

An extraordinarily central, even constitutive element of the set of questions concerning Jews has always been the question concerning the image, the idea or the figure of the Jew for non-Jews. In 2013, David Nirenberg showed how in virtually every chapter of the history of Western thought, basic notions of the world and the self, such as the good and the body, the national, the religious and the cultural, were fashioned and transmitted through figures of Jews. These figures have not always been coherent; they presented contradictory images, and flexibly merged, like fluids, into ever new iconographic formations. What they did have in common was that the Jew has paradigmatically been the figure of the antithesis: a foil to Christian love, a symbol of global commerce, an opponent of reason and tolerance, a malign cancer to the Aryan national body, a problematic origin of Christianity and Western civilization. Thus, the figuration of the Jew not only did not require the presence of real Jews, as Nirenberg shows, but was perhaps even predicated on their absence. This conference will reflect on the current situation of this paradigm. It will tentatively point at and attempt to contemplate a profound shift in the paradigmatic figuration of the Jew that seems to have begun after the Shoah and is still at work today. While "Jews", "Judaism" and "Israel" remain important terms for describing and accounting for global agenda, they seem no longer to serve as figures of antithesis, but on the contrary of essential and integral, even representative element of the West's political-cultural self. For the first time in history, the Jew has become a figure of the Western establishment, which is normatively committed to support the Jewish state and to protect and cultivate Jews and Jewish institutions. Jews have become a "good other". Anti-Semitism still exists, but is perceived by normative institutional discourse as social and psychological, even epistemological pathology. The conference will reflect on the ambivalent nature of this new situation of the Jew as a figure of hegemony. The historical situation of Germany makes it an especially interesting place for this conference. In contemporary Germany, figures of Jews have been playing an important role in the making of a new national self, following the fall of the Berlin wall. "Renaissance of Jewish life" has emerged, as also observable in Eastern and Central Europe, as a powerful narrative of overcoming the past destruction. The central role of this narrative stands in utter disproportion to the very limited presence of actual Jewish communities. Thus, the Jew has become a figure of a national discourse that does not necessarily promote pluralism and multiculturalism.

Organized by Elad Lapidot (elapidot@zedat.fu-berlin.de) and Hannah Tzuberi (tzuberi@zedat.fu-berlin.de)

Jewish Friends

Contemporary Figures
of the Jew

October 17th–18th, 2017

In cooperation with the
Institute of Jewish Studies,
Freie Universität Berlin



DAHLEM
HUMANITIES
CENTER

Freie Universität Berlin



DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft

Freie Universität Berlin
Rostlaube, Seminarzentrum (Room L113)
Habelschwerdter Allee 45 14195 Berlin

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16th, 2017

Room JK 33/121, closed event

11:30-18:00

Workshop with Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17th, 2017

Room L113

9:00-9:30 Greetings and Introduction

“Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White” (J. Baldwin)

09:30-10:30

Ben Ratskoff (University of California, Los Angeles)
Whiteness and Christendom: James Baldwin’s Figure of the Jew

Response: Daniel Boyarin (University of California, Berkeley)
t.b.a.

Chair: Anne Eusterschulte (Freie Universität Berlin)

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

The “bürgerliche Verbesserung” of Jewish Knowledge

11:00-12:00

Elad Lapidot (Freie Universität Berlin)
My Disfigured Friend

Response: Asher Mattern (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen)

The Leveling of the Human or the Sublation of Jewishness in the Liberal Form of Consciousness

Chair: Gilad Shenhav (Minerva Humanities Center/Goethe Universität Frankfurt)

12:00-13:00

Ivan Segré

Criticism as Conservatism: The De-Revolutionized Talmud

Response: Ron Naiweld (CNRS - Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique)

Reading the Talmud with Hope in my Heart and Against the Illusion of Timelessness in Talmudic Scholarship

Chair: Hannah Tzuberi (Freie Universität Berlin)

13:00-14:30 Lunch Break

Making Jews for Europe

14:30-15:30

Hannah Tzuberi (Freie Universität Berlin)

Filling a Void. The Making of Jews in Contemporary Germany
Response: Johannes Becke (Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg)

When Rachel Dolezal Goes to Shul: Transracialism, Atonement and the German Convert to Judaism

Chair: Schirin Amir-Moazami (Freie Universität Berlin)

A Nation Among the Nations

15:30-16:30

Hillel Ben Sasson (Jewish Theological Seminary New York)
“In the Name of the Jewish People” – The State of Israel and Its Figures of the Jew

Response: Oded Schechter (Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies, Universität Hamburg)

The Desecration of the Name

Chair: Nahed Samour (Universität Göttingen/Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

16:30-17:00 Coffee Break

17:00-18:00

Ofri Ilany (Van Leer Institute Jerusalem)
Radical Politics of Chosenness

Response: Raef Zreik (Tel Aviv University)
Dancing with the Devil?

Chair: Omri Ben-Yehuda (Freie Universität Berlin)

18:15

Cynthia M. Baker (Bates College)

Europe’s and America’s “New Jews”

(Dahlem Humanities Center Lecture, Room L116)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18th, 2017

Room L113

Gendered Images of Power

9:00-10:00

David Hadar (Freie Universität Berlin)

Reading Gal Gadot: The Image of the Tough Israeli Woman in American Popular Culture

Response: Silvana Greco (Freie Universität Berlin)

Myth and Anti-Myth of the Strong Israeli Woman

Chair: Michael Weinman (Bard College Berlin)

Europe’s New Jews?

10:00-11:00

Anya Topolski (Radboud Universiteit)

Good Jew, Bad Jew ... Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: “Managing” Europe’s Others.

Response: Özgür Dikmen (Hebrew University Jerusalem)
“These Are Not Like Them!” – On Perceptions of Anti-Zionist Jews

Chair: Michal Y. Bodemann (University of Toronto)

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:30

Sultan Doughan (University of California, Berkeley)
Jewish Friends and Muslim Enemies? Or How Do We Commemorate Auschwitz Today?

Response: Baruch Wolski

The Importance of “Being Jewish” for Muslims

Chair: Irit Dekel (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

12:30-14:00 Lunch Break

Politics of Friendship

14:00-15:00

Oriol Poveda Guillén (Uppsala University)

“A Friend of the Jews” – Walking the Razor’s Edge Between Judeophilia and Friendship

Response: Agata Bielik-Robson (University of Nottingham)
“Not So Friendly and Still Ruling the World”: On the Persistence of Some East-European Myths

Chair: Elad Lapidot (Freie Universität Berlin)

15:00-15:30 Coffee Break

15:30-16:30

Daniel Marwecki (SOAS, University of London)

How Jews Became Germans At Last: German Politics Towards Israel and the Transformations of Antisemitism

Response: Dani Kranz (Universität Wuppertal)

The Special Jewish Friend Reloaded? Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Muslim ‘Friends’ in Germany

Chair: Jan Eike Dunkhase (Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach)

16:30-17:30

Concluding Remarks: Cynthia M. Baker, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Raef Zreik, Hannah Tzuberi