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# **GUEST EDITORS’ INTRODUCTION: TRUMP AND THE “JEWISH QUESTION”**

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The election of Donald Trump has brought the “Jewish Question” back onto the intellectual agenda in a way that it has not been for decades. As a term, the “Jewish Question” was first employed in the nineteenth century during debates about the conversion and emancipation of Jews and has subsequently been used to describe the vexed relationship between Jewishness and the dominant social formations of the modern world—whether Christianity, Europe, the West, the nation-state, Enlightenment, or “the people.” In other words, the “Jewish Question” named, and names, a fundamental and unstable self-other relationship that is central to the production of both Jewish and non-Jewish identities in modernity. As David Nirenberg puts it in a discussion of Marx’s controversial “On the Jewish Question,” “the ‘Jewish question’ is as much about the basic tools and concepts through which individuals in society relate to the world and to each other, as it is about the presence of ‘real’ Judaism and living Jews in that society” (2013, 3).

To be sure, the United States has not had a “Jewish Question” in the same way that European nations in the age of emancipation did. Jews in the United States, as Ben Ratskoff documents in his contribution to this special issue, were from the beginning granted entry into the most significant category of belonging in the United States: that is, some Jews have always been considered white. Even if the degree of Jewish whiteness in the United States has been historically variable and has not always served as a shield against antisemitism and xenophobia, there has never been a fundamental incompatibility between being Jewish and being

American as there was between being Jewish and being a member of many European nations. Recognizing the vast differences between the contemporary United States and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, we nevertheless take inspiration from historians of the latter era who have considered Jews as “good to think” with in addressing the dilemmas of modernity.<sup>1</sup> In turning our gaze to the U.S. context, while holding the wider world in view, we seek to explore whether Jews—despite their small numbers and relatively privileged status vis-à-vis other minorities—might nevertheless offer a salient vantage point for understanding contemporary social and political forces. By no means do we believe that such a vantage point is the only relevant one for understanding our world. We do, however, hold that Jewishness and antisemitism play structuring roles in political imaginaries that far outstrip the quantitative presence of actual Jews in national and global affairs.<sup>2</sup>

We conceived of this special issue in the fall of 2017, one year after the 2016 presidential election and several months after the inauguration of Donald Trump as the forty-fifth president of the United States. The articles included here were written and rewritten during 2018 and 2019 and sent to press in fall 2019, a period in which we seemed to lurch almost daily from one crisis to another. When we began work on this issue at least one of us hoped that the questions raised in our call for papers might have become yesterday's news by the time the issue was complete. Yet as we worked on this introduction a seemingly endless stream of ugly tweets with “Jewish” content issued from the White House, culminating (for now) in the antisemitic charge that Jews who did not vote for Trump were at once disloyal to Israel and to the United States. (And as we are finishing the introduction, an impeachment inquiry has begun—the future is certainly unclear.)

If such tweets are frequently mere distractions from political maneuvers happening elsewhere, some of them have also had large-scale geopolitical implications, such as the banning of members of the U.S. House of Representatives from Israel and occupied Palestine. Although it is impossible to ignore the role played by Trump in inciting violence—against immigrants, against Muslims, and sometimes against Jews—the special issue that has resulted from our efforts does not place Trump at the center.<sup>3</sup> Rather, our contributors read widely across overlapping realms of contemporary society while also digging into a series of histories that help contextualize the disorientations of the present.

The most deadly indications of the urgency of our topic actually emerged long after this issue had been conceived. The killing of eleven people at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue during Shabbat services on October 27, 2018 stands as the most heinous example of anti-Jewish violence in U.S. history. It was followed several months later by an April 27, 2019, shooting near San Diego at the Chabad of Poway synagogue in which one woman was killed and several other people injured. Beyond the intolerable loss of life, what stands out in these two

mass shootings are the justifications offered by the perpetrators, Robert Bowers and John Earnest, respectively. Bowers apparently targeted Tree of Life because of its connections to HIAS (formerly known as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), which provides support for Central American and other immigrants and refugees. Meanwhile Earnest, who cited Bowers as a model, also referred to the mass shooting of Muslims at the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque and linked Jews to the far-right “white genocide theory.” These various commonplaces of the white supremacist right—the rhetoric of immigrant “invasion” and “white genocide,” the reference to earlier racist killings such as the one in Christchurch—later appeared in an even deadlier mass killing, the one in El Paso, in which another white nationalist killed twenty-two people at a Walmart. Jews were not a particular target of the El Paso killer, Patrick Crusius, but his rhetoric echoed that of Bowers and Earnest as well as Trump’s own anti-immigrant racism. As these mass shootings indicate, one characteristic of the contemporary “Jewish Question” is its integration into an “intertextual” network of transnational white supremacist rhetoric and action. This network also manifested itself in the most recent act of deadly antisemitic violence at the time of our writing, the October 9, 2019, attack on a synagogue in Halle, Germany, in which Jews were the primary target, but in which a site associated with immigrants—a kebab stand—became collateral damage when the synagogue proved impossible to penetrate.

Indeed, like many contemporary white supremacists, Crusius and the Halle killer both evoked versions of the “Great Replacement” theory popularized by the French fascist Renaud Camus, which holds that “elites” (frequently a code name for Jews) are perpetrating a kind of genocide by substitution through the encouragement of mass immigration from the formerly colonized world.<sup>4</sup> Although explicit antisemitism is not part of Renaud’s theory, those who have propagated it on the right are less concerned with making the theory *salonfähig*. Thus, the rhetoric of replacement, explicitly tied to antisemitic ideology, was present at what is, up until now, the signal moment for understanding the contours of the Trump era—and the most direct catalyst for this special issue: the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 11–12, 2017.

The Unite the Right rally was organized as a protest against the removal of Confederate monuments from public space, but its significance soon went beyond even that already critical issue. In addition to the vehicular murder of Heather Heyer by the neo-Nazi James Fields, what became emblematic of the event was the way it amalgamated anti-black and anti-Jewish racisms—an amalgamation that various contributors to this issue investigate. Although it requires a good dose of amnesia to be surprised by white supremacists’ enmity toward both blacks and Jews, many Jewish Americans—and no doubt others—were taken aback by the slogan “Jews will not replace us” shouted by the marchers and prominently featured in *Charlottesville: Race and Terror*, a much-watched

*Vice* documentary about the rally. While forgetful, such surprised responses to the marchers' "replacement-ist" antisemitism are also understandable: after all, the post–World War II assimilation of American Jews had seemed like a fully successful, irreversible process. But the unabashed, publicly articulated antisemitism of the white supremacists in Charlottesville, taken together with Trump's equivocations about "very fine people" among the neo-Nazis and of "hatred" on "many sides," reinforced a sense of reemergent Jewish vulnerability.

Charlottesville was a turning point, but it was by no means the first indication that Jewish identity, Jewish historical experiences, and expressions of antisemitism were going to play a significant role in the political imaginary of our moment. For many of us, the seemingly sudden emergence after the election of Richard Spencer and the so-called "alt-right" into mainstream media spaces was an early, disturbing sign of a changed political landscape. On November 19, 2016, just eleven days after the election, Spencer gave a speech at his blandly named National Policy Institute that did not have much to say directly about Jews, but that mobilized a set of sly references to Nazi rhetoric and propaganda. While Trump makes regular use of the phrase "fake news" to denigrate the media, Spencer openly revealed its unsavory genealogy in the National Socialist notion of the "Lügenpresse." Spencer ended his speech with another literal translation from what he earlier called "the original German": now intoning "Hail Trump! Hail our people! Hail victory!" (cf. *Heil Hitler, Heil dem Volk, Sieg Heil!*), a refrain that was enthusiastically greeted with Hitler salutes by Spencer's audience. He also invoked Leni Riefenstahl's infamous propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* when he called Trump's election a "victory of the will"—a reference that Trump's own campaign seemed to embrace when they used the opening of *Triumph of the Will* as a clear model for a short video advertising a July 2019 rally in North Carolina, which itself quickly became scandalous because of the chants of "send her back" aimed at Representative Ilhan Omar (see Ben-Ghiat 2019). While explicit antisemitism was mostly absent from Spencer's November 2016 speech, on other occasions Spencer has used more overtly antisemitic rhetoric—sometimes even employing it against members of Trump's inner circle, such as the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner. But Spencer's public pronouncements on things Jewish are fundamentally contradictory. When not insinuating that Kushner possesses a secret power reminiscent of antisemitic conspiracy theory, Spencer has frequently expressed his admiration for Zionism and the State of Israel, seeing them as positive "models" for the ethno-nationalism he supports.

Here we arrive at what we believe is the fundamental characteristic of the "Jewish Question" in the era of Trump: its essentially ambivalent nature. The significance of Jewishness in our moment is not singular. On the one hand, as the media presence of Spencer and events in Charlottesville, Pittsburgh, and Poway illustrate, Trump's ascendancy has inspired far-right individuals and groups to bring

antisemitic, white supremacist, and fascist ideologies into the open and to act on them in ways that would have seemed impossible even a few years ago. On the other hand, Trump's closest advisors include highly visible Jewish Americans, such as Kushner and Stephen Miller, and Trump can count among his supporters a significant number of prominent American Jews, such as the billionaire Sheldon Adelson. The point is not simply that there are identifiably Jewish individuals close to Trump: rather, the point is to consider the conditions of possibility for such support and to reflect on what those conditions of possibility tell us about the political valences of Jewishness today. Miller, for instance, has a long track record of anti-immigrant activism, a sign that Jews are not "naturally" aligned with antiracist politics despite their historical experiences of antisemitism. The example of Adelson indicates what we consider the most significant factor for the minority of Jewish Americans who support Trump: an intensifying right-wing Zionism. What Trump-supporting Jews seem especially to like about the president are his good relations with the current Israeli government and his seemingly absolute support of its ethno-nationalist policies. But Jewish politics—now as always—are fundamentally heterogeneous. While support for Israel remains high among Jewish Americans, new forms of opposition to the occupation have also emerged in recent years. In addition, a crucial factor in Jewish opposition to Trump seems to be an increasingly articulated sense of solidarity between Jews and the many other groups whose vulnerability has been exacerbated by Trump's incitements. This ambivalence—the tensions, contradictions, and new solidarities of our moment—confirms for us that Jewishness remains highly cathected in contemporary political imaginaries and thus offers one significant key to understanding the Trump era.

Although Trump is in many ways a singular figure and we do seek to chart here the emergence of a newly configured "Jewish Question," our perspective is not that the Trump era constitutes a radical rupture with recent American history and right-wing politics of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. To believe in such a rupture would be to offer a mirror image of Trump's own deeply racist slogan, "Make America Great Again." The liberal version of Trump's nostalgia implies that, while once the U.S. was a tolerant, equitable society, now it has been corrupted by racism and authoritarianism—a narrative difficult to maintain in the wake of centuries of genocide, slavery, Jim Crow, and imperial adventure. As Corey Robin (2017) and others have argued convincingly, far from representing a new current in American politics, Trump embodies trends within conservative and neoconservative (and even liberal) politics that stretch back much further and that are, in fact, fundamental to what the United States has been and continues to be. Instead of implying that we have entered a state of exception, our interest in exploring Trump through the lens of a critical Jewish studies derives from a sense that Trump condenses and personifies

many of the contradictions of the present and recent past. The Trump moment does have significant elements that are new, but it by no means represents a complete break with the past. Nor is it unique in our own day. To the contrary, when we survey the globe we see many similar figures and many similar political developments—from India and Israel to Hungary and Turkey. In some of those places questions of Jewishness are salient, in others less so. It is precisely in the contradictions and unevenness of the place of Jewishness in the contemporary world as well as its continuities and ruptures with the past that we seek to locate a new Jewish question.

To be sure, not all of the shifts in the contours of the “Jewish Question” in the last few years have been the result of the rise of the right, however. As we have suggested, a newly invigorated left has also had an impact on the kinds of questions that circulate in proximity to Jewishness. We’re thinking, for instance, of the election to congress of the group of progressive women of color known as “the squad” as well as the prominence of activist figures like Palestinian-American Linda Sarsour. These women have pushed political discourse to the left while also serving as targets of regular abuse from the right. For our purposes, what is most relevant is the way they have challenged some of the pieties around American relations with Israel. In doing so, they have sometimes been tagged as antisemitic, but they have also been party to the creation of new alliances between Jewish and non-Jewish activists concerned with racism, immigrant rights, and the question of Palestine. Indeed, the rise of a new, youth-inflected Jewish-American activism is one of the most significant stories of this period: groups such as IfNotNow have challenged the American Jewish community’s unquestioning support for Israel from an explicitly Jewish-identified perspective, while the network Never Again Action and the group JewsAgainstICE have sought to rework a sacralized and often quietist Holocaust memory so that it can stand in opposition to the unlawful and immoral detention of immigrants and refugees.

As this selective account of the contemporary moment suggests, the contours of American Jewishness as well as the broader meanings of Jewishness are in flux today. While neither brand-new nor propelled uniquely or even predominantly by the Trump phenomenon, shifts in the status of Jewishness and antisemitism provide one illuminating lens on consequential transformations that, as the articles in this special issue reveal, are simultaneously geo-political, cultural, and social. For the purposes of this discussion, we have proposed the “Jewish Question” as a productive—if deliberately provocative—lens for historicizing the present, but the term does not refer to a stable and unchanging set of concerns. Rather, we propose a three-part periodization in which Jewish questions have been differently configured. Like all acts of periodization, ours necessarily simplifies a complex field, but we hold nevertheless that periodization represents a heuristically useful way of grasping both the novelty and deeper history of our times.

The “Jewish Question” was a product of what historian Holly Case has called the “Age of Questions”—a late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tendency to consider social issues involving ethnic minorities, the declining Ottoman empire, and women, among other burning topics of the time, as questions in search of solutions (Case 2018). In the context that concerns us, this meant asking whether Jews were capable of integration into the emerging, secular Christian, European nation-states and, if so, on what terms. The “solutions” offered by the first age of the “Jewish Question” ranged from enfranchisement premised on assimilation, on the one hand, to the Nazis’ genocidal “Final Solution,” on the other. In the wake of the Holocaust and with the establishment shortly afterward of the State of Israel, this question was reconfigured and to some extent marginalized. Public expressions of antisemitism became taboo, and Jews went from being the quintessential suspicious outsiders to occupying secure places within postwar liberal states. A concept of “Judeo-Christian” culture took on increasing prominence, a development that has, in recent years, been deployed against other religious minorities, especially Muslims. Indeed, in this second phase, Jews moved from being outsiders of the nation-state to insiders of so-called Judeo-Christian civilization, a transformation that then facilitates the production of a new set of outsiders: immigrants from postcolonial contexts, from the Global South, and, above all, from Muslim societies (Bunzl 2007). In a sense, as Matti Bunzl argued with respect to Europe, the “Muslim Question” replaces the “Jewish Question” while, at the same time, the scale of belonging shifts from the nation-state to the supranational realm (Bunzl 2007).

While aspects of these first and second moments persist, we may be seeing the emergence of a newly configured “Jewish Question.” In this moment, the topography of inside and outside that has dominated the earlier iterations of Jews’ relationship to the politics and culture of Europe and North America finds itself displaced. While the place of Jews was always double, if not multiple—stretching from assimilation to absolute victimization in the first moment and including model citizen of the West and new citizen of Israel in the second—today transformations in technology, media, and the global political order have rendered Jewishness even more difficult to situate. Jews and Jewishness occupy contradictory positions in political conflict, as our brief sketch of the double relationship of Jews to Trumpism suggests. In addition, while Bunzl’s work in the early post-9/11 moment was premised on an optimistic assessment of the decline of traditional antisemitism, which he saw as accompanying the decline of the nation-state, a decade later things look different. Not only has nationalism made a strong comeback in Europe and elsewhere, but antisemitism has returned—not only in the guise of so-called “Muslim” and immigrant “new antisemitism” which was already central to discussions when Bunzl was writing, but especially in forms that echo “traditional” far-right anti-Jewish politics. Jews are



(still, once again) imagined by antisemites as pulling strings in global conspiracies—with the slandering of George Soros echoing the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—while at the same time many Jews imagine themselves, depending on their political self-understanding, as either part of a transnational ethno-nationalism merging Zionism and domestic right-wing politics or as part of a progressive intersectional alliance with other marginalized groups. What is common to all of these visions is the articulation of Jews and Jewishness in translocal networks where the topography of inside and outside no longer holds sway. In other words, on both the left and the right, Jews and Jewishness occupy ambivalent positions that cannot be described as either purely “inside” or “outside” a particular social or political formation.<sup>5</sup> For instance, conservative Jews can be networked into ethno-nationalist alliances, but Jews as a group also remain targets of the far right. Meanwhile, many Jews have aligned themselves with the multiracial social movements of the left, yet Jewishness and the status of antisemitism remain sources of unease and tension in such coalitions, not least because of the vexed Israel/Palestine question.

The articles presented here might, then, be understood as emerging from—and responding to—the conjuncture of this incipient third iteration of the “Jewish Question.” The contributors pose a variety of Jewish questions and questions about Jews, Jewishness, and Jewish Studies. They touch upon the historical “Jewish Question” as the question of the gap between citizenship and national belonging, and inquire into antisemitism—how it’s instantiated, what motivates it, how and when it might end. And they ask, most insistently, about the relationship of Jews as a minority to other, oppressed minorities, particularly African Americans. Does it make more sense to think of Jews as belonging to an historically oppressed and discriminated-against minority, or as agents complicit with a racially hierarchical dominant order? This question, and the myriad ways in which we might conceptualize it, arguably constitutes *the* “Jewish Question” of the twenty-first century.

Thus, for many of the contributors in this special issue what is most urgent to grasp in the contemporary American context is the place of Jews in relation to American categories of race. One of the central questions running through the issue is that of whiteness: whether, how, by whom, and under what conditions Jews have been regarded as white, and with what consequences for our understanding of their relationship to racial capitalism, in general, and to blackness and anti-black racism, in particular. Several of the articles recall to us the ways in which Jews have been aligned in the American racist imagination with African Americans, as fellow, if unequal victims of a racist gaze; the others, while acknowledging historical and contemporary antisemitism, limn how we might see Jews as implicated in a US white racial identity that situates them in proximity to state power and systematic and structural racial oppression.

Methodologically, most of the contributors approach the present through a historical lens. By arranging the articles in roughly chronological order of topic, we hope to offer a small counterweight to the exhausting temporal disorientation that has saturated and overwhelmed contemporary consciousness since 2016. The apparent novelties of our time do not, these pieces repeatedly suggest, come out of nowhere; instead, they have their roots deep in the formation and history of the United States. Many of our contributors turn to the past specifically to excavate key assumptions and preconceptions in contemporary political discourse, be it the identification of Jews with either racial whiteness or with Zionism and loyalty to the state of Israel (or both), or the widespread surprise that American white supremacists could be simultaneously antisemitic and anti-black. The issue begins with an exploration of debates and laws concerning citizenship and race in the late eighteenth century, then moves on to the Leo Frank case that gave the Ku Klux Klan a second lease on life. The subsequent historically oriented articles examine the post-1945 world, albeit from very different perspectives. They move from philosophical reflections on Jewish and antisemitic identity formation in the wake of the Holocaust, through communication between American Jewish and Israeli cultural, political, and religious organizations, to the transformations in the cultural status of pornography from its emergence into the margins of the cultural mainstream in the 1970s until the current moment. Each contributes to the long story of how we arrived at the present predicament.

In the opening article, Ben Ratskoff argues that the twin premises of American liberal democracy—racial whiteness and political forms that “materialize” Christianity—explain how Jews can be both the targets of white supremacists and among the members and ideologues of Trump’s xenophobic, racist administration. Supplementing Karl Marx’s observation in “On the Jewish Question” that the United States was a nation state without a Jewish question with a reading of debates around the 1790 Naturalization Act, Ratskoff observes that from the perspective of U.S. law, Jews have always been classified as white, and thus “implicated in racial whiteness.” Yet while racial whiteness historically “neutralized religious differences between Europeans,” establishing an abstract individual equivalence within a civil society that rested on the subordination and exploitation of non-whites, that whiteness, Ratskoff insists, has never been monolithic: it neutralizes but does not dissolve religious difference, leaving Jews subordinate within a genealogically—when not overtly—Christian (and particularly Protestant) political formation. The ambiguities of American Jews’ racial and political status today can be traced back to this foundational tension.

While Ratskoff situates Jews within whiteness, Brett Ashley Kaplan suggests that Jewish whiteness needs to be understood in conjunction with another longstanding American tradition: aligning Jews with non-white racial others. Taking

the closing reflections of Philip Roth's 2004 alternative history novel, *The Plot Against America*, as her point of departure, Kaplan revisits the 1913 Leo Frank case and its consequences to demonstrate how deeply intertwined antisemitism and anti-Black racism have been in the United States for well over a century. She emphasizes that the Ku Klux Klan's twentieth-century resurgence coincided with and perhaps was even catalyzed by Frank's lynching. Kaplan calls for us to work cross-racially and cross-culturally, to think the mutual imbrication of these different racisms, and to recognize the ways in which they travel across space and time, informing Nazi diatribes against modern art and music, and recurring, of course, in Roth's uncannily prescient novel.

Judith Greenberg calls for us to interpret Trump's deliberate deployment of fear through the lens of Jean-Paul Sartre's immediate postwar reflections on racism in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, whose original French title, *Réflexions sur la question juive*, could be more literally translated as "Reflections on the Jewish Question." Greenberg foregrounds the distinct role of fear in the respective "situations" of both the antisemite and the Jew. While Sartre reads the antisemite's projections onto the Jew as displaced expressions of his (the antisemite's) own fear of social uncertainty, change, and displacement itself, he sees the Jew's self-understanding as conditioned by the fear of aggression and violence in which many Jewish communities lived. For Greenberg, Sartre's terms both illuminate the resurgence of antisemitic rhetoric, images, and violence in the precarious present, and can also be deployed intersectionally to grasp how contemporary racist projections, fantasies, and fears about immigrants emerge out of and are mobilized by the current political and economic dispensation.

Doug Rossinow also homes in on the logical leaps and apparent irrationality that are characteristic of racist and antisemitic fantasies. He asks why Zionism has come to be understood in the present as synonymous with Jewishness; why it seems so necessary and yet so fruitless to argue that one can be Jewish without being a Zionist. His answer is resolutely historical. The identification of so many American Jews with the state of Israel was, he demonstrates, neither inevitable, immediate, nor spontaneous but rather the result of deliberate cultivation over many decades on the part of American Jewish and Israeli organizations, as well as serious negotiations between them. Even the Trump administration's decision to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, while at one level obviously a significant historical shift, turns out to be completely consistent not only with widespread American Jewish opinion but also with both Republican and Democratic policy over many decades. The complicated political and affective terrain of the present moment in which criticism of Israel is frequently conflated with anti-semitism, and in which Jews, no matter their political views, are often regarded as collectively responsible for the acts of the state of Israel, needs to be understood as its unhappy, unintended consequence.

Continuing a discussion of Jews and sexuality also central to Kaplan's discussion of the Leo Frank case, Kristoff Kerl shows how white supremacist writers have for decades seen pornography as an instrument of a Jewish cultural plot to undermine white male patriarchy in order to contaminate and destroy the white race. Focusing on the far-right journal *Instauration*, Kerl details the history, from the 1970s on, of how white supremacists responded to changes in American pornography—what it depicted, how it was distributed and consumed—as so many symptoms of a Jewish conspiracy to wage demographic warfare on the white race by emasculating white men and encouraging relations between minority men and white women. Kerl thereby offers a genealogy of a far right obsessed with its own racial purity and deeply invested in reactive displays of hypermasculine leadership for whom there is no more frequent insult than that of being a “cuck” (cuckold). From this perspective it is not hard to see that Trump's boasts about pussy grabbing and penis size, misogynistic responses to women who question him, and manifestly pathological fear of and hostility toward any signs of “weakness,” all accompanied by a steady stream of racist and xenophobic chatter, are not bugs but integral, related features of his appeal, crucial to any explanation of Trump's ascent and cultural significance.

In the closing article, Dean Franco builds on recent work by Achille Mbembe, Lila Corwin Berman, Benjamin Schreier, and others to invite us to think about what Jewish Studies would do, and to whom it would matter, if it were no longer principally concerned with Jewish people. Franco examines what's disclosed when Jews and Jewishness are evoked as a point of comparison and are deployed discursively as something to think with. He asks what assumptions undergird the phrase “the New Jews,” frequently attributed to groups occupying outsider status (when not claimed by those seeking it) as well as by those groups seen as on the way to assimilation, and he traces the role of Jewish figures in the work of contemporary African American artists such as Paul Beatty, Jay-Z, Spike Lee, and Donald Glover. Ultimately, for Franco, these figurations of Jewishness all reveal how whiteness—and by extension, racial capitalism—is regulated and controlled: this, for Franco, is the precise function of Jewishness as a contemporary discourse. He thus calls for us to rethink the kind of questions Jewish Studies asks, the kinds of texts and objects it asks about, and the kinds of subjects for whom such questions might matter.

The contributors to this special issue do not speak with one voice about Jews and Jewishness in the age of Trump—nor was that ever the goal of our special issue. Yet, without exception, they follow Franco's call to articulate Jewishness in ways that extend beyond parochial visions of Jewish Studies. Indeed, we would suggest, only intersectional, comparative, and transnational approaches can adequately address the third moment of the “Jewish Question” we have sketched in this introduction. The politics of the present often appear overwhelmingly

bleak—and not only when it comes to Jews and Israel—but we have also attempted to suggest how some activist engagements with the new “Jewish Question” offer inspiring models of what a new politics might look like. It is impossible to predict the future, but it seems certain from our vantage point in late 2019 that this special issue will appear in a moment of signal importance: for Jews, for the United States, and for the planet. A world “after Trump” will not be a world without serious problems, but it may be a world in which it is easier to address those problems seriously.

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MICHAEL ROTHBERG is Professor of English and Comparative Literature and 1939 Society Samuel Goetz Chair of Holocaust Studies at UCLA. His most recent book is *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford, 2019).

#### NOTES

1. In his study of Jews and French universalism, Maurice Samuels draws on Ronald Schechter's notion that “the Jews were ‘good to think’ during the Enlightenment because they offered philosophes a test for the powers of reason: if even a group as different as the Jews could be transformed by treating them fairly, and opening to them the world of philosophy, then anybody could” (13). See also Schechter (2003, 47), who draws on Claude Lévi-Strauss.
2. As David Nirenberg demonstrates in his massive history of ideas, references to Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness “appear with a frequency stunningly disproportionate to any populations of living Jews” in the archives of European culture—and beyond (Nirenberg 2013, 1).
3. As of August 2019, *The Guardian* had documented 52 cases of violence in which perpetrators were supporters of Trump. See Swaine and Adolphe (2019).
4. Dirk Moses (2019) provides a lucid analysis of what we have called white supremacist “intertextuality” by way of an analysis of the rhetoric of “white genocide,” particularly in the manifesto of the Christchurch killer. As Moses convincingly demonstrates, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant racisms are fundamental to the “white genocide” idea as to “replacement theory.” Although he mentions the Tree of Life killings, he does not emphasize antisemitism as an element of this discourse.
5. For a compelling account of how progressive Jewish-American activists have theorized Jews' liminal position as “middle agents,” see Lorber (2019).

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