, while Morten Thing in his voluminous cultural history, published in 2008, *De russiske Jøder in København 1882–1943* ('The Russian Jews in Copenhagen 1882–1943') took a broader chronological and thematic perspective.

Critical of what he regarded as the apologetic and bourgeois character of established Danish-Jewish historiography and its emphasis on the cultural contributions of eminent Danish Jews, Blüdnikow developed an historical interest in the Jewish lower classes, the Jewish poor and, in particular Jewish

immigrants from Eastern Europe (Blüdnikow 1987). He argued that the impact of Copenhagen Jewry on Danish society in the eighteenth century was probably founded more on Jewish pawnbrokers and dealers of second-hand clothes than on Jewish poets or financiers (Blüdnikow 1988: 243). His history of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Copenhagen was influenced by the same perspective: it was written as a kind of counter-history to the established narrative of Danish-Jewish history shaped by the norms of assimilation and middle-class respectability. Based on a variety of sources, including the archives of the state police and the Jewish community, and illustrated by some interviews with immigrants themselves and by many photographs from private collections, it brought to life the vanished and mostly forgotten world of immigrant working-class culture in Copenhagen which had flourished in the decade before the First World War. In its approach, it was inspired by Irving Howe's classic memorial book of 1976; *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made* and by the general interest in social history and working class culture in the 1970s and 1980s. Blüdnikow carefully reconstructed the legal and social framework conditions for the immigrants. These were determined by the state authorities and, with respect to poor relief, by the Jewish community, and became more difficult during the First World War. Still, Blüdnikow did not present the immigrants as mere victims of these circumstances, but stressed their agency and initiative by making visible their rich organisational and cultural life. In this way, he introduced the voices and perspectives of the immigrants themselves into Danish-Jewish historiography and tried to portray the immigrant 'ghetto' of Copenhagen as an important site of Jewish history and of socialist working-class culture. Being a descendant of an immigrant family himself, Blüdnikow tried to convey a view from the inside of the Eastern European Jewish milieu in Copenhagen. His book can be characterised as a mixture of academic historiography and memorial heritage literature.

While Blüdnikow's popular book had a clear message and was written with personal involvement, Morten Thing's study of the Russian Jews in the Danish capital was much more academic in character. Based on many years of meticulous research, especially a first analysis of the comprehensive source material written in Yiddish, Thing's cultural history of the Russian Jewish immigrants was clearly superior in terms of the breadth, depth and solidity of his presentation. The encyclopedic treatment of the topic in a volume of 656 large format pages, on the other hand, made it more difficult for the reader to discern a common thread of interpretation. The compartmentalisation of various subtopics, the richness of detail and the lack of an overriding narrative made the book

as much a work of reference as one of historiography. To be sure, in the introduction Thing outlined an interpretational framework by applying the sociological concepts of integration and assimilation to the history of the Russian Jewish immigrants and thereby distinguished three different phases: the period between 1882 and 1920 when the immigrants developed their separate cultural identity ‘with a fantastic vitality’ (Thing 2008: 22); the inter-war years when most immigrants became integrated into Danish-Jewish and thereby Danish society – a process that led from bi-culturalism to assimilation; and finally the years after the Second World War, only briefly covered in the epilogue of the book, when the assimilation process became complete and the remnants of Yiddish culture faded away. But this frame of interpretation is not systematically applied throughout the book, the second part of which deals with the reactions of Danish society to the immigrants and the development of Danish antisemitism. Thing’s *opus magnum* about the Yiddish speaking immigrants in Copenhagen has no equivalents in other Scandinavian countries and can be seen as a scholarly monument of a vanished immigrant culture whose native ground had been brutally destroyed in the Holocaust.

Norway

The first and most comprehensive academic work on the history of Jews in Norway, Oskar Mendelsohn’s *Jødenes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år* (‘The History of the Jews in Norway over 300 Years’), was published in two volumes in 1969 and 1986. Based on an intensive study and documentation of the sources, Mendelsohn’s work followed a double track: the external (legal, political and social) structural conditions of Jewish presence and life in Norway; and the development of the Jewish minority and the internal life of its communities. While Mendelsohn carefully listed all families who immigrated to Norway before 1900, including the children born in Norway up to the same year, his presentation was not really a history of Jewish immigration. It lacked the methodological tools and the analytical categories that could have extracted a meaningful historical narrative out of the enormous amount of raw material (e.g., Mendelsohn 1969: 276–306, 327–404; see Hoffmann 2013: 246–9).

In Norway, the history of Jewish immigration was first systematically researched in connection with the project of the *Norsk innvandringshistorie* (‘Norwegian History of Immigration’), developed and carried out by Knut Kjeldstadli and Jan Eivind Myhre in the years 1998–2003 (Kjeldstadli 2003, II: 278–85, 408–14; III: 27–39).

Martha Gjernes's study of 2002 on the settlement and socio-economic placement of Jewish immigrants in Christiania during the period 1851–1942, originated from this project and was the first to apply the methods of social historical research on the Jewish minority in Norway (Gjernes 2004, 2007). Having collected comprehensive information on Jewish immigrants onto a database, she applied a framework of socio-historical analysis and could thus present new findings about the scope and phases of Jewish immigration, the origins of the immigrants and their demography and social structure, their employment and position in Norwegian working life and, not least, their settlement and housing conditions in the Norwegian capital. Based on the statistical data of her study, Gjernes was able precisely to locate the Jewish immigrant community within the Norwegian labour market and thus arrived at new conclusions about their specific group behaviour and their collective strategies of integration:

[We have witnessed] how the Jewish immigrants actively responded and related to their situation in the workforce. The fact that as a group they placed themselves into a niche in the labour market also led to cohesion within the ethnic group in the economic sphere. Working independently, they established small networks, especially through families. Both the cohesion of the group and cohesion within the family can be understood as responses to the problem of gaining access to the labour market, as well as offering protection against the fluctuations there. The positive appeal of the community was equally important, as well-established Jews helped newly immigrant Jews. The independent nature of the work also allowed for a greater degree of autonomy. This kind of ethnic concentration around a segment of the labour market did not, however, lead to isolation. The Jewish network aided many in landing on their feet in the labour market, which was necessary in getting a standing in society at large. (Gjernes 2007: 141; translated by the author)

Gjernes painted a picture in which a minority – because of its specific vocational structure, focused around trade – was highly visible in Norwegian society. Considering the hostility of the external society, especially towards the peddling of goods, the internal network and the internal cohesion of the community were important in establishing an economic footing, as well as for survival. A strategy of assimilation – that is, of being completely absorbed by Norwegian society – was not a possibility in this context. The Jews in Norway wanted to preserve their Jewish identity, while at the same time having to take into consideration the reservations of the majority society, and therefore adopted a

strategy of 'careful integration' into Norwegian society. Similar to the integration of Eastern Jewish immigrants in Sweden analysed by Bredefeldt, Jews in Norway integrated by climbing the social ladder, as well as by means of education and through the acquisition of bourgeois values. Their new identity as 'successful Norwegian Jews' was to replace the stigmatised image of the peddler of goods. At the same time, through mutual assistance and internal policing, the Jewish community attempted to avoid offending the majority culture, and in this way to come to terms with antisemitic accusations.

Gjernes's social history of Jewish immigration to Oslo can be seen as a narrative of integration in two different ways: firstly because of its focus on the immigrants' integration into Norwegian working life; secondly because of its attempt to integrate the history of the Jewish minority into Norwegian national history, or more precisely, into Norwegian labour and immigration history. The thematic concentration on the working life and the use of quantitative methods of social history conveyed a new picture of the Jewish minority and made it more similar (and comparable) to other social and ethnic immigrant groups in Norway. As a result, the perspective of Jewish historiography in Norway became broader: it not only saw the history of the Norwegian Jews under the shadow of 1942 (which saw the deportation and murder of over one third of the Jews in Norway), but also emphasised the 'normality' of Jewish life before the Holocaust – as immigrants and as an ethnic-religious minority within Norwegian society.

In a recent article, Vibeke Kieding Banik supplemented Gjernes's social history of Jewish immigration and integration in Norway with a special study of the participation of Jewish women in the labour market and its significance for the integration of Jews in Norway (Banik 2015). Analysing not only official census data, including the special questionnaire for Jews issued by the Nazi government in 1942, but also biographical sources and interviews, she produced more nuanced results and concluded that Jewish women in Oslo were well integrated into the labour market; their (full-time) employment rate was similar to that of their non-Jewish peers of the same social class (nearly one third in 1910, and as high as 40 per cent in 1942). While most women in the labour market were unmarried, also married women, mostly categorised as homemakers, were economically active as entrepreneurs, in family enterprises or as breadwinning wives, securing additional income. Female participation in the labour market increased with the second generation of immigrant Jews that had grown up in Norway. Banik explained this development mainly by pointing to the economic conditions in Norwegian society:

Women worked mainly because their family needed their income, and Oslo was an expanding city where retailers and retail workers were in demand. Once an informal network of Jewish retailers was established, the next generation could rely on relatives and acquaintances for training and work if means of income in other places failed. (Banik 2015: 197)

Banik's results differed considerably from those of Bredefeldt's study on the gender aspects of Jewish social mobility in Stockholm (Bredefeldt 2008: 83–116). In contrast to Banik, Bredefeldt had found a decline in female participation in the labour market and explained it by a common strategy of advancement, a kind of 'gender contract' attributing the sphere of labour to the man and the domestic sphere of education and the preservation of the religious-cultural tradition to the woman (*ibid.* 114). Unfortunately, Banik, despite the comparative perspective of her article, did not take Bredefeldt's relevant findings into consideration, let alone discuss possible explanations for the different developments in Norway and Sweden.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this historiographical overview may be summarised as follows. Scholarly interest in the history of Eastern Jewish immigration to Western Europe gained momentum only in the 1980s. It was invoked and influenced by general changes and innovations in the study of history, above all the rise of ethnic and cultural studies in the United States and of social history in Europe. Both established class, gender and ethnicity as central categories of historical analysis. From the perspective of national historiography, the history of Jewish immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was seen as an early example of contemporary, colonial or guest-worker immigration and was studied in order to explore general patterns of state and majority responses to newcomers, and of minority integration into majority society. From the perspective of Jewish historiography, the focus on Jewish experiences of immigration to the United States or Europe indicated a reappraisal of the history of the diaspora. Vis-à-vis the Zionist catchphrase of 'assimilation as Jewish self-denial', the sociological concepts of acculturation, identity, subculture and, later, diaspora, allowed for a more accurate and nuanced description of the processes of incorporation and Jewish self-assertion. At the same time, the apologetically motivated 'blind spots' of previous Jewish historiography, glossing over internal conflicts and the discrimination of Eastern European newcomers, were gradually confronted by independent research. With the emergence of cultural

history at the end of the twentieth century, the historical Jewish minority in Europe, and, in particular the German Jews, could be seen as 'models of hybridised identity, and as guides to a specifically modern diasporic existence' (Moyn 1996: 308).

Also in the Scandinavian countries the study of Jewish history has been enriched by the perspectives of migration research and multi-ethnic history. The scholarly interest in Jewish migration history developed first in Sweden during the 1980s, as part of a new multicultural understanding of national history and the institutionalisation of multi-ethnic studies at the University of Uppsala. In Denmark and Norway, by contrast, research in Jewish migration history came rather late, was not institutionalised at a university and thus more dependent on the personal initiative of individual scholars.

The dominant approach of Jewish immigration history in Scandinavia, most clearly seen in Swedish and Norwegian historiography, was shaped by the conceptual framework of social history and ethnic relations. It aimed at exploring both – the reactions of the state and of majority society toward the newcomers, and the history of the Jewish immigrant minority, its specific strategies of integration and forms of identity, in comparison with other minority groups. Methodologically anchored in demography and sociology, informed by the concepts of migration studies and based on the rich source material that allowed for statistical analysis on a micro-level, these approaches largely focused on the role of the Jewish immigrants (men as well as women) within the labour market, their settlement and housing conditions and their social mobility. The Jewish minority was researched with the same analytical tools taken from the social sciences as other social groups and was thereby integrated into general historiography. The relationship between Jews and non-Jews in these studies was often interpreted as based in social conditions. Conflicts between majority and minority that had found its expression in rising anti-Jewish hostility or discrimination were largely attributed to social causes; for instance economic recession or rivalry. In the same way, the internal Jewish conflicts between an assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie and poor Eastern Jewish immigrant workers were explained by the class difference and the perceived loss of status for the established Jews, whereas religious and cultural differences were only considered to be of secondary significance. On the other hand, the long-term function of established Jewry as a kind of sluice of integration for the newcomers was emphasised, in particular by Bredefeldt.

An alternative approach could be found in the historiography of the Russian Jews in Copenhagen. To be sure, Blüdnikow and Thing, regardless of their differences, also researched the external political and societal framework conditions

of the immigrants and outlined processes of integration and assimilation, but the main emphasis was clearly on the social and cultural life of the immigrants themselves. The vitality of Yiddish immigrant culture in the Danish capital was reconstructed with a loving care for details, especially by Thing. The immigrants were here not presented as passive victims of trying circumstances, but portrayed in their historical agency and with their, often polyphonic, original voices and pluralistic identities. Since Yiddish culture today has almost completely disappeared – wiped out in Eastern Europe by the destruction of Jewish life during the Holocaust and vanished in the West as a consequence of assimilation – these histories aimed at preserving its legacy for posterity.

The different approaches towards the study of Jewish immigration history identified in this overview can be attributed to different disciplinary traditions (social history vs. cultural history), different views of Jewish history in general (external vs. internal perspectives) and not least to the simple fact that Yiddish immigrant culture in Copenhagen was more significant and has left richer source material than that in Stockholm or Oslo. The clear dominance of the social history approach in Scandinavia can be largely explained by the strong position of economic and social history in general historiography. But it may also reflect a lack of knowledge of the Yiddish language and of familiarity with Jewish culture in general among Scandinavian historians of migration, which makes them shy away from religious or cultural topics. In order to further develop this fascinating field of research, it therefore seems necessary to combine the external and the internal perspectives of Jewish migration and explore their interconnectedness in greater detail.

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Moses

Freud's ultimate project

RISTO OLAVI NURMELA

M*oses and Monotheism* was the last work of Sigmund Freud, known as the founder of psychoanalysis. It is not a study of psychoanalytical issues, but mainly a study of the biblical figure Moses, albeit with psychoanalytical applications. Freud attempted to prove that Moses' original monotheistic religion, which he, an Egyptian, gave to the Israelites, was one without sacrifices and priests, whereas the Israelite religion known from the Bible was not even strictly monotheistic. Moses' religion, according to Freud, was the religion of Ikhnaton, the similarity of which to Israelite religion Freud was in fact among the first to realize. The religion of Moses, which Freud thought he was able to reconstruct, was in my view actually Judaism, which later developed from Israelite religion. Freud was a stern atheist, but nevertheless also an uncompromising Jew, who never thought atheism would exclude Jewishness. As such he stands as a fine example of Judaism being something more and other than religion and ethnicity. Freud worked on *Moses and Monotheism* during his five last years. What apparently motivated him was Hitler's rise to power in Germany, which presented a threat to Freud personally as well as to his life's work, since the Nazis outlawed psychoanalysis. This threat became a reality when Germany occupied Austria in 1938. Freud fled to London where he finished *Moses and Monotheism*, published only months before his death in September 1939. In this work Freud's appreciation of Judaism finds a remarkable expression.

Presenting and developing psychoanalysis by means of various approaches in his numerous writings, Sigmund Freud also found that it could make contributions in other fields such as the arts or anthropology. *Totem and Taboo* was such a work, the results of which, to be sure, have not survived critical scrutiny. *Totem and Taboo* also purports to offer an explanation of the emergence of religion, a very sensitive topic for Freud. He was known as an atheist, which nevertheless in no way diminished his commitment to Judaism or, more properly, Jewishness. In a self-presentation written in 1925 he says: 'My parents were Jews and I, too, have remained a Jew' (Freud 1948b: 34). By 1900 the Viennese Jews had the world's highest conversion rate and one-quarter of the Jews of Vienna who left Judaism declared themselves to be without religion (Berkley 1988: 54). Freud was, in fact, an outstanding example of how Judaism cannot be

labelled simply as a religion: faith in God is not prerequisite for being a Jew in another sense than ethnically.

Freud's clearest exposition of his atheism was *The Future of an Illusion*, written in 1927 (Freud 1948b: 325–380), in which he vehemently declared religion to be worthless. Nevertheless, in a postscript to the self-presentation quoted above, added in 1931, he wrote: 'In "The Future of an Illusion" I esteemed religion mainly negatively; later I found the formula which accords it more justice: its power depends certainly on its truth content, but this truth is not a material but a historical one' (Freud 1950: 33).

One is left wondering what Freud meant by 'historical truth'. The answer to this question is given in the conclusion of *Moses and Monotheism*: 'I too should credit the believer's solution with containing the truth; it is not, however, the material truth, but an historical truth. ... I do not believe that one supreme great God "exists" to-day, but I believe that in primæval times there was one person who must appear gigantic and who, raised to the status of a deity, returned to the memory of men' (Freud 2010: 204).

As for this insight, Freud referred to *Totem and Taboo*, published in 1912. The religious phenomena are 'to be understood only on the model of the neurotic symptoms of the individual, which are so familiar to us, as a return of long forgotten important happenings in the primæval history of the human family, that they owe their obsessive character to that very origin and therefore derive their effect on mankind from the historical truth they contain' (Freud 2010: 94).

In a letter to Max Eitington Freud wrote that *Moses and Monotheism* differed from *The Future of an Illusion* in admitting that religion was not merely illusion but also had 'an historical kernel of truth, which explains its great effectiveness' (Freud and Eitington 2004: 883).

More astonishing, when *The Future of an Illusion* still was being printed, Freud wrote to Sándor Ferenczi that he found the book 'childish'; '...fundamentally I think differently, consider this work analytically feeble and insufficient as a self-confession' (Freud and Ferenczi 2005: 164), and to Eitington: '... the analytical content of the work is very tiny and it is otherwise, too, of little esteem' (Freud and Eitington 2001: 562). Moreover, in a letter to Oskar Pfister, a psychoanalyst who was a minister in the Swiss Reformed Church, Freud says that the views he has presented in the writing do not constitute any element of the doctrinal system of psychoanalysis (Freud and Pfister 1963: 126). When working on it he once remarked to Eitington: 'It nevertheless remains to consider whether the analysis [viz. psychoanalysis] *by itself*' [Freud's emphasis] really must result in giving up religion' (Freud and Eitington 2004: 519).

An interesting detail is that in 1928 the printing of a Russian translation was blocked by the censor in the Soviet Union (*ibid.* 606).

As for Jewishness, Freud asked in a 1925 article entitled 'On the resistance against psychoanalysis' whether the fact that he was a Jew who never wished to conceal his Jewishness had contributed to the hostility shown towards psychoanalysis. He concluded: 'Maybe it is not a mere coincidence that the first representative of psychoanalysis was a Jew. To confess one's faith in it a good deal of readiness to bear the fate of loneliness in the opposition was demanded, a fate which the Jew is more familiar with than someone else' (Freud 1948b: 110).

In a preface to the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo* (1930) Freud describes himself as one who does not understand 'the holy language', who is totally alienated from his paternal religion – as well as all other religions – who cannot share nationalist ideals, and nonetheless has never denied being a member of his people, has experienced his peculiarity as Jewish and does not wish to have it any other way.

If you asked him: 'What is still Jewish with you after having abandoned all these similarities with your compatriots?' he would answer: 'Still quite a lot, probably the most important thing.' But this essential he would presently not be able to express in clear words. It will surely be accessible to scholarly insight sometime later. (Freud 1948b: 569)

In a letter to the Committee of the Yiddish Scientific Institute of London Freud wrote, two days after his removal to London in 1938, 'You no doubt know that I gladly and proudly acknowledge my Jewishness though my attitude towards any religion, including ours, is critically negative' (Jones 1957: 253).

Moses and Monotheism was Freud's last piece of work. It turned out to be a prolonged project; Ernest Jones said that 'his ideas on Moses and religion ... were to engross him for the rest of his life'; 'he kept reading all the books he could find on Jewish history' (Jones 1957: 206, 210). In a letter to Eitington of 1935 Freud says that 'Moses' has become a 'fixation' for him (Freud and Eitington 2004: 889, Freud's quotation marks). The first mention of the project is in a letter to Arnold Zweig of September 30, 1934 (Freud and Zweig 1968: 102), whereas in a letter to Pfister of March 27, 1937 he says he has completed it (Freud and Pfister 1963: 157). Some weeks before the letter to Pfister, however he tells Eitington that he has completed 'a fragment which could be detached from the Moses-study' (Freud and Eitington 2004: 895). According to Jones, Freud 'conceived, and for the most part wrote, his ideas on Moses and religion' in 1934 (Jones 1957: 205–6). He was, however, reluctant to publish it,

and decided to publish ‘independently’ two parts of the book in issues 1 and 4 of the periodical *Imago* in 1937 (Freud 2010: 164). The concluding part, he declares in a preface written before the German annexation of Austria, he had decided to leave unpublished for the moment. He foresaw the ominous possibility of the institution of a Nazi regime in Austria, which would have meant the prohibition of psychoanalysis, as was the case in Germany (Cocks 1997: 58–71). Freud thought that the Catholic Church was a bulwark against this threat, and as he moreover found that the contents of the remaining part would be offensive to the church, he decided to postpone publication ‘until the time comes when it may safely venture into the light of day’ (Freud 2010: 91–2). This era arrived very soon, albeit not in the blissful form hoped for by Freud. After the *Anschluss* he could establish, in a second preface, that the protection offered by the Catholic Church turned out to be ‘but a broken reed.’ Freud fled to England, where he ‘may again speak and write – I almost said “think” – as I want or have to.’ And now he dared to publish the conclusion of the project (Freud 2010: 93).

However, Freud also gives a somewhat different explanation for his unwillingness to publish the conclusion. In the letter to Zweig he wrote that the politics of Austria were under the control of a certain Pater Schmidt, who was an intimate of the Pope and ‘unfortunately himself an ethnologist and scholar of religion’; a person who made no secret of how he detested psychoanalysis and particularly Freud’s totem theory. According to Freud, Schmidt lay behind the abolition of the journal *Rivista italiana di Psicoanalisi* in Italy, and he was sure that his publications would not remain undetected by him. This could lead to the abolition of psychoanalysis in Vienna (Freud and Zweig 1968: 102–3). Thus Freud feared that the Catholic Church would not only fail to protect psychoanalysis but would itself put an end to it. On the other hand, he apparently did not consider the viewpoints contained in *Moses and Monotheism* to be doctrinal elements of the system of psychoanalysis, as was not the case with *The Future of an Illusion*. In fact, in a letter to his son Ernst he named it his ‘first performance as a historian, late enough!’ (Freud 1960: 433)

The fact that Freud conceived and mainly wrote *Moses and Monotheism* in 1934 is significant, since Hitler had come to power in the previous year. Yosef Chayim Yerushalmi writes: ‘For Freud, as for many others, the shock of the anti-Jewish barbarism brought the question of what it means to be a Jew to a new pitch of existential urgency, and there can be no doubt that it was this that provided the immediate impulse to the actual writing of *Moses and Monotheism*’ (Yerushalmi 1991: 15, cf. 76). Freud also wrote to Zweig: ‘In the face of the new persecutions one again asks himself how the Jew emerged and why he incurred

this immortal hate' (Freud and Zweig 1968: 102). In the preface dated earlier March 1938 – and thus written before the *Reichskristallnacht* – he characterized the Nazi regime as an 'all but prehistoric barbarism' (Freud 2010: 90). He also seems to have considered the Nazi regime as a personal threat from the very beginning; in a letter to Ferenczi of April 2, 1933 he wrote concerning the appeal to flee from Austria: 'If they strike you dead, it is a manner of dying like anything else' (Freud and Ferenczi 2005: 303). It seems that Freud's response to the rise of National Socialism was an intensified interest in Judaism, the most prominent expression of which came to be *Moses and Monotheism*.

There was, however, also a more personal matter, which chronologically approximately coincided with Hitler's accession to power. In 1923 Freud was struck down with jaw cancer and underwent two major operations (Jones 1957: 99–100). In 1926 he wrote to Henry Havelock Ellis: '... a recrudescence is after nearly three years deemed unlikely. I may have to expect some other exit from this life' (Freud 1960: 368). However, in 1931 recrudescence did take place (Freud and Zweig 1968: 39; Jones 1957: 167). In a letter of 1931 to Eitington Freud said that he expected death perhaps even within a couple of months (Freud and Eitington 2004: 252–3). Interestingly enough, *The Future of an Illusion* was thus written at the beginning of a period when there was hope of recovery. So within two years two serious threats to Freud's personal existence had entered or re-entered the stage; one concerning his existence as a Jewish citizen, another intimating the possibility of his imminent decease. These were two main constituents of the final period of his life, during which *Moses and Monotheism* took shape.

Nevertheless, Freud's interest in the Moses dates back to an earlier time. The 1914 essay 'The Moses of Michelangelo' can be seen to be a forerunner of his final work. Freud was a lover of Rome, where the Michelangelo's *Moses* is housed in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli. Many think that Michelangelo depicts Moses in the moment of realizing that the Israelites had manufactured the golden calf while he stayed on the mountain and received the tablets of the law, which he subsequently crushed at the foot of the mountain in his fury over the apostasy. Freud, however, believed that Michelangelo had depicted a Moses who has just overcome his impulse to crush the tablets (Freud 1949: 178, 198). His pondering on Moses gives him the occasion for a veritable study of the Bible, which he opens as follows: 'The passage of the Holy Scripture, in which Moses' behaviour at the scene of the golden calf is reported, reads as follows (I apologize for my anachronistic use of the translation of Luther)'... He quotes chapter 32 of Exodus, verses 7–11, 14–20 and 30–5, thereby highlighting the findings of modern biblical criticism – without, however, referring to any work



Michelangelo's Moses in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli. Photo by Luca Volpi, 2010, CC-BY-SA-3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

– which prove that the text has been clumsily composed out of several sources (Freud 1949: 195–6).

Jones and Yerushalmi mention an inclination on the part of Freud to identify himself with Moses (Jones 1957: 394; Yerushalmi 1991: 60).

He also refers in *Moses and Monotheism* to modern exegesis, referring in the first place to an exegetical study by Ernst Sellin (Freud 2010: 59), *Mose und seine Bedeutung für die israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte* (1922). In the abovementioned second preface to the third part he says that his reading of this study was decisive: without it *Moses and Monotheism* would not have been written (Freud 2010: 95).

Sellin's thesis, so decisive for Freud, was that Moses was in fact killed by the Israelites in the desert. Sellin draws this conclusion on the basis of his study of Numbers 25 (connected to a scrutiny of Hosea 5:1), which tells of how Aaron's grandson Phineas strikes dead the chief Zimri, who has brought a Midianite woman to the Israelite camp. 'Who else than Moses possessed a Midianite wife?' Sellin asks. Zimri acts thus as a stand-in for Moses in the Biblical narrative, according to Sellin. It was in fact Moses who was stuck dead by a compatriot (Sellin 1922: 46). Given Freud's theory of the clan father being murdered by his sons (Freud 1948a: 171), one may ask if he actually could have failed to write *Moses and Monotheism*, having been acquainted with a theory such as Sellin's, which he must have experienced as a more or less explicit invitation to make an application of his theory to Judaism.

There is a rumour that Sellin later abandoned his thesis, and Freud was indeed even informed about this by Abraham Shalom Yahuda in 1938. Freud answered: 'It might be true all the same.' Jones carried out investigations into the matter, but found no evidence. The rumour might, according to Jones, have emerged when Sellin at one time, 'hard pressed in private talk, was willing to admit that he might have been mistaken in his interpretation of the passage in Hosea which had been the starting-point of his theory' (Jones 1957: 400–1).

In his letters Freud makes comments on his work in progress. In 1937 he writes to an unknown recipient: 'I was astonished to establish that already the first, so to say embryonic experience of the people, the influence of the man Moses and the Exodus from Egypt, determined all further development until the present day – just like a real trauma of early infancy in the history of the neurotic individual' (Freud 1960: 431–2).

Finally he wrote to Charles Singer as the English edition of the book was being printed in 1938: 'It contains a study based on psychoanalytical assumptions concerning the origins of religion and especially the Jewish monotheism, and forms essentially a continuation and completion of another writing, which

I published twenty-five years ago under the title “Totem and Taboo.” An old man cannot think of anything new; there remains nothing else for him than to repeat himself’ (Freud 1960: 445).

As to negative responses from the Catholic Church which Freud feared, it appears as if it was rather Jews who were against the publication. ‘Jewry will feel very offended’, he wrote to his son Ernst in January 1938, obviously concerning the two first parts, or one of them – unless he was referring to the manuscript of the third one, which I find unlikely, for he wrote that he had sent the treatise to him (Freud 1960: 433). In 1934 he had already expressed such a fear to Eitington: the Jews would take offence at the idea that Moses was an Egyptian (Freud and Eitington 2004: 881). In 1938 Freud indeed received appeals from Jews – ‘a young American Jew’ and Professor Yahuda – not to publish his treatise (Jones 1957: 250). In a letter of August 19, 1939 he referred to ‘the active opposition which my book *Moses and Monotheism* evoked in Jewish circles’ (*ibid.* 254).

It is, in fact, easy to imagine that the resistance to *Moses and Monotheism* would come from Jewish circles rather than the Catholic Church or other Christian denominations, as its main target was Moses. To be sure, Freud also wanted to investigate the origins of religion on the whole, but the centrality of a figure like Moses within Judaism must nevertheless have been apt to make Jewish readers more sensitive than Christians, for whom Moses is no unquestionable authority, but rather overshadowed by Jesus Christ. Moreover, the fact that the treatise was published when antisemitism was gaining support due to national socialist influence makes it less probable that the Christian clergy would have rejected Freud’s ideas about Moses especially vehemently. On the other hand, it might have increased Jewish opposition, as the questioning of Moses could be experienced as another attack in addition to those coming from the Nazis.

When Freud eventually, after his removal to London in 1938, made up his mind to rework and publish the concluding part, he wrote that what might give offence and was dangerous was ‘the application of my theory to the genesis of monotheism and my interpretation of religion’ (Freud 2010: 164).

Moses an Egyptian

The first part of *Moses and Monotheism* is entitled ‘Moses an Egyptian’. It opens: ‘To deny a people the man whom it praises as the greatest of its sons is not a deed to be undertaken light-heartedly – especially by one belonging

to that people. No consideration, however, will move me to set aside truth in favour of supposed national interests' (Freud 2010: 11).

Freud thus immediately addresses the ambivalence connected with the task he has taken on. While Hitler's rise to power made him more preoccupied with Judaism than hitherto, this preoccupation meant on the other hand that he directed his criticism of religion more specifically against Judaism.

Freud leaves the question open as to whether Moses really existed, but states that 'the great majority of historians have expressed the opinion that Moses did live and that the Exodus from Egypt, led by him, did in fact take place' (Freud 2010: 11). He makes no reference to any historian, and this statement is indeed very peculiar, at least seen from a modern exegetical perspective. For biblical scholars Moses is a pre-historical figure and thus not one who can be dealt with by historians. Scholarship can only be concerned with questions pertaining to traditions referring to Moses and must relinquish aspirations to establish any historical-biographical facts about Moses as an individual.

Freud then goes on to deal with Moses' nationality, suggesting that he was in fact an Egyptian. He corroborates this with an analysis of the name Moshe, which he, referring to James H. Breasted (1934: 350), thinks is undeniably Egyptian. While admitting that a person's name does not provide a secure conclusion about that person's nationality, he wonders why no historian has suggested that Moses was an Egyptian. 'What hindered them from doing so can only be guessed at. Perhaps the awe of Biblical tradition was insuperable.' If the question of Moses' nationality was deemed important, presenting additional material in order to answer it was welcome. This was the task of his essay; that is to say, the first part of *Moses and Monotheism*. The contribution it brought was, according to Freud, an application of psychoanalysis (Freud 2010: 13–15).

Freud investigates the biblical story of Moses' birth and how he was abandoned by his Hebrew biological parents and rescued by the princess who brought him up as her son. He states that in tales of this kind the first family of the child, which abandons it, is a fictive one, and concludes that the Hebrew family must have been fictive, whereas the royal family is the real one. Moses was thus in fact an Egyptian, probably a noble one (Freud 2010: 22).

These arguments might not appear to be very substantial. In fact, Freud himself did not find them wholly convincing, either:

The objection is likely to be that the circumstances of the origin and transformation of legends are too obscure to allow of such a conclusion as the preceding one, and that all efforts to extract the kernel of historical truth must be doomed to failure in face of the incoherence and contradictions

clustering around the heroic person of Moses and the unmistakable signs of tendentious distortion and stratification accumulated through many centuries. I myself do not share this negative attitude, but I am not in a position to confute it. (Freud 2010: 23–4)

If one could take the supposition seriously that Moses was an Egyptian one could, according to Freud, understand the possible motivation of the Mosaic traditions and moreover gain considerable insights about the emergence of monotheistic religions in general. At least one other fixed point is needed. An objective proof of which period Moses lived in would suffice, but Freud claims to have been unable to find any, and thinks it therefore ‘better to suppress any interferences that might follow our view that Moses was an Egyptian’ (Freud 2010: 24–5).

This is how the first part, originally a freestanding essay in the *Imago*, concludes. It appears as if Freud had opened an investigation in hope of gaining new insights, realized that he was unable to corroborate his theories, which normally would have resulted in giving up publication, but nevertheless submitted the report of his fruitless efforts. As he indeed had characterized the project as his ‘first performance as a historian, late enough!’ one asks why he was willing to jeopardize his scholarly reputation in this way. The idea that Moses was an Egyptian obviously appeared irresistible enough to him to motivate the effort to enter the field of history, in spite of an apparent lack of evidence.

If Moses was an Egyptian

In the same year, 1937, Freud nevertheless took up the thread in a second *Imago* essay, entitled ‘If Moses was an Egyptian’. He describes his inner struggle in confronting the lack of evidence: ‘The more significant the possibilities thus discerned the more cautious is one about exposing them to the critical attack of the outside world without any secure foundation – like an iron monument with feet of clay.’ He also comments: ‘And, lastly, it is not attractive to be classed with the scholastics and talmudists who are satisfied to exercise their ingenuity – unconcerned how far removed their conclusions may be from the truth.’ Then, however, he frankly states: ‘Notwithstanding these misgivings, which weigh as heavily to-day as they did then, out of the conflict of my motives the decision has emerged to follow up my first essay by this contribution. But once again it is only a part of the whole, and not the most important part’ (Freud 2010: 29–30).

After these introductory remarks Freud appears simply to dismiss the problem concerning the lack of evidence for Moses having been an Egyptian, and

goes ahead with his construction based on grounds which he has just admitted to be insecure. He now points out that Moses gave the people the religion of which he became a leader, one which to this day is called Mosaic. As he was an Egyptian, this religion must be an Egyptian one. The problem is, however, that the Mosaic religion is 'a grandiosely rigid monotheism', whereas the Egyptian displayed 'a bewildering mass of deities of differing importance and provenance'. Freud made out an additional difference between the Israelite and Egyptian religions: no other people of antiquity had done so much to deny death as had the Egyptians, whereas 'the early Jewish religion ... had entirely relinquished immortality; the possibility of an existence after death was never mentioned in any place' (Freud 2010: 30–4).

Freud was right in mentioning the absence of a belief in an afterlife in Israelite religion, although it should be pointed out that it is a relative absence; a belief in a continued community with God in spite of death is also hinted at in the Hebrew Bible (see Psalm 16:10–11, 49:16), and resurrection is mentioned in Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2. The two latter passages belong, to be sure, to the latest strata of the Hebrew Bible, but I doubt that by 'early Jewish religion' Freud meant pre-exilic religion, which would exclude these passages. In fact, Freud himself finds the absence of an afterlife astonishing, since according to him it can well be reconciled with a monotheistic religion (Freud 2010: 34).

Freud finds, however, a way out of the impasse created by the dissimilarity between the Egyptian and the Mosaic religions. In the nineteenth century the Pharaoh Ikhnaton (Akhenaton) had returned to our consciousness after thousands of years of oblivion, as a consequence of the excavations at Amarna. Ikhnaton proved to be a religious reformer who tried to introduce a new, monotheistic religion in Egypt – unsuccessfully, however. Theories that Israelite religion has its roots in Ikhnaton's Aton religion have exerted great influence among scholars, Freud actually being among the first to suggest a connection (Assmann 1997: 23–4). He made this connection in *Moses and Monotheism*. Originally his interest turned to Ikhnaton when in 1935 he read of Prince Tothmes being uncovered during the course of the excavations. He thought this might be Moses, which would prove that Moses was an Egyptian. In the following year he was informed that among the names of the pupils of the Re-Aten temple in Heliopolis built by Ikhnaton there were two which could only be interpreted as Moses and Aaron (Jones 1957: 211, 221). As seen, this was nevertheless insufficient to convince him that Moses could be proved to be an Egyptian, but it gave him another clue: it helped him overcome the obstacle posed by the dissimilarity of the religions. There was thus an Egyptian religion with a strong similarity to Israelite religion. Freud also notes that Ikhnaton's

religion says nothing about Osiris, the death god, or the realm of the dead (Freud 2010: 40–1). This could, however, be due to a lack of sources, and Jan Assmann (1997: 254n29) points out that he was in fact wrong, but it suited his purposes well in removing one of the obstacles to the theory that the Mosaic religion was of Egyptian origin (another being the contrast between monotheism and polytheism) – the more so as the denial of death was no logical consequence of monotheism, as was pointed out by Freud. Some pages later he declares this similarity to be the first strong argument for his thesis (Freud 2010: 43).

He concludes: ‘We venture now to draw the following conclusion: if Moses was an Egyptian and if he transmitted to the Jews his own religion then it was that of Ikhnaton, the Aton religion’ (Freud 2010: 41). He declares that this does not presuppose that Moses was a contemporary of Ikhnaton, since the Aton religion could have survived the downfall of the latter’s regime in the priestly school in On, from which it originated, even if he prefers to date the Exodus in the period immediately after Ikhnaton’s death (*ibid.* 50–2).

Freud thus retains the reservation that he has not been able to prove that Moses was an Egyptian, and also the transmission of his own religion remains a mere hypothesis. He thus openheartedly admits that his theories about a connection between the Aton religion and Israelite religion are not built on any solid basis – ‘like an iron monument with feet of clay’. This is somewhat paradoxical, since he in fact has the merit of being among the first to point out the striking parallels between the two religions, an observation which is by no means to be deemed unworthy of attention, even if no solid conclusions concerning the origins of Israelite religion can be drawn from it. Apparently Freud’s main interest was the person of Moses. He was aiming at psychoanalytical insights about religion connected with a powerful figure from the past, and observations on the proximity between these two religions did not offer any basis for such.

Freud nevertheless effects a comparison of the Aton and Israelite religions. He admits that the sources concerning the former are scarce, but also states: ‘The Mosaic religion we know only in its final form as it was fixed by Jewish priests in the time after the Exile about 800 years later’, which mirrors some degree of ignorance concerning religious and Biblical studies. He then makes the suggestion that Aton and Adonai might be connected (passing over the fact that the basic form of the latter indeed reads ‘Adon’), but himself admits: ‘probably we had better not make things so simple’ (Freud 2010: 41–2).

Freud makes a digression from the Aton religion, taking up the question of circumcision. He asserts that the Jews could only have learned the practice from

the Egyptians, and then concludes that if Moses had imposed such an obligation upon them, he was no Jew but an Egyptian (Freud 2010: 44–6). Moses is also said to have been ‘slow of speech’ and in need of a spokesman, which Freud takes as a further proof that he was an Egyptian: he could not address the Hebrews in their language (*ibid.* 53–4).

Then he goes on to refer to Eduard Meyer, who in *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (1906) postulates that Israelite religion has its origins in Qades and Midian. The Moses of this religion ‘to whom tradition could even ascribe the erection of a brazen serpent as a healing god’ differs according to Freud radically from the Egyptian ‘who disclosed to his people a religion in which all magic and sorcery were most strictly abhorred’. He concludes: ‘Our Egyptian Moses differs perhaps no less from the Midian Moses than the universal god Aton differed from the demon Jahve on his divine mountain.’ This would for the second time refute his suggestion that Moses was an Egyptian. Now he finds an unexpected solution in Sellin’s interpretation according to which the religion introduced by Moses was abandoned after he had been killed (Sellin 1922: 52). He does ‘naturally’ not consider himself in a position to decide whether Sellin’s interpretation is correct, but continues: ‘If he is right...’ Sellin’s theory ‘allows us to spin our thread further without contradicting the trustworthy results of historical research’ (Freud 2010: 55–60).

The next step in Freud’s exposition assumes that only a fraction of the Israelites had experienced slavery in Egypt; that is the Exodus group joined with related tribes somewhere between Egypt and Canaan, during which process a new religion common to both, the Jahve religion, was adopted. Then his line of thought involves the tribe of Levi. The Israelite priests were Levites, and only they were allowed to be priests. He postulates that they were a group of Egyptians who accompanied Moses when he joined the Israelites and became their leader. A good number of these people of Moses might have survived the catastrophe which befell their leader. They grew in number and fused with the people, retaining the tradition of his teaching. ‘At the time of the union with the followers of Jahve they formed an influential minority, culturally superior to the rest’ (Freud 2010: 60–3).

The Jahve religion was connected with the volcanic Mount Sinai or Horeb. Its mediators were, in Freud’s line of thinking, originally Midianite priests, but in the fusion of the two groups’ religions Moses was allowed to take their place, or the founder of the Jahve religion, the son-in-law of Jethro, was conflated with the figure of Moses. Freud suggested that some contradictory descriptions of Moses’ character as, on the one hand hot-tempered and even violent, but on the other the most patient and sweet-tempered of all men could be traced back

to the fact that 'he' was originally two different people. Another element of the Egyptian group's religion which was retained was the practice of circumcision (Freud 2010: 66–7).

The suggestion of there originally being two figures appears to have been inspired by Sellin's theory of two different traditions of Moses (Sellin 1922: 5–6). However, Freud goes one step further in postulating these two discrete figures.

Ultimately Freud states that in the 800 years between the Exodus and the fixation of the biblical text 'the religion of Jahve had followed a retrograde development that had culminated in a fusion (perhaps to the point of actual identity) with the original religion of Moses' (Freud 2010: 75). He describes the original Jahve as 'probably in no way a remarkable being. A rude, narrow-minded local god, violent and blood-thirsty...' and states: 'It is truly astonishing that in spite of all the revisions in the Biblical text so much was allowed to stand whereby we may recognize his original nature'. It is even questionable whether the Jahve religion represented a true monotheism that denied the divine nature of the other nations' divinities. However, Moses had given to some of the people another and more spiritual conception of God. This tradition remained and 'its influence reached – though only slowly, in the course of centuries – the aim that was denied to Moses himself', Freud states. 'None can doubt that it was only the idea of this other God that enabled the people of Israel to surmount all their hardships and to survive until our time.' He now returns to the Levites, who had become one with the people or the priesthood and had developed and supervised the ritual, besides caring for the holy texts. 'But was not all this sacrifice and ceremonial at bottom only magic and black art, such as the old doctrine of Moses had unconditionally condemned?' Freud asks, and declares:

There arose from the midst of the people an unending succession of men, not necessarily descended from Moses' people, but seized by the great and powerful tradition which had gradually grown in darkness, and it was these men, the prophets, who sedulously preached the old Mosaic doctrine: the Deity spurns sacrifice and ceremonial; he demands only belief and a life of truth and justice (*Maat*). The efforts of the prophets met with enduring success; the doctrines with which they re-established the old belief became the permanent content of the Jewish religion. It is honour enough for the Jewish people that it has kept alive such a tradition and produced men who lent it their voice – even if the stimulus had first come from outside, from a great stranger (Freud 2010: 80–3).

Maat, or Ma'at, was the Egyptian term for 'truth' or 'justice', and also the goddess of order. Freud notes that Ikhnaton gloried in his 'life in Maat' (Freud 2010: 96).

Freud's observations concerning the violent and bloodthirsty nature of Israelite religion, or the superior character of the prophets, are by no means unique or new, and may have been inspired by Sellin (1922: 52–4, 125). The same pertains to his questioning of the Jahve religion as true monotheism. In fact, genuine monotheism comes to expression as late as in the oracles of Second Isaiah (6th century BCE). He claims that this spiritual religion, which existed in the beginning, eventually became the dominant characteristic of the Jewish religion. The distinction Freud describes is in fact that between Israelite religion and rabbinic Judaism. Possibly he did not distinguish between them; but he had nevertheless observed the actuality of two forms of religion correctly (notwithstanding the idea of the pre-existence of Judaism in pre-historic times). On this point Freud disagrees with Sellin who concluded his book by asserting that Moses was never understood by his people and was too great for them, the word he and the prophets preached having experienced a new resurrection in the Gospel (Sellin 1922: 154–6). Sellin apparently did not recognize that rabbinic Judaism carried on the spirit of the word preached by Moses and the prophets, mirroring anti-Judaist attitudes of previous Christian theology.

The impression given of the Aton religion is indeed one of such a spiritual religion, and provided that there is a connection with the religion of Moses, one is of course tempted to imagine that the latter was of the same kind. Nevertheless, at least two obstacles remain: due to the scarcity of sources our knowledge of the Aton religion is very tentative, and its connection with Israelite monotheism remains an intriguing hypothesis. To be sure, in the concluding part of *Moses and Monotheism*, to be dealt with below, Freud points out that 'a spontaneous development to a higher spirituality during a cultural life extending over many centuries' did not lead to monotheism amongst the Greek people. In Egypt monotheism emerged as a side effect of imperialism: God mirrored the almighty Pharaoh. For the tiny Jewish people there was no reason to think that their God would rule over the world, ergo they must have taken over this idea from an external source; that is, Egypt. (Freud 2010: 105)

Freud's comment on sacrifice is also interesting, reflecting a Jewish view, advocated by, for example, Moses Maimonides in *The Guide for the Perplexed* (3:32).

It is significant that Freud ascribes circumcision to the Egyptian Moses, and thus considers it a component of his religion of truth and justice, since it is also a component of Judaism, unlike sacrifice. Provided his view that Israelite

traditions could emanate either from the Egyptian Moses or his Midianite counterpart it is clear that circumcision could only stem from the former. It is nevertheless noteworthy that Freud did not come upon the idea to dismiss it as an unspiritual tradition – an additional indication that Freud was inclined to retroject rabbinic Judaism into the earliest stages of Israelite religion.

Another reflection which can be made is that Freud seems to have put aside his critical attitude towards religion. There is no mention in the conclusion of this second essay of religious phenomena being ‘only on the model of the neurotic symptoms of the individual’. Instead, he uses words like ‘honour enough for the Jewish people’ and ‘kept alive such a tradition’ the stimulus of which came ‘from a great stranger’.

Moses, his people and monotheistic religion

In the conclusion, which Freud at first thought he would no longer be able to accomplish (Freud 2010: 85), he suggests that in the first phase of the scribal record of the Israelite religious traditions the material pertaining to Moses’ religion was deleted or altered, but preserved in an oral report. However, the oral report did not diminish as time passed, but rather found its way into later codifications of the official accounts. This is, according to Freud, not a familiar conception, but he thinks that some analogies can be found. He refers to national epics among the Greeks, but also among the Germans, Indians and Finns. Times in the remote past have a great attraction for the imagination. ‘As often as mankind is dissatisfied with its present ... it harks back to the past and hopes at last to win belief in the never-forgotten dream of a Golden Age.’ Nevertheless, religion was reproduced with a faithfulness for which the epic cannot provide a parallel, and therefore a better parallel is to be searched for, Freud concludes (*Ibid.* 110–16).

Freud then repeats what he stated in *Totem and Taboo*: that the primitive humans lived in hordes where the father took possession of all females and either slew, castrated or drove away his sons. Eventually the sons came together, slew the father and devoured him in a ritual banquet. All subsequent generations bear the reminiscence of this event in their mind (the *archaic heritage*, reminiscent of Jung’s *collective unconscious*, which Freud, however, did not find useful; Freud 2010: 157, 208), and this also plays a decisive role in the emergence of religion, as can be demonstrated by the Christian Eucharist. The Jews were particularly influenced by this primeval incident, since the slaying of Moses in the desert was strongly reminiscent of it. Then Freud declares that ‘Paul, a Roman Jew from Tarsus, seized upon this feeling of guilt and correctly traced it back

to its primæval source'. In Paul's interpretation, according to Freud, the death of Moses was expiated through the death of Christ. Through its universality Christianity reinstated one characteristic of the Aton religion, but on the other hand, Freud thinks, contrary to Sellin, it was a cultural regression compared to Judaism. 'Christian religion did not keep to the lofty heights of spirituality to which the Jewish religion had soared'. It was

...no longer strictly monotheistic, took over from the surrounding peoples numerous symbolical rites, reestablished the great Mother Goddess and found room for many deities of polytheism in an easily recognizable disguise – though in subordinate positions. Above all it was not inaccessible – as the Aton religion and the subsequent Mosaic religion had been – to the penetration of superstitions, magical and mystical elements which proved a great hindrance to the spiritual development of two following millenia.
(Freud 2010: 130–42)

Freud draws a parallel between this regression and the downfall of the Aton religion (Freud 2010: 214).

In this context Freud also addresses antisemitism. He lists some deeper motives which come from the unconscious of the nations: the jealousy evoked by the Jews in claiming to be the first-born, favourite child of God; circumcision, which reminds people of the dreaded castration; and, finally, the people excelling in antisemitism became themselves Christians relatively late. 'They have not yet overcome their grudge against the new religion which was forced on them, and they have projected it on to the source from which Christianity came to them. ... The hatred for Judaism is at bottom hatred for Christianity, and it is not surprising that in the German National-Socialist revolution this close connection of the two monotheistic religions finds such clear expression in the hostile treatment of both' (Freud 2010: 147–8).

Among these motives of antisemitism two are thus religious, and the third one is also connected to a religious rite, one which in Freud's view was instigated by Moses. The Nazi antisemitism of his day was, however, founded on outspokenly non-religious ideas. Hitler criticized the Christian social party founded by Karl Lueger for not building its antisemitism on racial but on religious grounds (Hitler 1941: 130–1). Freud seems to have linked Jewishness with Judaism as religion, thus addressing rather anti-Judaism than antisemitism (to be sure, this distinction remains rather vague).

In the section 'The Progress in Spirituality' Freud deals with some elements of Judaism. As to the prohibition of images in Israelite religion, he thinks that

Moses had not taken this over from the Aton religion. Rather, he surpassed it in his 'strictness'. He thinks this commandment has more significance than is at first obvious. 'If this prohibition was accepted, however, it was bound to exercise a profound influence. For it signified subordinating sense perception to an abstract idea; it was a triumph of spirituality over the senses; more precisely an instinctual renunciation accompanied by its psychologically necessary consequences' (Freud 2010: 178–9).

This commandment raised God to a higher level of spirituality. The dematerializing of God resulted in the Jews appreciating their literature. Immediately after the destruction of the temple Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai demanded permission to establish a Torah school in Yavne. 'From now on it was the Holy Book, and the study of it, that kept the scattered people together.' The preference given by the Jews to spiritual endeavour 'has helped to build a dyke against brutality and the inclination to violence which are usually found where athletic development becomes the ideal of the people' (Freud 2010: 181–2). Hereby Freud explicitly connects rabbinic Judaism with a reconstruction of (the Egyptian) Moses' religion.

One asks what in the content of this piece actually was offensive, so that Freud felt he had to hold back his study for years, and which caused so many to ask him not to publish it? He said it was the application of his findings to the genesis of monotheism and his interpretation of religion. The substance of this application was that the slaying of Moses had a strong influence on the subsequent generations of Jews because of its reminiscence of a primeval incident of parricide committed by the primitive brotherhood as postulated in *Totem and Taboo*, and that this circumstance also played a decisive role in the emergence of Christianity. This means that no god was needed for the constitution of the Christian faith, since we are dealing with an inner-psychical procedure, albeit a collective one. Nevertheless, in the section 'The Truth of Religion', Freud writes: 'I can only regret it if certain experiences of life and observations of nature have made it impossible for me* to accept the hypothesis of such a Supreme Being. As if the world had not enough problems, we are confronted with the task of finding out how those who have faith in a Divine Being could have acquired

* Omitted in Katherine Jones' translation. Freud writes in the first person plural ('We can only regret...', '...have made it impossible for us to accept...') Freud 1950: 231). It is obvious that Freud refers to himself ('certain experiences of life'), and the sequel of the quotation shows that he did not think it had become generally impossible to believe.

it, and whence this belief derives the enormous power that enables it to overwhelm Reason and Science' (Freud 2010: 194).

There is a significant contrast between the third part of *Moses and Monotheism* and the two first. The third part involves extensive sections on psychoanalysis with no explicit connection to Moses or Judaism. There is a remarkable lack of coherence, whereas the two first still bear the mark of the brilliant Freud. He says that he had reworked it after his resettlement in London which took place in June 1938 (Freud 2010: 164–5). He died in September 1939. In February 1939 his doctors established a recurrence of cancer which they deemed inaccessible so that no further operation could be performed (Jones 1957: 256–7; Freud and Zweig 1968: 186; Freud and Eitington 2004: 920–1). The reworking was apparently not very successful; it looks as if Freud was no longer in possession of the capacity required for writing at the qualitative level of the first instalments.

There is an apparent tendency in *Moses and Monotheism* to connect rabbinic Judaism with the alleged religion of Moses, which was thought to have been suppressed by inferior tendencies, but nevertheless in the course of centuries, to have survived and eventually in its turn suppressed these inferior tendencies, i.e. the Jahve religion. This thesis cannot be proved, as nothing is known about Moses as a historical person, but Freud's high esteem of rabbinic Judaism remains the essence of his ultimate legacy, *Moses and Monotheism*.

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May He Speedily Come

The role of the Messiah in Haredi and Hardal Judaism

MIA ANDERSSÉN-LÖF

This article studies the understanding of redemption in general, and in particular the role of the Messiah in redemption as it is expressed by representatives of two Jewish perspectives: the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) and the Hardal (nationalist ultra-Orthodox). Although both perspectives see the shift from exile to redemption as an event which is brought about by God, both also see ways to accelerate or decelerate that event. Both have developed a strategy according to their respective interpretations of how the shift from exile to redemption will appear. To the Haredim, the solution calls for the Jewish people to repent, live piously and wait for the Messiah to emerge; to the Hardalim, the solution calls for the Jewish people to abandon the passive approach and engage in the process of redemption, which has already begun even though the Messiah delays. Hence, both present a strategy for expediting the End, and can thus be considered messianic.

This article compares the understanding of the role of the Messiah in redemption in two contemporary perspectives of Judaism; Haredi and Hardal, in this article represented by the True Torah Jews Against Zionism and Neturei Karta on one hand, and by R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook and the Temple Institute on the other. Briefly put, for the Haredim, redemption will begin with an impetus from the Messiah; for the Hardalim, advances in the process of redemption are the spark that will bring about the Messiah. Although both perspectives see the shift from exile to redemption as an event brought about by God, both perspectives also see ways to accelerate or decelerate that event.

One may, perhaps, formulate the question which produced this division of minds more pointedly. It would then be: Can man master his own future?¹ (Scholem 1971: 14–15)

- 1 Gershom Scholem (1971: 14–15) views the development of two kinds of messianisms; one which ‘corresponds to and originates from the ... conception of the essential lack of relation between human history and the redemption’, and another in which ‘utopianism becomes the lever by which to establish the Messianic kingdom’.

The discrepancy between the two perspectives is visible in their conceptions of how to influence the shift from exile to redemption. The form of Haredi Judaism represented in this article sees the Messiah as a *sine qua non* of redemption, and furthermore perceives redemption and exile as two conditions exclusive of each other. Consequently, since the Messiah has not emerged (candidates can be tested against unambiguous criteria), the time of redemption has not yet come, and, it follows, the Jewish people are still in exile. During exile, a spirit of repentance is held to be an ideal, which is why an attitude of passivity has come to dominate many aspects of life (Ravitzky 1993: 13–22).

But it is impossible, for most of them, to pass through apocalyptic events such as the Holocaust, or to experience the end of exile and the reestablishment of Israel as a sovereign commonwealth, without the stirring of messianic chords in their souls (Werblowsky 2005: 5978).

The Hardal (an acronym for *Haredi dati leumi*, or nationalist ultra-Orthodox), is a subcategory of religious Zionism. To the Hardalim represented in this article, the unfolding of history, particularly the dramatic events of the twentieth century – with the highest points being the establishment of the State of Israel and the military triumphs of the Six Day War – reveals that God is now restoring his people. Exile has ended and redemption has begun. The regulations of life in exile no longer apply. Instead, this perspective sees it as a religious obligation to engage in the process of redemption. There is, however, no consensus as to the concrete expression of this engagement: some enhance the necessity of expanding the State of Israel to correspond to the idea of the Promised Land, some rank more highly the process of gathering the exiles first, and some concentrate on rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem. The underlying ideo-theology has its tenets far back in the Jewish tradition, but was brought to the fore by the R. Abraham Yitzhak ha-Cohen Kook (1865–1935), and his son, R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1982), whose *yeshiva*, Merkaz Harav, became a greenhouse for Hardal Judaism (Sacks 1992: 69; Sharot 1982: 226–7).

Definitions and demarcations

The two overlapping organizations, True Torah Jews Against Zionism (JAZ) and Neturei Karta (NK), both define themselves as Orthodox Jews, although they are generally referred to as ultra-Orthodox or Haredim (Friedman 2007: 114; Friedman and Derovan 2007: 742; Rubinstein 2007: 582). Haredi Judaism designates

the most extreme of Orthodox Jews who, although they have changed over time, claim to have made no compromises with contemporary secular culture or essential changes in the way they practice their Judaism from what the tradition and *halakha* have sanctified throughout the ages (Heilman and Skolnik 2007: 349).

I will be referring to primary material published by JAZ and NK: firstly, website material from the respective official websites, secondly the book by Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat From Within: A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism* (2006), to which JAZ has referred me for their views on exile and redemption. Also NK recommends Rabkin's book on their website (NK 2015a). Thirdly, I will be referring to Yirmiyahu Cohen's book *In the Footsteps of the Flock: The Views of the Gedolei Hatorah on Exile, Redemption and Eretz Yisroel Arranged According to the Weekly Torah Readings* (2007), published by JAZ.

For the other perspective represented in this article, that of the Hardal is characterized by Nadav Shelef (2010: 183; cf. Cohen and Kampinsky 2006: 120) as 'religious observance in the Haredi style combined with an uncompromising nationalist position as developed by the leaders of Mercaz Harav Yeshiva,' distinguishing itself as a particular category after the Six Day War in 1967 (Arian 2009: 80).

The usage of the term 'Hardal' varies somewhat in the scholarly discourse. Yoel Cohen (2014: 62, 96, 100, 141) depicts Hardal as a stricter form of mainstream modern orthodoxy, a combination of the 'Haredi separatist view of modern culture but a nationalist or *leumi* view of nationalism and the Zionist state'. On the other hand, Cohen distinguishes between *hardal* and *dati leumi* (nationalist religious), which he sees as a synonym for modern Orthodox (*ibid.* 151). In this article I will go with the definition of Nadav Shelef, according to which the stringent religious observance and the ideo-theological influence of the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva are typical of the Hardalim. When describing the Hardal at an organizational level, Shelef mentions organizations stemming from Gush Emunim, such as the contemporary Manhigut Yehudit and Zo Artzeneinu (Shelef 2010: 181–2). However, as Richard T. Antoun remarks, one should bear in mind that this perspective is a loose structure, both socially and theologically:

It is likely that the followers and sympathizers of both Gush Emunim and other Jewish fundamentalist parties are connected (each within its own movement) in a social network that has particular nodes in religious schools, cooperative and collective settlements, parties and political lobbies. (Antoun 2001: 25–6)

Another interesting aspect of the categorization is the relation *between* the Haredim and Hardalim. Shelef notes that religious Zionism has shifted from its proximity to secular Zionism – which turned out to be a misguided attempt at cooperation – to a ‘growing social, cultural and theological proximity between this segment of Religious Zionism and the Haredi world’:

The decreasing cultural gap between religious Zionism and the ultra-Orthodox world symbolized by the Hardal is evident primarily, though not exclusively, in the growing religious radicalization of the Religious Zionist movement. This increased religious fanaticism was not limited to the margins of the movement but was spearheaded by the graduates of the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva. (Shelef 2010: 183)

Hardal Judaism is represented in this article by 1) R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook, son of the founder of the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva and furthermore its rosh yeshiva, and 2) The Temple Institute (TI), founded and led by the Merkaz graduate R. Yisrael Ariel.

As primary material, I will refer to material on the official website of TI, as well its publication entitled *Carta's Illustrated Encyclopedia of The Holy Temple in Jerusalem* (2005) by R. Yisrael Ariel and R. Chaim Richman. I will also refer to R. T.Y. Kook's speech on Yom Ha'atzmaut of 1967, published by Merkaz Harav Yeshiva (MH 2015a).

When referencing biblical passages, the translation by the International Bible Society, 1979 (NIV) is used. The Sonico Edition of the Babylonian Talmud is also cited.

The emergence of two perspectives

Judaism has a wide spectrum of traditions regarding eschatology. Although the dominant tendency since the diaspora began has been to emphasise the virtue of enduring in exile – a form of passive messianism – an alternative, active messianism has flared up from time to time (Ravitzky 1993: 19–32, Myers 1991: 4). Robert Eisen (2011: 147–54) defines passive messianism as a theology in which redemption ‘comes primarily through divine initiative’, and in which ‘the influence of human beings on the messianic process is limited’:

In this approach, views range from the belief that the events of the redemptive process proceed according to a strictly predetermined divine plan to the belief that repentance can bring the messiah; however, even according to the

latter viewpoint, messianic redemption is seen as resulting primarily from God's wilful intervention in history. (Eisen 2011: 147)

In active messianism it is also God who brings about redemption, but in contrast to passive messianism, human beings are crucial participants in the process. Whenever a man (especially, but not exclusively, if he is Jewish) perceives that the messianic process has begun, he must find a way to contribute to it, to bring it to completion. Active messianism is often associated with religious Zionism, although according to Joel Kraemer, Jewish theologians as early as Maimonides also accord with its definition:

Maimonides wrote the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Guide of the Perplexed* to reconstitute the Jewish people as strong, wise, and understanding, to prepare it for the anticipated messianic age. This was an active Messianism built on natural preparation, not a passive Messianism based on eschatological visions of divine interventions.² (Kraemer 2006: 34)

From the nineteenth century onwards, the interpretation of redemption as a process gained momentum. Arie Morgenstern (2006: 202) sees the Gaon of Vilna (1720–92) as a precursor to this thinking. His disciples were 'caught up in a messianic ideology' in which settling in Palestine and rebuilding Jerusalem would advance the process of redemption.

Many representatives of traditional Judaism, against which this was a radical break, held that an *en masse* emigration to Palestine would constitute a violation against the regulations of life in exile.³ The creative theology of R. Kalisher (1795–1874) and R. Alkalai (1798–1878) provided a justification for deviation from the ways of the fathers, although it was widely banned as heresy (Fishman and Inbari 2011: 620).⁴

2 Yael Sagiv-Feldman (1979: 107–10) sees a development in Maimonides' understanding of eschatology from the early compositions to the later; he 'moves from historical assurances of the coming redemption to a definite prohibition of any calculation of the End of Days'. Already in his *Epistle to Yemen*, he expresses his belief in the advent of the Messiah, but it is in the later *Mishneh Torah* that his 'unique conception' of the Messiah and redemption 'springs out in full bloom'.

3 Two of the most prominent representatives of the anti-Zionist position was the Rebbe of Munkács, R. Hayyim Eleazar Shapira and the Satmar Rebbe, R. Joel Moshe Teitelbaum (Ravitzky 1993: 40–51).

4 R. Kalisher and R. Alkalai are often portrayed as 'pioneers of religious Zionism'. The development of the perspective is described thoroughly by Dov Schwartz (2009) and Raymond Goldwater (2009).

The weight of the theological argumentation was, however, not the only feature granting the success of religious Zionism. Robert Eisen (2011: 5) notes that ‘religious Zionism would not have become such a potent source of violence nowadays, had it not been for the assistance it received from secular Zionists in its earlier decades’. Jacob Katz sees that

Jewish society achieved its nationalist transformation with the appearance of a modern idea, later called Zionism, which purged, so to speak, Jewish messianic belief of its miraculous eschatological elements and retained only its political, social, and some of its spiritual objectives. Even in this phase of development, however, Zionism leaned heavily on the old messianism and derived from it much of its ideological and even more of its emotional appeal. (Katz 2007: 540)

According to David Vital (1989: 348–9), the ideology of Zionism was developed in retrospect, which is why the dogma of Zionism presents ‘a patchy and unsystematic appearance’. Its development can be systematized as three-fold, with the Mizrahi distinguishing itself as a party in the World Zionist Organization in 1902 as a first step, the workers’ party Ha-Po’el ha-Mizrahi forming in Palestine in 1922 under the slogan ‘Torah ve-Avodah’ as a second, and the emergence of Gush Emunim, for which the yeshiva Merkaz Harav was the ideological cradle, as a third (Fishman and Inbari 2011: 620; haCohen *et al.* 2007: 630; Feige 2009: 24; Lustick 1988: 32).

R. Abraham Y. Kook (1865–1935) founded the Merkaz Harav in 1924, in Jerusalem (MH 2015b). Central to his thinking was a form of active messianism. He interpreted the national awakening of the Jewish people as the beginning of the End that would, in time, lead to the full redemption of Israel (Eisen 2011: 147; Inbari 2009: 18; Schwartz 2002: 123–4). R. A. Kook, like Kalisher, Alkalai and other harbingers of religious Zionism were ‘driven by a kabbalistic-messianic outlook’ (Schwartz 2002: 124). In R. A. Kook’s view, the State of Israel was ‘the foundation upon which rests the Throne of God in this world’ (MH 2015c). His son, R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook, followed in his footsteps and became the mentor of religious Zionism from the establishment of the Israeli State until his death in 1981 (Ravitzky 1993: 79). Reuven Firestone (2012: 278) perceives him as a charismatic figure that ‘succeeded in channeling the energy of a generation of enormously talented young people to engage in militant activism for the settlement-conquest of the Land of Israel’. Also Michael Feige highlights R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s contribution:

Kook the Son presented them [the young religious Zionists of the Merkaz haRav Yeshiva] with an ideology that placed the victorious project within a religious framework and assigned his followers a privileged position with respect to other groups. This encounter of an enthusiastic young group, the message of the yeshiva, and the historical opportunity provided by the Six-Day and the Yom Kippur wars, helps explain why the movement emerged in the form that it did. Feige 2009: 27)

As R.J. Zwi Werblowsky (2005: 5977) points out, a tendency to ‘messianize’ politics has become notable, particularly within the religious Zionist perspective, since the war of 1973. A noteworthy development after the Oslo Accords, Shelef notes (2010: 182), is the growth of the Hardal, both numerically and theologically. There has been a tendency towards a ‘Haredization’ within the perspective; for example, the role of the rabbi is enhanced while the role of the political leadership is diminished; Haredi attributes, like fashion, are taken on by the Hardalim. Shelef interprets this development as a hint of the ‘desired proximity to the Haredim’.

To conclude, the Haredi and the Hardal are two (ultra-)Orthodox perspectives, that in response to the existential challenges history has presented the Jewish people with, have developed contrasting interpretations of redemption, and subsequently, formed contrasting imperatives.

Cognitive dissonance⁵ occurs when reality, as it is perceived, does not meet with expectations. The response to cognitive dissonance is often radicalization (Inbari 2009: 12–13). Ravitzky estimates (1993: 60) that the radical element of Haredi Judaism, although statistically marginal, have an indirect influence ‘widely felt in the Haredi mainstream’. It has ‘taken a consistent ideological line for nearly two generations’ and is powerful in ‘drawing the larger community into repeated confrontations with Israeli society and its institutions’. Regarding the Hardalim, Eisen (2013: 147–51) notes that a ‘virulent strain of religious Zionism ... has come to the fore in recent decades’, but in contrast with the Haredim, religious Zionism has gone from ‘a relatively marginal phenomenon

- 5 Leo Festinger’s *theory of cognitive dissonance* proposes that discrepancies between beliefs, ideas or values create mental stress; cognitive dissonance. In the pursuit of consistency there is a propensity to prefer solutions that maintain already accepted beliefs and ideas of value intact. Hence, the battle between the previously accepted information and the new, contradictory information is generally won by the former, even when achievement of consistency between the two requires a highly creative interpretation. Leo Festinger and his colleagues examined these dynamics in *When Prophecy Fails* (Festinger *et al.* 1964; cf. O’Leary 2000: 341–3).

in Israeli society and politics to one that had a strong influence on the entire national agenda’.

In its declaration of its *raison d’être*, JAZ comes to the heart of the matter: it is a question of two irreconcilable ways of understanding redemption:

It is our hope that all of our fellow Jews will soon open their eyes, return to Torah and reject this ideology that replaces the Jew’s age-old hope for G-d’s redemption with a false redemption and a human-initiated state.
(JAZ 2015a)

The Haredi understanding of the Messiah

Traditionally, Jewish existence is thought to be characterized by a pendulum motion between exile (Heb. *galut*) and redemption (Heb. *geula*). This motion is seen to be both divinely orchestrated and caused by the obedience or disobedience of the Jewish people. If the people strays from God, it brings an exile upon itself, but if it then repents and resorts to abiding in faith, God will have mercy upon it and redeem it.

The first biblical reference to this existential dynamic is found in Deut. 28–30 (Rabinowitz 2007: 789). The Jewish people is warned that if it doesn’t carefully follow all the commands and decrees of the Lord, he will ‘put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you’ (28:48), and ‘bring a nation against you from far away’ (28:49), who will ‘besiege all the cities throughout the land’ (28:52) and hence, the people will be ‘uprooted from the land’ (28:63). Thus, the exile has begun (28:64–6). But there is also a promise that if the people returns to the Lord and obeys him with all its heart, wherever it is dispersed among the nations (30:1–2), he will have compassion and gather it to himself (30:4–5).

An integral element in the concept of exile is the Talmudic tradition of the threefold oath. BT Ketubbot 110b–111a holds a tradition that before going into exile, the Jewish people gave an oath that regulates life in the exile in three essential ways:

One, that Israel shall not go up [altogether as if surrounded] by a wall; the second, that whereby the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured Israel that they shall not rebel against the nations of the world; and the third is that whereby the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured the idolaters that they shall not oppress Israel too much’. And Rab Judah? – It is written in Scripture, That ye awaken not, nor stir up. (BT Ketubbot 110b–111a)

The fear of breaking out of the exile prematurely – of forcing the End – is also recorded in Song of Songs Rabbah 2:7, where R. Helbo discusses with R. Onya the passage which says: ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires’:

Rabbi Helbo said: There are four oaths here: that they not rebel against the kingdoms; that they not force the End; that they not reveal their mystery to the nations of the world; and that they not ascend as a wall from the Exile. Rabbi Onya said: These four oaths correspond to the four generations which forced the End and failed. ... [The Children of Ephraim] gathered together and went to war, and many of them died. Why? Because they did not believe in God and did not trust His salvation, because they transgressed the End and the oath, ‘lest you awaken and excite my love’.

The oldest reference to an oath prohibiting forcing the End and rebelling against the nations is from the sixth century CE, when Simeon ben Megas ha-Kohen writes: ‘You adjured the lion cubs, saying: one, that they not force the future end and one, not to rebel against the four kingdoms.’ (Ravitzky 1993: 214; Fleisher 2005: 598). The primeval myth of the Children of Ephraim, recorded in *BT Sanhedrin 92a*, carries similar imperatives.

The emphasis placed on the three oaths differs from time to time and context to context. Aviezer Ravitzky (1993: 83, 212) remarks that although the traditions of the threefold oath were seen to be aggadic and thus never functioned as a direct prohibition, they generated a ‘deep-seated reluctance to rebel against the Exile or to force the end’. This is exemplified by JAZ, who believe that the emergence out of exile and the restoration of the Jewish people to the Holy Land is ‘strictly God’s domain, and any effort in that area is a direct affront and denial of his mastery over the world’ (Cohen 2007: 4). The processes of exile and redemption ‘must be left to the control of God, with no physical effort on our part’ (Cohen 2007: 10). To try to end the exile politically or forcibly would only ‘defy divine providence’; the only way to bring about relief is to repent, as ‘the fate of the Jews reflects the consequences of the Covenant between God and His people’ (Rabkin 2006: 12). Abandoning this approach is bound to have serious implications, JAZ warns:

We [the Jewish people] are in exile by Divine Decree and may emerge from exile solely via Divine Redemption. All human efforts to alter a

metaphysical reality are doomed to end in failure and bloodshed. History has clearly borne out this teaching. (JAZ 2015a)

Werblowsky concludes that embracing the exile as the way to redemption has become a meaningful strategy for Judaism (2005: 5978); it is seen as a reflection of the more profound exile of God, in which the Jewish people can participate, and thereby contribute to the redemption of God himself, his people and his creation. In this system, the role of the Messiah is diminished.

In this brand of passive messianism, it seems the domains of God, the Messiah and the Jewish people are clearer than in the active equivalent. Redemption will be brought about solely by God; the Messiah will bring the Jewish people to repentance; having accomplished that, he will gather them to the Holy Land and rebuild the Temple. Hence, the responsibilities left with the Jewish people are to repent and live piously. Whilst the Jewish people attend to these aspects, God will see to the rest. This is, according to JAZ, the way Jews have ‘always believed’:

Jews have always believed that first the messiah will come and afterwards all the Jews will return to the Holy Land. They will go there under the messiah's leadership. ... See also the Talmud (Kesubos 111a) which states that nowadays the Jewish people is forbidden under oath to take over the Holy Land. Clearly then, taking over Eretz Yisroel is something we cannot do on our own, before the messiah comes. We must wait for the messiah to tell us in the name of G-d that the exile is over and the oath is no longer in force. (JAZ 2015b)

Besides BT Ketubbot 111a, JAZ also refers to Isa 11:12 and Mishneh Torah Melachim u Milchamot 11:1 for the view that the Messiah will ‘arise and restore the kingship of the house of David to its former status, build the Temple and gather in the exiles of Israel’ (JAZ 2015b). NK also refers to BT Ketubbot 111a for a related view: that Jews ‘shall not use human force to bring about the establishment of a Jewish state before the coming of the universally accepted Moshiach’. Furthermore, it is ‘forbidden to rebel against the nations’, and the Jewish people should ‘not attempt to leave the exile which G-d sent us into, ahead of time’ (NK 2015b).

Expectations as to how the Messiah will reveal himself are framed in concrete and observable circumstances, which limit the parameters of interpretation. Similar to NK, JAZ presumes the Messiah will bring the entire Jewish people to repent:

Once he has accomplished the repentance of all the Jews, clearly Hashem is telling us that he has enough of a *chezkas moshiach* [presumed Messiah] to be allowed to fight wars. Once he fights the wars, he reaches an even higher level of *chazakah*, allowing him to gather the exiles and build the Temple. (JAZ 2015c)

Bringing the entire Jewish people to repent is an undertaking so monumental that ‘no false Messiah will be able to do it and fool the world’ (JAZ 2015b). If somebody were to achieve it, it would be sufficient proof that he is sustained by God and is designated to be the Messiah. By these criteria, there need not be any confusion as to who is the true Messiah; those already living a life in repentance should continue on that path. Eventually, the whole of the Jewish people will do the same and then the next step can be taken. The next step also shouldn’t cloud one’s mind, because then the Messiah will be there to guide the Jewish people on the way to redemption:

The messiah will be recognized by the fact that he will be a Jewish leader who brings all the Jews to repent and follow the laws of the Torah. Once he does this it may be safely assumed that he is the messiah. Once the entire Jewish and non-Jewish world has recognized him as the messiah, his next task will be to bring back the Jewish exiles and build the Temple. If he does this, then he is certainly the messiah. If he fails at this second stage or dies before completing it, then he is not the messiah. (JAZ 2015d)

Hence, there redemption is, in a paradoxical way, indeed a divine intervention and a miracle, but at the same time, redemption in its initial phase will be manifested by a feature of exile: repentance. JAZ explains that this is to ensure that false prophets cannot daze the people with grand miracles, an interpretation made by the Satmar Rav (R. Yoel Teitelbaum, 1914–2006) in *Vayael Moshe* (Cohen 2007: 127).

The Haredim seems to be content with the traditional strategy for redemption: to wait for the Messiah, and while waiting, to live piously, repent and abide by the threefold oath. This strategy allows many questions related to redemption to be postponed:

Whatever the criteria are for the messiah, it is clear that we have to wait for him, and thus it is certainly wrong to conquer the Holy Land under a movement such as Zionism that does not even claim that any particular person is the messiah. (JAZ 2015b)

Although this form of messianism falls into the category of ‘passive’ (Eisen 2011: 147–54) the enforcement of this strategy involves a persistent activism: the adherents of this perspective protest, publish books, deliver speeches and distribute pamphlets (NK 2015c).

The Hardal understanding of the Messiah

To the voices of the Hardal perspective, as represented in this article, the Messiah is seen as vital to the coming of the ultimate redemption, but the *process of redemption* has already begun. Hence, the exile has ended and the Jewish people should do all in its power to contribute to the dawning redemption, even though the Messiah seems to be hanging back.

This understanding was not novel, but got off the ground in response to the establishment of the State of Israel. This remarkable break in what otherwise were ever deteriorating conditions for the diaspora in Europe was interpreted as a divine intervention to restore the Jewish people. For R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook, it was clear that the new development was the work of God. In his Independence Day Speech of 1967, he recalls his response on hearing the news:

We sat together [the following day], the two of us [R. Zvi Kook and R. Y. M. Harlap], in that small hallowed room in ‘Beit HaRav’ [in the study of the late R. A. Kook] – where else if not there – we sat shocked and silent. Finally, regaining our strength, we said, the two of us as one: ‘This is the L-rd’s doing; It is marvellous in our eyes.’ (MH 2015a)

What was equally clear was that the circumstances were far from ideal: the new state was officially secular, as was a substantial proportion of its Jewish population. This constituted a problem: if the time of redemption had indeed come, why were not all Jews inspired to repent? Why was a state, rather than a kingdom, established? Why a democracy and not a revival of the Davidic dynasty? The interpretation of the state as a work of God was firm, however, suggesting that the reinterpretation of redemption, which had now been gaining ground for half a century, was correct. R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook was convinced that the lack of piety in the Jewish state would, in time, be replaced by a hunger for the Torah and its glorification:

Indeed, surely as a result of the return of Israel to their Land there will come about the increase of Torah and its glorification. But the first step is the settlement of Israel and of their Land. HaRav Eliyahu Gutmacher

z'tl [1796–1874] wrote: 'It is clear to me that if 130 families of Israel begin to till the land in our holy Eretz – this will be the beginning of the Redemption (Geulah) even if the people are not yet worthy. (MH 2015a)

R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook's father and predecessor, R. Abraham Y. Kook, perceived the exile to be a harsh, but spiritually purifying preparation for the national and religious awakening. He saw that the burdens of exile had become too heavy for the Jewish people to bear and that the time had come for a return. The historical connection was no longer enough to sustain the nation. He was optimistic that

one spark of this real life in the homeland will revive a very vital existence. Only with the people's return to its land, which is the only route to its rebirth, will the real, sacred life of Judaism be revealed. (Don-Yehiya 1992: 132)

The negation of exile was 'highly prevalent' in both secular and religious Zionist circles, Eliezer Don-Yehiya tells us that (1992: 130–2). R. A. Kook was convinced its time had passed and that the exile had become a 'defective and alienated existence', characterized by 'decline, narrowness, displacement, seclusion and weakness'. He was hopeful that, when liberated from it, Judaism would be restored to its original nature, in which all areas of life are bound together and connected to its divine source. Under these conditions, the Jewish people would constitute a nation with institutions and an infrastructure based on and guided by the Torah, allowing a full Jewish existence, both individually and communally. R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook not only negated the exile but excluded the diaspora from the 'true Israel':

The true Israel is Israel redeemed, the kingdom of Israel and the armies of Israel, a people in its wholeness and not a diaspora in exile. Thus, when Israel was sent into exile heavens and earths throughout the universe trembled. And so it was with the coming of the Geulah (Redemption). A tremor spread through the universe, billowing from step to step until it reached us. ... The process is gradual and continuous, and each and every year [of Israel's independence] is a new hymn, a celestial song, another link in the chain. (MH 2015a)

The impression of Ravitzky (1993: 135, 98) is that undoubtedly, R. A. Kook perceived Zionism as 'a human response to a divine call'. Therefore, the death

of Theodor Herzl presented R. A. Kook with a difficulty: how to view the man, who made no claim to be a religious figure, but still was the *primus motor* of a divine intervention. R. Kook's solution was found in classical Jewish messianic imagery: he drew parallels between the legendary figure Messiah ben Joseph and Herzl. Both were messianic figures paving the way for the ultimate redeemer, Messiah ben David, and both were determined to fall in battle, making a crucial contribution to redemption, but not bringing it to completion.

To turn to a currently active representative of the Hardal perspective, the Temple Institute based its understanding of the role of the Messiah on the idea of a progressive path to redemption. The military triumph of the Six Day War in 1967 – with the conquest of the Temple Mount at its climax – was interpreted by many religious Zionists as a divine intervention to bring about the final redemption. Among the paratroopers conquering the Temple Mount was R. Yisrael Ariel, who recalls:

No one who was privileged enough to witness this moment, and whose feet stood on the Lord's mountain after thousands of years of Jewish absence, could fail to be elated by the great moment for the Jewish people. These are the Days of Messiah – there is no other expression for it. ... I arrived at the Western Wall, and below me I saw two old men – none other than my two rabbis and teachers from the yeshiva, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook ZTS'L and the 'Reclusive Rabbi' ZTS'L [David HaCohen, a.k.a. the Nazir]. We embraced and stood with tears running down our cheeks, in complete silence, sensing that Messiah was still on the way – it would just take another hour or two.' (TI 2015a; Inbari 2009: 33–47)

But as time passed by and the Messiah did not appear, a sense of disappointment dismantled the magical experience. The crisis at the Western Wall caused R. Yisrael Ariel to reconsider his eschatological expectations. His ruminations over the years that followed led him to the conclusion that the Temple was the missing link in the chain of redemption:

Through the years, the more I studied, the more I began to understand that we had only ourselves and our own inaction to hold accountable: G-d does not intend for us to wait for a day of miracles. We are expected to act. We must accomplish that with which we have been charged: to do all in our power to prepare for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, and the renewal of the divine service. (TI 2015b)

R. Ariel thus laid the blame for the absent redemption on the Jewish people,⁶ for ‘waiting for a day of miracles’ instead of rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem, which has ‘the power to hasten the advent of the Messiah and bring about the final redemption’ (Ariel and Richman 2005: 1). From that realization onwards, rebuilding the temple became his mission. As with the process of redemption, rebuilding the Temple is seen as a process, advancing slowly but steadily:

The rebuilding would happen, even if it happens very slowly, and in stages, one step at a time. For like the morning dawn, ‘such is the way of Israel’s redemption. In the beginning, it progresses very slowly... but as it continues, it grows brighter and brighter.’ (TI 2015c)

For this purpose, R. Ariel founded the Temple Institute (TI), an organization based on ‘the principle of action’, with the ambition to ‘provide a basis in research, planning and infrastructure for the Third Temple’ (TI 2015d). TI relates the project at hand to that of King David:

The basis of the Institute’s work is the commandment given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, *And they shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell amongst them (Ex. 25:8)*. The Institute’s efforts towards preparing for the Temple in our time can be compared to the preparations that were done in the days of the tabernacle and later, by King David. (TI 2015d)

Over time, the emphasis on the Temple as a crucial aspect of the unfolding redemption was outweighed by the emphasis that building a temple is a commandment, and all of God’s commandments are incumbent. Both of these ideas fulfil their function: the first evens out the cognitive dissonance that was created when redemption did not erupt despite the promising signs in 1967⁷; the second provides an argumentation which is resistant to similar disillusionments:

6 Presumably R. Ariel is referring to the Jewish people when speaking of ‘us’; however, it is not specified in the sources referred to in this article. He could, for instance, be excluding anti-Zionists or including Christian Zionists.

7 Inbari (2009: 12–13, 38–9) connects Leo Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance to the ideo-theological development of R. Yisrael Ariel. The theory of cognitive dissonance presumes that it occurs when a prophecy has failed, that is, when it has been proven to be a miscalculation. Inbari’s examination suggests that if cognitive dissonance also occurs when a prophecy does not have an end date it therefore does not fail, *per se*. He proposes that messianic radicalization may be a reaction to cognitive dissonance. But although the theory of cognitive dissonance assumes that a movement, on finding its belief system challenged, will undergo a process of radicalization, it does

There is no question about the fact that at the time G-d wills it, the messiah will arrive. This is a great promise that He made, and nothing can happen that will change that. But this has nothing to do with our obligations to G-d! Those also do not change! The messiah's job is not to come and tell us, 'Now, it is time for you to fulfil this or that particular commandment.' For the commandments are always to be fulfilled by Israel, at all times, to the best of our ability. (TI 2015e)

When stressing the perpetuity of fulfilling the commandment to build a sanctuary for God, rather than stressing its importance for the process of redemption, the order of events falls out of focus. *Even if* some traditions suggest the Messiah will precede the rebuilding of the Temple, it does not call for a change in the plan of action, since the plan for action is based on adherence to the commandments, rather than on the understanding of redemption. Nevertheless, TI interprets Maimonides as indicating that rebuilding the Temple will, in fact, precede the coming of the Messiah:⁸

if there really is a question as to 'Which comes first, the Messiah or the Temple,' there seems to be ample indication that the building of the Holy Temple will precede the Messiah's arrival. Various Biblical verses and statements made by the great sages prove this. This is actually the opinion of Maimonides, who quotes an astounding verse from the prophecy of Malachi (3:1) in his classic Letter to Yemen: 'For suddenly the master whom you are seeking will come to his sanctuary. (TI 2015e)

Another way to downplay the importance of the Messiah, and hence, to reduce the problem of his absence, is to widen the scope of interpretation. TI elaborates on the possibility of *messianic manifestation* and *messianic potential*. In Hilchot Ta'anot 5 and Hilchot Melachim 11, Maimonides describes Bar Kochba as 'a great king whom all of Israel, including the great sages, was convinced was the Messiah'. From these words, according to TI, it is reasonable

not necessarily mean that the movement has acknowledged its beliefs to be errant; it may instead, Inbari argues, *both* radicalize *and* pursue a logical explanation for its error. Cognitive dissonance may thus occur not only from *acknowledging* a mistake but also from the *fear* of being wrong, and lead to radicalization.

- 8 The passage from Maimonides' Letter to Yemen cited here reads: 'Regarding the question of how and where Mashiah will appear; we know he will make his first appearance in Eretz Yisrael. As it says, "Suddenly he will come to His temple" (Malachi 3:1). But no one will know how he will arise until it actually happens.' (Finkel 1996: 40-1).

to perceive Bar Kochba's attempt to reinstitute the monarchy and gather the exiles as *messianic manifestation* by Jewish law. Although Bar Kochba's attempts failed, they had a *messianic potential*:

From Maimonides' words, we understand that Bar Kokhba's attempt to restore the kingdom to Israel and return the nation to its land is clearly defined by Jewish law as messianic manifestation. Thus a fast was decreed for all generations to mourn the failure of this process. In other words, the attempts of Bar Kokhba had messianic potential. (TI 2015e)

In the Book of Daniel (7:13), the Messiah is portrayed arriving on clouds of heaven. The Book of Zechariah (9:9), on the other hand, portrays the Messiah arriving modestly, riding on a donkey. A discussion concerning this discrepancy is carried out in BT Sanhedrin 98a. The fruit of the discussion, TI concludes, is that how the Messiah will arrive is not fixed. He may arrive in splendour and grandeur, if Israel has proven itself worthy of him, but he may also appear in humbleness and stillness, if Israel is unworthy (TI 2015e). However, the unforthcoming Messiah does not challenge the idea that redemption is there 'for the taking':

The opportunity for redemption – *geula* – is also always at hand – for those who seek it urgently, for those who are willing discard their appointment books and personal calendars, jettison their vacation plans, reorder their priorities, and make all holy haste to grab it. When the sense of urgency is upon us, when *geula* is for us the only option, so compelling that we are *unable to hesitate*, then redemption is ours for the taking. (TI 2015f)

Conclusions

In this article, we have acquainted ourselves with the Haredi and Hardal perspectives on redemption in general, and on the role of the Messiah in particular, as expressed by a handful of rabbis and organizations. We have seen that historical events such as the establishment of the State of Israel and the Six Day War, have promoted a development in their respective understandings of redemption. The parting of ways between the two has so far been sustained. However, there are some indications of a break in this trend.

There is a temptation to polarize these perspectives, although, *in toto*, they are in agreement on crucial aspects of redemption. Both believe in an approaching redemption; both believe that the Messiah will play a crucial role in it;

both believe that the Messiah will appear at a time of God's choosing. The disagreement concerns the shift from exile to redemption: *how* and *by whom* it will be brought about. However, from the solutions to this question, two respective plans of action are derived. These are, in many respects, poles apart. To the Haredim, the solution calls for the Jewish people to repent, live piously and wait; to the Hardalim, the solution calls for the Jewish people to abandon the passive approach and see that 'redemption is there for the taking', as TI expresses it. Hence, both present a strategy for expediting the End, and can thus be considered messianic.

The Messiah is, to the Haredim, an integral aspect of the shift from exile to redemption. He is the marker that exile has ended and that redemption has begun, which opens a world of new possibilities. But until he has emerged, the Jewish people are in exile and abide by the restrictions of exile. To the Hardalim, the Messiah is crucial to the impetus of the ultimate redemption, but what function he will fulfil during the shift from exile to redemption – during the process of redemption – is less clear. As (the Hardal interpretation of) history has shown, he was not needed to redeem Israel from its subjugation to the nations; he was not needed to gather the exiles or to wage war; the rebuilding the Temple has been prepared for without his guidance. Hence, the process of redemption proceeds even without the Messiah being physically present. The question is, therefore, whether there are any realms related to redemption which are exclusively assigned to the Messiah, or is he invited as a guest to an already set table?

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Positioning oneself and being positioned in the 'community'

An essay on Jewish ethnography as a 'Jew-ish' ethnographer

BEN KASSTAN

This article offers a reflexive and anthropological contribution to the current volume of Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis. It reflects on the experience of conducting anthropological work at home – or *across* homes – I considered this research to be an experience of 'Jewish ethnography' as a Jewish ethnographer. However, my own 'Jew-ish' background meant that I had become 'neither fish nor fowl' within the field-site, which proved both to be an obstacle to, and an opportunity for, conducting the research. It utilises this experience to challenge the conceptual use of the term 'community', which encapsulates considerable diversity but obscures the nuanced differences that can pervade a social body. These reflections demonstrate how positionality can be used as a tool for postgraduate students to untangle the complexities of conducting ethnographic research at 'home' or in relation to religious minority groups, where significant intra-group differences of practice and worldviews exist, but may otherwise be concealed by the image of 'community'.

Preface

Haredi Jewish minorities are often grouped together and framed by public health bodies in England and Europe as the 'ultra-Orthodox Jewish community' with not much clarity concerning of how this 'community' is constituted. I was consequently interested to problematise the construction in health discourse of this composite collective as a 'community' and the implications of this for meeting their needs. Presenting my initial findings at the Donner Institute in March 2015 for a round-table discussion on 'Judaic Studies in the Nordic Countries Today' was, then, a timely opportunity to reflect on my PhD fieldwork which was conducted in an Orthodox and Haredi Jewish area of England, introduced above and discussed in this essay.

Although this volume shows an unfortunate lack of anthropological or ethnographic perspectives of Jewish sociality in the Nordic countries or by Nordic scholars, anthropological contributions to Jewish Studies more broadly have been immense. Anthropologists have certainly contributed to the sub-field of

Jewish Studies by producing research that critically analyses emerging encounters within Jewish social worlds, as well as intra- and inter-community relations as they connect, conflict, or coalesce over time (to name just a few examples; see Arkin 2014, Egorova and Perwez 2013, Goldberg 1972, Herman 2012, Sered 1996). It has also proved to be a stimulating and reflexive journey when the researcher conducts anthropology at 'home' or has a degree of relation to the context of study, as prompted by Barbara Myerhoff's (1978) legendary ethnographical work *Number Our Days* (see also Fader 2009, Kugelmass 1988, Kahn 2000, Seeman 2009, Stadler 2009, Weiss 2002).

As a growing and prominent Jewish minority, the 'ultra-Orthodox community' has increasingly become the focus of academic interest. In the context of Israel, its members have been cited as being an example of 'Jewish fundamentalism', demonstrating outward expressions of activism and resistance despite voluntarily living 'in sort of ghettos that have ecological and cultural boundaries clearly defined and carefully maintained' (Aran *et al.* 2008: 32; see also Hakak 2009, 2011). There remains, however, a lack of ethnographic research that captures the texture of Jewish life in the UK (also argued by Kahn-Harris 2014), particularly regarding the bounds of Orthodox and Haredi Judaism.

Rather than a fixed 'boundary', the term 'frontier' accounts for a situation that is brought about by the presence of 'overlapping and moving cultures' (see, for instance, Merli 2008: 6), which could, more suitably, describe a composite collective that is formed of multiple Jewish modalities. Ethnographic research and the researcher's experience of positionality may then be a strategic method for teasing out the complexities and intricacies of Jewish topographies that are not defined by the notion of a clear-cut and contained 'community'.

Following a year of immersive fieldwork, my own experience of Jewish ethnography as a 'Jew-ish' ethnographer has consequently challenged the notion of a Jewish 'community' as a construct and also how it is employed in health discourse as well as Jewish studies. The article reflects on the process of negotiating one's position when pursuing anthropological research 'at home' – or *across* homes, in this case, as I conducted research both in the UK and within Jewish contexts that cannot be singularly defined. It offers an insight into the potential of anthropological research methods for postgraduate students in Jewish Studies, as well as understanding the complexities of Jewish social bodies in Europe today.

Anthropology *across* homes: being 'neither fish nor fowl'

It has been noted that the motivations for pursuing anthropological work at home might be because 'many of the people we study are those with whom we most closely identify: people of our ethnic group or subculture, people with our same social class, history, and traditions' (Messerschmidt 1981: 8). Conducting 'anthropology at home' certainly encourages an individual to consider how fieldwork will be approached and what research methods will be employed, but also to confront the meaning of 'home' and how it is conceptualised. The ways in which 'home' as a field-site (and the field-site as a home) is perceived, experienced, and envisaged consequently shapes the relationships that are built with research participants, which is so crucial to anthropological work. But how is fieldwork at 'home' conceived of when the researcher and participants have differing perceptions of who belongs and who does not?

'Home', as Michael Jackson describes it, 'is a double-barreled word. It conveys a notion of all that is already given – the sedimented lives of those who have gone before – but it is also conveys a notion of what is chosen – the open horizons of a person's own life' (1995: 122). Spurred perhaps by the feeling of *hiraeth* (Welsh, 'a longing for a lost home'), researchers who conduct anthropological work at home may then choose a field-site in which to sojourn based on a nostalgic, internalised, or even imagined bond to the social or physical topography. This has certainly been the case in Jewish ethnography, as expressed by Jonathan Boyarin, 'I will hazard a guess that Jewish anthropologists – perhaps anthropologists in general – are motivated by a sense of loss' (1988: 73).

Defining 'home', for me, has been a constant challenge. Not only did I grow up away from the UK and live in Mauritius, Djibouti, Benin, Botswana, and Lesotho, but the familial roots sown by my forbears also span countries, continents, and religious traditions. My own family narrative crosses ancestral *home-lands*; being uprooted and dispossessed has been a feature of my family narrative for generations, as is typical of many Jewish families. Home is therefore a nostalgic memory that has been handed down from generation to generation; it is a physical absence, augmented by a spiritual distance from an expression of Judaism that I imagined as more 'traditional'. On reflection, it was most probably this physical and spiritual nostalgia which prompted me to pursue Jewish ethnography twice over, first as a Masters student and then as a PhD candidate.

Durham University in the north of England has been the 'home' that I have been raised in as a student over the last seven years, and here I received all of my methodological and theoretical training – right from undergraduate to PhD level.

In May 2014 it was time to pack up years of preparatory notes and relocate for ethnographic fieldwork in an Orthodox and Haredi Jewish constituency, my chosen 'home' for the next twelve months. From this perspective, I was indeed conducting 'anthropology at home' as the academy and field-site that underlie my thesis and this ethnographic essay are both in the UK and just 132 miles apart. However, I quickly found that my own positioning, and indeed how I was positioned in the field-site, was a continuous process of negotiation and navigation which created a social distance that was constantly in a state of flux.

My formative ventures in Jewish ethnography as a Jewish ethnographer felt like I was undertaking 'anthropological work in the spiritual as well as the physical sense of the word "home"' (Kasstan 2015: 353). I perceived the field-site as being another sort of 'home' by proxy or extension of my Jewish heritage, and I (naively) expected a smoother process of immersion and integration into the field. This was imagined partly because of past fieldwork experiences and also an exposure to the values of Orthodox Judaism through my paternal Jewish relatives, but also because of a key passage inscribed in the Torah:

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him.
The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens,
you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
([Tanakh] Leviticus 19:33–4)

The above edict on strangers, I was later told by a Haredi research participant, can be interpreted as only applying to bona fide Jews. And this was part of a harder lesson I received when working in the context of a strictly religious form of Jewish ethnography; my own Jewish identity would present both obstacles to and opportunities for the research.

Being Jewish by *halachic*¹ definition is determined matrilineally in the Orthodox and Haredi streams of Judaism, and conversion is a contentious issue as only those performed under a 'reputable' Orthodox rabbinical authority are accepted.² There is evidently no unanimous standard for conversion into Orthodox and Haredi Judaism, though it is important to note that *halachah* is just one definition of Jewish status. As a 'patrilineal Jew' under the auspices

1 Codex of rabbinical law (sing. *halachah*; pl. *halachot*).

2 Reference to 'reputable' taken from the United Synagogue (nd). Whilst Judaism is not a proselyting religion, *giyur* (Hebrew 'conversion', from the root *ger* meaning 'stranger', commonly interpreted as 'convert') is tolerated. A conversion performed under one 'Bet Din' (Hebrew 'House of Judgment') is not unanimous and does not mean recognition by another *Bet Din* or denomination.

of Liberal Judaism³ – a leading progressive denomination that upholds Jewish status as equilineal – I presented as an anomaly because I was not acknowledged as Jewish, yet openly practised Judaism and could mobilise an understanding of the law, customs, and Hebrew language. It frequently seemed as if I embodied the threats which Orthodox, and particularly Haredi, Judaism seeks to insulate itself from; integration, assimilation, and most grievous of all, intermarriage. Liminality is often constructed as being ‘dangerous, inauspicious, or polluting’ (Turner 2002: 368) and I was, according to one participant, a grey area in a life-world defined and ordered by *halachot*.

I then became entangled in a conflict of (in)authenticity within the field-site; research participants would hold their authenticity against me and, in turn, the inauthentic was then constructed through me as a medium. Being non-Jewish, and the threats of the external world, came to be defined by my behaviour and *halachic* status. At the core of this issue is the view that Orthodox and Haredi Jews are the authoritative, authentic, and legitimate practitioners of Judaism, who are arguably intolerant and prejudiced towards non-Orthodox Jewish modalities.⁴ The situation I encountered can be contextualised within a body of anthropological work that has explored contested definitions of, and dogma concerning, Jewish status, particularly in the case of Israel (see Seeman 2009, Egorova 2009), and thus upholds the view that the ‘argument is not really about “who is a Jew?” but rather “who is to decide who is a Jew?”’ (Alderman 2008: 9).

Also bound up in these discussions are the terms used to describe observant practitioners of Judaism, and the hierarchy of religious observance that they can insinuate. A common synonym for Haredi Jews is ‘ultra-Orthodox’, but this can be considered an inaccurate description for several reasons. In their cosmology there is nothing ‘ultra-Orthodox’ about living a life of ‘Torah Judaism’, which is supposedly conducted in accordance with the unadulterated values and laws inscribed in religious texts.⁵ In fact, this sub-group of religious practitioners generally prefer to regard themselves as ‘Haredi’, a term that is rooted in the Torah as ‘those who tremble at God’s word’ (Isaiah 66:5). The more commonly

3 Liberal Judaism in the UK closely resembles the Reform Movement in the US, who both uphold Jewish status as being equilineal; that is, passed through both or either parent. The UK’s Movement for Reform Judaism has recently taken measures to legitimise patrilineal Jews through a new process of ‘certification’ (see Rashty 2015).

4 See Ferziger 2009 for a deeper discussion on Orthodox and Reform Jewish relations in the US context.

5 See Shapiro 2015, who argues that particular Orthodox establishments ‘rewrite’ history to suit current worldviews and conducts.

used term 'ultra-Orthodox' can also be considered problematic because it implies the idea of one group being more observant than their (perhaps equally observant) co-religionists; the issue at hand is not the degree of observance but rather conceptual or cosmological differences in the essence of Judaism between the sub-groups.⁶

I initially reflected on the experience of Jewish anthropologists who conducted ethnographical research within Jewish communities for support on how to navigate issues in social interaction, and also the ways in which they personally identified with their field-sites (Myerhoff 1978, Winston 2005, Stadler 2009, 2013). However, I found this material did not fully relate to my position of a contested Jewish status. On the other hand, reflections by William E. Mitchell (1988) of being a 'goy in the ghetto' also did not reflect my liminal position within the field-site as I was not a complete outsider to the socio-religious context under study.

As Orthodox and Haredi Judaism places specific obligations and legal duties on co-religionists which those perceived as non-Jews are not encumbered with, I then found that some research participants used particular methods to reinforce their positioning of me. One such example was Shabbat observance, and being used as a 'Shabbos goy',⁷ or being referred to as a *sheigetz*; a derogatory Yiddish word for a non-Jewish male, originating from the Hebrew term *sheketz*, meaning impure or abominable. The status I was ascribed proved to be an obstacle when engaging with some potential research participants, especially when authoritative figures would advise families to exclude or disinvite me from meals during Shabbat or *chagim* (festivals). This was particularly limiting as these invitations were typically the most opportune events at which to meet Jewish locals and engage in conversation about the research. The schism between how I positioned myself and how I was positioned in the field therefore epitomised the view that 'even for those of us who study our own ethnic group, the distance between the anthropologist and the "natives" remains' (Tsuda 2015: 15).

The status of 'neither fish nor fowl,' as one of my research participants described me, was an accurate reflection of my 'betwixt and between' position(ing). Conducting Jewish ethnography as a Jewish ethnographer soon became conducting Jewish ethnography as a 'Jew-ish' ethnographer, and was an experience that tested and tormented my own identity and subjectivity.

6 See translator's note by Haim Watzman (El Or 1994).

7 Shabbat (Sephardic pronunciation), Shabbos (Yiddish or Ashkenazi pronunciation); the Sabbath. Using a non-Jewish person (determined by *halachic* status) to perform tasks that a Jewish person is prohibited from doing on Shabbat.

Although these ethnographic encounters were personally challenging, they were, as has been argued previously, a necessary part of enabling an anthropologist-in-training to gain a sense of 'the host culture and its behavioural parameters' (Mitchell 1988: 228).

Conducting anthropology *across* homes caused 'boundaries' between oneself and the field, oneself and the research participants, as well as with one's quotidian or ritual facets of life, to constantly be re-drawn and instead reflected the fluidity of a 'frontier'. Moving from a progressive to an Orthodox and Haredi context of Judaism entailed abiding by Orthodox standards and customs, especially in relation to gender and dress. I also took a 'leap of faith' and stopped attending Liberal Jewish religious services during the twelve-month period in order to understand the context in which the research was grounded, and attending Orthodox and Haredi synagogues soon illuminated the extent of the socio-religious diversity that existed in a so-called 'community'.

The composite nature of the field-site, which is described in more depth in the following section, 'Anthropology *across* "communities"', meant that I had to continuously negotiate what situations with the opposite gender would be acceptable and what would not. This was especially the case considering that Orthodox and Haredi Judaism uphold the strict separation of genders, and that specific doctrines are mobilised to minimise those interactions or degrees of engagement. On many occasions, for instance, I invited research participants for breakfast or a late lunch in the local kosher⁸ cafes as an act of gratitude for their time. However, it was a constant challenge to comprehend which research participants this would be (un)acceptable to, regarding the stringencies they applied to interactions with the opposite gender, and what could be misconstrued as being inappropriate by witnesses. Moreover, meeting in public cafes also ran the risk of conversations being overheard.

Regardless of the social or geographical proximity of the researcher to the area under study, it remains the case that ethnographic fieldwork 'requires us to ... embark on the uncomfortable process of learning about persons and power from scratch and often through mistakes and manifest ignorance' (Simpson 2006: 126).

Anthropological work at home is not exempt from this process of navigating the field-site and its internal dynamics of power and potential. In fact,

8 *Kashrut*; laws governing food preparation and consumption. The kosher cafes in the field-site are under the supervision of different *Bet Din* who might apply – or are considered to apply – different stringencies to *kashrut*, so what might be considered kosher for one participant could be considered not kosher enough for another.

it arguably adds further layers of complexity, as the researcher's subjectivity undergoes a transitional role in becoming an ethnographer at home, negotiating dualities in identities and status, and (re)aligning relationships along the way. Moreover, this is especially the case if we consider fieldwork as an 'initiator rite' of social anthropology, where 'unless one proves oneself in the field, one has not earned the right to call oneself an anthropologist' (Jackson 2012: 4).

Anthropology *across* 'communities'

The above discussion does not imply that the field-site was a simple demarcation between those perceived as Jewish or non-Jewish, and the negotiation of my own identity was arguably characteristic of the field-site, where a multiplicity of Orthodox and Haredi Jewish groups sat 'cheek by jowl'. There was no singular expression of Judaism (or of being Orthodox or Haredi Jewish) in the field, and understanding the intra-group dynamics and diversity was a consistently arising element of the research to consider. This can be epitomised by a close participant, who, upon describing the field-site, remarked that there were 'fifty shades of grey here'.⁹

Past ethnographic studies of Orthodox Jewish topographies have made similar claims, where 'what looks like a single "suburban Orthodox Jewish community" is in fact a much more complex agglomeration of many communities' (Diamond 2008: 120). As Etan Diamond (2008) notes, the Orthodox Jewish topography consists of 'religious microspaces' which are exclusive as well as encompassing of intra-group diversity, and this research not only involved understanding the myriad 'microspaces' and how they relate to each other, but also an attempt to access them as an 'outsider', build rapport, and develop potential research participants.

A previous study of a Haredi Jewish area in Manchester referred to the intra-group diversity as a situation where 'clearly there are communities within communities, but the imagination of an idealistic overall community remains' (Valins 2003: 167). My participants were quick to describe the Jewish area under study as a friendly 'community'; the fabric of society is indeed rich and tightly woven (perhaps for those considered to be on the 'inside'), and this was demonstrated by religious events which brought different facets of the population together and thus formed a principal area of interaction.

9 A reference to the controversial book and especially the film *Fifty Shades of Grey*, released in 2015, at the time of the fieldwork.

The festival of Purim was one vibrant example of this, where the local geography transformed into a carnival with open homes and institutions, and with *mishloach manot*¹⁰, alcohol, and donations flowing across frontiers. Interestingly, children attending particular schools would be in identifiable costumes; with boys from one institution all dressed in red and white stripes from the iconic book *Where's Wally?*, those from another dressed as penguins, or another dressed as musketeers and adorned with *fleurs de lis*.

Whilst the space was quickly regarded as a 'friendly community' during the interviews, they also unravelled subtle threads of distinction. Rather than a 'community' – as the Jewish population in the UK is often and problematically referred to¹¹ – I found that the field-site consisted of overlapping and multi-layered sub-groups who sat side by side, and often with tensions between them. Moreover, conducting anthropological work across 'communities' challenged and undermined this term, as moving between sub-groups exposed the internal dissent and dissonance, and degrees of separation that were perceived to be necessary for (and protective of) the Haredi and especially the Hassidish¹² cosmologies. Moving beyond the use of 'community' as a social and conceptual category was, then, an important part of the research, which enabled me to envisage the plurality of subjectivities as well as the relationships between the subgroups, and not only with each other, but also the broader non-Jewish environment.

Described as an 'ultra-Orthodox Jewish community' as it is by the English and European health authorities, there is indeed a risk of generalising and simplifying what is actually a complex and composite social body. Moreover, this raises questions of theoretical importance concerning the dynamics of this so called 'ultra-Orthodox Jewish community' and the conditions that make it 'hard to reach'.

There were mixed responses to the notion of being 'hard to reach' when I put this to my participants. One Haredi mother felt uneasy about being categorised as 'hard to reach', perhaps alongside other minority groups such as the historically stigmatised Roma and Irish travellers, and exclaimed 'it makes us sound like hippies or something'. Others commented that the self-insulating stance of the Haredi cosmology is a deliberate strategy, but social conducts that

10 Hebrew 'gifts of food that are given to friends and family on Purim'.

11 See Kahn-Harris and Gidley 2010 for a discussion on the 'Jewish community'.

12 Hassidish (used in the field-site as opposed to 'Hassidic', perhaps reflecting a linguistic and Yiddish reference) sub-groups are Haredi per definition, but not all Haredi Jews are Hassidish.

non-Haredi Jews incorrectly interpret as being offensive is, I am told, in fact defensiveness on the part of the Haredim. As a key Hassidish authority, who is an integral part of the Haredi institutional landscape, made clear; 'I'm hoping what I've said to you is that I'm talking about communities trying to cope but on the other hand, it's a community that is vulnerable'.

Attention to intra-group diversity encourages a discussion on *marginalities* and the position of, and dissidence between, minorities within what is perceived as a singular and homogenous minority group. Conducting anthropological work *across* 'communities' within the field-site illustrated the differences in socio-religious conduct or worldviews that could be found across families, or what might be attributable to membership of a particular sub-group. One's worldview or *hashkofah*¹³, in turn, impacts upon the degree of engagement with the wider Jewish and non-Jewish population and institutions. Based on my ethnographic research and the preliminary findings that are presented here, intra-group diversity can consequently present challenges for the design and implementation of peer-led as well as state-provided health and wellbeing services, as health conduct cannot be considered in isolation but rather as part of cosmological or world view.

My initial attempts to relate sub-groups to each other and gauge the different standards of Orthodoxy were challenging as the continuum of being 'Orthodox' or 'ultra-Orthodox' was indeed vast. As one Haredi participant remarked, the most basic measure of Orthodoxy was being observant of the laws surrounding Shabbat and *kashrut*, and this prerequisite extended over to particular needs relating to individual or communal ideals of religious observance, such as gender-segregated or culturally sensitive services.

Signifiers such as 'Modern Orthodox', 'Orthodox', 'Haredi', and 'Hassidish' did not always position sub-groups as existing within clearly defined 'boundaries' but instead exemplified how frontiers could be flexible and fluid. In Mrs Rosen's¹⁴ case, there was a reluctance to be identified as being Haredi and she instead identified her family as being on the 'Orthodox spectrum. We're *frum* Orthodox Jews. From the outside we'd be classed as Haredi, but Haredi is such an extreme and we're probably somewhere at the sort of lower end of the extreme'.

13 To reflect vernacular of the Jewish constituency under study, I use the Ashkenazi Yiddish pronunciation. This term was often pronounced as *hashkofah* (pl. *hashkofos*) in the field-site rather than the Sephardic pronunciation of *hashkafah* (pl. *hashkafot*).

14 All names in this paper have been replaced with pseudonyms in accordance with the ethical guidelines outlined by the ASA (2011).

The word *frum* that Mrs Rosen refers to is the Yiddish term for pious, which was at first a challenging word to comprehend as it was often used as a standard of religious observance. The term was also used to demarcate individuals or institutions which were perceived as *anti-frum*, or what was considered as not being compliant with particular interpretations or stringencies of religious law; notably a local Jewish publication that advertised non-kosher restaurants or included images of women. I soon found that being *frum* did not necessarily entail abiding by religious dogma and prescribed texts alone, but also conforming to social norms and expectations. An integral part of *frum* life and its rich social fabric is 'community' (see Benor 2012), the membership of which commands conformity in dress, language, and restrained use of, for example, the internet and secular media. This is iconic of the notion of boundaries within ethno-cultural groups, where Frederik Barth noted that the 'identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgment' (1998: 15). Abiding by *frum* values and social codes was then, interestingly enough, not always an indicator of acting in congruence with religious commandments, therefore demonstrating how 'emblematic labels and stereotypes of collective identity do not always provide reliable instruments of diagnosis of how people experience their own social identity, or that of other groups' (Jacobson-Widding 1983: 23).

By circulating around various social bodies and *hashkofos* within the field-site I was able to understand vernacular embodiments and manifestations of Judaism that are inclusive or exclusive of others. The word *heimish* was one example of a reference point that I continuously encountered but struggled to define or locate. Although its roots are in the term *heim* (Yiddish 'home'), the quality of being or feeling *heimish* has a more convoluted meaning. It encompasses a wide range of the Orthodox Jewish population; those who have a shared cultural background, outlook, or a similar level of religious observance and, as one participant described it, as 'people like us, who are on a similar level to us'.

A *heimish* atmosphere was the essence of many Shabbat dinners that I experienced over the year, but it was only when I arrived at the family home of a Satmar research participant that I grasped and experienced its tangible meaning; previously it had seemed like an abstraction. Upon opening the door, Mrs Fried led me through the hallway into a divided room with wooden flooring; the front housed a piano and settee, and the back held the grand dining table with a matching sideboard. The air was weighted with a musky feel, and the silver candelabra caught my eye, less for its ornateness and weight and more for the drops of candle wax that adorned and marked the solid wood cabinet

beneath. The room told an ancient story; a narrative that was preserved in the leather-bound *seforim*¹⁵ behind me.

There were strands that ran across the Orthodox and Haredi frontiers and were available to any Jewish person in the local area, and these took the form of remarkable intra-group services as well as *gemachim*,¹⁶ which are both dedicated forms of *chesed* (Hebrew 'kindness') that operate in the Jewish topography. The services perform a unique role in catering for the needs of the religious constituency for whom outside agencies that are viewed as non-Jewish, or not *frum*, would be considered as culturally inappropriate. These include therapists, a swimming pool, special educational needs facilities, a family and children's centre, and hospital visitation groups. The *gemachim* consist of a continuously growing portfolio of resources that are freely available, or for a nominal charge to cover the expenditures incurred. These include laundry services, wedding dresses, foods and supplements which are considered to be health promoting, and medicines, to name a few. Whilst these services are available to all Jews in the area, I was told by Mr Attias that 'if you're not in the community, you probably wouldn't know about it'.

The socio-religious topography then demonstrates that territorial or geographical proximity to the Orthodox and Haredi precinct is one consideration, but arguably more important is the participation and conformity, and, by virtue of this, the circulation of knowledge that being 'in the community' bestows. This is, again, emblematic of Barth's theory of ethnic groups and boundaries and his argument that:

Ethnic groups are not merely or necessarily based on the occupation of exclusive territories; and the different ways in which they are maintained, not only by a once-and-for-all recruitment but by continual expression and validation, need to be analysed. What is more, the ethnic boundary canalizes social life – it entails a frequently quite complex organization of behaviour and social relations. (Barth 1998: 15)

Differences in *hashkofah* extended beyond philosophical differences in Judaism, religious observance or customs, and to attitudes regarding the engagement with behaviours or conducts that are perceived as belonging to the

15 Hebrew 'religious texts or books'.

16 Hebrew 'an abbreviation of *gemilut chassadim*, acts of kindness'.

non-Jewish or ‘*goyish*’¹⁷ world. Exploring how young Haredi children engage with physical activity was an arena where the construction of qualitative knowledge became hindered by my liminal, ‘Jew-ish’ status. Whilst I had initially intended to understand how physical activity fits into Haredi Jewish childhoods by interviewing youths, my status often prevented this, probably because of my ‘exposure’ to other, contested, Jewish denominations as well as the broader outside world. The majority of my research participants, then, came to be Orthodox and Haredi mothers, consequently shifting the focus of the research.

However, in the eyes of some Haredi and Hassidish parents, it is more dangerous for their children to mix with Modern Orthodox or non-Orthodox children than non-Jews because of crucial differences in *hashkofos*. There are indeed differences in *hashkofos* between *frum* Jews and non-Jewish people, but because one group is Jewish and the other is not, there is a clear social boundary that justifies acting or thinking differently. But the issue of ‘hashkofic contamination’ – as one participant regarded it – is much greater because modern Orthodox Jews still define themselves as religiously observant, yet they may have a wildly different *hashkofah* and a less stringent approach to *halachah*¹⁸ than their *frum* or Haredi counterparts: so the boundaries effectively become more blurred.

Yehuda was one participant who had transitioned his children from a ‘black’¹⁹ expression of Judaism and attendance at a private Haredi school to a state-aided Jewish school that was more modern and Zionist in its outlook. He remarked how intra-group differences can be demarcated by outlook and observance:

there are significant worries that if you speak to other children, the kid might hear things that are not quite appropriate for them – or ideas that are not [of the] correct *hashkofah* which might influence their children to take a non-Haredi lifestyle and they want to protect them against it.

The fear of ‘*hashfokic* contamination’ was a constant gradient between families, rather than it being an issue confined to the extremities of Jewish Orthodoxy. Describing herself as Modern Orthodox (but whose children attended schools

17 Derived from the Hebrew term *goy(im)* (‘nation(s)'). *Goyish* is also used as a pejorative term for what is viewed as a non-Jewish conduct.

18 See Oring 1988 for a more in-depth discussion of the differences between ‘traditional Orthodoxy’ and Modern Orthodoxy in the US context, and the concern which Modern Orthodoxy presents for their ‘traditional Orthodox’ and Haredi counterparts.

19 This term was commonly used in the field-site as being Haredi, religiously right wing, or *shtark*, meaning strict.

that were widely regarded as being more Haredi), one mother elucidated her concerns as to why differences in *hashkofos* are significant:

Mrs Harris: It's more to do with people coming from very different homes. It's hard to stop your kids being friends with people whose homes I'm not so keen on them going to. So either watching stuff that you don't want them to be watching, or wearing stuff that you don't want them to be wearing, or eating stuff that you don't want them to be eating.

By attending a particular educational establishment, her children would be encountering other children whose families upheld a similar *hashkofah* and socio-religious codes of conduct. But another participant faced the tension of realising that her eldest child would be more suited to an institution which was generally considered less Haredi by maintaining an emphasis on balancing secular and religious studies, but this was not an option, for fear that her younger children would consequently be 'thrown out' of the Haredi primary school they attended.

Whilst interviewing a Satmar mother, she commented that a defining principle of being Hassidish is what she described as a 'very insular outlook, and we do an awful lot of protecting ourselves from anything that might not be appropriate'. This extended to the use of a local organisation that claims to be 'cross-community', also serving the local non-Jewish population, and has an agenda to bridge informal Jewish and Zionist education with sports and social activities. When I asked if her children would use the service for physical activity and recreation, she replied:

Our children definitely not, other [Satmar] children presumably also not. This is going to sound extremely snobbish and I don't mean it the way it sounds; we try to be careful who they mix with, and if its going to be children who might introduce them to stuff that we're not very excited for them to know about, we'd like it to be with strict supervision and very carefully controlled. It sounds very snobbish and elitist, but we don't mean it like that, it's being exposed to the outside world.

Physical activity has been discussed as being contentious in Haredi educational institutions, perhaps because of a general resistance to a 'body culture' and the view that exercise is a 'gentile custom' (Hakak 2009). However, this quotation alludes to the possibility that childhood physical activity provisions in the

'community' also bring unwanted and uncontrollable exposure to other Jewish modalities and customs.

Concerns about the degree of relation to Jewish families and institutions who identified with Zionism were common in Hassidish circles, and this was, for one participant, an issue when procuring funding from Jewish bodies for activities in the Hassidish neighbourhoods:

Mrs Leib: There were ideology issues, there was at the time some funding that came in through Zionist sources which was against their agreements.

Ben: Is that acceptable in this kind of community?

Mrs Leib: Not to my in-laws, anything that you take from a service that is available, you become behoven to; it's human nature. They do not *ever* want to be behoven to the Zionists because they were actually doing things against what is allowed. (Emphasised in interview)

Whilst Sarah Bunin has commented on the ways in which Orthodox cultural practices are maintained by upholding an 'ideology of distinction and separation from non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews' (2012: 7), there is evidently a potential for Orthodox and Haredi sub-groups to protect themselves from internal conflicts in worldviews, customs, and interpretations of observance. Although I was told that it was in nobody's interest for one Orthodox or Haredi group to marginalise another, with there being an exchange and reliance of services in between, marked distinctions were nonetheless at play. This reflects the notion described by Oliver Valins, where 'just as the dominant often seek to exclude others, minorities may likewise attempt to create and to defend their own identities and 'purified communities' (2003: 160).

What is conceived as a 'community' is a figment of the imagination, and, as Benedict Anderson has remarked, 'communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (2006: 6). The term 'community' has indeed been problematised in the broader academic discourse of intra-group relations, partly for its 'mythic value', which can give rise to a 'misplaced belief in "community" and the "participation" that normally goes with it' (Cannon *et al.* 2014: 93). Moreover, as Roberto Barrios recently noted, "communities" are never static or bounded (either geographically or socially). Rather they are collectives that a) are in a constant state of emergence over time, and b) are shaped by dynamic, politically, and epistemically charged relationships' (2014: 330). It is therefore the case that 'communities' are

constantly being shaped and defined over time by continuously responding to what is perceived as being internal or external to the group.

Moving across homes and worldviews demonstrated how my own position(ing) in the field, to a certain extent, reflected degrees of difference and distinction between sub-groups in the Orthodox and so-called 'ultra-Orthodox' Jewish population. The risk posed by my own subjectivity as a 'Jew-ish' ethnographer and also the perceived threat of '*hashkofic* contamination' from co-religionists upholds the notion of 'purity and danger', for 'where the lines of abominability are drawn heavy stakes are at issue' (Douglas 2002: 196).

Coda

Just months before I boarded my plane to Turku for the round-table discussion on 'Judaic Studies in the Nordic Countries Today', Dan Uzan was murdered whilst guarding Copenhagen's Great Synagogue, on 15 February 2015. What makes this tragic incident even more harrowing is that it is just one of many targeted attacks against Jews in Europe over recent years. It followed the siege at a kosher grocery store in Paris where four Jewish men were murdered in January 2015, as well the unleashing of a Kalashnikov rifle at the Jewish Museum of Belgium in Bruxelles, killing four people in May 2014. In between these fatal and targeted assaults were a string of anti-Jewish attacks, especially in the midst of the Israel-Gaza conflict of July 2014, which led to worldwide protests and the attempted or actual firebombing of synagogues in France and Germany, as well as record levels of reported hate crimes against Jews in the UK (see Community Security Trust 2015).

It comes as no surprise then that disintegrating inter-group relations have come to define Jewish life in Europe, and my Jewish research participants were themselves fearful of an attack occurring locally. But attention should also be paid to intra-group dynamics and their nuanced differences. What is true of any 'community' is diversity, and we should think critically about this term being used to describe a sense of uniform participation.

Differences within and between Jewish Orthodox and Haredi sub-groups may result from differences in religious observance or customs, but also worldviews and outlooks that are feared as 'contaminating'. A singular expression of being a minority group or a context of marginality in the field-site then seems a less than accurate description of the composite Jewish population I encountered, and instead an issue of multiple *marginalities* were certainly at play. Considering this intra-group facet of Jewish life in Europe, I feel, will help

us to better understand the current issues facing religious and ethnic minority populations more broadly in the Nordic countries.

The impetus to engage with Jewish ethnography as a PhD candidate provoked an experience that I naively did not foresee and neither can I forget; whilst I identified as being part of the same religion outside of the field, I was prohibited from doing so inside the field. I had become definitively 'neither fish nor fowl'. Conducting anthropology at home – or *across* homes – has, for me, clearly demonstrated how our own identities as researchers can enable as much as they can obstruct the potential for, or course of, ethnographic encounters. Postgraduate research students can indeed harness their contested position-alities within the 'field' to better understand the complexities that define, yet remain concealed within, a 'community'.

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Creativity, community, change

Functions of and motives for singing niggunim

RUTH ILLMAN

Jewish musical practices stemming from Kabbalah and Hasidic mystical traditions are currently the object of growing attention among a variety of different Jewish communities in Europe and North America, as well as in non-Jewish spiritual circles. As niggunim travel into new contexts, they are reframed and reconsidered in order to meet the needs and expectations of contemporary religious communities, characterised by a liberal and egalitarian, global and transformative religiosity. This article focuses on contemporary practices of *niggunim* – the (mostly) wordless melodies with roots in Hasidic Jewish traditions, sung, chanted and sometimes danced in preparation for, or as a form of, ardent prayer. The practice is seen as an example of the expressive, engaging, emotional and embodied forms of prayer that currently attract many Jews of different institutional attachments. The article seeks to explore the different functions niggunim are put to today and the motives which drive different people to engage in the practice. The analysis is based on ethnographic material in the form of in-depth interviews conducted among progressive Jews in the London area. As a conclusion, the article suggests an approach to contemporary niggunim practices that incorporates perspectives from both literature and ethnography in order to deepen the understanding of the motives for and functions of singing niggunim today.

Introduction

What is a *niggun*¹ and why is it attractive as a way of expressing a Jewish religious identity today? What functions does the niggunim practice fulfill among contemporary, urban, progressive Jews and what motives inspire people to incorporate these traditional wordless songs into their communities nowadays? These questions lie at the heart of this article, which aims at exploring

- 1 In English, you find the alternative ways of spelling the Hebrew word: *nigun/niggun* as well as *nigunim/niggunim*. In this article, I have chosen to follow the spelling used in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, which is *niggun/niggunim*, unless I refer to direct quotes where an alternative spelling has been used. Also the spelling of other Hebrew words follows the recommendations of EJ, which means that e.g. the Hebrew letter ן is translated somewhat inconsistently either as *h* or *ch*.

niggunim as they are practised within a selected group of progressive Jews in London.

Put briefly, niggunim are religious melodies with roots in the Hasidic tradition that since the turn of the millennium have found their way into all sorts of Jewish communities around the world (Huss 2007; Summit 2000: 94–5). This development has interesting connections with the universal processes of change stressed by researchers of religion on a global level – often described as post-secular trends in the globalised, eclectic and highly digitalised religious landscape of today (Nynäs *et al.* 2015). The rekindling of the niggunim practice in new contexts – sometimes referred to as neo-niggunim (Weiss 2009: 57–9) – can thus be linked to developments observed not only in Jewish communities, but in Europe and the USA at large.² As a consequence, individual and embodied forms of worship connected to experience-based and emotional dimensions of faith are gaining ground at the expense of institutional and intellectual religious forms such as dogmas and formal authority (Huss 2007; Ochs 2007: 17). In this context, the wordless melodies, stemming from the Jewish mystical heritage, but adapted to the conditions and needs of the twenty-first century, offer an attractive alternative for many religiously curious Jews (Kahn-Harris and Moberg 2012: 101).

To shed light on this practice and illuminate the motives for and functions of niggunim today, ethnographic material has been gathered among Jews from progressive milieus in London. The functions of, and motives for, singing niggunim was touched upon as part of a comprehensive ethnographic field study that aimed at illuminating contemporary niggunim practices from many angles, including discourses of authenticity (Illman 2016) and emotional, embodied and ecstatic experiences (Illman 2015), as well as issues of liturgical renewal within progressive Judaism today.³ The material is composed of participant observation and in-depth interviews with ten people (five women and five men

2 Recent contributions analysing the role of sound and music in contemporary religious practice are e.g. Hackett 2012, Hoondert 2015, Laack 2015.

3 The material was collected during two visits to London in July and November 2014. The informants were all tied to the progressive, urban and international Jewish milieu centred around Leo Baeck College (LBC; see their website <<http://www.lbc.ac.uk/>>), where rabbis and other professionals for the Reform and Liberal movements in the UK are educated. During my stays, I participated in services and meetings where niggunim were sung and conducted ten in-depth interviews with people involved in the practice. Thus, the research material is qualitative by nature and its creation has been guided by a striving to understand the points of view of the informants. On a self-reflexive note I want to add that the selection of research question naturally reflects my interest in and sympathies for the practices under study, but I am not myself involved in this practice.

aged between 34 and 75 years old) involved in the progressive Jewish milieu in London, centring on Leo Baeck College and with a special interest in music, liturgical renewal and Jewish religiosity.⁴ In this article, the term 'progressive' is not used to denote a certain organisation but rather as an umbrella term for Jews of various organisational backgrounds, who are interested in developing liberal, egalitarian and renewed ways of living Jewish lives. The article focuses on individual understandings rather than official policies and thus among the interviewees are members of Liberal and Reform Judaism as well as Masorti and Orthodox Judaism.

What, then, inspires Jews such as the ones interviewed for this study to seek out meaningful religious practices in the mystical movements of the past? According to Jody Myers, several motives can be assumed; among these the opportunity to build an alternative, more open, flexible and immanent Jewish theology and to develop complementary forms of liturgy and religious practice (Myers 2011: 180–4). The wish to create a dynamic dialectic between creativity and tradition can also be mentioned: bolstering personal needs for self-expression and religious experience while also satisfying a longing for historical embeddedness, structure and validity (Summit 2000: 153). Are these motives also relevant for the people contributing to this study?

Niggunim: definitions and a historical background

The roots of the niggun tradition go far back in Jewish liturgical history. Over the course of history they have been particularly associated with the Hasidic movement where they have become the subject of an entire theology of ardent devotion (Jacobs 1993: 68). The Hebrew word *niggun* (*nign* in Yiddish) is translated into English as 'tune' or 'melody'. Scholars assume that it can be derived from the verb *ngn* (נגן), which in Biblical Hebrew stands in *piel* (and is thus associated with an emphatic expression) and denotes 'to play a musical instrument' or 'to make music' (Jastrow 2004: 874). The Targum commentaries introduced the connection between the Biblical term נגן and a melodic performance of prayer (Elbogen 1993: 382). In modern Hebrew the word is reserved for playing instruments, but in Hasidic contexts a niggun denotes a comprehensive musical unity (a melody) that can either be sung, with or without words, or performed on instruments (Gartner *et al.* 2007: 429). According to Ruth HaCohen, the word niggun bears connotations of 'authenticity', even

4 For details, see the list of references. The interviewees have been given aliases – common Jewish names – in order to guard their anonymity.

holiness, as is the case among the Hasids (HaCohen 2011: 439). It belongs to a group of several interrelated terms that are often used interchangeably in describing Jewish melodic traditions. Hence the word ‘niggun’ as such, simply means melody, but it belongs within a religious context and is mostly associated with a melodic study of the Torah (Summit 2000: 163–4). More specifically, niggunim are linked to Hasidic religiosity and the performance of repetitive melodies with plain syllables or mantra-like text fragments from the Torah or siddur (Weissler 2011: 44). A niggun can even be called a ‘pure melody’ (Edelman 2003: 36).

There are many kinds of niggunim. Some have fixed texts from the Bible or the liturgy.⁵ Most characteristic, however, are the wordless tunes that are performed only to ‘vocables’ – literally, nonsense syllables – such as *lay-lay-lay* or *ya-ba-bam* (Bohlman 2008: 57). These are sung in a repetitive fashion, perhaps interrupted by cries of joy or lament. These wordless vocal melodies are often used ‘as an extension of the existing liturgy, and serve as a prelude or postlude to the traditional prayers’ (Avenary 2009: 48–9). Niggunim can be performed as song, instrumental music or dance, but the central point is that the tune and the singing itself form the core of the practice. The scarcity, or even absence, of words in niggunim is thus an apparent indication of the superior role of the melody: singing itself is more important than pronouncing certain words (Gartner *et al.* 2007: 427, 429). Most commonly, the repetitive element is accompanied by a gradual raising of pitch and increase in tempo so that the intensity of the tune becomes ecstatic (Avenary 2009: 50; Gartner *et al.* 2007: 428). Some niggunim follow rhythmic patterns while others have a freer rhythm (or alternate between the two) and are usually directed by the Rebbe (in Hasidic communities) or the song leader (Avenary 2009: 53). A. Z. Idelsohn writes poetically that niggunim are unique within Jewish music: ‘These tunes have a taste of unearthliness – like a swaying mist which loses itself in infinity (*en sof*)’ (Idelsohn 1992: 411).

Niggunim are often called ‘Hasidic song’ even if contemporary practitioners may not explicitly employ or identify with this heritage. Within Hasidism, a versatile Jewish spiritual movement that developed in Eastern Europe at the end of the eighteenth century,⁶ music became a way of expressing their ideology,

5 In the case of niggunim with words, furthermore, research has often shown that the texts are later additions, adapted to the original tunes (Weiss 2009: 62).

6 A detailed presentation of the multifaceted Hasidic movement cannot be included in this article, but can be found in, for example, Gartner *et al.* 2007, Jacobs 1993, Rubinstein 1975.

and niggunim developed as a means of achieving spiritual elevation and ecstatic states (Bohlman 2008: xix, 80; Idelsohn 1992: 411). The Hasidic lifestyle was marked by ardent piety imbued with mystical motives such as achieving unity with the divine, sanctifying and purifying the soul, repairing the world through good deeds (*tikkun olam*) and even influencing the divine sphere by way of music (Idelsohn 1992: 414; Rubinstein 1975: 17). At the social level, niggunim fulfilled the important function of creating community among the Hasidim (Rubin and Baron 2006: 121). The Hasids made joy the supporting pillar of prayer, and song, as a natural way of expressing joy, was accorded a central role in the religious practice (Bohlman 2008: xix; Edelman 2003: 36; Idelsohn 1992: 411, 414; Smith 2010).⁷ The imperative to rejoice developed into an emphasis on enthusiasm and ecstasy – characteristic of Hasidic niggunim (Jacobs 1993: 68). Niggunim are associated with intensity and zeal as they ‘are sung with a kind of ecstatic fervour by Hasidim’ (Kahn-Harris and Moberg 2012: 101).

Border crossing, hybridity and an ‘interplay of selfness and otherness’ have always been prominent characteristics of Jewish music, Philip Bohlman contends (2007: 5). In Hasidic niggunim, these negotiations take place in the encounter between the sacred and the secular. Creativity and innovation have always been central aspects of a tradition that includes the active combination of high and low, secular and religious (Idelsohn 1992: 415; Rubin and Baron 2006: 121). All music was regarded as appropriate for rendering into niggunim and hence inspiration was sought in music from various sources far removed from the Jewish religious life (Gartner *et al.* 2007: 428). ‘Rescuing’ melodies from their exile in profane contexts and giving them a new sacred obligation hence became a religious duty (Edelman 2003: 35–7; Idelsohn 1992: 417). Thus, ‘all the doors were opened to the influx of foreign musical forms and styles, but they were remodelled’ (Avenary 2009: 49). Singing became part of the aspiration to promote *tikkun* – repairing the world and hastening the coming of the Messiah (Summit 2000: 29, 101). Thus, the niggunim practice ‘emerged not from an anxious desire to tame the musical, but from a Jewish logic that ... embraces the music’s radical potential’ (Kahn-Harris and Moberg 2012: 102).

7 Even though the Hasidic communities of Eastern Europe declined at the end of the nineteenth century and were close to extinction during the Holocaust, Hasidism is certainly not a phenomenon of the past: there are many lively communities in Europe, Israel and the USA (Meir 2010: 199, 215–17). As a cultural form, therefore, Hasidic music is an active, creative and highly contemporary art form (Bohlman 2008: 68–9).

Among contemporary Hasidim, one can find both the effort to preserve and document the musical heritage and the ambition to create new tunes inspired by the tradition (Bohlman 2008: 68–9). Today, one also finds a growing use of niggunim among progressive, liberal Jews with an interest in expressive and embodied prayer forms (Ochs 2007: 17, 26; Weissler 2011: 53). A burgeoning interest in the niggunim tradition had already commenced during the 1960s in the USA as part of the so-called Jewish Renewal movement, which was part of the larger countercultural movement of that time (Ochs 2007: 37; Summit 2000: 42–3). Today, the tradition is alive within many branches of Judaism as part of a larger upswing in explorative, emotional and embodied Jewish practices (Levine 2009: 4–5). For this contemporary context, which is the focus of the current article, Vanessa Ochs offers the following definition:

The *nigun* is a Jewish spiritual melody often sung with universal sounds, rather than words. Initially used among Hasidim to warm up for prayer and also as a prayer in and of itself (Ochs 2007: 37).

In this article the term ‘niggun’ is used in line with Ochs’s suggestion: to encircle a special kind of religiously significant set of tunes associated with Jewish religiosity, rooted in Hasidic religiosity but currently developed and adapted in a variety of Jewish settings, and the focus is especially placed on wordless melodies. As noted above, the functions of niggunim within traditional Hasidic milieus were to prepare for, or form part of, prayer and to create community. By creating an interplay between sacred and secular elements, niggunim offered a practice that through its wordlessness and intense character highlighted the emphasis on the soul’s intention beyond intellectual capacity, ardent devotion beyond rational reasoning, and abundant joy above all. Theologically, the motives reflect the mystical heritage of the Kabbalah, which was a tendency within Hasidim: repairing the world, bringing forward the coming of the Messiah and strengthening divine presence (*shekhinah*) in the world. Against this backdrop, it is time to turn to the ethnographic accounts to analyse what functions and motives are attached to the niggunim practice in this context.

What to do with a niggun?

Many of the interviewees are cantors or prayer leaders in various Jewish settings and reflect on the practicalities around niggunim in relation to their communities rather than their personal family sphere. In the following, therefore,

'we' commonly refers to the community in which they are active. The interviewees give varying answers to the question of whether they use niggunim in their religious practice. Most say they use them to some extent, as Dinah: 'Niggunim in the very strict sense of being melodies without words, the largely Hasidic origin, we don't do it a lot'. Nevertheless, she contends, her Reform community often uses prayers that are 'niggunim-ish', that is:

... where part of the melody itself appears niggun-like ...; it starts off as though you're singing a niggun and then you actually insert the words and then you lay-lay again at the end. I would argue whether that's strictly speaking a niggun, but it feels influenced by niggunim.

Similarly, Sarah, who works as a Reform cantor, says: 'We don't use them *that* much [but] we use them every so often. ... I feel as if my niggun repertoire is pathetically small [laughing]'. Among the interviewees, the Masorti cantor Rebecca is most enthusiastic about niggunim: 'It's really wonderful and we use niggunim a lot', she exclaims. Both Miriam and Daniel, on the other hand, say they never sing niggunim.

Micah, who has a past involvement in the Hasidic Chabad movement but now works as a Liberal rabbi, says he does not have many opportunities to use niggunim anymore. In addition, he does not find it as urgent or attractive as before: 'There's just too many other more important things to do with the time'. Hannah says her Reform community does tend to sing melodies without words 'in a kind of Hasidic style with ya-ba-bam or lay-lay-lay', but that not many niggunim are included in the services: 'It's not something that we never do; we just don't do it very much, because it's more formal'. However, most interviewees agree with Daniel (born in the 1950s and a member of an Orthodox synagogue), who says that overall this form of singing is 'more visible than it was when I was young, certainly ... so it's grown, very much grown'.

Niggunim are teachable

The interviewees associate niggunim with spiritual and mystical values such as experiencing a connection to the divine and sanctifying one's own hectic life, but above all, they are seen from a practical angle. From a pedagogical point of view, wordless niggunim have many advantages. In congregations where members are not confident in Hebrew, niggunim offer a viable option: the melodies are simple; they are captivating and easy to join in with, regardless of Hebrew

skills or musical proficiency.⁸ Niggunim are, to use Daniel's term, 'teachable'. Sarah calls niggunim a 'teaching tool':

I find that they're helpful for a couple of things. One on a very technical level: niggunim are a great way to teach. If I want to introduce a new melody for a piece of liturgy that's halfway through the service and I don't want to stop the service to teach it, I'll teach the melody without words, as a niggun. [And when] they know the melody I just fill in the words.

Similarly, Rebecca uses niggunim to teach new melodies, however not revealing that she is actually teaching something new 'because then you've broken the flow of the service'. If you bring in the new melody in the form of a niggun 'you hold the energy' and it works every time, she concludes. 'Rather than as a prayerful device [the niggun] becomes more of a leadership device, or pedagogical device', Dinah agrees. She thinks niggunim are useful for meditation because 'there's something very natural about it; ... to have a melody to hold on to'. A melody, you can 'take outside of the service, the formal structures of prayers as well, and carry with you for the rest of the day, that's very helpful'. Adam argues that niggunim get people to sing 'almost without thinking, the way children will sing when they're around music'. Niggunim also function as an invitation: 'I think it gives the congregation the permission to sing'. In order to function in that way, however, the niggunim must be uncomplicated, Micah concludes: sometimes you have to 'simplify it ever so slightly to make it easier in case people wanted to join in. Some of the very fiddly bits I just simplify'. Yet, teaching is not the right word to use, as Hannah ponders:

When I 'teach' – I'm saying it in inverted commas, niggunim – I don't teach them. I say to them: I will sing it until you can join me. And when everybody has joined and we've sung it through, then everybody knows it. It just feels to me alien to the soul of a melody to [teach it]. I think there is something about niggunim that has a life of its own.

There are definitely trends in niggunim singing, David concludes: some years, certain melodies are sung to the extent that they start 'getting on everybody's nerves'. In a similar vein, Dinah jokingly says: 'Niggunim without words

8 In order to demonstrate this point, several of the interviewees introduced niggunim during the interviews and made me sing along – a method that usually functioned very well.

of any meaning, just the lay-lays, they have that kind of earworm quality to them, you know, where they get stuck in your head'.

Structuring time and creating moods

Among the functional qualities of niggunim, the interviewees frequently mention their ability to structure time and create different moods, for example 'getting people in the mood for Shabbat', as Micah says. Hannah describes how her family always starts Friday night 'with a niggun that we used to sing in my home'. Just two notes into the niggun she feels 'it's bye-bye week, hello Shabbat'. Adam and Miriam describe how wordless niggunim can be used to separate secular time from sacred time as well as marking the transition from one section in the liturgy to another. Furthermore, Miriam argues, niggunim are apt tools for creating an atmosphere – of joy or sincerity, remembrance or assurance, depending on the circumstances. In fact, she claims: 'I would completely instrumentalise it':

What do I do with niggunim? I use them very functionally, for example to create community in the beginning of a service: people come in; they are talking, and if I want us to start together, I will use a niggun and often people know the melody so they pick them up very quickly. ... Then I would use them to introduce the time ..., to create atmosphere but also time boundaries, so that you know when it is Hanukkah or Kol Nidrei or ... [and] then, I use them to keep people silent [laughing]!

Dinah follows the same line of thought, saying: 'They might be used rather than saying: "OK everybody, it's time to start up". Somebody might just start by humming a niggun clearly as a device to bring people together.' Sarah agrees: 'It's a great way of getting people settled in and settled down for the service'. Starting with a song is, according to her, a soft entry into the space of prayer:

If I start singing [a niggun] and I just do it three or four times, by the second time people will have started to quiet down, by the third time they're silent, by the fourth time they've joined me. And I don't have to say a word. ... So starting a service with music is a real signal that, OK, this is something different now, I'm not talking at you, we're in this together. ... You don't want to be patronizing but it's much easier, much nicer, to know that it's time to do something when you sing it.

Sarah also claims niggunim are apt to be used ‘as a bridge, especially for going from particularly upbeat texts that we need to transit into something a little bit more gentle’. Miriam, too, points out that niggunim can be used ‘to prepare people to change an atmosphere’. Rebecca would use niggunim both for ‘introductory ends’ and as continuations of prayer: ‘If we’ve had a prayer where people have enjoyed singing it and you don’t want it to go, you like it but you’ve run out of words, so you just carry on singing the tune’. This way, you do not have to ‘come out of the magic all of a sudden’, but can dwell in the prayer atmosphere even after the words are finished. Hence, a niggun is useful for creating and upholding sacred time, a way of ‘settling in and getting ready’ for Shabbat, as Sarah says: ‘I don’t do this on a normal day so this is how I’m expressing being Jewish and being here and separating from the rest of the week’.

As mentioned above, the niggun is referred to as what Rebecca calls ‘a mood creator’. The mood can be meditative and peaceful or jolly and lively – depending on the niggun. This includes ‘building up an atmosphere’ and ‘creating an emotion’ in the service, as Miriam and Micah clarify. The niggun, Sarah concludes, ‘keeps us going, and it keeps us building up this fervour of getting ready for the service, which is a lot of fun!’ Dinah refers to niggunim as ‘very good shortcuts to a particular space’, and says: ‘If I as a service leader want to trigger a particular state, emotion, communal memory or something, [a niggun] will be a much faster way to get there’. Rebecca points out that in her view, ‘Judaism is not really a religion of belief as much as a religion of doing’. The physical activity of singing together, without words, underlines this and creates energy, which is felt rather than heard. As mood creators, niggunim are flexible tools, Hannah contends – the same tune can be sung with or without words; it can change and transform:

The same melody could be a *steiger*, a kind of a meditative pouring of the soul, and it can also be a *freilache*, a joyful [tune]. It depends on how you perform it; there’re lots of niggunim that you can sing slowly and they have one mood and you sing them fast and they have a very different mood.

Creating community – but also distance

As noted by, for example, Jeffrey Summit (2000: 34) and Martin Hoondert (2015: 131), participatory singing can offer transformative occasions where experiences of unity, community and sharing flourish on a deeper level. This aspect of niggunim is accentuated in the interviews. Niggunim ‘give a community something to do together’, Daniel states. Miriam adds that the advantage

of the niggun is that you can join in easily, which creates community. Adam presents a similar view: 'The whole idea behind [the niggun] is that everybody is singing it. So people coalesce around it.' Micah sometimes presents niggunim as a soloist in concerts and gatherings, but emphasises that 'just to stand and perform a niggun feels somehow wrong'. He would much rather sit in a circle together with others and encourage them to sing along: 'Niggunim are not solo performances, it's very much everybody singing together'. Therefore, Sarah says, a niggun 'helps to connect with the people around', and continues:

It's hard to speak something together, but it's really easy to sing something together. So the rhythms and the melodies ... it's a point of connection between me and the people that I'm with now as well as the people in tradition, in history. It's a powerful form of expression.

Many of the interviewees stress the importance of involving everyone in the service – not merely having professionals who perform the music and congregants who are spectators. 'People generally want to be participants and not audience', Rebecca claims. In her view, this change towards greater participation shows that religious sentiments are changing. Today, people seek prayer experiences that are tangible and intimate: 'We want to enable each other not just to sit there like wooden posts; we're all involved in it'. In the service, then, the niggun helps you to 'stay engaged and stay a part of things', Sarah claims. 'I want to be part of it', Dinah agrees, but also points to the need for balance and rhythm:

Normally I love singing along the service. ... I want to participate. [But] I think services do need to have light and shade, a balance, and so there is a place for a solo here, group participation here, maybe a choir. ... Because I want to participate, it doesn't mean I have to sing every single thing.

Despite these positive assessments of niggunim singing and its adaptation to contemporary progressive services, several informants also describe uneasiness with wordless melodies. Miriam has made a conscious decision not to tap into a heritage that she does not feel is her own.

I don't use [niggunim], deliberately not, because I'm not connected. I don't want to connect to that Eastern European shtetl world. Because we live in modern Europe, we live in a time where we do not live in ghettos, we are part of the normal everyday world, outside, part of society. So why should I use this tradition, that comes from something that I cannot connect to?

Daniel presents similar motivations: 'I don't do it; not part of my tradition. I didn't grow up doing it. So I just see it going on, it can be nice.' Dinah clarifies that singing niggunim today does not entail your subscription to the theological standpoints upheld by the communities that developed them. There is a clear differentiation between classical and contemporary motifs for singing niggunim, but it is far from watertight, she claims: many people within progressive communities have colourful Jewish backgrounds and may choose to combine motives and beliefs from different sources in their personal lives:

In the Jewish community, I think it's very likely that most people have a number of different kinds of Jewish experiences, and therefore, when I sing the niggun in my Reform synagogue, am I *really* thinking about bringing the Messiah back? Maybe not, but that would be to discount the likelihood that a lot of people might well know that information from some other part of their Jewish life experience.

Others describe a more practical uneasiness with niggunim. Adam, for example, says he would use niggunim if asked to, but generally prefers prayers with words. 'The idea is that people will be comfortable singing [niggunim] because they don't have words, but that's not my experience', he claims:

What I've found is that congregations are generally a little bit uncomfortable singing la-la-la. ... They just don't know quite what to do with it. So I find that they do better with tunes that have words, but simple [Hebrew] ones. But it isn't about what's being said, it's that it's easy to sing [with] words, there's some feeling of being attached to them as opposed to la-la-la.

For the same reason, Dinah says she 'couldn't have a prayer experience that was only niggun, but as part of a service it can be powerful'. Thus, she holds: 'I'm not averse to them; it's a lot to do with how it's used, when it's used, why it's used'. Micah also asserts that 'the whole question of singing niggunim and creating community is a tricky one'. Like Adam, he doubts that singing without words is easier:

It's actually not so clear, not so simple. Because singing *with* words, if you can get the words across to the people, actually helps to anchor the melody and helps people to associate syllables with notes and get the shape of a melody. Singing without words, it can be much harder for people to get the shape of a tune and fix it in their minds. And also, if people are not used to

singing to nonsense syllables it can be very uncomfortable at first, ... a little ridiculous, a little strange and artificial.

Others, on the other hand, think that wordless singing comes naturally in Jewish communities. 'Our community is used to the feeling of a niggun', Sarah says: 'Because we have this embedded culture of niggunim ... we're used to it, we love it, we like to sing and if there's no words it makes it easier to sing.' Nevertheless, she adds: 'There's certainly some people [for whom] niggunim feel very foreign ... they don't necessarily know that there is that connection but it's amazing how quickly they grab on to it'. Hannah is even slightly upset by the thought that niggunim are experienced as insincere:

I think that people, who are uncomfortable singing [niggunim] because it's childish, are very far removed from the Jewish community, because if you are part of the Jewish community, you grow up with it all the time. Have you actually met people, who are steeped in the Jewish community, who'd say that they feel it's childish? ... I've never experienced it, I think we all grow up very comfortable with that kind of singing, it's part of our culture, part of our tradition. It wouldn't occur to me to think this is childish.

Musical creativity

The presentation above shows that the interviewees largely experience and discuss niggunim in functional terms rather than in terms of a theological or mystical heritage. Thus, the practical elements, what a niggun can do, are brought out as more relevant than the wish to adopt a certain ideology. Seen as a function, wordless singing is open to a colourful array of creative practices. As noted by Summit, contemporary musical choices of Jewish religious music can include a variety of influences, such as Sufi chants and Buddhist mantras, folk music, popular music and much more (Summit 2000: 4). Similarly, several of the interviewees describe at length how they go about creating and adapting wordless tunes as prayer leaders or cantors.

Creating innovation by adapting tradition

New niggunim are often created by adapting and developing elements from the Jewish tradition. Miriam describes how she creates new niggunim spontaneously, based on traditional motifs: 'There are lots [of melodies] which everybody knows', she says, they are easily picked up because 'they are so common

they are almost boring!’ Another source of inspiration for Miriam is the traditional cantillation mode, *nusach*, which forms the chanting of prayers in traditional synagogues:

What I do is I create tunes by using the *nusach* of the moment of time. ... But if I want people to join it has to have a rhythm and regularity. It’s not a niggun, it’s just something made up to wake you up a bit: Are you with me here in this room? [laughing]

Daniel describes how he incorporates tunes from different spheres of the Jewish world in his prayer life: ‘If there isn’t an Ashkenazi tune I’ll use a Sefardi one. And I even invented one or two, or adapted them.’ According to Rebecca, cantors should feel free to develop the tradition creatively, relating to things that are currently going on in the world and in the community. Sometimes ‘I make it up on the spot’; as she describes it:

That’s a lovely way of using niggunim, and I do, and it doesn’t have to be something that was written down or handed down to me, I can make up anything, I’m a *bazzan*, I know what to do with it! ... And it’s spontaneous; you don’t have to write something down.

It is important that all melodies you bring in suit the purpose and the atmosphere of the particular service and moment, as Sarah emphasises: new tunes need to fit into the flow. ‘There has to be a way: fast and slow and loud and soft, but purposefully.’ As her sources, she uses material from her cantorial training, but also consults colleagues for advice.

With his background in the Chabad movement, Micah clearly draws on the traditional Hasidic repertoire in his practice. Niggunim are a ‘very prominent part’ of the Chabad movement, he explains, and certain niggunim are especially close to his heart so that he has preserved them in his religious practice even while renouncing the Chabad theology. Thus, he introduces his favourite niggunim by telling their story: what Rebbe they are ascribed to, their structure, their use in the Chabad community and their theological connotations. Niggunim thus remain important for Micah, even if he does not use them as widely as before. Some twenty years ago, when he first joined the Liberal movement, niggunim were new and exciting:

I was in quite a lot of demand, to come and sing niggunim. ... There was great curiosity to find out about this relatively unknown world. It’s become

much more mainstream since then. ... A lot of younger rabbis who have absorbed neo-Hasidic approaches when they've gone to study in Israel or in the United States, where there are very vibrant Jewish musical cultures that often involve niggun-type singing, whether it is real Hasidic niggunim or modern composed niggunim, of which there are a lot.

Most of the Hasidic niggunim Micah learnt the 'organic way', that is, 'from singing with people, just listening and joining in'. However, he also set out to learn more on his own, consulting records and musical transcripts. Nevertheless, today Micah has his own, personal way of singing niggunim. What syllables are used is a question of personal taste, he says: 'I usually start with lay-lay-lay but then introduce other sorts of syllables depending on the shape of the music and the feeling'.

Inspiration from and encounters with other religions

Some informants gladly explore melodies from outside the Jewish tradition in their development of niggunim. 'I don't believe that all of our sacred music needs to be composed by Jews', Sarah says. Thus, she is open to experimenting with crossover concepts such as 'Yoga Tefillah'. Rebecca is also open to finding inspiration 'from everywhere'. In her view, the function of the melody is more important than its background. 'We also bring in music from other religions; we've got a lovely Sufi chant that we use. I can use that as a niggun, and I do sometimes. Why not?'

An illuminating example of crossover creativity is given by Hannah, who during the interview sings the melody of a well-known Finnish folk song ('Taivas on sininen ja valkoinen') in niggun style, chanted to the characteristic syllables lay-lay-lay. 'I call it niggun', she laughs and describes how she learnt it years ago from a Finnish friend: 'I have it, for me it's a niggun'. Hannah asks me, the interviewer from Finland, to explain the words, which I do: it is a melancholy text about longing, loneliness and heartache, revealed only to the stars in the sky and the deep forest. 'And you use it as a niggun', I ask, surprised and intrigued. 'I could use it as a niggun; if I came to Finland, I would sing it', Hannah responds. For those, who know the words, the niggun will tap into the emotion of the existing song 'but it will add another layer; you will suddenly see it fresh as just music, with ya-ba-bam...'

I later retell this story to Miriam, who responds by calling it a 'good example' of how tunes can be adapted into the liturgy in a sensitive and meaningful way. For example, she reflects, it could be used in Finland on Yom Kippur: 'In the

context of missing, of longing for someone, if you start with this niggun', you may recognise the folk tune and connect to its atmosphere, perhaps helping you to formulate your prayer: 'God, I'm lonely, be with me'. Yet, creating niggunim based on traditional melodies from other contexts is a delicate task, Miriam emphasises: 'When you do this deliberately, it can be enormously powerful', she contends; but she also describes examples where vernacular tunes have evoked shock and resentment when used in the liturgy due to the connotations they carry. 'I think ignorance is something that mustn't happen', she states; you have to know the background of the tunes, their undertones and original context to be able to use them appropriately as niggunim. Thus, in her view, Christmas carols and national anthems are examples of melodies which are unsuitable as niggunim.

Hence, the interviewees define the limits for innovative musical borrowing in different ways. While Rebecca feels comfortable with integrating Sufi chants and Dinah mentions participating in Sufi *dikr*, Adam would not use melodies that are 'devoid of any connection to Jewish tradition, however defined'. Daniel, on his part, mentions Buddhist mantras as an element he feels sceptical about integrating into Jewish prayer. However, interreligious encounters are presented as a context in which niggunim are especially suitable. Niggunim are 'wonderful in interfaith work', Rebecca exclaims; 'It's another way of embracing and learning'. Dinah concurs:

One thing about wordless melodies is they're very convenient for interfaith work. ... Nobody gets too worried about it because they're not imbued with meaning in the same way [as melodies with words]. And they can be very handy in that kind of space.

Micah often uses niggunim in interfaith contexts because he believes that melodies without words can 'speak to people across religious divisions' as a spiritual technique. In interfaith work, Hannah contends, the niggun is 'an equalizer; it cuts through all the cultural [differences] and the languages'. Similarly, Daniel describes the use of Jewish music in general, not specifically niggunim, in encounters with the secular world:

We use song and music as a way of integrating people, who actually have nothing to do with religion at all, into the activity of prayer, and via the activity of prayer into some understanding of what Shabbat might be about, and what prayer might be about. And it's quite complicated things; it's about explaining the nature of the world.

Mysticism and ecstasy in a critical light

As shown above, the interviewees who describe their experiences of engaging in niggunim singing in progressive milieus in London convey a largely practical approach. They evaluate it in relation to the benefits it offers, the ends it meets and the functions it fulfills. In most cases, niggunim are not perceived narrowly as a historical phenomenon tied to the Hasidic heritage, but rather as a broad, functional category that includes wordless songs that meet the desired ends of the communities: facilitating equal participation, creating atmosphere and connecting people with various backgrounds. Thus, the motives for engaging in wordless singing seem immanent rather than transcendent and expressive rather than esoteric or mystical.

The mystical aspects of wordless singing are mostly discussed in terms of personal religious experiences as facilitating self-awareness, wholeness and well-being, as well as offering emotional and embodied forms of prayer.⁹ The interviewees know the Hasidic history of niggunim and the Kabbalistic motives involved, but predominantly choose more immanent ways of describing their own practice. Micah, whose attachment to Chabad Hasidism was mentioned before, contends that niggunim are, of their very essence, a mystical practice, even if they are seldom used in that way today: 'I think of it as an inherently mystical practice, singing niggunim, but for most people in progressive contexts it's done in a fairly non-mystical way'. This description of niggunim in the progressive Jewish communities of today is emblematic of the opinions aired in the interviews: 'It's of course a completely different approach to niggunim than [the Hasidic], a very functional approach', Miriam concludes.

Thus, the mystical motives are often left aside: there is seldom mention of bringing back the Messiah, redeeming the divine sparks entrapped in the material world, sacralising worldly tunes by adopting them as niggunim, or influencing the divine by means of singing. One aspect of the mystical heritage, which most interviewees allude to in a negative way, is the ecstatic character of certain niggunim. Embodied, engaged and emotional forms of prayer appeal to the interviewees if they are meditative and grounding – ecstatic traits are approached with hesitation and suspicion. Many of them feel uncomfortable with cheerful, happy and energetic singing, which may also include clapping or dancing. As David states: 'When niggunim end up in ecstatic frenzy, clapping and dancing ... when they are framed in that [overtly cheerful] lay-lay, I just can't ...'. Dinah agrees: 'Some of the stuff that I definitely don't like is what we

9 For a more detailed analysis of this theme, see Illman 2015.

tend to refer to as the happy-clappy scene. ... I don't like things that get too charismatic. There's something that feels quite artificial about it to me.' The 'happy-clappy', Dinah specifies, is the excessively cheerful and ecstatic:

A service where you are being deliberately led by a service leader to stand up, to clap, to sway, to feel the need to dance, to be dragged around the room in circles to some sort of heightened emotional experience that is meant to be only positive feels Evangelical to me; and I'm very mistrustful of them, it feels very Christian. It just does zip, nothing for me.

These kinds of experiences are important to many people inside as well as outside the Jewish world, Dinah admits, but personally, she feels sceptical: 'Building a safe environment for prayer is important to me, and that can be an environment where people are enjoying themselves, but not to the point where they want to fall on the floor and speak in tongues ... [laughing]'. Daniel shares her suspicion of practices that 'may not feel dignified'. Adam, on his part, feels uneasy about dancing:

It's not my sort of thing. I'm just not one of those people. There's a lot of people, who are and for them it may be completely authentic, that they feel this need to move and they do [but] I'm not comfortable with that.

Other interviewees are more positive concerning the so-called 'happy-clappy scene'. Sarah laughingly says that 'happy-clappy' was a positive term when she grew up in Canada; only in Britain has she learned the derogatory connotations of the phrase. Dancing is seldom incorporated in her synagogue though: 'That doesn't mean we are not interested, it means that it's scary and it's hard; I think that's probably one step too far for some people'. Rebecca, on her part, is more positive: 'Why should I not be happy?' she replies: 'and clappy – we haven't done a lot of clappy; I'd love to bring in some drums!' She is also keen on dancing 'on the occasions that merit it; it has to be spontaneous'. Such practices need to stay within certain limits, however: 'I'm not saying we have to throw inhibition completely to the wind; you wouldn't want people to do things that wouldn't be acceptable'.

Thus, a middle way between embodied, energetic participation and meditative, sincere prayer is called for. Actually, this balancing is reflected in the basic structure of most niggunim, Micah contends: There are 'meditative niggunim' and 'jolly-dancing type of niggunim' but most would tend to be 'in-between niggunim [with] a bit of both in them'. Nevertheless, he regrets that the more

complex niggunim are seldom used in service because the singalong quality is lost: 'To use niggunim to get people together, they always have to be really simple niggunim. But they're not the ones that excite me at all.' Similarly, Adam points out that niggunim may turn into 'oversimplified musical styles that feel a little embarrassing sometimes'. Micah relates this critique as well:

Sometimes there is a bit of a critique, that it's happy-clappy, that it's a bit meaningless, a bit facile and artificial. And yes, it sometimes feels a bit like that. And that may be why I don't do it a lot, just occasionally when it feels right I'll use niggunim, but not as a routine practice. Because I think maybe that can rob it of some of the specialness.

'It doesn't work for some people, and it really works for others' is how Sarah concludes her view of the practice. Therefore, the balance called for by most of the interviewees rises to the fore, as well as the capacity of prayer leaders and cantors to be able to cater for different tastes and wishes in a congregation. Thus, she claims:

I think it's important especially with niggunim to be OK with knowing that not everyone is going to love it. And learning how to deal with that is hard; it's very hard. But I think it is important because it shows just how emotionally connected music can be for people.

Conclusions

Summarising the analysis presented above of the functions and motives related to contemporary progressive Jewish involvement in niggunim, it seems that wordless songs may facilitate and inspire new forms of prayer and practice in the progressive communities to some extent, as presumed by Jody Myers (2011: 183–4). There are similarities in the functions of niggunim in the past and present – for example their ability to create atmosphere, community and prepare for prayer – but there are also significant differences, especially related to the mystical aspects of the practice.

As I have argued elsewhere (Illman 2016), the informants are reluctant to term their engagement with niggunim a revival or rekindling of the Hasidic tradition. Rather, they look at the tradition as 'a source which is available' (Daniel) – to use and be inspired by, but not as a historical legacy that needs to be, or even should be, recreated as faithfully as possible. Some aspects of the tradition are accepted as positive and innovative. These include the meditative

and embodied functions of niggunim, the joyous expression as well as the creative, bricolage approach of the Hasidim, which seems to suit contemporary religious preferences well, mixing and matching tunes from sacred and secular sources, popular culture and contemporary influences. Other aspects are however consciously rejected, a prominent example being the ecstatic traits of niggunim. Another significant difference concerns *who* is singing. Within Hasidic traditions, niggunim are an exclusively male phenomenon (Idelsohn 1992: 432, 434). The interviewees have a different view, though, and as a contrast, the niggunim of progressive London are sung by women and men together.

The attraction and inspiration of the historical Hasidic niggunim practices is thus performative rather than theological. Function seems more relevant than origin when it comes to choosing a tune and, hence, contemporary niggunim singing does not necessarily carry the same connotations as the historic, Hasidic counterpart it is modelled on (Summit 2000: 47, 88). As the practice is situated in a new frame, the music becomes the carrier of new connotations (Hoondert 2015: 126). The interviewees give voice to a wish to find a way of deepening their religiosity within the frames of the Jewish tradition while simultaneously refusing to be held back by the traditional structures of Jewish identity (e.g. institutions, ethnicity, language and gender) in their searches for a comprehensive, personally relevant and meaningful way of being Jewish. 'Music has the power to create a discourse that mixes signifiers and juxtaposes meanings', Philip Bohlman contends (Bohlman 2008: 69). In my opinion, this statement aptly summarises the views of niggunim presented in this article.

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Ethnographic material

Ten interviews conducted in North London, 8 July and 17–21 November 2014 by the author. All interviews were recorded on mp3 and transcribed into text documents. Recordings and transcripts are stored at the Folklore Archive, Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland. Archive codes: IF mgt 2014/028 and IF mgt 2014/032–040.

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A guide for the perplexed

A student's navigation through Jewish studies in Sweden

NATALIE LANTZ

This article presents a student's perspective on Jewish studies in Sweden over the past ten years. By identifying the milestones of her own educational and professional path, the author discusses three questions of particular interest for a student wanting to pursue any kind of Jewish studies in a Nordic country, using Sweden as an example, namely: 1) How to compose a curriculum that leads to doctoral studies? 2) What can be said about the 'identity' of Jewish studies in Sweden? 3) Can a degree in the subject field of choice also lead to a career outside the academic framework?

My article will offer a student's perspective on Jewish studies¹ in Sweden for the last ten years. I write in the capacity of student representative of the Forum for Jewish Studies (FJS) at Uppsala University (UU) and I have study experiences from three important settings for Jewish studies in Sweden today.² By identifying the milestones in my own educational and professional path, I want to discuss three questions of particular interest for a student wanting to pursue any kind of Jewish studies in a Nordic country, using Sweden as an example:

1. How to compose a curriculum that leads to doctoral studies?
2. What can be said about the 'identity' of Jewish studies in Sweden?
3. Can a degree in the subject field of choice also lead to a career outside the academic framework?

These questions are formulated in general terms due to the interdisciplinary character of Jewish studies: it encompasses a wide range of disciplines such as Jewish history, languages, religion, literature, thought, society, politics and

- 1 Here I define 'Jewish studies' in the broadest sense, spanning Jewish religion and Jewish civilizations throughout history.
- 2 Jewish studies at Lund University, classic and modern Hebrew and Hebrew Bible exegesis at Uppsala University and Jewish studies at Paideia – The Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden.

culture. Under the generic title 'Jewish studies' we find tracks of quite different nature: courses in *Halakhic Midrashim* and contemporary Hebrew fiction can be found in the same syllabus, together with courses on Zionism, Shoah or Sephardic studies. The rich variety of research areas are often allowed to undergo cross-fertilization at larger academic institutes where faculties from different departments are brought together to provide the students with a helicopter view of Jewish studies.

Many institutes of Jewish studies around the world offer courses that range from the basic introductory level of a particular topic to more advanced seminars. The student is therefore well informed when it is time to seek advanced knowledge at graduate level, and to prepare for the doctoral level. These academic settings enable the student to navigate the immense landscape of Jewish studies and find a path that leads to a degree, and further, to a profession in fields such as education, communal service, publishing, journalism and public affairs.

In Sweden, the case is different. I will approach the situation by taking you all on my own personal journey through Jewish studies from Lund University, to Uppsala University, to Paideia and via the Hebrew University, back to Uppsala.

1. How to compose a curriculum that leads to doctoral studies?

In Sweden we do not (yet) have the infrastructures that institutes specialized in Jewish studies do to allow the students to follow through programmes which are designed to take them from the basic level to doctoral level in Jewish studies. Nevertheless, in Sweden there are many academic disciplines that do lead to the doctoral level and easily could be ascribed to the multi- and cross-disciplinary mishmash also known as 'Jewish studies'. Naturally, these disciplines are scattered across the different universities and their various departments, but it is up to the student and the student's supervisors to make contact with experts from other universities/departments in order to broaden the student's orientation within other fields of Jewish studies.

I will illustrate how I patched my own degree together by combining different courses and programmes, guided by two main interests of mine: language and literature.

After graduating from high school, I knew that modern and classical Hebrew and rabbinic literature would be the cardinal points on my journey into academia. I enrolled at Lund University (LU), the first and – so far – only university in Scandinavia which has established a professorship in Jewish studies. (Unfortunately the third-cycle subject area of Jewish studies is no longer extant

at LU). Over two semesters we combined introductory courses in Talmud and Midrash, Jewish memory, Jewish faith and tradition with courses in modern Hebrew.

On one occasion, the faculty of Jewish studies in Lund invited the then newly-established Paideia, the European Institute for Jewish Studies, to a workshop on a rabbinic text. I remember a full classroom with international students engaged in heated discussions. Someone even played the accordion... In the evening we were all invited to a faculty member's private home, where he and his family had prepared a kosher meal for us. This social gathering was an important event for me: we numbered perhaps forty undergraduates and senior researchers who all believed Sweden would be a potential centre for Jewish studies in the future.

After my year in Lund, I continued with classic and modern Hebrew at the department of Linguistics and Philology at Uppsala University, where I later earned my MA degree with modern Hebrew as the main subject. The establishment of a professorship in Hebrew at Uppsala University dates back to 1605 (Norin 2006: 7–11), and the long history of scholarship in the discipline is well reflected in the wide range of second-cycle courses that span from an introduction to West Semitic epigraphy to courses in modern Hebrew literature.

At this point I had acquired the linguistic and philological tools that enabled me to work with different strata of Biblical Hebrew, as well as texts in rabbinic and in modern Hebrew.

But where to turn if I wanted to continue with studies in rabbinic literature? After all, as a student in Sweden, I was – to use the laconic expression used by Vibeke Kielsing Banik – on the ‘periphery of the diaspora’ of Jewish Studies, far away from the academic hotspots of Israel and the US. I recalled the workshop in Lund with Paideia, *in Sweden*. Could it be that this northern corner of the diaspora had become something of a *centre* for Jewish studies? My first visit to Paideia proved that it was indeed possible for me to study with some of the most renowned scholars from influential institutions of Jewish studies worldwide, without even having to leave my home town of Stockholm. I was accepted as a Walter Benjamin fellow at Paideia in 2009 and joined a classroom with students from Argentina, Armenia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the UK and Ukraine. The course list of the one-year Walter Benjamin fellowship programme reveals that the student is guided through ancient and contemporary Jewish textual sources by faculty based in academic settings for Jewish studies in the US, Israel and Europe. During an academic year, me and my fellow students completed the following courses (the Paideia One-Year Jewish Study

Programme for 2009/2010): 'Major themes in the Pentateuch'; 'Midrashic literature'; 'The Rhythm of Jewish life'; 'Early Kabbalah and its origins'; 'Cultural encounters between Judaism and Islam in the Middle Ages'; 'Religious beliefs in Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages'; 'Modern Jewish identity'; 'Medieval Halakhah'; 'Introduction to Jewish-Christian relations'; 'Modern Hebrew literature'; 'Jewish theatre'; 'The Jewish society in the modern era'; 'The Hasidic path'; 'Modern Jewish philosophy'. In addition to these courses, modern Hebrew was taught at three different levels for four hours per day during the entire academic year, and there was also a year-long Talmud course.

When I graduated, Paideia was just about to start a joint Master's programme in Jewish civilizations with the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien in Heidelberg (HFJS). Today a Paideia student can choose to combine the year in Stockholm with studies in Heidelberg for a total of 120 ECTS: 60 credits at Paideia and 60 credits at HFJS. After my Paideia experience I spent a year of graduate Bible studies at the Rothberg International School of Hebrew University and after that, I came back to Uppsala to write an MA thesis on the Tannaitic reception of a certain passage in Exodus, a subject that I could pursue within the realm of Hebrew Bible exegesis. So, after oscillating between classical and modern Hebrew, Jewish studies and Hebrew Bible studies, I found a field where I can make use of the entire spectrum of my educational background.

My educational trail has obviously been both long and winding, and I have often moved in order to continue with Jewish studies at the next level. Individuals have advised me to enrol onto a certain course or programme, but it is not until recently that I have experienced any joint efforts to coordinate existing platforms for Jewish studies in Sweden. As a former student, I want to suggest that the existing institutions jointly draw up possible curricula for students wanting to pursue any kind of Jewish studies, whether it is in the field of history, languages, religion, literature, thought, society, politics or culture.

2. What can be said about the 'identity' of Jewish studies in Sweden?

I like to suggest that the 'identity' of a discipline is created by the scholars active in the field, and the networks they are engaged in. It is the sum of the scholarly activity that attracts students to a certain academic setting. The diversity of disciplines that can be associated with Jewish studies poses a special challenge for the 'identity' of the research area: if different fields of Jewish studies could be gathered under one roof, which faculty is then best suited as an academic environment for Jewish studies? Now, it is not far-fetched to assume that scholars and students interested in Zionism and contemporary Jewry might

not be motivated to study early rabbinic literature, and vice versa. The area of Jewish studies has a mixed pool of potential students amongst aspiring historians, theologians, linguists, law students etc. How to grasp and communicate the ‘identity’ or, rather ‘identities’ of disciplines so diverse?

In 2012 the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University appointed a board to run the multi- and cross-disciplinary Forum for Jewish Studies (FJS), that aims at promoting, supporting and coordinating research and teaching in Jewish history, religion, languages and culture (Instruction for the Forum for Jewish Studies). FJS collaborates closely with other forums, departments, universities and networks and runs a seminar that circulates around the different departments. During the spring semester of 2015, FJS is announcing eleven seminars at six different departments (FJS seminar programme). As a nomadic organization, the FJS enables an exploration of all the variants of Jewish studies without being limited by disciplinary boundaries. But what if the curricula of Jewish studies were to be developed in Sweden? What if students could obtain a doctoral degree in Jewish studies in Sweden? Then, all of a sudden, we must decide on which institutional framework Jewish studies belongs to. If no separate academic setting can be established to embrace the various fields of Jewish studies at all levels in Sweden, then the field, or at least a delimited part of it, must be ‘housed’ by an already-existing faculty. Which one? In my opinion, this is a question of identity rather than administration. Which identity will Jewish studies reflect if it is offered as a track within Oriental studies at the department of Linguistics and Philology? Or if it is given within the history of religion in the Faculty of Theology? Or, say, within Hebrew Bible exegesis? The localization of Jewish studies within a university is an important identity marker for the field.

This said I want to address the fact that a majority of the contributors to the volume at hand, myself included, come from faculties of religion and theology. It is indeed problematic to view Jewish studies as primarily the study of Judaism. Nevertheless an important field of Jewish studies, that is in-depth studies of the textual sources of Judaism demand knowledge in (for example) Israelite religion, biblical Hebrew, Koine Greek, exegesis, the Dead Sea scrolls and the history of late antiquity – expertise you usually find at a faculty of theology. Allow me therefore to take a minute to ponder the identity of Jewish studies within the framework of the Faculty of Theology at UU.

In recent years a number of initiatives have been taken towards a more inclusive terminology within Hebrew Bible exegesis at the theology department at Uppsala University and its scholarly networks. The ethnocentricity of the dating system *f.Kr.* (BC) and *e.Kr.* (AD) is often replaced by *f.vt.* (BCE) and

v.t. (CE) and the discussions occasioned by this increased cultural sensitivity, can, in the words of Martin Jaffee ‘at the very least, remind us of the way that that all temporal schemas represent an index of cultural values’ (Jaffee 2006: 2).

Furthermore, the question about what to call the research discipline usually known as Old Testament (OT) Exegesis was the focus in Göran Eidevall’s installation speech, as he became a professor of OT Exegesis at Uppsala University in 2012. Eidevall suggested a name change and the discipline now goes under a parallel usage of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible Exegesis. In addition to this reform, the criteria for applications for PhD positions changed: before 2012 students needed studies in the New Testament in order to be considered, whereas today Talmud studies serve as an adequate alternative. Also, through FJS, the Faculty of Theology now cooperates closely with Paideia, inviting members of their faculty to lecture in Jewish studies. All these initiatives are vital to pave the way for the establishment of a chair in Talmud studies at the Faculty of Theology at UU, as has been suggested by Lena Roos (2015). If a field of Jewish studies is to be introduced in a faculty with a long history of a Christian orientation, then it must be conducted in *its own right*, not used merely as a springboard to studies of Jesus and the early Jesus movement. The increased sensitivity concerning terminology and dating systems is an important development in this direction.

What are the challenges for the identity development of Jewish studies at a faculty of theology in Sweden? Well, for many, the title ‘theology’ refers to research conducted in a Christian context. In personal correspondence with Chaim Milikowsky, a leading expert on textual criticism of rabbinic literature at Bar Ilan University, I received the following answer concerning my wish to pursue a doctoral degree in Jewish studies at the Faculty of Theology at UU:

I do hope that students can study Jewish Studies at Uppsala soon, but is indeed the Faculty of Theology the optimal place for this to happen? Where, for example, would one study Buddhism or Islam? If indeed, the answer is the Theology Faculty [*sic*], then it must be assumed that Jewish studies belongs there also, but if not, then the German example indicates clearly that Jewish studies in Europe thrives better outside of a Theology Faculty [*sic*]. (Chaim Milikowsky in e-mail correspondence with Natalie Lantz, 21.10.2014)

I quote this e-mail in order to argue that the very name of the faculty creates confusion about what kind of research is conducted there and calls for a justification as to why Jewish studies have a natural place within the framework

of such a faculty. Will people – even from the scholarly world – perceive me as a priest if I present them with a degree from a faculty of theology? And, on a personal note: what does that imply for my Jewish identity?

Further, in the era of non-confessional theological research I'd like to quote a recommendation letter that the Chief Rabbi Emeritus Morton Narowe wrote for me considering future studies in the field of Bible studies in a Swedish university setting:

I emphasize [Natalie's programme on biblical idioms in everyday speech at the Jewish Museum in Stockholm 2009] mainly to illustrate what the presence of a Jewish Bible scholar could contribute, not only to the academic world in this country, but uniquely, to Swedish Jewry. [Natalie] might attract others in our communities to Biblical Studies. (Morton Narowe, in a recommendation letter for Natalie Lantz, 12.1.2011)

I had hoped that Rabbi Narowe would write something impressive about my skills, but no, instead he highlighted the fact that I am Jewish and affiliated to the Jewish community in Sweden. Rabbi Narowe called for increased reciprocity between academia and the Jewish community in Sweden. His request corresponds to the current initiatives taken in order to cater to the educational need for Swedish Muslims at Uppsala University, namely the establishment of the first Swedish professorship in Islamic theology and philosophy at the Faculty of Theology in 2012.

The press release announcing this initiative, clearly expressed the objective to provide education also for minority groups in Sweden:

Today we have a large community, almost half a million people, with a Muslim background [in Sweden]. We want to change the fact that in the current situation they must travel abroad in order to study, for example, Islamic philosophy, Quranic studies and Islamic law ... An important objective is to offer future leaders or teachers within Swedish Muslim organizations an opportunity to attain academic education in Islamic theology and philosophy at home. (Press release announcing the first Swedish professorship in Islamic theology and philosophy, 8.11.2012)

It is still too early to analyse the effect of this establishment on the diversity of the student body, but the initiative is vital in order to offer other communities in Sweden training for their professional lives in religious and cultural organizations. Lena Roos notes that 'the students preparing for service in the

church are but one group in a much more diverse student body' (Roos 2015) at the Faculty of Theology in Uppsala. However, these students are united by their ambition to prepare for service in the church, and thus, I dare argue, still constitute a critical mass that influences the identity of the faculty.

3. Can a degree in the discipline of choice also lead to a career outside the academic framework?

Let me now return to my journey through Jewish studies in Sweden and take a minute to stress the importance of updated 'reality checks' for academic institutions that send students out to a labour market that does not exactly demand an expert on, say, West Semitic epigraphy or Ladino...

A scene from my life as an MA student in Hebrew: I was in a professor's office, taking an exam on a text by Agnon, when the telephone rang. The professor picked up and explained to the caller that no one in the faculty had any time whatsoever for translations of Hebrew fiction. Luckily for me I was able to make out the identity of the caller. That rejected assignment became the impetus for my enrolment onto a course in publishing and translation studies at Stockholm University (SU) and, years later, I contacted the editor that had called the professor and asked for a translator. Today I work as a translator for that very publishing house.

Having done some additional courses in cultural management at SU, with a few months of internship at a museum, I got a job at the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, where I was responsible for PR and public events. Today I am combining the translation assignments with event planning as a freelancing cultural producer. Without the courses and the internships provided at SU I would not have had any work experience corresponding to my educational background at all.

As a former student of Jewish studies, I can vouch for the difficulty of promoting oneself on the labour market. I had to find additional courses for applied training in publishing and cultural management in order to turn my educational background into a competitive resource.

In my opinion, job prospects and practical reasons for a degree in Jewish studies should be discussed at the very first meeting with a potential student. Otherwise the only key to a career is to develop a habit of eavesdropping.

Conclusion

This essay is based on my own educational and professional experience as a student of Jewish studies based in Sweden. By demonstrating how I accomplished the arduous task of patching together my own educational trail from a variety of courses offered by different institutions, I addressed the question of how to compose a curriculum that leads to doctoral studies. Sweden may lack the infrastructures that institutes specialized in Jewish studies have in order to follow the students through programmes designed to progress from the basic level to a doctoral level. However, in Sweden there are many academic disciplines leading to the doctoral level that could go under the generic title 'Jewish studies'. Based on these existing, but scattered, courses in Jewish studies in Sweden, my recommendation is to increase joint efforts to coordinate these platforms and draw up possible curricula for students wanting to pursue any kind of Jewish studies from the basic to the doctoral level. Assuming that no separate academic setting can be established to embrace the various fields of Jewish studies at all levels in Sweden, then the field, or at least a delimited part of it, must be housed by an already existing faculty. In my article I argue that this is a question of the field's identity rather than its administration. Notwithstanding the problems of categorizing Jewish studies as primarily the study of Judaism, there are certain benefits that go with placing a curriculum within faculties of religion and theology. In Sweden, however, such faculties have a long history of a Christian orientation. In line with the recent initiatives within Hebrew Bible exegesis at the department of Theology at Uppsala University, I recommend an active sensitivity concerning terminology in order to open the door to a more diverse body of students and scholars wanting to engage in Jewish studies in a faculty of religion and theology in Sweden. Jewish studies must be conducted in *its own right*, not used merely as a springboard to studies of the early Jesus movement and the New Testament.

Another point of discussion I raise in the article at hand is the question of whether a degree in Jewish studies can lead to a career also outside the academic framework? As a former student of Jewish studies with a patchwork-like degree from different universities, I note the difficulty of promoting oneself on the labour market. I had to find additional courses for applied training in my areas of interest in order to turn my educational background into a competitive resource.

Hence, if curricula of Jewish studies were to be developed in Sweden, it is vital that the issue of job prospects also outside the academic framework is discussed at the very first meeting with a potential student.

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