

Antisemitism and International Relations: the international politics of the Jewish enemy within

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Abstract

This article examines the role of antisemitism in international politics. Drawing on a genealogy of European antisemitism, it proposes the analytic framework of the ‘enemy within’ to foreground instances when Jewish ‘enemy’ figures are positioned on both sides of the boundaries organising international political orders. This particular permutation of (racial) bordering is porous and ambivalent, even or especially as ‘hard’ and binary racial borders are simultaneously enforced. The article identifies four characteristics of the Jewish ‘enemy within’: a shared origin story with European Christendom; simultaneous presence on both sides of a (racial) boundary; a prompting of fears around contagion, infiltration and assimilation; and deployment to legitimise strategies of hyper-vigilance, surveillance and purification. The genealogy traces how the Jewish ‘enemy within’ is mobilised in consolidation or defence of, first, Christian medieval order and, second, raced nation-states, economies, and bodies, in modernity. In both periods, the Jewish ‘enemy within’ appears as both an insider and outsider whose perceived ambivalence threatens, and is mobilised to defend, religious, racial and political international orders. Finally, the article applies this framework to contemporary antisemitism. Overall, the article offers a novel engagement with antisemitism in International Relations and a tool for analysing complex forms of racial bordering in global politics.

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Introduction

A rich International Relations (IR) literature shows that international politics are organised through processes of racial borders and boundary-making. Building on Du Bois' (2020 [1900]) legacy in the discipline, IR scholars trace the many ways in which the global colour line is foundational to international order, not least in its organisation of colonial or imperial processes of enslavement, occupation, exploitation and state formation (Bell, 2013; contributions to Anievas et al., 2014; Bhambra, 2020; Nisancioglu, 2020; Zvobgo, 2020). Attending to the figuration of racialised enemies, such as 'the slave' or 'the migrant' (Niang, 2020), 'perverse queer' (Weber, 2016), 'conceptual Muslim' (Ali and Whitham, 2021), 'victims' or 'madmen' (Howell, 2007), or 'snowflake', 'mob' and 'cultural Marxist' (Leigh, 2023), has proved a fruitful site for understanding the complexities of racial bordering. Yet so far IR scholarship has been relatively quiet when it comes to antisemitism or the figure of the Jewish enemy. This article suggests that attending to European antisemitic figurations of the Jew, which we find is imagined as simultaneously inside and outside of European faith, nations, territories and bodies, contributes to understanding of (racial) boundary-making in IR. It does so, building on observations in postcolonial, Black feminist and Jewish studies, by drawing attention to the ways in which (racial) bordering in international politics can be porous or ambivalent, even as it simultaneously remains rigid and violent.¹ The article proposes the framework of the 'enemy within' as an analytic tool for understanding this permutation of race in international politics, which is especially visible in, though not exceptional to, antisemitism.

To construct the framework of the 'enemy within', we develop an account of the role of antisemitism in European international order. By 'European international order', we mean the terms which structure and organise European politics across local, regional and transnational scales: In the medieval period, these terms were grounded in the Christian faith and clerical authority; in the modern period, they uphold the territorial, capitalist nation state rooted in and articulated through the logics of race. Starting from Rebecca Gould's (2023) observation that attempts to fix a definition of antisemitism across time and place fail to understand antisemitism as historically situated, we approach antisemitism genealogically (p. 19). We trace how antisemitism figures the Jew as simultaneously inside and outside of European order, and as threatening precisely due to this double location. This figure is mobilised in defence of, first, medieval Christendom and, second, raced nation-states, economies and bodies in modernity. A long historical lens shows how the Jews' ambivalent status in relation to the white body politic in modernity, including fears surrounding Jewish racial, national, or economic assimilation, emerges in part from Christianity's early entanglement with Judaism. Our focus on European antisemitism reflects the severity of antisemitism within European territory which, as Jewish Studies scholars observe, has outstripped the violence and harassment experienced by

Jews elsewhere (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007; Sorkin, 2019) and/or been a source of anti-semitism in Europe's colonies.

The framework of the 'enemy within' we draw from this genealogical account has four interconnected characteristics. First, the 'enemy within' shares an origin story with the 'self' that it is deployed to demarcate: in our case, the 'self' of medieval Christendom is imagined as rooted in/opposed to or replacing Judaism, before being refigured through whiteness in modernity (with the possibility of Jewish racial or national assimilation raising similar anxieties around an 'other' concealed within the white, European body politic). Second, the 'enemy within' often occupies both sides of a (racial) inside/outside, friend/enemy, good/evil boundary, even while efforts to locate that enemy on one side or another continue, often driven by the anxiety produced by ambivalence. At the same time, the enemy is never finally fixed on either side. In our case, the Jew is figured as an enemy precisely because of his or her location simultaneously inside and foreign to European territories, economies and bodies. Third, the 'enemy within' prompts fears of contagion, infiltration and perversion, believed to threaten and corrupt European Christianity, whiteness, economies, children and bodies. Fourth – pointing to the significance of the framework for IR scholarship – this figure legitimises anxious strategies of hyper-vigilance and purification, which often take the form of expulsion, surveillance or violence.

The framework of the 'enemy within' is offered as a contribution to IR scholarship tracing raced bordering and boundary-making in international politics. The primary way in which this takes place, and is documented in the IR literature, is through the global colour line, often characterised as a binary and hierarchical distinction between populations racialised as 'white' and 'non-white', 'civil' and 'uncivil', or 'self' and 'other', authorising the exploitation, occupation and subordination organising international politics (e.g. by Anievas et al., 2014; Bhambra, 2020; Du Bois, 1961). Scholarship in post-colonial (e.g. Said, 2003) and Jewish studies (e.g. Traverso, 2019), as well as on the experience of race (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1987; Hill Collins, 1986; Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006), has long noted ambivalences of racial bordering, even or especially as hard racial lines are rigidly enforced. Building on these observations, the framework of the 'enemy within' highlights instances when the 'enemy' is racialised as both 'inside' and 'outside' of the whiteness, nation-statehood and economies that organise European international politics, as moving between the two, or as dangerously impossible to pin down on either 'side'. If many of the racialised figures of interest to IR scholars authorise exploitation via dehumanisation or nation-building in the name of defence against invasion (e.g. Niang's (2020) 'migrant' and 'slave'), even when the enemy is imagined as already having invaded (e.g. Ali and Whitham's, 2021 'conceptual Muslim'), the 'enemy within' conjures anxieties about a threat that has always been at least partially present 'inside' Europe. The current article offers a framework for making visible such ambivalent figures which, we argue, function to shore up international order precisely through their ambivalent relation to its racial boundaries, even or especially as 'hard' and binary racial borders are simultaneously enforced.

The article proceeds in four sections. The first situates this article within the scholarship on raced bordering and boundary-making in international politics, including the roles of ambiguous enemy figures in that process. The second section explains the

methodological choices we make in our genealogy. Our account of the ‘enemy within’ flows from engagement as well as contrast with other possible histories of antisemitism, namely those suggested by IR scholarship on Nazism and populism, as well as Sylvia Wynter’s analysis of the figures underpinning international racial ordering. We suggest that sustained attention to the figure of the Jew complicates Wynter’s narrative in which the Jew is briefly present and then disappears. The third and fourth sections trace the figure of the Jewish ‘enemy within’ through medieval and modern Europe, respectively. In the medieval Christian era, the Jew is figured as simultaneously constituting and contesting the ecclesiastical order of the Church, being cast as both an ‘originator’ and ‘threat’ to, or in need of replacement by, Christianity. In modernity, antisemitism articulates the Jew as both an insider and an outsider to the white, racial, nation state. Finally, the fifth section applies our framework to contemporary European antisemitism. We conclude by suggesting a future research agenda for analysing antisemitism and ‘enemies within’ from within the discipline of IR.

Locating the ‘enemy within’ in IR

Beginning with efforts to distinguish ‘order’ from ‘anarchy’, ‘security’ from ‘insecurity’ and the ‘domestic’ from the ‘international’, IR has long been concerned with how binaries, boundaries and divisions organise IR (Ashley, 1989; Doty, 1993; Walker, 1993; Weber, 2016). A rich IR literature shows that international politics are organised through racial borders and boundaries in particular, and that divisions between ‘order’ and ‘anarchy’, ‘security’ and ‘insecurity’, and so on are themselves raced (Henderson, 2014; Zvobgo, 2020). Racial borders are complex, historically situated and varied, as they are refracted or produced through, for example, space in the capitalist city (Danewid, 2020), internal colonialism (Turner, 2018), the commodification and control of land (Yao, 2019), settler coloniality (Leigh, 2022), humanitarianism in the seafarer industry (Khalili, 2023), heteropatriarchy (Agathangelou, 2013; Rao, 2020; Richter-Montpetit, 2014; Richter-Montpetit and Weber, 2017; Weber, 2016), medicine and psychiatry (Howell, 2013) and caste (Krishna, 2014). In this section we situate our framework of the ‘enemy within’ as contributing to this literature. The ‘enemy within’, we suggest, contributes to IR scholarship tracing raced bordering and boundary-making in international politics, including the roles of enemy figures in that process. The ‘enemy within’ builds on observations in this literature that raced ‘friend’ versus ‘enemy’ or ‘inside’ versus ‘outside’ distinctions are often ambivalent, fragile, or subject to breakdown, even or especially as ‘hard’ or binary racial lines persist.

As Anievas et al. (2014) describe, a central way IR scholarship has theorised racial boundary-making is through W. E. B. Du Bois’ work on the global colour line, a concept drawn from the Black radical struggles of which he was part. Du Bois was an IR scholar, writing in the heart of the discipline at its inception (Vitalis, 2018). For Du Bois, the colour line marks a division and hierarchisation of races, in which white Europe’s narrative of its own superiority legitimised the dispossession and exploitation of the Black and Indigenous peoples of its colonies as well as between white America and the Black descendants of enslaved ancestors. In his words, the line is the ‘. . . the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the

sea' (Du Bois, 1961: 23). In Europe's view, 'It is the duty of white Europe to divide up the darker world and administer it for Europe's good'. (Du Bois, 1925: 503). As Duncan Bell explains in his reading of Du Bois: 'Usually – though not always – racial classification was linked to notions of civilization, bifurcating the world into "advanced" and "backward" peoples, the former ascribed the right (even the duty) to administer and "improve" the latter' (Bell, 2013: 1). In this way, a central function of the global colour line is to organise international politics – including capitalism, imperialism, postcoloniality and the nation-state – through a racial boundary between the categories of 'civilised' and 'uncivilised', as well as 'superior' and 'inferior'.

The significance of the colour line's marking of racial boundaries in this way cannot be overstated. We describe just a few examples which, although not articulated with explicit reference to Du Bois, nonetheless illustrate its scope. In a similar vein to Du Bois, Gurinder Bhambra describes how narratives of white European superiority and Black, Brown or Indigenous inferiority created 'the global connections forged through colonialism that are the condition of capitalist-modernity'. (Bhambra, 2020: 307). These include primitive accumulation through the occupation and exploitation of Indigenous lands, the enslavement of Black people and global arrangements of 'slave trading' (Bhambra, 2020: 309, 311). This continues today in post- or neo-imperial states, nations and economies, which are produced through the exploitation or expulsion of postcolonial subjects. Relatedly, Kerem Nisancioglu (2020) argues that racialised bordering and divisions underpin state sovereignty. Nisancioglu (2020) shows that in the British colony of Virginia in the 17th century, colonial sovereignty – and legitimate occupation of Indigenous territory – was asserted through a distinction between the civilised European and 'savage' Indigeneity (p. 50). In the very different case of the United Kingdom's 'Brexit' politics, a racialised 'us' versus 'them' distinction regarding migrants enabled the expression of UK sovereignty. In fact, racial bordering is so integral to international politics that it is reproduced in the epistemic pillars of the discipline of IR. Kelebogile Zvobgo's (2020) description of the discipline, Errol A. Henderson's (2014) analysis of realism and liberalism, and Alison Howell and Richter-Montpetit's (2020) critique of the Copenhagen School of security studies show that the divisions of central concern to IR – between 'anarchy' and 'order', 'security' and 'insecurity' or 'developed' and 'undeveloped' – are in fact racial divisions.

In a final example – of particular interest to us here because it deals, as we do, with the deployment of enemy figures in processes of racial boundary-making – Amy Niang (2020) argues that the figures of 'the slave' and 'the migrant', placed outside the category of the human, legitimised the enslavement of Black people, and expel the migrant, deemed surplus, from the 'bounds of the livable' (p. 334). In Niang's account these figures reveal both the continuities across differing manifestations of race ('the slave' and 'the migrant' are both fully 'other' to white politics), and the variability of race across contexts (each is produced through a distinct narrative with its own effects – enslavement or expulsion – for the racialised populations involved). In this way, in addition to showing how racial bordering in international politics operates through figures of the 'enemy', Niang's account draws attention to how 'commonalities' and 'connection' between such figures exist alongside their contingencies and specificities (Niang, 2020). The figure of the 'enemy within', not least in its articulation as 'the Jew' which we trace here, is

similarly distinctive (including, in the Jewish case, through entanglement with Christianity), shares features with other racialised enemies (e.g. the Muslim who is expelled alongside the Jew from Spain) and is mobilised both against Jewish populations and as part of the broader terrain of race in international politics.

Like Du Bois and his legacy in IR, we are motivated by a concern with racial bordering in international politics as well as the vast and violent stakes of this process. If the scholarship discussed thus far often explores especially rigid expressions of the racial boundaries organising international politics (where one is only ever ‘civilised’ *or* ‘uncivilised’, ‘from here’ *or* an ‘outsider’), the ‘enemy within’ is a more ambivalent case. The Jew is often figured on both sides of racial boundaries and is viewed as especially suspect due to this potential for duality. In fact, at the very same time as IR scholarship has mapped the violence with which hard racial boundaries are enforced, it also points to the fragility, breakdown and contradictions of racial boundaries in international politics. This is well explored and the object of extensive scholarship outside IR, including in the fields of postcolonial (e.g. Said, 2003) and Jewish studies (e.g. Traverso, 2019). Within IR, poststructuralist scholarship maps the ambivalence or ‘aporetic’ nature of constitutive binaries (Doty, 1997; Walker, 2006), drawing out how ‘and/or’ logics underlie instances when ‘a person or a thing is constituted by and seemingly embodies multiple, seemingly contradictory meanings that may confuse and confound a simple either/or dichotomy’ (Weber, 2016: 40). Although we do not deal with the experience of Jewishness here, or with resistance Jewish or otherwise, we note that the ambivalences of racial bordering have been explored from the standpoint of racialised ‘outsiders’ living ‘within’ spaces characterised by white supremacy and coloniality (e.g. Patricia Hill Collins’ (1986) Black feminist ‘outsider within’; Walter Dignolo’s ‘border thinking’ (Dignolo and Tostanova, 2006); Du Bois’ (1961) ‘double consciousness’; or Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) ‘Borderlands/La Frontera’), and that at the same time, as Shilliam (2023) points out, the experiences and agency of those subjugated by race or struggling for freedom always exceed their relationship to racial borders (see also Solomon, 2023). Further complicating this picture, European whiteness – on which we focus in this article – as well as its North American counterpart, are not the sole sources of racial bordering. Perhaps, we speculate, observations of the messiness, doubleness and other complexities of race (for some), motivate (Anievas et al., 2014: 6–7) to question whether the framing of the global colour line – developed by Du Bois in the context of Black life in post-emancipation United States – can capture the many permutations of race in international politics, even as recognising the significance of the colour line remains vital. One such permutation, the so-called ‘Jewish question’ and its genocidal answer, prompted Du Bois to revise his conceptualisation of race and the colour line after visiting the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto in 1949 (Du Bois, 1952: 15; see also Rothberg, 2001). Like Du Bois, we argue that antisemitism and the figure of the Jewish ‘enemy within’ constitute a site of productive engagement for questions of (racial) bordering in IR.

In an account of racial bordering anticipating elements of the ‘enemy within’, Nadya Ali and Whitham (2021) show how the figure of the ‘conceptual Muslim’ manages and purveys anxieties ‘enmeshed in broader political struggles, strategies and relations of power’ through narratives of a ‘foreign body’ within the United Kingdom, cast as conspiring to take over the food production industry (via halal meat production) and

education (by imposing Islam in schools) as well as sexually exploiting children (through organised ‘rape gangs’) (p. 407). Ali and Whitham (2021) draw on Žižek’s analysis of Nazism’s ‘conceptual Jew’, which explores Nazi fantasies ‘about the other’s political and/or sexual omnipotence, about “their” strange sexual practices, about their secret hypnotic powers’ (Žižek cited in Ali and Whitham, 2021: 406). Perhaps unsurprisingly given Ali and Whitham’s borrowing from an analysis of antisemitism, the framework of the ‘conceptual Muslim’ resonates with that of the ‘enemy within’, especially in its focus on the anxieties about territorially internal enemies, conspiratorial takeovers and powerfully organised racial ‘others’ (for other IR analyses of shared antisemitic/Islamophobic logics, see Aktürk, 2024; Barnett, 2019: 249; Lopez, 2016). At the same time, bringing the ‘conceptual Muslim’ and the ‘enemy within’ together highlights that the Jew in our genealogy is imagined as integral to Europe’s Christian origin story, while the ‘conceptual Muslim’ portrays external enemies coming in from the outside. Ali and Whitham’s analysis raises key questions for the framework of the ‘enemy within’. What forms of racial boundary-making other than antisemitism might mobilise the ‘enemy within’? Where and when are the limits of this line of enquiry, especially when such figures might be rearticulated in struggles over racial boundaries, for example in Zionist assertions that the state of Israel is European through narratives of the uncivilised Arab (Shohat, 1988, 1999), or the denial of Black housing rights through American Jewish suburbanisation (Brodtkin, 1998)? Although the interrelation of antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Blackness and other racisms is addressed elsewhere (e.g. Fanon, 2004; Sundquist, 2009), we return to these questions in our conclusion.

Overall, the analytic framework of the ‘enemy within’ contributes to the rich and diverse IR literature on race, making a particular contribution to the project – first and foremost expressed in analyses of the global colour line – of understanding how racial bordering and boundary-making organises international politics. The ‘enemy within’ offers a framework for analysing the role of some racialised enemies in this process. This framework captures how, especially in the case of the Jew, some racialised enemies function to shore up domestic and international orders precisely through their ambivalent relation to its boundaries, alongside or motivating the enforcement of ‘hard’ and binary racial borders.

Towards a genealogy of antisemitism in European international politics

We develop the framework of the ‘enemy within’ through a genealogy of European antisemitism, paying particular attention to the deployment of the figure of the Jew in processes of bordering and boundary-making that organise European international order. In this section, we situate this genealogy with reference to other histories of antisemitism, drawing on IR scholarship on Nazism and populism, Jewish studies and postcolonial studies and Black studies, with a focus on the work of Sylvia Wynter. Much of the existing IR literature on antisemitism, we find, risks exceptionalising antisemitism or evacuating its racial content by solely addressing antisemitism in the contexts of Nazism and populism (exceptions include Aktürk, 2024; Barnett, 2019; Lopez, 2016; Rae, 2002).

Drawing on Jewish studies, postcolonial and Black studies literature, which takes a contrasting approach, we situate antisemitism as integral rather than exceptional to the history of racial boundary-making in European international order. The work of Sylvia Wynter, in turn, offers both methodological tools for tracing racialised ‘other’ figures across successive iterations of European international ordering (first Christendom, then racial modernity), but also a point of contrast: While the Jew’s disappearance from Wynter’s account enables her tracing of a ‘hard’, or binary global colour line, our centring of the Jew points to a parallel and more ambivalent mode of international racial boundary-making.

IR scholarship on the inseparability of race and international order is largely silent on how antisemitism fits into its picture. Many key texts on race in IR omit to consider antisemitism altogether (e.g. Bell, 2013; Doty, 1993; Henderson, 2014). In a minority of cases where antisemitism is mentioned, it is part of an analysis of Nazism and/or the end of Nazism, suggesting these were definitive points in broader racial history (e.g. Vitalis, 2018; Yao and Delatolla, 2021). Not only does this fail to address antisemitism preceding or succeeding World War 2, it also risks articulating the Holocaust as the singular and teleological expression of a discrete current of antisemitism.

There are key exceptions to IR’s silence on antisemitism. For instance, Jelena Subotic’s (2022) article titled ‘Antisemitism in the global populist international’ offers a rare sustained engagement with antisemitism in IR. The article provides an account of the historical figuration of the Jew as a threat against which international order must be secured, suggesting that modern antisemitism arises from a sense of anxiety about diversity signified by Jews, or Jews’ incapacity to fit into categories underpinning international order (Subotic, 2022: 462). For Subotic, because antisemitism has often been articulated as unease with a powerful international or cosmopolitan Jewish force, it is especially appealing to a ‘populist international’ concerned with the struggles of a ‘pure people’ against a ‘corrupt elite’ or conspiracy, and seeking to challenge the dominant liberal order for which Jews are taken to stand in (Subotic, 2022: 462–463). Subotic underscores the contradictory nature of antisemitism, arguing that ‘Antisemitism’s enduring power lies in its ability to construct “the Jews” to represent whatever populists reject (communism, or capitalism, or neoliberalism, or multiculturalism, or pluralism, or feminism, or cosmopolitanism)’ (Subotic, 2022: 464). Other accounts consider how antisemitism constituted medieval international order: Şener Aktürk (2024) suggests that the purging of Jews and Muslims in Western Europe reveals dynamics of ethnic cleansing obscured by an exclusive focus on its modern nationalist varieties (see also Rae, 2002), while Lopez (2016) maps the complex dynamics at work constituting the medieval Christian Self in relation to both Jewish and Muslim ‘Others’. Turning to the modern period, Michael Barnett (2019) argues that antisemitism and Jewish responses surrounding the ‘Jewish problem’ reveal how international society ‘manages’ diversity. Our account affirms the observation that antisemitism is key to articulating accounts of international and domestic orders, as well as the value of considering the medieval period in histories of international order, while also probing deeper into the multiple, at times contradictory, meanings attached to figures of the Jewish enemy within by antisemitism and focusing centrally on race.

In contrast to IR approaches which often overlook its entanglement with other racisms, Jewish studies as well as postcolonial and Black studies scholarship understand antisemitism as integral to processes of modern and pre-modern ordering (Bernasconi, 2020; Frederickson, 2002; Lentin, 2012; MacMaster, 2017; Mosse, 2020). The precise relationship of antisemitism to racism is contested. Some argue that pre-modern hostility to Jews is qualitatively different from racism. For instance, George Frederickson differentiates between religious anti-Judaism and racial antisemitism. In the former, Jews were seen as ‘criminal’ for having committed the crime of deicide, yet conversion was possible (Frederickson, 2002: 18). In the latter, Jewish difference, inferiority and danger was seen as ‘hereditary and unalterable’ (Frederickson, 2002: 170). In contrast, Sander Gilman (2013) posits an ‘inherent consistency of Western attitudes toward the Jews’ and uses the term ‘antisemitism’ across historical periods (p. 6). Gilman (2013) insists that antisemitism was often racial long before the advent of racial taxonomies in the 18th century, with Jewish difference often projected onto physical characteristics.

Both Jewish and postcolonial/Black studies document shared lineages, as well as flows of logics and practices between antisemitism, race more broadly, and colonialism. These include the constitutive role of 15th- and 16th-century Spanish purity of blood laws enacted against Jews and Muslims in the history of biologised race (Wynter, 2003), imagined Jewish Blackness (Bruns, 2011: 112; Gilman, 2013: 171–74), perceived Indigenous Jewishness (Slabodsky, 2014) and the colonial answers given across centuries to the so-called ‘Jewish Question’ in efforts to create a Jewish state, first in the Caribbean, then Africa, then Palestine (Alroey, 2008; Bruns, 2011: 106). While a full review of these literatures is beyond the scope of this article, which faces the discipline of IR, they nonetheless inform the centrality of race to, and provide the historical material for, our genealogy of antisemitism. In this light, we do not conclude as Subotic does that antisemitism’s contradictions make it an empty signifier that can mean ‘anything and everything’. Rather, we argue that these ‘contradictions’ are laden with meaning, emerging from the concrete genealogy of antisemitism as a mode of racial bordering and boundary-making. In our account, antisemitic conspiracy theories and narratives of Jewish elites are not solely rhetorical devices but specifically configure the ‘enemy within’ as simultaneously inside and outside of a European ‘self’.

Wynter’s analysis of ‘genres of the human’ constituted in relation to various ‘spaces of otherness’ offers valuable tools for tracing the role of (racial) boundary-making in global politics over the historical *longue durée* from the Middle Ages to the present. Every society, argues Wynter, maps its conception of order onto an ‘extrahuman’ entity, such as the cosmos, a deity, or in the present era, race; each of which are attributed authorship for social, political and economic relations among humans. These relations thus come to be seen not as hierarchical, exploitative and unjust but as the expression of a higher principle (Wynter, 2003: 271). Notably, these entities also provide the grounding for sets of ‘descriptive statements’, or binary accounts of ‘what it is to be human’ (Wynter, 2003: 264), placing each ‘genre’ of the human either ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of particular socio-political and epistemic orders while also authorising violent transnational arrangements of extraction, enslavement and colonisation. For instance, the medieval Christian theocentric order grounded a descriptive statement dividing ‘True Christian Self’ from ‘Untrue Christian Other’, authorising a division between clergy and laity while

apportioning spiritual, epistemic and political authority exclusively to the former (Wynter, 2003: 265). In the early modern period, the invention of race as a new 'extrahuman' principle of differentiation between 'rational men' and 'irrational animals' subtended the Spanish colonial venture as well the rise of the secular, territorial state (Wynter, 2003: 300–301). In the wake of the Darwinian revolution, the boundary between 'Man' and his 'Others' came to be articulated via the colour line, projected onto what Wynter (2003) terms as 'the only available "objective set of facts" that remained', namely 'phenotypal differences between human hereditary variations' and 'drawn between the lighter and the darker peoples of the earth' (pp. 315, 310). This ordering mechanism is affirmed and enforced by a dually Darwinian and Malthusian descriptive statement, which attributes enduring transnational relations of exploitation and subjugation to the 'eugenic selectedness' or 'dysselectedness' of individuals as well as the workings of the 'invisible hand' of the free market (Wynter, 2003: 320–322).

Wynter's genealogy is a powerful account of (racial) boundary-making seen through a long historical lens, and is highly generative for our genealogy: Its delineation of descriptive statements offers guideposts for tracing the constitutive role of binary distinctions in the production of order across different scales, ranging from the personal to the transnational. Guided by Wynter's mapping, our genealogy of European antisemitism is divided into two periods: 'Enemy Within I' during medieval Christendom, in which social and political hierarchies are articulated via distinctions between Christian and non-Christian; and 'Enemy Within II' in modernity, when distinctions between 'eugenically selected/dysselected' enforce a global colour line (we do not cover the early modern history of antisemitism, which would correspond to Wynter's 'rational/irrational' descriptive statement).

Yet our account diverges from Wynter's in one important respect: in tracing the figure of the Jew in the history of European antisemitism, we find that processes of (racial) bordering do not always function in a binary fashion, with Jews often placed on both sides of inside/outside, friend/enemy, good/evil dividing lines. In fact, we suggest, Wynter's account of a strictly binary descriptive statement rests, in part, on her evacuation of the figure of the Jew from her genealogy. While Jews are named as part of the tapestry of difference as the 'other major Other figure' (Wynter, 2003: 307) at key moments of Wynter's genealogy (such as the Spanish blood purity laws), they ultimately disappear from Wynter's (2003) analysis, with the exception of invocations of a hyphenated 'Judeo-Christian West' (p. 307) and the mention of the 'extermination credo of the Nazis' (p. 318). This disappearance and hyphenation imply that the Jew may have been fully assimilated into white, European 'Man' following emancipation. As Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2020) argues with reference to Wynter's essay '1492', this erases Arab and Black Jews, as well as African Jews more broadly, who are unable to assimilate into whiteness or who do so through force or at great cost or are simply not figured, in the antisemitic imagination, as Jews (see also Slabodsky, 2014; on South American Jews; and Shohat, 1988, 1999, on Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews). Yet before the Jew disappears from Wynter's analysis, in her discussion of medieval Europe she names Jews as 'boundary-transgressive . . . figures', signalling that they refuse/fail to be contained on one side or the other of the good/evil matrix of 'redeemed Spirit/Fallen Flesh' (Wynter, 2003: 266). Our genealogy below thus picks up where Wynter leaves off in tracing the figure

of the Jew through this story and, following Azoulay's intervention, reveals more ambivalent modes of racial bordering than those traced by Wynter. In building our framework on Wynter's genealogical mapping, we highlight the co-existence of binary 'colour line' and ambivalent 'enemy within' expressions of racial bordering.

To summarise, we take a genealogical approach to developing the concept of 'the enemy within' as a framework for analysing the permutations of racial bordering expressed through the figure of the Jew. Following the Jewish studies literature's observation that antisemitism is integral rather than exceptional to the history of (racial) boundary-making, we take a long historical view, viewing the Jewish 'enemy within' as integral rather than exceptional to the making of European international order. Following postcolonial and Black studies scholarship, our genealogy locates antisemitism as a site of racial boundary-making underpinning the nation-state, economic and, in the case of race science, bodily, terms of European international politics. Finally, Wynter's history of racial international order through successive figurations of 'genres' of the human since the medieval period offers a starting point for successive figurations of the Jew in this same time frame. Our account departs from Wynter's, however, not only in its empirical focus on the Jew, but in tracing how porous and ambivalent forms of racial boundary-making organise European international politics.

The Jewish 'enemy within I': medieval Christendom

This section traces the figure of the Jewish 'enemy within' in late medieval Europe (early 1200s to early 1500s), considering narratives of Jewish wandering, perversion, cerebralism and proto-racality in turn. This first section of the genealogy brings into focus the four key characteristics of the Jewish 'enemy within'. Owed to Christianity's roots in Judaism, medieval expressions of anti-Judaism struggle to place the Jew firmly outside the bounds of Christian norms, faith and selves (the first characteristic). This begins to articulate the routine placement of figures of the Jew on both sides of inside/outside boundaries, a dynamic which will become fully apparent in the modern era (the second characteristic). Yet already in the medieval period, the ambivalent placement of the Jew in relation to Christian beliefs, communities and bodies prompts fears of contagion, infiltration and perversion (the third characteristic). These fears legitimise anxious strategies of inward-looking scrutiny, surveillance and hyper-vigilance which ultimately find expression in moves to 'purify' the contaminated 'self' through purges, pogroms and expulsions (the fourth characteristic).

In the medieval era, the imagined shared origin of the Christian self and the Jewish 'enemy within' is exemplified by Christian dogma, in which Jews were simultaneously originators of Christ and the cause of his downfall. This is encapsulated in the antisemitic narrative of the 'wandering Jew', which '... tells of a man who insulted Christ at the time of the Passion and was then doomed to linger until the Second Coming ...' (Lampert-Weissig, 2016: 4; see also Rose, 2014: 28). This 'wandering Jew' embodies Christ's origin from and promise of renewal of Judaism through Christianity, as well as Jews' refutation of this promise. As 'insulters' of Christ, Jews are thus fated to wander, aimlessly and uprooted, within Christian territories. Although predating the medieval period, narratives of a 'wandering' Jewish political threat were taken up and expanded

during the crusades, which targeted Jews and Muslims across Europe and the Middle East (Lampert-Weissig, 2016). The 'wandering Jew' speaks 'foreign', minority or 'secret' languages and is thus able to evade Church governance, organise covertly and cross official boundaries of political authority (Lampert-Weissig, 2016: 4). This figure is an opponent of Christ but, crucially, also part of the Christian origin story, as well as an outsider who remains present in Christian communities. That is, the 'wandering Jew' is intimately bound-up and ever-present in the Christian world, while also representing a threat to the highest possible source of political authority among Christians.

This dually inside/outside status of Jews inspired inward-looking paranoia, with Jews seen as prone to and capable of sabotage. During the medieval period, Jews were accused of having killed Christ (Simonsen, 2020: 357) and of destroying or mocking Christian sacred objects (e.g. by 'host desecration', Chazan, 1997; see also Lentin, 2012: 63). They were also blamed for blocking the redemptive teleology of the Church by refusing to convert (Rose, 2014: 4) and distorting the biblical timeline in which Jews should have been destined to become Christians (Lampert-Weissig, 2016). Yet foreshadowing contradictions in modern antisemitism, Jews were imagined not only as powerful scheming enemies but as tragic figures illustrating the costs of betraying Christianity, doomed to wander the earth without Christ's love (Lampert-Weissig, 2016).

A particular set of fears circulated around Jewish perversion, viewed as a threat to the Christian bodily, gender and familial arrangements underpinning the theocentric order of medieval Europe. In accusations of blood libel or ritual murder, Jews were imagined as abducting, torturing and bleeding children to death in order to use their blood in rituals and magic (Hsia, 1988: 2). For example, when a 2-year-old was found murdered in the Italian city of Trent in 1475, blame attached to the city's Jewish community, much of which was rounded up, tortured and executed (Hsia, 1988: 43–44). An image from the Nuremberg Chronicle of 1493 illustrates the sexualised nature of these types of charges, with Jewish figures portrayed as taking a knife to the boy's groin to collect blood (Hsia, 1988: 49).

Trials of the Talmud which took place across Europe from the 13th to the 15th centuries were another expression of anxiety regarding the dually inside/outside status of Jews, as well as an attempt to resolve it (Maccoby, 1994; Rembaum, 1982). Pope Gregory IX was especially concerned with 'the authority of the Talmud vis-à-vis the bible'. (Rembaum, 1982: 205). Jews were, according to the Church, defined by allegiance to Old Testament laws (Rembaum, 1982: 210). Jews thus existed '... for the sake of the Church, carrying with them the Bible, the source that verifies the Christian faith' (Rembaum, 1982: 208). Yet the trials reflected fears that Jews had 'elevated the Talmud to the status of the Bible' (211), that the 'Talmud exceeds the size of the Bible' (Rembaum, 1982: 216) and that Jews 'taught it [Talmud] to their children who grew ignorant of the laws of the prophets'. In this way, Jews were close to the text underpinning papal and monarchic authority in Europe, but also threatened to replace, demote, or reinterpret that text. In the eyes of the Catholic Church, Jewish Talmud study provided further evidence of Jewish legalism and preoccupation with rote repetition, with the trope of the loveless wandering Jew evoked to portray Jewish pedagogy and epistemology as cold application of law (Rose, 2014: 3), in contrast to a Christianity concerned with divine inspiration, universality and love (Rose, 2014: 28). In 1239, Pope Gregory I sent a denunciation of

the Talmud to Church leaders and monarchs, resulting in public trials of the Talmud in Paris (1240), Barcelona (1263), and later in Tortosa (1413–1414) as well as its confiscation and burning (Maccoby, 1994: 11). These trials reflected the potential threat posed by Jews' location inside Christianity, but also consolidated Christian pedagogical and epistemological authority against a perceived challenge by Jewish 'Old Testament' knowledge.

An especially consequential effort to reimpose order vis-à-vis the 'boundary transgressive' figure of the Jew in late medieval Europe were the blood purity laws (*limpieza de sangre*) in 15th-century Spain. These portrayed the Jewish body itself as contaminant and the Christian body as the site of insecurity. The Iberian Peninsula had been under Islamic rule since the 8th century, with Muslims, Christians and Jews living in mutual tolerance. As Christian kingdoms in the north conquered these territories, they both insisted that Jews and Muslims convert to Christianity and passed statutes excluding Jewish and Muslim converts from civic participation (Burk, 2010: 10). Proof of Christian lineage was required for recognition as an 'old Christian' (*Cristiano Viejo*), while those who refused to convert were deported (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2003: 3). The *limpieza* statutes understood Jewish blood not only as a (proto-racial) marker of indelible difference but as a contaminant. Charges of Jewish male menstruation – the notion that Jewish men 'leaked impure blood' (Beusterien, 1999: 447) – combined with *limpieza* laws to solidify the abject nature Jewish corporality and bolster the case that Jewish inferiority was biologically determined (Beusterien, 1999: 451). The notion of 'purity of blood' would be 'retroped' as 'racial purity' and come to shape and justify colonial expropriation and slavery in the Americas (Wynter, 2003: 308). This pre-modern version of race – articulated in efforts to resolve the ambiguous status of the Jew – thus became operative in the emerging political form of the modern, sovereign, colonial state. It would also, as described below, be taken up in modern articulations of Jewish 'contamination'.

To summarise, the figure of the Jew is complexly situated in relation to medieval Christendom, cast simultaneously as 'enemy' and 'refuser' of Christ while also sharing its point of origin. This dual location both 'inside' and 'outside' of Christian selves, Church dogma and communities prompted an anxious, inward-looking paranoia, with Jews accused of stealthy acts of sabotage, child abuse and contamination. Despite this ambiguity, efforts to place Jews firmly 'outside' of Christian faith, knowledge and communities persisted, for instance through public trials of the Talmud or the imposition of blood purity laws in 15th-century Spain. Finally, pogroms, executions and deportations aimed to 'cleanse' or 'expel' Jewish foreign elements concealed within Christian spaces. In the next section, we see how the figure of the Jewish 'Enemy Within 1' is reworked in the modern period.

The Jewish 'enemy within 2': late modern Europe

The second part of our genealogy tracks the figure of the Jewish 'enemy within' in late modern Europe, covering the period from the late 18th to the early 20th century. As outlined in the previous section with reference to Wynter's discussion of the transition between medieval and (early) modern orders, European international order in the medieval period was grounded in Christianity and clerical authority, and reorganised in the

modern period around the territorial, capitalist and racial nation-state. Thus, antisemitism evolved: while medieval suspicion over the Jew's status stemmed from Christianity's shared origins with Judaism, the 'enemy within' was reconfigured through fears surrounding the racial, national or economic assimilation of Jews in modernity. While Jews were already seen as an 'enemy within' in the medieval period, the porousness of the increasingly racial boundary between Jews and white Europeans was now, in the modern period, rearticulated through images of Jews as both racially 'pure' and degenerate, hyper-rational and mad, and capitalist and communist. As in medieval Christendom, this dual location on both sides of inside/outside binaries stoked an inward-looking paranoia fixated on sexual and moral propriety. Strategies to 'resolve' this ambiguity once again took the form of hyper-vigilance and purification, now expressed through eugenic techniques of 'defence' against Jewish 'degeneration', including in but not limited to the Nazi Holocaust (for a general elaboration of this argument not specific to Jews, see Howell, 2014).

Jews' dually inside/outside status took on a new valence in a Europe increasingly organised around nation-states which claimed fixed territorial boundaries. Jews not only lacked a state but often also aspirations to statehood (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007; see also Mosse, 2020: 48) as well as being geographically dispersed. Instead – and alongside a degree of inclusion in nation-states – Jews organised through non-state and non-national political communities which crossed increasingly established state borders (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007). Notions of Jews as inimical to the nation thus hardened. For example, Gottlieb Fichte, Heinrich Treitschke and other German nationalists imagined Jews as incapable of full assimilation and hostile to German nationalism and unification (Mosse, 2020: 118, 134). Similarly, the Dreyfus affair in France cast Jews as betraying the French military to Germany. More fundamentally, Jewish diasporic communities were seen by some to pose a threat to the very rationality or perceived inevitability of the consolidating European order of sovereign nation-states (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007).

Anxieties resulting from the reorganisation of Europe through industrialisation found expression in images of Jews as agents both of capitalism and communism. On one hand, images of money-grabbing and economically powerful Jews 'evidenced' Jewish loyalty to money over states, Jewish capitalism and/or Jewish responsibility for the upheavals of modernisation – that is, Jewish threats to both the waning feudal and the emerging nation-state order. Joni Alizah Cohen describes this as 'anti-Semitism as a foreshortened critique of capital', where Jews stand in for undesirable economic change or threat (Cohen, 2018). For example, French Catholic agricultural unions called Jews 'instruments of destruction' of the countryside (Mosse, 2020: 124–125). German politicians and academics described 'Jewish influence' in the 'invasion' of finance capital (Mosse, 2020: 131). Yet Jews were also associated with left-wing radicalism and were linked to the 1848 revolutions across Europe (Mosse, 2020: 126). By the early 20th century, Jews were blamed for both capitalism or 'international finance Jewry' and Bolshevism (Mosse, 2020: 164). The dually inside/outside location of the Jew combined with increased rights (i.e. potential assimilation/covertiness) and an association with disloyalty ('wandering') to underpin this seemingly contradictory vision of Jews as inherently both capitalist and socialist.

The emergent field of race science promised to make visible the racially ambiguous figure of the Jew (Mosse, 2020: 23). For instance, Frances Galton, the founder of eugenics, created composites of photographs of Jewish schoolboys in an effort to isolate a 'Jewish physiognomy', identifying a 'cold, scanning gaze' as proof of a depraved essence (Gilman, 2013: 64). Similarly, in 1871, German physician and anthropologist Rudolf Virchow catalogued hair and eye colour of approximately seven million school children aiming to identify the racial 'types' in the German Empire, focusing on distinguishing 'Jewish' from 'Germanic' races (Mosse, 2020: 82–84). Theories of racial degeneration and 'born criminality', which posited that physical appearance and health were a reflection of the environment (i.e. living conditions) and a person's character, constituted further attempts to make visible Jewish difference and depravity. Edouard Drumont, founder of the Antisemitic League of France, claimed Jews were identifiable by their 'hooked nose, shifty eyes, protruding ears, elongated body, flat feet, and moist hands' and responsible for 'national and social degeneration' (Mosse, 2020: 141–142).

Building on anxiety surrounding the bodily threat of Jews in medieval Christendom, racial anxieties in the modern period often centred Jewish genitalia and sexuality as loci and vectors of disease. As population-level national health was increasingly attributed to biologically reproduced racial attributes, fear attached to Jewish sexuality. For instance, in the 19th century, an extensive medical literature credited a heightened incidence of syphilis and hysteria (Gilman, 2013: 93–97) as well as urbanity, venereal disease and bodily debilitation more broadly (Gilman, 2013: 93) to Jews. Yet, simultaneously, race scientists Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain viewed Jews as models of racial purity due to a perceived strict adherence to intermarriage (Mosse, 2020: 95, 113). Thus, in the consolidating fields of race science and degeneration, Jews were seen as simultaneously 'whitened' and racially inferior, as well as racially 'pure' and degenerate/diseased.

In addition to anxieties surrounding the degeneracy of the Jewish body and its threat to white and/or national strength across Europe, the 'Enemy Within 2' was imagined as both hyper-rational and mad. On one hand, Jews were associated with growing cities and therefore the urban homelessness, migrant slums, poverty, dirt, unemployment and sex work considered to be weakening the white race or national 'character' (Carlson, 2001). US and UK governments passed a range of policies, especially incarceration and institutionalisation (and later sterilisation), to defend the nation from such degeneracy. On the other hand, as in the medieval period, Jewish madness continued to be imagined as Jewish hyper-rationality, abstraction, legalism and cerebralism (Cohen, 2018). Although seemingly contradictory, these images simultaneously articulate an 'enemy within' who is both irrational and hyper-rational.

Overall, antisemitism in the modern period articulates the Jewish 'enemy within' in relation to an unstable, increasingly racial binary, locating this figure both inside and outside of European nations, whiteness, politics and bodies. Heightened fears of contagion and sabotage at the hands of the 'enemy within' followed Jewish assimilation through the acquisition of legal rights and, in some locations, upward class mobility. The violent politics of purification implemented against this dually inside/outside figure included border and reproductive policies, with eugenic techniques mounted in defence of a white body politic.

Contemporary European antisemitism

This section applies our framework of the ‘enemy within’ to contemporary antisemitism, demonstrating what it can make visible as well as how it might be adapted for new contexts. While contemporary antisemitism continues to uphold the racial, capitalist nation state (and thus remains within the coordinates of ‘Enemy Within 2’), realignments between the figure of the Jew and constructions of the Western, European ‘self’ – with the latter now extending to Europe’s former settler colonies – have taken place post-1945/48. For many Western states, appearing ‘on the right side of history’ in relation to Nazism and the Holocaust has become a significant site of political investment (Jung, 2025). Political actors of all kinds, including the far right, now assert friendliness to Jews (Zeit Online, 2018), denounce their enemies as antisemitic or Nazis (Karp, 2024), and declare support for the state of Israel (Paris, 2024). Claiming to support Jews, European governments light Chanukah candles and offer military or diplomatic support to the state of Israel. Europe’s civilisational status is thus anchored by its embrace of the Jew, placed on the side of ‘Europeans’ against the evil signified by Nazism, and more recently, Islam (Czollek and Cho-Polizzi, 2023; Tzuberi, 2020). The idea of a ‘Judeo-Christian tradition’ now merges Jews with Christians in a shared origin story, placing both in opposition to the threats of Nazism and/or Islam (Czollek and Cho-Polizzi, 2023: 58). Czollek and Tzuberi suggest that this shared origin story assumes a particular version of the Jew as white, in need of saving, assimilable into European secular citizenship (i.e. a private ‘believer’ in a ‘religion’) and, most importantly, able to vouch for the redemption of Europe (in Czollek’s and Tzuberi’s analyses, specifically Germany) as no-longer-antisemitic through joint practices of remembrance and facing down of (Nazi/Muslim) threats. A certain figuration of the Jew has thus moved to the centre of European constructions of self.

Yet contemporary antisemitism continues to place the ‘enemy within’ on both sides of racial, national and bodily boundaries: the embrace of the Jew is accompanied by suspicion about the Jew’s location inside Europe. Accounts of ‘cultural Marxism’, for instance, extend tropes from the genealogy above, claiming a hyper-organised secret left-wing cabal at the heart of public and state institutions controls society (Walker, 2019). Opponents of trans rights attribute transness – viewed as weakening the ‘West’ – to this Jewish-coded leftist network, centring puppeteer-ally Jewish philanthropist George Soros (Miles, 2022). Howard (2020), for example, suggests there are ‘lucrative industries profiting from transgenderism and a gaslighting operation driving the population mad . . .’ and names those responsible as Jewish (p. 12). Similarly, Heather Brunsell-Evans (2020) imagines an organised network of health professionals is inside, and in control of, healthcare systems, imposing hormones onto children, directed by ‘The Trans Lobby’ and a ‘cadre of elite billionaire philanthropists’ (p. 58). Here, the Jew is cast as a nebulous global entity ‘outside’ the nation state, yet having infiltrated society and children’s bodies through hyper-rational scheming, or, as in defences of ‘Judeo-Christianity’, as having been there all along. In these ways, Jewish-coded left-wing movements are constructed as both inside and outside of, as well as traitors to, an imagined shared racial national heritage. This doubleness informs antisemitic violence, such as the Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue shooting, in which the shooter claimed ‘Jewish financier George Soros, and Jewish people in general, were working to bring immigrants into the United States to destroy the white

American way of life' (Berlatsky, 2019). The 2019 attacker of a synagogue in Halle, Germany hoped to '[k]ill as many anti-Whites as possible, Jews preferred' (Nilsson, 2022: 221). Note how the Jew is imagined as already present in the homeland, while also 'anti-White' and conspiring to 'bring immigrants' into the territory.

Another version of this dynamic plays out in the Russian case for war in Ukraine, which casts the figure of the Jew as both worthy of protection and nefarious agent of sedition. On one hand, Russian officials claim that Ukraine is run by 'Nazis', or a regime which 'glorifies Hitler's accomplices, the SS', prompting the need to 'de-Nazify' Ukraine through a 'special military operation' (Moscow Times, 2024). Yet Russian officials also mobilise the antisemitic narrative of the 'wandering Jew', characterising Jewish-Ukrainian president Zelensky and other Ukrainian leaders as disloyal, rootless and mentally weak infiltrators of Ukraine, itself a nebulous entity requiring actualisation through integration with Russia. Dmitry Medvedev (2021), former president and prime minister and current member of the Russian Security Council, writes in a 2021 opinion piece for the *Kommersant* newspaper that Zelensky has 'certain ethnic roots' but 'renounced his [Jewish] identity' when he became president. Zelensky 'completely changed his political and moral orientation out of fear . . .' to serve the 'rabid nationalist forces' in his country, that is, the 'Nazis'. For Medvedev, Ukraine's leaders in general are 'weak people who seek only to fill their pockets' who 'are constantly changing their position to please their overseas masters and the political situation'. The complex doubling of the figure of the Jew in the post-World War 2 setting is on full display here, with the Russian leadership placing itself on the side of the Jews who Zelensky has 'betrayed', while simultaneously peddling antisemitic tropes that posit Zelensky and Ukraine itself as disloyal Jews who have infiltrated (what should be considered) part of the Russian homeland.

Fears persist about Jewish contagion, infiltration and assimilation: while the medieval and modern Jewish 'enemy within' was accused of blood libel, perverse genital mutilation and transmitting disease, contemporary antisemitism associates Jews with the social contagion or bodily invasion of transness, child abuse and the Covid-19 virus. When anti-trans movements attribute transness or trans rights to Jewish conspiracy, as described above, and assert transness is a threat to children's bodies, they reproduce the image of the Jewish enemy within as perversely interested in Christian, white or otherwise European bodies, and as national and racial reproductive threats (Leigh, 2024). The QAnon conspiracy theory updates the medieval blood libel myth to accuse an international, part-Jewish elite cabal of harvesting children's adrenochrome (Murray, 2023). Other conspiracy theories attributed the Covid-19 virus to the Rothschilds, a family of European Jewish bankers, and suggested the pandemic was a Jewish hoax, in both cases facilitating Jewish control (Weiss, 2022). At anti-vaccine rallies in Poland, France, Germany, Canada and Hungary, protesters carried signs and sung chants blaming the pandemic on Jews (Ling, 2022). Thus, fears surrounding contagious bodily (racial) weakness continue to locate the 'enemy within' both inside and outside of nations, families and bodies. Such fears, and the dual location of the Jew, underscore the contingent, never-secure, but often threatening, status of Jewish assimilation.

Finally, this already-within, simultaneously outside and contingently assimilated figure is deployed to legitimise practices of hyper-vigilance, purification and surveillance. This is visible in antisemitic attacks, such as the synagogue shootings mentioned above,

but also at the levels of the territorial state and body. Antisemitism is, precisely through the double location it attributes to the Jew, deployed to authorise a hardening of boundaries of both body and state, enacted through surveillance and purifying expulsions. The figure of the ‘cultural Marxist’ purveyor of trans rights, for instance, generates paranoid policies of surveillance that attempt to secure education, medicine, toilets and gender itself against an imagined threat to children’s bodies (Leigh, 2024). The implication is that these spaces might be purified of gender deviance, often focusing on the identification and expulsion of trans women. Paranoia, surveillance and expulsion also attach to resistance movements more broadly. When it comes to policies regarding the state of Israel, Jews’ dual inside/outside location leads to particularly complex iterations of ‘enemies within’. Imagined as enemies to Jews, narratives of Muslim ‘enemies within’ legitimise surveillance or expulsion of Palestinians and/or Muslim-identified people in the name of protecting Jews against antisemitism (often equated with criticism of the state of Israel). Shehadi suggests, for instance, that a recent wave of restrictions on pro-Palestinian organisations in the Netherlands link Muslim communities with antisemitism (Shehadi, 2024), implying a shadowy amorphous network. In the United Kingdom, Suella Braverman claimed that anti-Israel, pro-Palestine ‘Islamists’ have ‘dominated’ ‘our streets’, suggesting they ‘have got control over’ Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, or that Kahn is engaged in behind-the-scenes Islamist takeover with his ‘mates’ (quoted in Sultana, 2024). When Jews oppose the state of Israel, they too become subject to surveillance and repression (Prochnik et al., 2023). That is, the European embrace of Jews extends only so far as it does not undermine the narrative of redemption of European states staked on their support for the state of Israel.

Overall, this brief application of the Jewish ‘enemy within’ framework shows its potential for analysing present-day racial boundary-making. Notably, in this phase of antisemitism, images of the Jewish enemy within have become sufficiently common as to be recognisable without being named explicitly as Jewish, as with conspiracy theories regarding powerful, covert, disloyal and perverse elites. That such tropes need not always be explicitly named as Jewish may make the figure of the ‘enemy within’ available for reattachment to, and differing articulation around, other racialised figures, such as in the Islamophobic conspiracy theories and policies described above. These also illustrate that, in contemporary antisemitism, the figure of the Jew joins, is associated with, or is pitted against other enemies within. A rigid binary account of racial boundary-making cannot fully account for how contemporary antisemitism is expressed through anxiety surrounding the imagined status of Jews as hidden, seditious, insider-outsiders, as well as the inward-looking politics of surveillance, hyper-vigilance and purification this anxiety prompts.

Conclusion

Analyses of anti-semitism, in general, and of ‘enemies within’ specifically, have much to contribute to IR’s project of understanding how racial boundary-making organises international politics. Given the relative silence in IR on antisemitism and Jews, much more research on both is needed. Such research might, as we have done, engage with Jewish studies and histories of antisemitism which, despite addressing key concerns of IR such as the production of racial modernity, the nation-state and whiteness – whether from a

Jewish perspective or with a focus on Jews and/or antisemitism – has been largely ignored in IR. Our account of the ‘enemy within’ represents just one possible engagement with that literature but nonetheless illustrates the potential of Jewish studies and histories of antisemitism to join postcolonial and Black studies scholarship in enhancing our understanding not just of racial bordering in IR, but of the global politics of race more broadly.

Future research may also be guided by the limitations of our empirical focus on European antisemitism and our necessarily partial account of the contemporary era. With regard to the focus on Europe, we might ask whether and how the ‘enemy within’ is found in antisemitism beyond Europe, for example in the MENA region, perhaps including in Zionism. With regard to the contemporary era, how might attending more closely to leftist antisemitism enhance our understanding of the ‘enemy within’? Can a framework such as the ‘enemy within’ help with the definitional stalemates over what ‘counts’ as antisemitism that characterise the institutional, policy-making and public sphere discourse about antisemitism today? While beyond the scope of this article, the analytic framework of the ‘enemy within’ helps frame, and provides a starting point, for these questions. Furthermore, we recognise the risks of focusing entirely on the violence, domination and ordering enacted through antisemitism – and thereby erasing the roles of resistance and agency in shaping international order – and look forward to more IR scholarship addressing resistance to antisemitism as well as Jewish agency.

Another question raised by the framework of the ‘enemy within’ is whether it might be useful or reach its limits when applied to racial bordering in international politics beyond antisemitism. As observed in the postcolonial and Black studies literature, as well as in Ali and Whitham’s example of British Islamophobia, Jews are not the only figures around which integration anxiety circulates – fears surrounding ‘racial mixing’ and degeneration are also attached to the formerly enslaved and migrants, while even the violence directed at Jews through Nazism was also targeted at Roma, Black Germans, as well as queer, trans, disabled and politically or religiously dissenting populations. We recognise, as Niang does, that shared registers are refracted across different instances of racialisation, even as each instance is specific and historically situated. As such, while we find antisemitism to be overwhelmingly characterised by the ‘enemy within’, we also take this as an invitation to investigate such manifestations of racial bordering in IR more broadly, while taking care to avoid an analogous or reductive approach to the many permutations of race.

Overall, this article offers the analytic framework of the ‘enemy within’ to the discipline of IR. We develop this framework through a genealogy of European antisemitism, in which Jews’ shared origin story with Christianity means they are often imagined as potentially, partially and/or contingently capable of assimilation into first, Christian Europe, and second, the modern racial order of nation states. As a result, antisemitic projections figure an all-powerful conspiratorial and sabotage-prone Jew, who is simultaneously ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of national, racial, economic and bodily borders. This, in turn, legitimises anxious practices of purification or surveillance to construct or defend European international order.

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Note

1. We place 'racial' in parentheses in relation to (racial) boundary-making as we trace this process from the late medieval period in our genealogy, which predates the invention of the concept of race in early modernity.

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