AHR Roundtable
Rethinking Anti-Semitism

Introduction

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Anti-Semitism requires rethinking. Unlike anti-black racism, nationalism, postcolonialism, or feminism, anti-Semitism remains under-theorized.1 Fundamental questions remain unresolved: How does one define anti-Semitism? Should the word be hyphenated? Can a term that was coined in order to distinguish racialized and politicized Judeophobia from religious anti-Judaism stand for the whole history of Jew hatred? Is hatred the emotion propelling anti-Semitism? Or is Judeophobia—the term I will defend using as an overarching category for the field—better understood in terms of ambivalence: a volatile combination of both fear and fascination? Is anti-Judaism a leitmotif for understanding the Western tradition?2 If so, were ancient Judeophobia and medieval anti-Judaism animated by the same impulses as Nazi anti-Semitism, and how do these map onto anti-Zionism?3 How should one periodize Judeophobia? What accounts for its con-

1 In the case of each of these areas, the theoretical and methodological literature is so developed that there are anthologies or guides to the literature. For examples, see Les Back and John Solomos, eds., Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader, 2nd ed. (London, 2009), which includes a short section on “Racism and Anti-Semitism”; Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism (London, 1998); Robert J. C. Young, Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction (Oxford, 2001); Susan Archer Mann and Ashly Suzanne Patterson, eds., Reading Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity (Oxford, 2016).


continuity? Is it unique in its persistence, key tropes, and consequences, differing substantially from Islamophobia or Negrophobia? How is Judeophobia related to homophobia and sexism? Is it based on fantasies or grounded in socioeconomic realities, or both?

These vexed and foundational questions are difficult to answer because they are straitjacketed twice over: first by the history of the *Holocaust* and its memory complex, and the way this often imposes an *exceptionalist, transhistorical, teleological* narrative on studies of anti-Semitism, but also by the *politics of the Israeli-Palestinian* conflict, which often turn discussions of anti-Semitism into fodder for debates about the Middle East or apologetics for the actions of either side.

The Israeli-Palestinian question is a hot global debate, and how one understands anti-Semitism is now thoroughly wound into the dispute. How Jews, Israel, and anti-Semitism fit into struggles about identity and power is vociferously contested in the United States, not least on college campuses. A group of scholars have shown, to quote Karen Brodkin’s felicitous title, “how Jews became white folks and what that says about race in America.” Jews’ whiteness, coupled to the Israeli domination of the Palestinians, for many, makes Jews part and parcel of hegemonic culture. But this view is amnesic; it disregards the second part of Brodkin’s title. It represses what Matthew Jacobson discusses as the link between “anti-Semitism and the racial odyssey of Jews in the United States,” which was “neither wholly divisible from nor wholly dependent upon the history of whiteness and its vicissitudes in American political culture.” This has played out in recent campus melees related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when activists depict Israel as the embodiment of a colonial, racial state, with its treatment of the Palestinians likened to the white supremacy of apartheid South Africa. On the other side of the barricade, some Jews consequently complain that they are maliciously harassed...
for their defense of Israel and Zionism. This has resulted in several Title VI lawsuits claiming civil rights violations against Jews.\(^6\) Contesting the definition of anti-Semitism is central to these clashes. There are powerful watchdog organizations that monitor these turf wars, and off-campus agitators who aid and abet the combatants on both sides. On one side, the theory of intersectionality is sometimes drawn upon to represent Jews as the embodiment of power and privilege, preempting their inclusion in anti-racist struggles.\(^7\) Meanwhile, those on the other side often insist upon the disconnections between Judeophobia and Islamophobia, Negrophobia, homophobia, and xenophobia, staking their claims around the uniqueness of anti-Semitism and the imperiled state of Jews.

Contemporary discussions about anti-Semitism have consequently become a battlefield, with scholarship caught in the crossfire. The participants in this roundtable each address flashpoints in this fraught and contested zone. They pan back to widen the purview, reflecting on a meta-level about how to think about anti-Semitism. In doing so, we maintain that writing about Judeophobia today demands greater interrogation of our terms, methods, narratives, and epistemologies. It requires that we appreciate the connections between anti-Semitism and colonialism, immigration, and xenophobia; the links between gender and Jewishness, and between Jews and Muslims and other “Others”; and the ties between the postcolonial condition shaped by slavery and imperialism, and the experiences of other genocides and the Holocaust.\(^8\) In short, we argue against exceptionalism, eternalism, teleology, apologetics, and theoretical naïveté in how scholars approach anti-Semitism.

We call instead for an entangled history of anti-Semitism. By this, we mean four things. First, scholarship on anti-Semitism requires the same kind of attention to its categories of analysis that has been applied to the concepts of class, gender, race, religion, and nation.\(^9\) This must begin with the concept that defines the field, because “anti-Semitism” has meant


\(^{8}\) The literature on these topics is referenced in the articles within the roundtable that focus on each subject. For works on the entangled history of Jews and blacks and Negrophobia and Judeophobia, see the bibliography included in the massive compendium Maurianne Adams and John Bracey, eds., *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations between Blacks and Jews in the United States* (Amherst, Mass., 1999), 837–842. See also Eric J. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005). For an overview that covers Western European and U.S. discourses on the psychopathology of race and racism focused on Jews and blacks from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present, see Sander L. Gilman and James M. Thomas, *Are Racists Crazy? How Prejudice, Racism, and Antisemitism Became Markers of Insanity* (New York, 2016). For the overlap in Jewish and black diasporic histories, see Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Calypso Jews: Jewishness in the Caribbean Literary Imagination* (New York, 2016).

different things to different people at different times. Second, we suggest that the oft-claimed uniqueness of anti-Semitism must cede to comparative frames, and ultimately to a history of interlaced pasts. Only through an assessment of the parallels and overlaps with other targeted groups can the singularities of Judeophobia emerge with clarity. Third, we consider how the plasticity of anti-Jewish images rests upon a fundamental ambivalence. This helps account simultaneously for Jewish persecution and survival. It also enables an appreciation of the overdetermined nature of stereotypes about Jews. The concept of the Jew shapeshifts. These shifts help explain how myths about Jews have had different meanings at different moments or have signified differently to different people in the same era. Fourth, we urge that studies of anti-Semitism more deeply engage the theoretical and methodological considerations that have characterized work in cognate areas. Theory provides a language, ways of thinking, and methods that permit historians to reflect at the meta-level on precisely the kinds of impasses that define the study of anti-Semitism at present.

The dilemma of whether to hyphenate the term provides an example of the need for an entangled history of anti-Semitism. If you type “antisemitism” into your word processor, it will likely autocorrect. This is because in most English dictionaries it is spelled with a hyphen. But the preponderant position among scholars of anti-Semitism is that this is wrong.\(^{10}\) They give two main reasons. As Shmuel Almog puts it, “If you use the hyphenated form, you consider the words ‘Semitism,’ ‘Semite,’ ‘Semitic’ as meaningful. They supposedly convey an image of a real substance, of a real group of people—the Semites, who are said to be a race. This is a misnomer: firstly, because ‘Semitic’ or ‘Aryan’ were originally language groups, not people; but mainly because in antisemitic parlance, ‘Semites’ really stands for Jews, just that.”\(^{11}\) Historically, however, “Semites” was not just a placeholder for “Jews.”

The original German term Antisemitismus was not hyphenated when political activist and pamphleteer Wilhelm Marr popularized the neologism around 1879.\(^{12}\) Targeting Jewish emancipation, Marr sought to distinguish his position from the tradition of religious anti-Judaism by deploying a modern, secular, scientific construct based on racial theory.\(^{13}\) But Marr’s term derived from the field of comparative philology, which grouped together Semitic languages. In the early nineteenth century, linguists, anthropologists, philosophers, and Orientalists not only opposed “Semitic” to “Aryan” languages, they also maintained that languages encapsulated the indelible racial spirit of the people who used them.\(^{14}\) Both Jews and Arabs were implicated by the construct “Semites,” which led Edward Said to

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provocatively note in *Orientalism*, “I have found myself writing the history of a strange, secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism.”\(^{15}\) The work of Gil Anidjar has helped unlock this shared secret not only by suggesting its long history, but also by indicating how and when it became a secret. As Anidjar put it, “Once equally Semites, Jews and Arabs were both race and religion in a secular political world . . . Today, and since Nazism at least, one can divide them again.”\(^{16}\)

Anidjar developed this insight in *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*, where he maintained that European self-constructions long depended upon a two-headed hydra: the Jew as the internal enemy, the theological enemy, and the Saracen, the Moor, the Arab, the Muslim, the Turk, or Islam itself as differing names that served as the external enemy, the political enemy.\(^{17}\) Developing Anidjar’s point, Ivan Kalmar has traced a dialectic of doubled demonization in the cultural history of representations of Jews and Muslims in the West.\(^{18}\) Jointly defined in medieval Christianity, the construct “Semites” racialized this representation in the nineteenth century. Some stopping points along the way reveal how they were entangled. Their fates were intertwined in the Crusades, which gave rise to the first mass killings of Jews by Christians en route to liberating the holy sites held by the Saracens in Jerusalem. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) mandated that not only Jewish but also Muslim clothing be marked. The Spanish Inquisition targeted not only Jews but also Moors. Post-expulsion, 90 percent of Jews lived under the crescent of Islam, with such coexistence lasting into the Ottoman period. This resulted in the repeated trope of Jews depicted in Turkish garb in Renaissance art, as in many paintings by Rembrandt. And in the nineteenth century, Benjamin Disraeli claimed in *Tancred* that “All is race,” while nonetheless insisting that the Jews were an “Arabian tribe” and “Arabs are only Jews on horseback.”\(^{19}\)

The conjoined history of Jews and Muslims in the construct “Semites” was erased in the 1930s, around the time that another hyphenated construct, “Judeo-Christian,” was popularized.\(^{20}\) Disseminated as a formula used to appeal to Christians to aid Jews who were being targeted by the Nazis, its use continued after the Holocaust with the early efforts at interfaith dialogue, the creation of the State of Israel, and the onset of the Cold War.\(^{21}\) It was then that what Arthur A. Cohen terms “the myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition” and what Marshall Grossman calls “the violence of the hyphen in Judeo-

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Christian” solidified.22 “Judeo-Christian” became a pillar of Western civilization and European and American democracy, implicitly negating the contributions of Islamic civilizations to “the West.” What made the decoupling of Jews and Muslims definitive was that beginning in the 1930s, spurred by the burgeoning Arab-Israeli conflict, and accelerating to the present day, the demonization of Jews became more common in the Islamic world, drawing upon the European anti-Semitic arsenal, at the same time that anti-Arab racism spread among Jews. The two heads of the European enemy now turned against one another, effacing their entangled past.

This brief sketch only hints at the complicated story of the linkages and disconnects between Judeophobia and Islamophobia.23 It makes plain, however, that the choice about the hyphen is and always has been both epistemological and political. To hyphenate “anti-Semitism” consciously today—by drawing attention to this grammatical mark as signifying a conjoined history—is to point to the forgotten intersections and interactions between Jews and Muslims, while remarking upon the history of the myth of “the Semite” that underpins the origins of the term. It also rebuffs the assertion made by those who refuse to hyphenate “anti-Semitism” because they insist on the unique targeting of Jews.24 The choice to hyphenate is particularly significant in a political frame where Jews and Muslims are often figured as perpetual enemies despite the historical scholarship that shows otherwise.25

The seemingly small matter of the hyphen consequently encapsulates a host of bigger, entangled problems. These include the definition of anti-Semitism, which remains


23 For a deeper consideration, see Bunzl, Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia; Ilan Halevi, Islamophobie et judéophobie: L'effet miroir (Paris, 2015); Nasar Meer, ed., Racialization and Religion: Race, Culture and Difference in the Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia (London, 2014); Renton and Gidley, Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe; Dorian Bell, Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture (Evanston, Ill., 2018). For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Ethan Katz’s contribution to this roundtable, which elaborates on how to think about the entangled history of Jews and Muslims and Judeophobia and Islamophobia; and Jonathan Judaken and Ethan Katz, guest eds., Jews and Muslims in France before and after Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Cacher, Special Issue, Jewish History 32, no. 1 (2018).


nебulous. “Anti-Semitism” covers everything from personal prejudices to genocide.26 As is the case with the over-expansive use of the term “racism,” this equivocation stifles discussion and leads to misunderstandings.27 A more refined conceptual palette that makes distinctions between terms could help clear up this confusion. Stereotypes—enduring mythic images of Jews and Judaism—do not necessarily entail the internalization of these representations, which form the basis of prejudicial views about groups of people.28 Likewise, prejudice—“attitude, affectivo-imaginary disposition, linked to ethnic stereotypes”—does not necessarily lead to discrimination.29 Discrimination necessitates behavioral, social, or legal means of enforcing certain practices. In turn, it does not necessarily depend on a racial ideology: a worldview or doctrine that contains a view of history and a metaphysics of identity built upon systems of racial classification. So not all forms of discrimination are racist.30 None of these entails genocide (i.e., organized group annihilation).31 But when “anti-Semitism” is used to label all these differing attitudes and actions, reiterating an anti-Jewish stereotype conjures images of Nazi storm troopers, even as this leap often misconstrues past and present cases of Judeophobia.

Gavin Langmuir sought to provide some necessary clarity regarding this confusion in Toward a Definition of Antisemitism.32 He considered the social scientific literature available at the time, parsing definitions of ethnocentrism, bias/bigotry/prejudice, discrimination, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism. He also tore into the notion of eternal anti-Semitism, insisting upon a radical disjunction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, defining the latter as “socially significant chimerical hostility against Jews.” In doing so, he articulated three modes of responding to out-groups: (1) realistic hostility,
(2) xenophobic hostility, and (3) chimerical hostility. The first response is based upon the rational competition for scarce goods and incommensurable values that Langmuir associated with ancient Judeophobia and early Christian-Jewish enmity. The second is the result of projecting a series of stereotypes onto a scapegoat because of perceived threats faced by a community. This is done not so much because of ignorance of the Other, but because of ignorance by the in-group of the real social conditions that plague them. Theodor Adorno made this point when he maintained that stereotypes personify social conditions for those without an adequate language to express them otherwise. 

Inspired by the new cultural history, Shulamit Volkov has influentially called the clusters in which these stereotypes come “a cultural code” for articulating social crises. Unlike realistic and xenophobic hostility, Langmuir contended that anti-Semitism is entirely unamenable to reality: “In contrast . . . chimerical assertions present fantasies, figments of the imagination, monsters that . . . have no ‘kernel of truth,’” he wrote. “This is the contrast which distinguishes the hostility that produced Auschwitz from that manifested against Jews in ancient Alexandria.” A medievalist, Langmuir maintained that it was in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries that anti-Judaism turned into anti-Semitism. His prime example of a “socially significant chimerical” assertion was the charge of ritual murder. Like the other anti-Jewish medieval myths, specifically host desecration and well-poisoning, ritual murder implicated Jews in a conspiracy against Christendom. But what Langmuir does not address is that chimerical assertions about Muslims were also bandied about in the centuries of the Crusades, as were similar chimerical delusions apparent in the history of the witch-hunts in following centuries, and monstrous fantasies of blacks circulated in the era of Jim Crow lynching. Yet none of these led to Auschwitz.

In Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World, Peter Schäfer pushes back against Langmuir in the other temporal direction. He insists that chimerical assertions were integral to the pagan anti-Jewish diatribes in ancient Alexandria, most saliently in the charge of Jewish “ritual cannibalism.” Langmuir’s theoretical model consequently does not help us to demarcate anti-Semitism, chides Schäfer.

33 Ibid., 328.
35 See Shulamit Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,” Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 23, no. 1 (1978): 25–46; Volkov, “The Written Matter and the Spoken Word: On the Gap between Pre-1914 and Nazi Anti-Semitism,” in François Furet, ed., Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews (New York, 1989), 33–53. Volkov argues against simple continuity arguments in our efforts to understand anti-Semitism, whether by suggesting that anti-Semitism is a permanent prejudice or a cyclical phenomenon, or that it has a uniform development and growth that culminates in Nazism. Instead, she insists that it is best understood in its specific discursive context. Moreover, she maintains that late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century anti-Semitism in Germany was more like anti-Semitism in France in the same period and significantly different from Nazi anti-Semitism, since it was ideology, not oratory intended to mobilize action; ideas, not propaganda. In making this argument, she suggests that one facet of Wilhelminian anti-Semitism was that “it had gradually become a code for the overall Weltanschaung and style of the right,” and likewise that opposition to anti-Semitism “identified individuals and groups in the camp of democratization, parliamentarianism, and often also with cultural and economic modernism” (43, emphasis in the original).
37 Schäfer, Judeophobia, 203.
His crucial chimerical fantasies are part and parcel of ancient hostility, but not only against Jews. If his model is not altogether worthless, one should opt for a much more dynamic interplay of its components (realistic, xenophobic, chimerical), instead of his linear pattern of development. There is obviously no clear-cut, absolute point in history at which anti-Judaism turns into anti-Semitism. The transitions between the different components are fluid, and this applies to all periods of history, certainly to the ancient world.38

Schäfer’s suggestion about the adaptable interplay of realistic, xenophobic, and chimerical components is spot on and problematizes the chronological unfolding of anti-Semitism suggested by Langmuir. The neat divides between these varieties not only break down in the ancient world, but also falter in the discourse around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, recent scholarship shows that racism was widespread within Christianity by the nineteenth century, so a categorical divide between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism fails there as well.39

Given these problems of when, where, and how to locate “anti-Semitism,” David Engel suggests that the term be eschewed in the interest of better scholarship. He explains that one cannot simply postulate causal links across time between anti-Jewish animus and persecution: “no necessary relation among particular instances of violence, hostile depiction, agitation, discrimination, and private unfriendly feeling across time and space can be assumed,” he writes.40 Like Langmuir and Volkov, who seek to undercut a notion of anti-Semitism as eternal or as teleologically culminating in the Nazi genocide, Engel insists that transhistorical causality must be demonstrated in connecting the various iterations of Judeophobia. They cannot just hang together tautologically in the construct “anti-Semitism,” which unifies what historians need not only to describe but also to analyze. Hence, he endorses avoiding the term in the interest of scholarly attention to the frameworks and contexts in which these differing elements arise.

Kenneth L. Marcus’s The Definition of Anti-Semitism is the latest effort to tackle these nested problems.41 The strength of eternalist approaches, Marcus claims, is their emphasis on continuities in understanding what Robert Wistrich dubbed “the longest hatred.”42 But ultimately, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, eternalists answer “the uncomfortable question: ‘Why the Jews of all people?’ . . . with the question begging reply: Eternal hostility.”43 Following Arendt, historicists accordingly view anti-Semitism as uniquely modern, or they consider its historical episodes as “discrete, socially embedded and contingent.”44 Wanting to move beyond this deadlock, Marcus advocates what I would dub a cyclical eternalism, which he calls “anti-Semitism as repetition.” He acknowledges that the recurrence of Judeophobia “involves continuities and discontinuities, evolutions and transformations, increases and diminutions, latencies and eruptions,” hence freeing us “from the double-bind in which Jew-hatred is either eternal and

38 Ibid., 204.
40 Engel, “Away from a Definition of Antisemitism,” 53.
42 Wistrich, Antisemitism.
44 Marcus, The Definition of Anti-Semitism, 93.
immutable or else culturally specific and disconnected. But rather than embrace this dynamic understanding as we do, Marcus merely gives eternalism a cyclical makeover. He insists that proto-racism already existed even when racial categories and the science that underpinned them had yet to emerge. He vacillates on whether there are objective factors that define anti-Semitism or whether perceived threats by Jews are a justification for claims of anti-Semitism. In the end, he acknowledges that the various definitions of anti-Semitism that he parses are all provisional: they depend upon what researchers seek to include in the classifications they adopt. For his own purposes, he claims that Israel today is the collective Jew, that anti-Semitism consequently slips easily into anti-Semitism, and that the so-called “new anti-Semitism” that targets Israel and Zionism rather than Jews and Judaism, including in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) against Israel, is nothing but the latest repetition of an eternal cycle that has perpetually plagued Jews, triggered by the same set of causes.

In fact, the concept of the “new anti-Semitism” already indicates an eternalist bias. Whether transhistorical or cyclical, it is always already teleological. Contra Marcus and all eternalists, historicists are right to insist that anti-Semitism per se requires science, mass politics, secularity, and modernity. Without the development of scientific theories of race, mass political organization, the secularization brought about by modernity, the shifts in populations from rural to urban spaces, and the rise of literacy and mass media, events such as the Dreyfus Affair are inexplicable. These were factors that did not exist in the premodern world. Likewise, the assumption that occurrences such as blood libel charges meant the same thing in twelfth-century England as they do in the modern Middle East simply does not make sense. What has endured are persisting myths, images, tropes, or fantasies about Jews developed over the long history of Christian anti-Judaism. But these representations are reworked in different ways in different periods to serve different ends. Most importantly, the social forces, political frameworks and institutions, technological mechanisms, and economic conditions that have periodically driven the revival of these persisting myths are not the same in dissimilar contexts. Consequently, different eruptions of Judeophobia require different explanations. For this reason, cyclical eternalism, like its twin, transhistorical anti-Semitism, does not advance our understanding.

The quagmires that the ahistorical use of “anti-Semitism” has led to indicate that it is time for scholars to adopt a different vocabulary. Judeophobia offers a better overarching term for the field for at least three reasons. First, it defamiliarizes readers. This allows for the conceptual reflection we are calling for. Judeophobia, as I define it, encompasses denigration of Judaism, defamation of the Jewish character, discrimination


46 Six core tropes have proven particularly persistent: (1) the image of Judas, who embodies the Jewish traitor and exemplar of Jewish materialism; (2) Caiaphas and the Pharisees: key depictions of Jewish leaders who are hypocrites willing to do anything to maintain their power; (3) the charge of deicide in the course of the Christian Passion narrative, indicating a willingness to defy ultimate values and an inherent proclivity to malevolence; (4) the association of Jews with the devil, first put into Jesus’s mouth by John (8:44); (5) the supersessionist narrative found in Paul’s Epistles; and (6) the blood libel, ritual murder, host desecration, and well-poisoning charges of the medieval era, indexing a Jewish conspiracy against Christendom, which has modern analogues in the worldwide conspiracies found in The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.
against Jews, their racialization, and at its extreme, efforts at their destruction. This core definition should be understood to cover the five modes of Judeophobic discourse and anti-Jewish practices that I have distinguished: stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, racialization, and murder. Embracing a Foucauldian lexicon by addressing the Judeophbic discourses and practices at work in differing social contexts will allow for a more nuanced and pointed analysis that will not equivocate, as the term “anti-Semitism” does. Using Judeophobia as an overarching category in this way not only taps into the more refined conceptual palette I have delineated, but it does so without the anachronistic associations that the term “anti-Semitism” often provokes. Ultimately, it is the distinctive modes of Judeophobic discourses and practices in their particular contexts that scholars need to describe and analyze.

Secondly, “Judeophobia” lends itself more readily to periodization that is attentive to social, political, economic, technological, and cultural shifts. This is a key way in which it differs from the term “anti-Semitism.” Judeophobia has been transformed by changes in social mores, customs, and institutional formations, and in the modern and postcolonial periods by reactionary responses to anti-racist activism. We can and should distinguish five main epochs. The ancient Judeophobia studied by Schäfer was characterized by important contextual differences from the early Christian Judeophobia of the Adversus Judaeos tradition. This anti-Judaism was transformed by the era of the Crusades and the High Medieval period, when the new fantasies about Jews that are the focus of Langmuir’s work emerged. Modern racism developed out of the theological heritage of the Spanish Inquisition, the conquest of the Americas, transatlantic slavery, Enlightenment systems of categorization, and the rise of nationalism in the wake of Napoleon. Post-Holocaust Judeophobia has taken new forms in a postcolonial era defined by globalization.

“Anti-Semitism” sensu stricto need not be discarded but should be more precisely circumscribed. The term should be delimited in its use to the era of modern racism, when it was coined, reaching its climax with the Holocaust. “What was new and menacingly different about antisemitism,” Richard Levy astutely claims, was “its politicization and embodiment in permanent political parties, voluntary associations, and publishing ventures—in short, its institutionalization.” Anti-Semitism became racialized and programmatic.

In these modern institutions in an era of mass politics, anti-Semitism developed into an ideology by reworking “[pre- and early Christian writings, medieval iconographic and modern literary expressions, pithy folk sayings, cartoons, and doggerel songs]” that were based upon a reservoir of anti-Jewish figures, formulas, and conventions. Today’s post-Holocaust Judeophobia has once again morphed. It is about cultural, religious, and political conflicts, not about an ostensible racial conflict between Aryans and Semites, and it is unprecedentedly global. The context has changed. If our vocabulary changed as well, the ter-

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47 Leon Pinsker coined “Judeophobia” in his Zionist manifesto Auto-Emancipation (original German ed. 1882), a work discussed in Scott Ury’s contribution to this roundtable. In Pinsker’s sense, it is a “psychic aberration” or “inherited predisposition” of Christian civilization. This is clearly eternalist in scope and psychopathological in emphasis. See Pinsker, Auto-Emancipation, trans. D. S. Blondheim (New York, 1906), 3, 4. While I have adopted Pinsker’s term, I have defined it otherwise for scholarly purposes.


minological morass that hinges on drawing a line or an equal sign between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism might abate in discussions of contemporary Judeophobia.

A third reason to adopt the term “Judeophobia” is that it readily links what Frantz Fanon aptly designated “phobogenic” objects itemized in his studies of Negrophobia with instances of Islamophobia, homophobia, or gynophobia. These each name subjects of anxiety or unsubstantiated fear or resentment, but also fascination or even envy.51 To grasp this ambiguity, Bryan Cheyette’s earlier work refers to “semitic discourse” as a way to understand the ambivalences and slippages in figuring Jews in modern literature: “The radical emptiness and lack of a fixed meaning in the constructions of ‘semitic’ difference,” he stipulates, “results in ‘the Jew’ being made to occupy an incommensurable number of subject positions which traverse a range of contradictory discourses.”52 The social theorist Zygmunt Bauman took this insight furthest in his reassessment of Judeophobia. He borrowed and developed Artur Sandauer’s concept of allosemitism, derived from *allos*, the Greek word for Other. Bauman used this construct to highlight “the [problematic] practice of setting the Jews apart as people radically different from all the others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them, and special treatment in all or most social intercourse.”53 Allosemitism, he maintained, is the root of both anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism. Bauman claimed that we need a new vocabulary to capture this ambivalence, because Jew hatred is not at the core of what fuels anti-Jewish thought and practice.54

Judeophobia is often treated as a case of heterophobia: resentment or hatred of the Other that provokes anxiety or hostility.55 Bauman averred that it ought to be understood instead as a form of proteophobia.56 Proteophobia aims its venom at the figures who disrupt “the structure of the orderly world,” who “[do] not fall easily into any of the established categories,” who send out “contradictory signals as to proper conduct” and are “behaviourally confusing.”57 Judeophobes, Bauman concluded, fear the anxiety

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55 The Tunisian Franco-Jewish writer Albert Memmi coined the term “heterophobia” as more expansive than “racism” or “anti-Semitism,” since historically these have focused on biological differences rather than cultural, social, or other differences. In doing so, he suggests, “instead of speaking of anti-Semitism, which is manifestly imprecise, one might employ the term Judeophobia, which clearly signifies both fear and hostility toward Jews. The same can be said for Negrophobia and Arabophobia.” He also encourages using “ethnofobia” for the exclusion of whole groups as preferable to “xenophobia” since the latter tends to refer only to foreigners. See Albert Memmi, *Racism*, trans. Steve Martinot (Minneapolis, 2000; original French ed. 1982), 117–121, quote from 119.

56 Bauman here reworks and reevaluates the categories developed by Tuguiéff in *The Force of Prejudice*, especially chap. 1.

produced by Jews because Jews blur boundaries, disrupting systems of categorization and signification often defined through binary formulas.

In making these arguments, Bauman picked up on threads running through French postwar theory. Thinkers from Jean-Paul Sartre to Jacques Derrida drew attention to the perpetually morphing “figural Jew.” This tradition was, of course, one reservoir for the linguistic turn that provides resources for thinking about the referential systems within which shifting tropes of Jews have operated historically. Building on the social theory from Sartre and the Frankfurt School to poststructuralism and contemporary sociology à la Bauman, alongside critical race theory and the literary and postcolonial theorists that Maurice Samuels and Bryan Cheyette invoke in their contributions to this roundtable, we have a launching pad to ways of thinking about discourses and practices that historians of Judeophobia have yet to take up adequately. These critical theories all offer insights that scholars of anti-Semitism have too often neglected.

Indeed, the study of anti-Semitism could serve as a case study of what can happen to a field that does not remain attentive to theoretical self-reflection. Lynn Hunt, once in the vanguard of the new cultural history, has long suggested that it is time to move “beyond the cultural turn” and return to the archive and to empirical research, even as her latest prods entail that this be broadened to incorporate the global turn. More transnational studies would certainly advance our understanding of Judeophobia. But widening the lens with only a positivist, empiricist focus will not overcome the impasses in the field. Some scholars have resisted contemporary critical theory, since leading figures such as Alain Badiou, Judith Butler, and Slavoj Žižek are hostile to Zionism. Their critics have consequently asked, to quote the title of a book by Bruno Chaouat, “Is theory good for the Jews?” But only by engaging with the challenges posed by these theo-


59 Amy Allen provides a useful definition for the way in which I am using the term “critical theory”: “In a more capacious usage [as opposed to the narrow sense of the Frankfurt School], ‘critical theory’ refers to any politically inflected form of cultural, social, or political theory that has critical, progressive, or emancipatory aims. Understood in this way, ‘critical theory’ encompasses much if not all the work that is done under the banner of feminist theory, queer theory, critical race theory, and post- and decolonial theory. A distinct but related capacious usage of the term refers to the body of theory that is mobilized in literary and cultural studies, otherwise known simply as ‘theory.’” Allen, The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory (New York, 2016), xi.


reticians, offering arguments against their claims and countering their underlying assumptions, can we effectively combat their positions or judiciously weigh their merits. Instead of this engagement, too much of what passes for thinking about anti-Semitism amounts to reductive apologetics or polemics. Ignoring theory is one cause of the stagnation in the field, because theorizing often challenges deeply held assumptions, questions conventional narratives, and suggests alternative methodologies and epistemologies. As we intend this roundtable to suggest, theoretical reflection for historians begins with a consideration of the historicity of our categories.

Consequently, David Feldman’s contribution considers the use of “anti-Semitism” in the twentieth century. His case study shows that the term was always contested, but initially it was used in a highly restricted way to refer to the forces and crises of modernity, especially as they played out politically in Germany. German anti-Semitism was actually depicted as less threatening than the “medieval” kinds of attacks that were directed against Jews in the Russian Empire. Early scholars also maintained that Jews were partly to blame for Judeophobia. It was in the wake of World War I, with the breakup of Eastern Europe into nation-states, and particularly with the rise of the Nazi racial state, that the various instances of ostracism and violence that Jews faced across Europe were first depicted as part of a single phenomenon—“anti-Semitism”—with cultural roots extending into the distant Christian past. Feldman thus highlights the changing meanings of anti-Semitism, indicating how the intellectual and cultural history of the term reflects the changing relationship between Jews and states. This symbiosis continues anew with the State of Israel—the Jewish state—now transforming the meaning of anti-Semitism once more.

Scott Ury’s piece picks up this conceptual self-reflection by examining the eternalist framework in political Zionist ur-texts such as Leon Pinsker’s *Auto-Emancipation* and Theodor Herzl’s *The Jewish State*, later adopted in the influential work of the Israel-based historians Shmuel Ettinger and Robert Wistrich. Political Zionist approaches, Ury shows, emerged at the same time as political anti-Semitism and shared three key postulates. First, they are eternalists, sharing the axiom that Jews have been despised everywhere they have lived. Anti-Semites use this claim to bolster their argument that there is something inherently pathological about Jews or Judaism. Political Zionists maintain that the nature, course, and fate of the Jews has been constituted by this perennial hatred; this is what underpins the need for the Jewish state as a refuge. Second, both held that Jews are essentially a separate and distinct people, nation, or race. Third, both were critical of the liberal Enlightenment politics of emancipation. As Wistrich put it, “Most Zionists have regarded anti-Semitism as an ineradicable disease that cannot be corrected merely through education, reason, or enlightenment, let alone assimilation.”

The focus of Zionist narratives is to delineate the uniqueness, persistence, and duration of anti-Jewish hatred, culminating in the Holocaust, which has become the template for the ostensibly enduring pattern that defines anti-Semitism. Ury not only considers this feedback loop; he also exhumes the alternative historicism of Arendt and Salo Baron, who decried this “lachrymose” history and insisted instead upon a contextually specific approach to Judeophobia—a view the roundtable participants all share.

63 Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession*, 13, emphasis in the original.
Daniel Schroeter and Ethan Katz offer reflections in their contributions that will be valued by historians of the Middle East, colonialism, immigration, and xenophobia. Building on a point raised in Ury’s conclusion, they demonstrate that a key strand of the claims about the “new anti-Semitism”—that its epicenter is Islamic—requires reevaluation. This is not a denial that Judeophobia among Muslims has become more widespread. Rather, Schroeter and Katz consider how Islam is framed in discourses about anti-Semitism. Their interventions explicitly reexamine the links between Jews and Muslims, and between Islamophobia and Judeophobia.

Schroeter reconsiders the historiography of so-called “Islamic anti-Semitism.” Much of the work on the topic is ahistorical, politicized, and instrumentalized, based on biased secondary sources digested by researchers who have little knowledge of the languages or differing cultural practices of Muslims over time. They have created the myth of “Islamic anti-Semitism.” Their metanarrative is constructed in three ways. First, they have scripted a “neo-lachrymose” view about Jews vis-à-vis Islam as permanently hostile as a result of perennial Muslim contempt, even though this contradicts the work of expert scholars of the Islamic world. Second and closely linked is the popularization of the term “dhimmitude,” which obscures the realities of the dhimmi status of Jews, the role of Jews in Islamic theology, and the diversity of the Jewish experience under the crescent. The dhimmi status of Jews (and Christians) meant that they were “protected.” But this was guaranteed by their accepting symbolic subordination to Muslims and paying a special tax. The notion of dhimmitude transforms this juridical conception into an ontological status of primordial difference and opposition. Third is the terminological conflation between “Arabs,” “Muslims,” and “Islam” in a way that homogenizes the beliefs and practices among highly differentiated Muslim communities globally. Schroeter surveys the historiography and shows how the construct of “Islamic anti-Semitism” developed from the often-polarized politics of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He opposes not only the metanarrative of “Islamic anti-Semitism,” however, but also the corresponding counter-narrative in which Judeophobia among Arabs, Muslims, and Islamic thinkers is countenanced, obscured, avoided, or denied by those opposing Zionist and pro-Israel research agendas. Serious scholarship on Judeophobia among Arabs and Muslims must avoid getting caught on the horns of these two fallacious approaches, Schroeter suggests, which is possible only on the basis of a careful assessment of primary sources in their specific contexts and a refusal to have scholarship serve the ideological ends of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle.

Katz, for his part, asks us to rethink both Judeophobia and Islamophobia by considering how they were connected under colonialism. He abjures claims that they are structurally the same and historically parallel, which he terms “the Orientalism school,” as well as the “replacement theory” that maintains that Muslims are “the new Jews.” Instead, he considers how the rise of liberalism, nationalism, and especially imperialism led to the entangled history of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim discrimination, often in complicated and even paradoxical ways. Rather than make the case in the abstract, he considers how three historical fragments drawn from the archive of “the French imperial nation-state” from the 1880s through World War II illuminate this entwined history.

Katz consequently asks us to consider how the forces of colonialism made Jews and

Muslims vital symbols of the aspirations, possibilities, boundaries, and dangers of a series of projects that helped to define European modernity.

Stefanie Schüler-Springorum makes an analogous claim in her essay here about the links between gender, Jewishness, and modernity. She maintains that anti-Semitism functioned in tandem with gender constructions. In Joan Scott’s words, this was done as a means “to mobilize constituencies, to tar enemies, to put groups and individuals in their place,” but more generally as “a primary way of signifying power.” Schüler-Springorum thus underscores a point, first made by Adorno and Max Horkheimer in Dialectic of Enlightenment and then elaborated by George Mosse’s and Sander Gilman’s historical studies, about how Jews were depicted as the shadow side of the bourgeois social order, revealing its norms and attendant strictures. If Jews were intrinsic to representing the modern itself, anti-Semites hammered this point home by associating Jewish men with unmanly commerce, Jewish women with the decadence of urban life, and both sexes with threatening sexualities. Both supposedly symbolized materialism and the break with clear-cut gender roles as the basis for a healthy, moral society. Like Katz, Schüler-Springorum draws her general insights from a contextually specific but nonetheless breathtaking overview of modernity, in her case primarily German.

Whether in a slogan, a sound bite, a visual image, a political screed, or a novel, Judeophobic discourses boil down to narratives about Jews and Judaism that are personified in typologies. Stereotypes are central to Samuels’s focus in his essay here on how literary approaches sensitiz ize us to decoding these racial archetypes as they are embedded in texts. Roland Barthes’s classic work explained how stereotypes provide an index of the “mythologies” that shape cultures. James Shapiro subsequently pointed out in his study of Shakespeare how “social identity is contingent upon the kinds of stories a culture tells itself.” Samuels shows how literary historians who are focused on Judeophobia bridge these points. They have done so by moving from providing a taxonomy of the various stereotypes of Jews that exist within a national literary tradition toward an appreciation of the kind of myth-making narratives and “cultural work” that literary texts perform. These myths cast light on particular cultural obsessions that nevertheless have meant different things at different historical junctures. For example, the Jewish nose denoted religion in Elizabethan England, but it signified a kind of economic activity in the Victorian era, just as the ostensibly malformed foot of the Jew was a sign of his affiliation with the devil in the Middle Ages but an indicator of his ineligibility for military service and consequently citizenship in newly forming nation-states. Samuels explores not only what literature teaches historians about the multiple levels of meaning contained in a literary text, and therefore the slipperiness of Judeophobic discourse, but also the way in which stereotypes and other texts embody narratives and consequently dramatize social problems that historians might otherwise overlook. He thus attunes us “to the fact that anti-Semitism is, in a certain sense, fundamentally literary,” which aids us in understanding how and why it persists, but also how meanings are transformed, and how literary theory offers tools for deciphering these layers of signification.

Cheyette’s contribution, in turn, helps to explain not only the importance of post-

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colonial theory for rethinking anti-Semitism, but also the centrality of Judeophobia for reconsidering postcolonial theory and its understandings of racism, empire, and their afterlives. Since Jews often figure as interstitial within colonial configurations—between colonizer and colonized—they help to illuminate the gray zones that have become key to new understandings of both the colonial and the postcolonial condition. Moreover, foundational thinkers in the pantheon of postcolonial theory such as Fanon, Albert Memmi, Aimé Césaire, Arendt, and Sartre all drew linkages between colonialism and anti-Semitism in their work. These were all theorists attentive to what Paul Gilroy has discussed as “the knotted intersection of histories” and sensitive to what we might call after Michael Rothberg “multidirectional” racisms. But Cheyette explains why, as postcolonial studies developed into a field, anti-Jewish racism was largely ignored. This was in part because of the ambivalent role of Jews within the colonial project, but also because of the success of political Zionism and the State of Israel alongside the integration of Jews as “whitened” Americans who helped forge the myth of the “Western-Judeo-Christian” tradition, which is a target of postcolonial critiques. Cheyette concludes by suggesting that postcolonialism allows us to move beyond anti-Semitism as an exceptionalist, eternalist, and teleological historical narrative straitjacketed by the history of the Holocaust and the politics of Israel-Palestine.

This roundtable thus offers a set of interventions that aim to spur the much-needed rethinking of anti-Semitism. We call for a new contextualism in studies of Judeophobia that considers continuities as well as periodization, attending to multidirectional racisms and their entanglements, but without losing sight of the particularities and nuances of Judeophobic histories. To get there, we suggest a shift in vocabulary, enjoining scholars of Judeophobic discourse and anti-Jewish practices to engage in greater self-reflection on the categories of their analysis, to appreciate the multiple meanings of the representations of Jews, to consider a variety of methods and theories they might employ to interpret them, and to examine the intersected frames required to gain perspective. The interventions in this roundtable each probe a sensitive area of scholarship in the field, rethinking how to approach it anew. The stakes are not only scholarly. We seek to defuse the political minefield that underlies the study of Judeophobia, even as we highlight the political ramifications of certain positions on the topic. The goal is to stoke scholarship at its best, which illuminates contemporary problems by attention to how they are shaped by the past.

68 Paul Gilroy, Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), 78; Michael Rothberg, Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization (Stanford, Calif., 2009).

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