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Another Fateful Triangle: Jews, Muslims, Europe

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Abstract: This paper argues that Jews–Muslims–Europe is a fateful triangle, in which identities and identifications both inform and form one another. It draws on interview-based research at the Jewish Museum Berlin to showcase how Jewish and Muslim positionalities have become entwined in the context of contemporary Berlin, Germany, and Europe. At the same time, it showcases how the positionality of strangerhood can provide a critical perspective for understanding and articulating Europe as a place of pluralism, both present and past. What emerges is a sociocultural terrain in which Muslims, Jews, and Europe are made by and with one another, rather than simply against one another.

Keywords: Jewish; Muslim; Europe; Germany; Jewish Museum Berlin; museums; Stuart Hall

1. Introduction

The idea of a "fateful triangle" is rooted in Stuart Hall's work. In a series of published essays and talks, Hall (2017) specifically speaks to the fateful triangle of race, ethnicity, and the nation: three forms of group identification and identities that shape the sociocultural context of Britain, in particular, and Europe, more broadly. These, he argues, intersect, overlap, and speak to and at times speak against one another. In the paper that follows, I argue that such a "fateful triangle"—of intersection, overlap, and speaking to and against one another—also applies to the entangled relationship between Jews, Muslims, and Europe. I do so by exploring this triangle through one specific cultural institution—the Jewish Museum Berlin—and tracing its transformation over time.

The state–minority nexus has been deeply theorized across the social sciences and humanities, for instance, vis-à-vis Will Kymlicka's (2018) work on liberal multiculturalism, Tariq Modood's (2022) articulation of the Bristol School of Multiculturalism (as a normative sociology), and Jeffrey Alexander's (2006) theory of the civil sphere (as the societal sphere in which minorities make claims on inclusion). This scholarship largely portrays mainstream society and minorities as paired in conversation. However, relationships and interactions in our social world are far more complex and multiple. They do not exist only in such duos of exchange but also in triangles (as well as many other shapes and forms). Such triangulation has been explored in sociological scholarship in other contexts, including that on "assumed ethnicity" (with one ethnic group portraying itself as another in order to gain mainstream inclusion) in the context of the United States; and that on "strategic ethnic performance", in which "members of one ethnic group present themselves as members of a phenotypically similar ethnic group for economic gain" in the context of Japan (Becker 2014; Ivory 2017, p. 172).

The triangulated relationship between Jews, Muslims, and Europe has long existed, and has been traced in the historiographies of how Muslims and Jews were cast out together during the Reconquista in Spain, as well as the delimitations on both groups, in terms of their segregation and physical demarcation as the "other" in European public spheres since the Middle Ages (Martínez 2008; Aktürk 2020; Ravid 1992). In the contemporary context, it has been both implicitly and explicitly invoked through the ethnographic tracing of Jewish–Muslim relations in the urban contexts of Europe (Becker 2023; Egorova and Parfitt 2013; Everett 2018, 2020; Gidley and Everett 2022). For instance, recent scholarship by Arndt

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Emmerich (2024a, 2024b) on the Bahnhofsviertel in Frankfurt has illuminated how lived encounters and relationships contribute to the reconfiguration of relations between Jews, Muslims, and the mainstream. Not only micro-level but also top-down state discourses and policies shape these relations; in one case, Esra Özyürek (2016, p. 41) traces how Muslims in Germany have become scapegoated as "carriers" of antisemitism. What emerges is a complex web of relations (re)configured by the local, national, and Europe-level social contexts inhabited together by these two ethnoreligious minority groups.

Before exemplifying the complexities of this triangulation, it is important to point out that these three group identities and identifications—Jews, Muslims, and Europe—are both imagined and, to a certain extent, real, having notable effects on the lives of those classified as such (Becker 2024; Brubaker 2013; Zukier 1996). The internal variation within these groups is far greater than these categorizations would suggest, i.e., there is no singular personhood of a Muslim or Jew, and no singular understanding of Europe as a geographical, sociocultural, and economically integrated set of nation-states. Still, the invocation of these two ethnoreligious groupings as such, often singularly so ("the" Muslim or "the" Jew), has significant consequences for the societies in which they live.

The invocation, negotiation, contestation, weighing, and re-weighing of this triangle are ongoing processes imbued with dynamism. So too are the renegotiation of the borders—imagined and material alike—between Muslims, Jews, and Europe. While this paper seeks to think through the triangulated Jewish, Muslim, and European relation, it more specifically homes in on an illuminative case in the German capital, showcasing how Jewish and Muslim relations become triangulated with and within German society not only through top-down discourses/policies, or lived everyday encounters, but also on the level of cultural institutions—in this case, the Jewish Museum Berlin. The paper proceeds as follows: I begin by articulating the similarly ambiguous positionality of Jews and Muslims in Germany through the Simmelian notion of "the Stranger". I then turn towards the case study of the Jewish Museum Berlin, which illuminates the tensions at the heart of Jewish–Muslim–European making together, and also its pulling apart. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of what this means for the question of Europe, specifically during a time of crisis, and how such strangerhood might become a position of constructive opportunity to rethink the borders of Europe.

2. Strangehood

In his seminal essay, "The Stranger", Simmel (2016) articulated the concept of the Stranger as modernity's seminal insider–outsider, claiming the "classic example" of this figure as the "European Jew". Simmel sought, through this description, to bring attention to the liminal positionality of those individuals and those groups that are somewhat part of society, while also enduringly set apart from it. The Stranger, Simmel argued, was perceived as not only liminal in space but also liminal in time; understood as a temporary presence, living within but never entirely belonging to the society at hand; in but not of the society; in but not of Europe.

Simmel introduced the notion of the Stranger, and others (such as Hannah Arendt (1944) and Zygmunt Bauman (1990)) furthered his conceptualization to make sense of how the negative distinction of Jews took root and endured throughout European modernity. All at the same time pointed to a more universal position of alterity in their engagement with the Stranger (one that Jakob Engholm Feldt articulates in his 2020 article "The future of the stranger: Jewish exemplarity and the social imagination").

Building on Feldt's (2020) articulation of the Jewish Stranger as exemplary but not exclusive, I also consider the contemporary Muslim positionality in Germany as Europe writ large as one of strangerhood. While I do not directly compare the experiences of Muslims and Jews (again, experiences are very plural both across and also within these groups), both Jews and Muslims have long been perceived as introducing unwelcome otherness into idealized Christian-cum-secular visions of whose Europe is and what Europe is/should be; these notions are often couched in the language of "incivility" and "threat" (Becker 2022).

Both have been seen as polluting forces, a stereotype re-invoked throughout history, from the Reconquista to the Nazi project of Jewish annihilation and contemporary narratives of Muslim threat (Hafez 2014; Hamid 2019; Martínez 2008; Aktürk 2020). And yet, at times, Jews have also been included in the European imaginary, through the language of the "Judeo-Christian" and, more recently, through the articulation of a "new antisemitism" seen to target Jews and also European progressivism—an understanding of antisemitism projected exclusively onto Muslims in Europe, that is, in order to set Muslims negatively apart (Özyürek 2023).

I now turn to one specific empirical case, which has largely been studied as an exclusively Jewish and/or state institution (Costello 2013; Feldman and Peleikis 2014), but in fact exposes the fateful triangle of Muslims, Jews, and Europe: the Jewish Museum Berlin. This is an illuminative case. I then turn to the critical possibilities for re-thinking Europe, in which Muslims and Jews are neither set against one another nor cast out, but instead recognized as critical strangers not only in but of Europe.

3. The Jewish Museum Berlin

The Jewish Museum Berlin emerged in my ethnographic research over the past decade as a formative institution in the life of Jewish—and also Muslim—Berlin: a place that speaks at once to historical ethnoreligious exclusions and their contemporary incarnations. While my research centered on other institutions (mosques), the Jewish Museum featured as a space/place facilitating the articulation of urban identities for Muslim youth who worked there as tour guides, as well as its inaugural Jewish curator (Cilly Kugelmann), tasked with the responsibility of representing German Jewish history—and the present—in a single institution. In this case study of a single institution, I draw primarily from two interviews, with Cilly Kugelmann and with Harun, a Turkish German Muslim tour guide in the Jewish Museum. I additionally draw from other interviews that I undertook with staff at the museum, museum exhibitions, as well as the media coverage of these exhibitions.

The contemporary Jewish Museum Berlin was founded in 2001 after a decades-long conversation regarding its emplacement and spatial form. The first Jewish Museum in Berlin opened on 24 January 1933, less than a week before the Nazis rose to power. Erected beside the Neue Synagogue on Oranienstrasse in the Mitte district of the city, it was designed as a place to showcase the history, culture, and contemporary lives of German Jewry, including exhibitions of modern and Jewish art (Sodaro 2013). Shut down and looted during Kristallnacht, on the night of 8–9 November 1938, this museum became part of the larger destruction of the city. In the fateful year of 1989 when Berlin (and Germany's) east and west reunited, architect Daniel Libeskind was selected to design the new Jewish Museum. Libeskind designed a modern building, colloquially termed the "Blitz" or "lightning bolt" because of its form. The museum today consists of this and a second, older building, the "Kollegianhaus" (Opotow 2012). The seat of the 18th century Royal Court of Justice, it became home to the Berlin Museum, a museum centered on Berlin's history, in 1969 (Jewish Museum Berlin 2024c). The Kollegianhaus is also today the entrance, cloakroom, and the space for special exhibitions in the museum, whereas the "Blitz" houses the underground axes of German Jewish life (axis of the Holocaust, axis of exile, and axis of continuity) as well as the permanent exhibit of the museum, curated by Cilly Kugelmann.

In 2006, under the leadership of the museum's inaugural director Michael Blumenthal, Cilly Kugelmann—a Jewish Frankfurter and historian—became the first curator of the Jewish Museum Berlin (and would remain so for over a decade, until her retirement in 2017). Blumenthal, a German-American academic, had a vision of opening the museum to the world: a vision shared, from its very beginning, by Kugelmann. In her words,

> I was recruited for this job and at the time, I was a committed chain-smoker. Michael Blumental was also a committed chain smoker. And we were committed to the same aim. He nor I were interested in a Jewish-Jewish institution. Our agenda was rather to look at the historical and current problems and give a

> variety of interpretations, to resonate with the world that we actually live in . . . Blumenthal and I said "to hell with it", we want to do something that is relevant for the society itself.

When I asked how she became involved in the museum, Kugelmann reflects on her search for an opening beyond the closed and traumatized post-war Frankfurt Jewish community in which she grew up, a place in which to educate the broader public on the intricacies of German Jewish culture and history.

> I grew up in a traditional Jewish community and one thing was completely clear to me: I would never in my life work for a Jewish organization. I was born in Frankfurt to Polish parents. This is an interesting history but I was not interested in working at an institution focused on itself: with "prenatal enthusiasm".

To be relevant for the society itself meant, for Kugelmann, to speak through the institution to the reality of a new multiculturalism, a new Germany as a self-recognized "migration country" in which the predominant, post-migrant minority was Turkish (and, therefore, largely Muslim). Many of the tour guides at the Jewish Museum Berlin are themselves Turkish German Berliners, reflecting the make-up of the city and the neighborhood of Kreuzberg where it stands. I interviewed one of these tour guides, Harun, in the summer of 2013. In the museum's courtyard, we discussed how conflict had taken hold of this cultural institution tasked with representing Jewish history and culture, while remaining relevant to contemporary German and European societies.

This struggle began early on in the post-war life of the museum and has continued until today. In 2005, the museum instated a tour in which Judaism and Islam were compared as religious traditions, responding to the reality of largescale Muslim migration and settlement in Berlin, as in Germany, more broadly. One of the goals of this endeavor, another former tour guide in the museum explained, was to make the museum seem relevant to the lives of the local Turkish school children who visited it, creating a point of connection for young Berliners to the history of their city, their country, and Europe, as a whole.

Many of the events hosted by the Museum's academic wing, the Jewish Museum Academy, brought antisemitism and Islamophobia into conversation, highlighting the histories of discrimination in Germany and Europe that targeted both groups. The two focal points of this academy were "the Muslim-Jewish Forum" and its program in "Migration and Diversity". Again, these reflected the contemporary constitution of the German capital, where a large (predominantly Turkish) Muslim populace had settled after WWII, specifically through the so-called "guestworker" program that brought tens of thousands of migrants from Turkey to Germany (Chin 2007). At the same time, Berlin had become a center for Palestinian diasporic settlement in Europe, and increasingly a place for Jewish emigration, including that by Jewish Israelis (Atshan and Galor 2020).

Under Cilly Kugelmann's leadership, the Jewish Museum exhibitions did not shy away from sociopolitical complexities or even controversies. Instead, they engaged with them head-on. And many specifically engaged with the intersections of Jewish and Muslim life. Some that garnered public attention include the 2013 exhibition, Snip It: Stances on Ritual Circumcision, which explored traditions of circumcision in the Abrahamic religions; the 2017 exhibition, Cherchez la femme, which explored Jewish and Muslim traditions of head covering, through imagery, narratives, and a sculpture made from hair; and in 2018, the Welcome to Jerusalem exhibition, which centered on the Holy City as a place of great import to Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike (Jewish Museum Berlin 2024a, 2024b, 2024d). The last of these garnered not just attention, but outrage from within and outside of Europe. The Israeli government accused museum leadership of reflecting anti-Israel sentiment in these exhibitions, supposedly more prominently portraying the Palestinian/Muslim perspective (Eddy and Kershner 2018). It is important to note that this exhibition opened during a time of increased clashes in Gaza between Israelis and Palestinians, during the Gaza Border Protests, and thus emotions were particularly fraught (Yarchi and Ayalon 2023).

"That was the beginning of the end", Kugelmann lamented when I interviewed her in 2023 about her experience working at the Jewish Museum Berlin. "It's not what it was any more. Now the museum has retreated. To give up such a chance, it really hurts".

"What was that chance?" I ask, "What represents the vision that you had?"

She tilts her head to think, and then widens her eyes. "Jerusalem", she says, with a sigh.

> The Jerusalem exhibition is dear to me. Nobody else had an exhibition that wasn't afraid to display the political problems and to embed not only the three monotheistic but also integrates the fight over Jerusalem between Palestinians and Jews. We got so many good views and then that was turned around.

With the Jerusalem exhibition, Kugelmann was accused of provocation. She did not contend with this claim, but rather re-emphasized the relevance of her work, and of exhibitions as a form of art that allowed for reflections on sociocultural challenges, creating a space for conversation.

> You only can open discussions and change the mindset if you are provocative. You only can instigate thinking this way. And it hurts sometimes. When you have to solve contradictions, presented to you as a provocation, then you start to reconsider. Ultimately, art has this task. And for me exhibitions are a specific form of art. In a book you have a variety of ways of presenting things, from positivist to emotional. In film, which is an emotional art form, you can inspire people to laugh or cry. Every art has its own right. I think that exhibitions should be considered as a form of art based in the three-dimensional remains of culture.

This short summary of events linking Jewish and Muslim life in the body of the Jewish Museum, culminating with the Jerusalem exhibition and shortly thereafter an academy event in which a vocal BDS supporter was invited to an intellectual roundtable by the academy director, Yasemin Shooman, serves as a backdrop to the tension at the heart of the institution's recent unraveling and subsequent reopening as a more insular, inward-facing institution—a tension that reverberates throughout the German capital and beyond. An aptly titled *New York Times* article published on 9 July 2019 captured the conflict with a single question: "What and Whom Are Jewish Museums For?" (Eddy 2019). This gave way to other questions, including the following: Is the museum a place to emphasize the particularity of the Jewish experience in Germany and Berlin? Or is it a place to explore the particular and yet also universal experience of strangerhood, and therefore Jewish and Muslim experiences together too?

4. The Circumcision Ban

I met Harun when the museum was still outward facing and run by Cilly Kugelmann, in 2013, over a decade ago. Harun, like all of the tour guides at the time, wore a red scarf around his neck imprinted with an outline of the Jewish Museum, on top of a black button-down shirt. Our conversation quickly turned towards the controversy that had grasped not just the museum but society writ large: the circumcision ban. This was the year before the Snip It exhibition on circumcision opened, but the topic was already being discussed by museum staff.

On 7 May 2012, the Cologne Appellate Court ruled that circumcision constitutes bodily harm (*Körperverletzung*), and thus would be henceforth outlawed in Germany. This ruling followed the report of complications experienced by a young Muslim boy in Cologne, who had undergone the procedure with a Muslim doctor. The language of the ruling demonstrated the divide between grammars of liberal rights, specifically regarding bodily autonomy, and grammars of religious obligation, specifically regarding group belonging (Amir-Moazami 2016; Yurdakul 2016). The blanket ban on circumcision did not last long, not least of all because of the backlash against it by Jews in Germany, across Europe and beyond. However, the language employed to describe circumcision had already left its mark in German society; it demarcated both Muslims and Jews as uncivil and backwards, unenlightened, and even violent against children. In Harun's words:

> What was very significant is that this practice was portrayed as a barbaric practice and "Ok, now we teach you what to do, we Christian society, we German society, we have overcome certain barbaric traditions, we have modernized with the Enlightenment and everything. We have left things behind, you know, we have overcome this. So now it's time for you guys to, you know, arrive here.

The circumcision ban was a moment in time in which Muslims and Jews were lumped together as the societal Stranger, as among but still different from "us", not having culturally "arrive[d]" in Europe. Harun explained,

> The anti-Semites, they were kinda happy actually, and also the anti-Muslims, you know, they were like "these are the two strangers in our society and now we have one case where we have the two strangers in our society together". For them, it was the perfect chance.

This "chance" allowed for a dual othering that re-invoked the Christian-cum-secular nation-state as morally superior to the ethnoreligious minorities within it, showing the endurance of cultural exclusions on belonging, and their capacity to become (re)inscribed in law.

At the same time, what occurred in the days, weeks, and months that followed revealed the hierarchy that exists between Muslims and Jews (even if both were seen as distinct from, and inferior to, the German or European mainstream). This tipped the triangle of relations in a certain direction, one in which Jews were perceived as closer to the German-cum-European mainstream, and Muslims as further away. In fact, according to Harun and another Muslim museum employee, the circumcision ban was reversed under the weight of pressure from Jewish communities both inside and outside of Germany (Yurdakul 2016).

Harun assured me that Muslim pressure would not have resulted in the same outcome. He believed that without the Jewish voice, the ban would have remained in place. He also made it clear that while there had been an opportunity for Muslims and Jews to work together in the immediate aftermath of the ban, they did not. Part of this lack of solidarity related to the initial reactions of the Jewish and Muslim communities: an extreme "shock moment" experienced by German Jews, one that notably did not reverberate in German Muslim communities.

> I have a lot of [Jewish] friends who said, "This is something we never expected, never in Germany with this past", and this was a disappointment for them and *unfathomable*. On the Muslim side, it was somewhat different. Muslims have had many such experiences in the last years, prohibitions by the state, the majority society, mosque building, *halal*, everything is a problem . . . the shock moment was not so big.

This difference in experience is of course situated in the fragile reality of Jewish life after World War II, and the foundation of the New Federal Republic of Germany with an explicit dedication to protecting Jewish life (some would argue, a Raison d'etat for the new democratic state). Yet, while the idea of the Judeo-Christian figures in discussions of Jewish inclusion in contemporary Europe, many scholars argue that this is simply a foil for an enduring Christian-centric vision of what and whose Europe is: and a way to effectively assert a harsher boundary to Muslims.

The idea of a Judeo-Christian Europe, Nathan and Topolski (2016) argue, is in fact supercessionist, suggesting that Judaism came first and then would/should be replaced by Christianity. And yet, this language has also been a powerful force in dividing Muslims from Jews, by insinuating a clash in civilizational values (Byshok 2019). It has been employed by the radical right across Europe, as a means to create a deep and enduring border between Europe and Muslims, even if and when that means (to an extent) including Jews (Özyürek 2023). Often, the employment of this concept poses Muslims as threatening the Judeo-Christian nation-state, as the radical right brings "religion back in" to the public conversation on citizenship and belonging (Minkenberg 2018). In Harun's words, this differentiation entails the "secondary placement" of Muslims in Germany, a placement

that he argues can be seen, for instance, in the way that securitization works in Muslim institutions (surveillance) versus Jewish institutions (protection).

It is further important to here note that the strongest incarnation of this deep line drawn between Muslims and Jews (and between Muslims and Europe through Jews) is the powerful narrative of a "new antisemitism". This narrative suggests that Europe has somehow cleansed itself of old antisemitism, in the German case through education, government initiatives, and a top-down regime of collective guilt (Dekel and Özyürek 2022). The logic here follows that antisemitism has reappeared in Germany and Europe, writ large, not because it was latent, but because it has been "carried" by Muslim migrants from the Middle East and reintroduced into German and European societies (Özyürek 2016). In Dekel and Özyürek's (2022) terms, it has become a kind of polluting force brought back to Europe by these inherently polluted (post)migrants. In the German context, Özyürek (2023) argues that this is a way to outsource guilt over the Holocaust and antisemitism, by projecting it onto another internal Other. While in reality, the vast majority of antisemitic incidents in Europe are perpetrated by far-right wing actors, this narrative of a "new antisemitism" is extremely potent and widespread (Judaken 2008; Dekel and Özyürek 2022). This can be seen, for instance, in the extensive programming and funding for initiatives that address antisemitism among young Muslims and Arabs; in the alarm expressed by the Central Council of Jews in Germany over this new antisemitism (Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland 2021); and in the fact that this narrative has been carried forward, beyond the borders even of Europe, with articles on the topic published in such outlets as the *New York Times* (Özyürek 2023; Bittner 2014).

5. Jewish–Muslim Relations Reconsidered

Under the weight of such tensions between the particular experience of German Jewry and the more universal experience of strangerhood among minorities in Germany, the Jewish Museum Berlin could not sustain its role as an intermediary between Jewish history and Germany as a contemporary multicultural society. In 2019, Yasemin Shooman stepped down. The then-president of the Jewish Museum, Peter Schäfer, also stepped down. The Jewish Museum Berlin shut its doors to undergo major renovations, but also arguably to rebuild its leadership, as well as reconsider the direction of the museum.

While Kugelmann was tasked with developing the new permanent exhibition, what has emerged after this period of closure is a Jewish Museum much more focused on internal Jewish debates. The new director, Hetty Berg, was instated in April 2020. Berg had previously worked as a curator, then director, of the Jewish Historical Museum Amsterdam. The new director of the Jewish Museum Berlin Academy, Daniel Wildmann, instated in 2022, previously directed the Leo Baeck Institute, London. One museum employee told me that after all of the controversies that the museum had faced, it would under their new leadership pursue a vision that specifically avoided engaging with Muslim–Jewish relations and migration as themes. Recent exhibitions include the following: "Sex: Jewish Positions", "Another Country: Jewish in the GDR", and "We dreamed of nothing but Enlightenment"—Moses Mendelssohn".

What we see reflected in the triangulation of Muslims, Jews, and Europe across the history of this institution, its making, unmaking, and remarking, are the tensions that have always been present in the making, unmaking, and remaking of European societies—and of Europe, as a whole.

In approaching the "question of Europe", Anya Topolski (2020) cautions that claims of similarities between the othering of 19th–early 20th century Jews in Europe and the late 20th–early 21st century othering of Muslims have been disregarded because of the Holocaust's exceptionality. And yet, many scholars have continued to draw such parallels because of the systematic forms of othering that both groups have faced as Strangers in the societies at hand (Shavit 2016; Bell 2018). In her work as curator, Cilly Kugelmann recognized the similar emplacement of these two ethnoreligious minorities as strangers in Germany and more broadly in Europe as well as beyond, and sought to represent this

emplacement in her vision of the Jewish Museum Berlin through exhibitions that resonated with the present moment—and present struggles—of Jews and Muslims, like those on circumcision, hair coverings, and of course, Jerusalem.

In the same vein as both Nathan and Topolski (2016) and Kugelmann, I do not suggest parallels between the Holocaust and current marginalization of Muslims, but rather parallels in the ways in which Europe has defined itself vis-à-vis differentiation from Jews and Muslims in the centuries prior to the Holocaust, and how it defines itself vis-à-vis differentiation from Muslims, and differently also from Jews, today. This is an argument about Europe's enduring struggles to create a distinct identity, which, as in Topolski's analysis, invoke hierarchy rather than horizontal community; this identity becomes, however, a negative identity rather than a positive identity, through excluding Muslims and Jews (Van der Tol and Becker 2024). It further illuminates the limits of citizenship as a legal and political category, i.e., the cultural distinctions have serious and lasting effects (Beaman 2016). That is, imagined belonging matters (Anderson 2016). The imaginaries and resulting regulations of Europe remain (post)Christian and secular and this results—for both Muslims and Jews—in consequential exclusions and hierarchies of belonging (Becker 2024).

This story is a German study but it is also a European story. The idea of a new anti-semitism is one that has gained traction across Europe most notably in the cases of France (Peace 2009; Silverstein 2008) and the United Kingdom (Ben-Moshe 2017), and become a language exported to non-European contexts in order to explain why—even with great investments into education—antisemitism persists. Museums across Europe have grappled with similar questions regarding their connection to, and therefore relevance for, contemporary social contexts: how to speak to both Jewish histories and presents, and the struggles of Europe with its internal plurality over time. For example, as Everett (forthcoming) narrates in his work on museums in France, a strategy of "curating commonality" resulted in exhibitions on Jews and Muslims (Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration) and Juifs d'Orient (Institut du Monde Arabe).

These struggles are, of course, not new. This triangle has existed throughout European history. It is, again, not only in contemporary Europe that the overlapping and layered othering of Jews and Muslims has existed. We can look back to the Reconquista in which both Muslims and Jews were forced to convert, expelled from and murdered in the Iberian Peninsula (Jónsson 2007; Martínez 2008). At that time, a single drop of Muslim or Jewish blood was seen to signal otherness, and this was therefore a key historical moment in the othering of Muslims and Jews as both religious and racialized others. Even earlier in the history of Europe, the Fourth Lateran Council of Rome passed a decree to segregate Muslims and Jews, placing them in ghettos and forcing them to wear specific clothing that demarcated them as non-Christian others in 1215 (Aktürk 2020; Ravid 1992)

The formation of Europe as an exclusively Christian-cum-secular set of nation-states and imagined idea has long occurred through the othering of its religious minorities, and the internal and yet externalizing strangerhood of Muslims and Jews. These narratives have shifted shapes and discursive forms, most recently re-invoked with the migration of guestworker and postcolonial migrants, those who are now deemed simply as "Muslims" in Europe. At times Muslims and Jews are othered together, at others, othered apart, and often posed or pitted against one another.

Walter Benjamin (1999, p. 542) writes of the glass "window-mirror", "project[ing]" the interior lives of the Parisian bourgeois into the metropolis; Muslims together with Jews provide a metaphorical "window-mirror", a sight inside of, while also reflecting, the interiors of Europe's struggles with itself. As we have witnessed in the recent European and French elections, there is a notable divide between pluralist, multicultural visions and ethno-national purist visions of Europe: what it is and what it should be. The first includes Muslims, Jews, and many others; the second, as put forth by movements like the German Alterative for Germany, Pegida, and the French National Front, explicitly excludes or subordinates them (Coury 2021; Benveniste and Pingaud 2016).

There is also a notable tension between thinking through Jewish and Muslim experiences in Europe together and apart. We see this in the Jewish Museum Berlin that reinvented itself as more inward facing when it reopened in 2020, turning against the longstanding idea, supported by its inaugural president and curator, that it should grapple with broader questions of multiculturalism in contemporary Germany. We also see this in the crisis today, beginning with the 7 October Hamas attacks on Israel and ensuing with the War in Gaza, which affects this fateful triangle in myriad ways. Not least of all, we are witnessing an even deeper emphasis on a conflicted relationship between the Muslims and Jews of Europe, and one shaped by global politics. Yet, there are also attempts to override or avoid these assumptions of conflict on a local level, with counter-narratives, for instance, in Berlin of Jewish groups calling for ceasefires and Muslim politicians and civic leaders joining a neighborhood solidarity event at a synagogue in the central Kreuzberg neighborhood of the German capital.

6. Strangers as Intermediaries of Europe

Throughout the history of sociology as a discipline, Jews have been recognized as distinct, with Weber (1966, p. 111) terming Jews a pariah people, rooted in a "religion of suffering". Arendt (1944) echoed this pariah status, arguing in her famous essay "The Jew as Pariah" that whether assimilated or not, all Jews remained together "in the same boat, rowing against the same angry see".

Strangerhood, as posited by Simmel, is, however, an ambivalent positionality: one that can be destructive, but also equally constructive. That is, the Stranger is imbued with agency and, as Zygmunt Bauman (1990, p. 145) writes, "the Stranger rebels".

I have developed the concept of "critical strangerhood" to show how those relegated to societal margins, such as Muslims and Jews, are able to see and understand things uniquely. Bauman (2001, p. 53) has described this unique critical positionality of being "always on the outside even when inside, examining the familiar as if it was a foreign object of study, asking questions no one else asked, questioning the unquestionable and challenging the unchallengeable". Similarly, Ebrahim Moosa (2006, p. 279), a contemporary scholar of Islamic thought, writes of the stranger: "that experience allows one to see things—to view things in a way that a domesticated or complacent gaze may fail to observe".

Now, if we think about the fateful triangle of Jews, Muslims, and Germany, the figure of the stranger—Muslim or Jew, together and apart—becomes not only in-between, transcending boundaries and "order", but also *intermediary*, able to speak between—in both literal and figurative languages—and thus speak to the Question of Europe in new ways. These ways are, at times, uncomfortable and discomfiting, as we see today. Hannah Arendt, for instance, in her speaking through such strangerhood, has been called the "prophet of nonconformity" (Bromwich 2023). So too has Cilly Kugelmann been a critical intermediary, refusing to conform to her imagined place in European history, instead emplacing herself—and a much larger project of Jewish life engaged with the pluralism of contemporary Germany—in Berlin. She pioneered by creating a version of the Jewish Museum Berlin that at once spoke to the Jewish history and present of Germany and Europe, while also speaking to the broader context of strangerhood, most notably through exhibitions that united Muslims and Jews, and in so doing, *resonated with the world that we actually live in*—a world in which Muslim and Jewish lives are entwined with one another in the project and projections of Europe, present, future, and past.

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