

Clemens Räthel

## 5 Beyond Shylock

### Depictions of Jews in Scandinavian Theatre and Literature

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

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

## Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Denmark

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 46–90.

8 *Indtoget* premiered in 1793.

9 *Chinafarierne* opened in 1792.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>15</sup> Niels Peder Jørgensen, "The Stage Jew," in *Danish Jewish Art: Jews in Danish Art*, ed. Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen (Copenhagen: Selskabet til Udgivelse af Danske Mindesmærker, 1999), 470–79.  
<sup>16</sup> Rätzel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 207–48.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

25 Bruce Kimmse, "Hans Christian og Jødepigen: En historisk undersøgelse af noget 'underligt'," *Rambam: Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning* 31 (1992): 59–66.

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

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

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

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

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**28** von Schnurbein, “Hybride Alteritäten,” 136.

**29** Katharina Bock, “Philosemitische Schwärmereien: Jüdische Figuren in der dänischen Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts” (PhD thesis, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2019).

**30** von Schnurbein, “Hybride Alteritäten,” 139.

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

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

**33** Schiedermaier, “Der Kaufmann von Kopenhagen,” 55–56.

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

**35** von Schnurbein, “Darstellung von Juden,” 57.

**36** Bock, “Philosemitische Schwärmereien. “

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

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

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37 von Schnurbein, “Darstellung von Juden,” 69.

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

39 Klaus Müller-Wille, “Buchstaben-theater: Zum Konzept einer modernen jüdischen Poetik in Meir Aron Goldschmidts *Avromche Nattergal* (1871),” *Orbis Litterarum* 68, no. 5 (2013): 411–41.

40 von Schnurbein, “Darstellung von Juden,” 71.

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

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

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

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

<sup>43</sup> Bach, *Exodus*, 215–52.

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

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

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

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

## Sweden

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

50 Aaron Isaak, *Lebenserinnerungen: Textfassung und Einleitung von Bettina Simon* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1994).

51 Aaron Isaak, *Minnen: Ett judiskt äventyr i svenskt 1700-tal*, ed. Mattias Dahlén (Stockholm: Hillel-förlaget, 2008).

52 Räthel, “Gränsland,” 240–41.

53 Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 314–29.

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

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

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

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

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

56 Willmar Sauter, “Shylock i Sverige,” *Teatervetenskap* 20 (1979): 20–27.

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

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

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

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

61 Sauter, “Svensk-judisk teaterhistorik.”

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

## Norway

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

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

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



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

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

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63 Bock, “Blühende Dornenzweige,” 66.

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

65 Räthel, *Wie viel Bart darf sein?*, 281–89.

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

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

68 Rothlauf, “Vom Shtetl zum Polarkreis.”

