Literature Compass 13/12 (2016): 771–783, 10.1111/lic3.12372

The Transnational Wandering Jew and the Medieval English Nation

Lisa Lampert-Weissig*
Literature, UC San Diego

Abstract

This essay focuses on the legendary Wandering Jew in order to explore how elements of transnationalism figure into representations of the Jew and Jewish-Christian relations in medieval England and how the Jew figured into emergent English nationalism.

Rees Davies has wittily remarked that medievalists attempting to join in discussions of nationalism are often regarded "rather like young children at an adult evening party" (567). In my experience, this observation also holds for medievalists who attempt to intervene in conversations about transnationalism; studies of modern transnationalism rarely, if ever, afford pre-modern contexts any extended consideration. If we look within medieval studies, we find that while the concept of "the nation" has been explored in notable depth, studies of transnationalism are rare.[1] This paucity of examination may stem in part from medievalists' lack of agreement about the relevance of "the nation" itself to medieval contexts. Perhaps medievalists also eschew the "transnational" because, even among modernists, "transnationalism" evades easy definition. As Donald Pease has observed in relation to American Studies, "Endowed with minimal analytic consistency, 'the transnational' is as devoid of semantic coherence as it is of social existence" (4).

In this essay, I will take up what Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt call "Philosophical Transnationalism … based on the metaphysical view that social life is transnational to begin with—transnational phenomenon and dynamics are the rule rather than the exception, the central tendency rather than the outlier" (8). This particular framing of transnationalism lends itself well to medieval contexts, as it views "the nation-state system" not as a given, but as a "puzzle" to be solved, a constructed system the origins of which are worth exploring.[2] In exploring this construction, we should consider the possibility that "nationalism" or "national sentiment" was already in existence even before the establishment of the nation-state proper. The figure of the Jew, in particular the association of the Jew with the foreign, I want to suggest, is part and parcel of that same idealism that coalesced around the still largely unrealized concept of nation in the Middle Ages.

Our focus will be on England, a medieval kingdom in which national consciousness appears to have developed earlier than in many other parts of Europe, and the first realm to expel entirely its Jewish population. Some scholars, as we will see, view England's "precocity" in both nationalism and anti-Semitism as related (Stacey 163). In this essay, we will explore the relationship between the development of medieval English national consciousness and the figure of the Jew as a translational figure, as a presence within the borders of the *natio* who nevertheless always carries with him the trace—or taint—of realms from beyond those borders.

If, as Khagram and Levitt put it, "social life is transnational to begin with," then this observation is to none more applicable than to diaspora Jewish communities, the history of which has always been, as Shulamit Volkov observes, "inherently transnational" (190). The medieval

diasporic Jew, "belonging nowhere yet found everywhere" as Suzanne Akbari has eloquently put it, has also always seemed, I want to suggest, to carry the mark of an elsewhere (33). In this way, "transnational" applies not only to how medieval Jews experienced life in the diaspora but also to how they were perceived by the Christian populations among whom they lived. It is on this second aspect—the perception of the medieval Jew as transnational and translational—that we will focus in this essay.

In the Middle Ages, Jewish difference was not only perceived as a difference of faith; language, importantly, also sets Jews apart. Lital Levy and Allison Schachter note that until "Israeli Hebrew, Jewish languages were not associated with nation-states … [t]hey were at once local and transnational" (96). Languages marked as Jewish, like Hebrew, as well as languages spoken by Jews as part of their diasporic existence, such as the French spoken by medieval Anglo-Jews, distinguished the Jew in relation to the nation and contributed to the precarity of the Jew's place within it. Anthony Bale has noted that the Jew can function "as a kind of lens through which the nation is projected" (37). Representation of the Jewish nation as "polyglot, diffuse"—in essence, as "inherently transnational"—helps to grind this lens (Cohen "Pilgrimages" 620).

This essay has three parts. The first will discuss the concepts of "nation" and "transnationalism" as they have been examined in medieval studies generally and in relation to the study of medieval Western European Jewish-Christian relations more specifically. I will then turn to the figure of the Wandering Jew, examining him in the context of the most important medieval written source for his legend, Matthew Paris's thirteenth-century *Chronica Majora*. The Wandering Jew legend dates back to the sixth century and tells of a man who insulted Christ at the time of the Passion and who was then doomed to linger until the Second Coming, roaming the world as a witness to the power of the Savior. His existence epitomizes a defining element of transnationalism, the crossing of boundaries between peoples. The Wandering Jew's witness is, of course, transmitted through language as he tells his tale, and in some later versions of the legend, he is specifically said to speak to those he meets in their own tongues, without need of translation. A facility with languages, including "secret languages," is a distinguishing characteristic of the transnational Jew both real and imagined; this ability can be viewed with admiration, but also with fear.

We will consider the Wandering Jew within Matthew's overall portrayal of the Jews as a group set apart not simply by their religion, but by their language, which was, as Ruth Nissé shows, sometimes linked to violence against Christians, with Jewish language portrayed a secret code to facilitate treachery and conspiracy. This violence became part of Matthew's evocation of a nascent English national consciousness, as he created a vision of an English identity that needed and merited defense against threats from elsewhere, including a Jewish "elsewhere within."

In part three, I will consider how an understanding of medieval Anglo-Jewish history as both inherently transnational and as integral to the development of English nationalism might impact how we think about medieval English literature. Recent work on medieval English literary history has shown an increasing awareness of England and the British Isles as multilingual, but while texts in languages such as Anglo-Norman, Old Irish, and Middle Welsh are now regarded more inclusively, those few examples we have of Anglo-Jewish works in Hebrew are not. What might be the implications of including the "transnational" literature of medieval Anglo-Jewry in our understanding of England's "national" literary tradition?

Nation/transnational

Most explorations of the modern nation sideline medieval history. To be sure, some medievalists also regard the "medieval nation" as an anachronism, but others have made strong arguments

for the presence of some level of medieval national consciousness. Historian Susan Reynolds, for example, cautioned against creating false distinctions between the modern nation-state and "the medieval idea of a kingdom as comprising a people with a similarly permanent and objective reality" (252). Rees Davies has challenged the parameters used to define the nation, arguing that emphasis on "political" and "civic" elements downplay the importance of the "ethnic," the "cultural" and the "genealogical-mythical" in conceptions of the national (568) and therefore privilege modernity. Emily Reiner has recently noted that several influential medieval writers, including Isidore of Seville and Vincent of Beauvais, considered the nation to be: "a group of people who inhabit a geographical area, whose language defines them, and who have a scheme of characteristics proper to themselves" (31). These elements of national identity—ethnicity, culture, genealogy, and myth—are all pertinent in considering of the role of the Jew in the development of nationalist sentiment prior to the emergence of the modern nation-state.

Even if, or more likely, because, Jewish cultures have never fit neatly within the boundaries of the nation-state, numerous scholars have suggested that the Jew or, more precisely, the exclusion of the Jew, was central to the development of nationalism. Salo Baron notably and controversially linked nationalism and prejudice in both medieval and modern contexts. Baron's focus on nationalism has been characterized as an "obsession," but other scholars have also found significant connections between how the nation, specifically the "English nation," developed and the treatment of the Jews on English soil (Roth, 280). Adrian Hastings has made an argument for England's national development as preceding that of other nations—as a "prototype" with medieval roots (4). Some medievalists have tied this early development to the history of Anglo-Jewish relations. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen provocatively states, "[l]ate medieval Englishness is a national identity precipitated through the exclusion of Jewishness" (Cohen, "Pilgrimages" 620). Robert Stacey demonstrates a convincing correlation between "the precocious development of the medieval English state and the no less precocious development of medieval English anti-Semitism" ("Anti-Semitism" 163). Political scientists Karen Barkey and Ira Katznelson, comparing the political and social contexts of the post-Bouvines medieval expulsions of Jews from both English and French territories, emphasize how important the Jews were as fiscal pawns in disputes between monarch and magnates as the English state took shape.

The developing medieval relationship between Englishness and Jewishness was not, however, only one of simple rejection and exclusion. Samantha Zacher has recently argued that "Anglo-Saxon self-identification as the New Israel (that is, the newly Chosen people of God) laid an important ideological framework for the expulsion of the Jews in 1290 and that chroniclers in the age of Edward I deliberately repurposed this trope in order to position "Englishness" in opposition to Jewishness" ("Judaism"369). Sophia Menache stresses this oppositional tension as central to the ideology of the 1290 Expulsion:

> [t]he removal of 'Israel of the flesh' made it easier for the English to identify with 'Israel of the spirit' … The Jews and their heritage thus played a double role, negative and positive, by serving as a reference group to which the English could relate in order to determine their own position.… Henceforth identification with "Israel of the spirit" would serve to express the uniqueness and superiority of the English people over other nations. (360)

This complex dynamic of identification and rejection endured long past the Expulsion. James Shapiro has shown that the Expulsion "has meant that Englishness has in part defined itself by the wholesale rejection of that which is Jewish (even long *after* Jewish communities were openly reestablished in England in the seventeenth century)" (4). Achsah Guibbory has traced the lasting self-identification between England and Israel into the Reformation period. Jeffrey Shoulson, Michael Ragussis and others have shown how Jewish, Christian, and English

identities remained complexly intertwined, as in Heidi Kaufman's exploration of Jews envisioned as a "nested nation" in the nineteenth-century English novel, expressing a particular shape for modern visions of the transnational Jew.

While these scholars of Anglo-Jewish history point to its significance in the formation of English national consciousness in the medieval period and beyond, Anglo-Jewish history goes virtually unmentioned in many discussions that take a more "general" approach. Turville-Petre's *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity, 1290-1340* uses the year of the Jewish Expulsion as a beginning date and opens with the sentence "Defining a nation necessarily involves exclusion." (1). Nevertheless, Turville-Petre's study does not engage with the role of Jewishness in the development of English national consciousness in any meaningful way. What might we discover if we looked for intersections between more general studies of the medieval English nation and the insights of those more focused on medieval Anglo-Jewry?

A promising point of intersection is language, a component of medieval conceptions of nation highlighted as central by medievalists such Reiner, who writes of language "defining" a nation for some medieval thinkers (31). Recent studies have looked intensively on the practices and meanings of multilingualism in medieval England. Focusing on the "absorbing character of the Anglo-French bilingual condition of post-Conquest England," Ardis Butterfield asks "what it means to construct nation through difference as opposed to unity" ("National" 54; 39). If we include Jewish difference in this consideration of "what it means to call something or someone else foreign" ("National" Butterfield, 40), we open up new vistas into the role of Anglo-Jewry in the development of English national identity. The French that Butterfield shows as so important to medieval England was a marker of the pre-Expulsion Jew.

As Paul Hyams puts it, the "first Jews of mediaeval England were Norman imports" (271) and those living in England between the Conquest and the Expulsion came to be seen as marked not just by their faith, but by linguistic difference as well. Medieval Jewish use not only of Hebrew, but also of French, was part of what distinguished even those Jews born in England as being from "elsewhere." Medieval Anglo-Christians viewed their Jewish counterparts as distinctively "foreign," associating them not only with a money trade linked to the trans-regional trade of important fairs but also with "Frenchness," as medieval Anglo-Jews identified and self-identified as French speakers.[3] Stacey argues that this identification was not a neutral one, "By the middle of the thirteenth century, both the vernacular and the learned languages of the Jews of England were seen as threatening by their English-speaking neighbors in ways that they had not been a century before" (Stacey "Jews and Christians" 345).

While research by scholars such as Beryl Smalley, Melachi Beit-Arié and Eva de Visscher points to a productive exchange between Jewish and Christian scholars that centered around the study of biblical Hebrew, mutually regarded as a holy tongue, as we will see in Matthew Paris's *Chronica*, Jewish language was also sometimes regarded with fear and implicated in violence or potential violence against Christians. The medieval Christians of the British Isles may have, in part, cultivated their sense of nation through an identification with ancient Israel, but they also defined their national identity through opposition to its Hebrew-speaking descendants in the diaspora. If the development of the nation-state system is not a given within Khagram and Levitt's "Philosophical Transnationalism," but a "puzzle" to be solved, then the transnational Jew is a key piece of that puzzle.

The Transnational Wandering Jew

The Wandering Jew, whose existence emblematizes the Jewish diaspora, is consummately transnational. In most versions of the legend, he wanders endlessly across countless borders.

The transmission history of the legend over the centuries is also notably multilingual and transnational. By the thirteenth century, early versions of the Wandering Jew legend seem to have merged and traveled to Western Europe along with a body of Eastern oral tradition, a transmission catalyzed by the Crusades (Anderson 17). The Wandering Jew appears in a Latin chronicle from Italy in an entry for the year 1223. In this text, *Ignoti monachi Cisterciensis S. Mariae de Ferraria chronica et Ryccardi de Sancto Germano chronica priora*, the Wanderer is described as a Jew who has been seen in Armenia and who has been cursed to wander the earth since the Passion, when he assaulted Christ. The next known reference to the Wandering Jew appears in Roger of Wendover's *Flores historiarum*. We do not know if Roger knew the Italian source, nor is there any concrete evidence that actual visitors from Armenia were the source for his 1228 entry about the Wandering Jew. It seems clear, however, that in the early thirteenth century the story of the Wandering Jew was circulating widely, perhaps primarily orally (Anderson 18).

Roger of Wendover's *Flores* records that in 1228 an Armenian archbishop made pilgrimage to England to visit relics and holy places. He arrived with letters of recommendation from the pope and, weary from his journey, stopped at St. Albans abbey to rest. Using an interpreter, the archbishop entered into dialogue with the St. Albans monks and inquired about the customs of England. For his part, the Armenian visitor related "many strange things concerning eastern countries."[4] The English monks asked him "whether he had ever seen or heard anything of Joseph, a man of whom there was much talk in the world, who, when our Lord suffered, was present and spoke to him, and who is still alive in evidence of the Christian faith" (*Flowers* 2:513). Roger records that the archbishop affirms his existence by stating that he knows the Wandering Jew well, noting that a knight in the archbishop's retinue acted as an interpreter into French.

According to Roger, the archbishop recounts that the Wanderer has told him his own story, which also provides a first-hand witness of the Passion narrative. In the Wanderer's account, the Jews are the main villains: it is they who seized Jesus, goaded Pilate and were then dragging Jesus away when a man named Cartaphilus, "a porter of the hall in Pilate's service," struck Jesus on the back with his hand as Jesus was leaving. Cartaphilus taunted Christ: "'Go quicker, Jesus, go quicker, why do you loiter?' And Jesus looking back on him with a severe countenance said to him, 'I am going, and you will wait till I return'" (*Flowers* 2:513). Cartaphilus's experience converts him to Christianity; he takes the name of Joseph and becomes a holy man of humble demeanor. When asked, he will recount "the events of the old times, and … the events which occurred at the suffering and resurrection of our Lord" (*Flowers* 2:513). Others seek out the Wanderer's knowledge and to "men of authority, he explains all doubts on the matters on which he is questioned" (*Flowers* 2:514).

For our purposes, the most important of the fascinating details in Roger's chronicle entry is the attention he pays to the recounting of witness and to the linguistic details of transmission. The stories of the Wandering Jew, like the figure himself, cross borders and require translation (*Flowers* 2: 513). Roger may mention the archbishop's interpreter to help attest authenticity, not unlike the provision of a sacred relic's provenance, but his attention to the language of transmission resonates with other accounts of language when they appear later in the continuation of Roger's work, Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora* (Lampert-Weissig 95).

In the *Chronica*, the most influential medieval written source of the legend, Matthew includes Roger's 1228 entry on Cartaphilus almost *verbatim*.[5] He also adds an entry for 1252 about more visitors from Armenia, here described as a place thirty days' journey from Jerusalem. With this 1252 entry, we also do not know if Armenians actually visited St. Albans, but in Matthew's account of this visit, fictional or otherwise, he links the Wandering Jew to the Tartars, which the Armenians say have been devastated by a plague. The Jews in the *Chronica*, as we will see, were

represented as a threat to English Christians from within their own lands. The Tartars are depicted in the *Chronica* as cannibalistic marauders who could scarcely be considered human and who posed a major external threat to Christendom, one Matthew understood in apocalyptic terms. Matthew links the Jews and the Tartars, alleging that in 1241 they plotted to smuggle arms encased in wine barrels.[6] This example of global trade masking global threat is ultimately foiled at a river-crossing in German territories.

The intrigue not only relies on transnational trade routes; it is also facilitated through linguistic affinity. Ruth Nissé reveals a focus on language that permeates Matthew's depiction of Jewish threat both external and internal, including this episode. As he describes the 1241 Jewish-Tartar plot, Nissé argues, Matthew "takes pains" to "ventriloquize" a Jewish voice ("Romance" 509). Nissé shows how "Matthew reveals the Jews' lethal hypocrisy as inherent in the way they move between two languages, Hebrew (or his imagination thereof) among themselves and the vernacular in trying to ingratiate themselves with the Christians" ("Romance" 510). Matthew elsewhere links the Jews to the Tartars through reports that the Tartars have adopted the Hebrew alphabet.[7]

Matthew's portrayal of the Jews' linguistic difference extends beyond their alleged ties to the nefarious Tartars. Nissé demonstrates how Matthew's representation of a "malevolent Jewish textual tradition" ("Romance" 512) colors his account of an alleged ritual murder accusation of 1244 in which the body of the victim was said to have been carved with Hebrew words that named the victim's family and his sale to the Jews (*CM*, 4:377). This Hebrew, translated by Jewish converts to Christianity, demonstrates an on-going "Jewish textual violence" directly linked to the torments of the Passion. Hebrew letters, used by the Tartars as well as the Jews, are signs of a violent difference.

Hebrew can also be portrayed as secretive. In another 1252 entry, Matthew recounts how the "the testaments of the twelve patriarchs … had long been concealed through the malice of the Jews," and were revealed to Christians through the work of Greek translators.[8] Here, Hebrew is portrayed as a secret language, decoded through transnational Christian cooperation. While we know that Jews taught Hebrew to learned Christians, Matthew instead portrays the Jews as secretive obscurers who use Hebrew to hide religious truth.

Matthew's depictions of the Jews are not alone in their emphasis on dangerous Jewish linguistic difference. In an account of the alleged ritual murder of Adam of Bristol written in the mid- to late-thirteenth century that is also highly attuned to linguistic differences of several sorts, the "secret communications" of Jews facilitate their crimes (Stacey, "Jews and Christians" 345).[9] The Jew is always regarded as foreign, as a transnational element dangerously embedded within the nation; he is not only associated with the speaking of French, but with his own inscrutable secret speech, which debases Hebrew from a holy language into a code to hide evil deeds.[10] Like the figure of the Jew itself, Old Testament Hebrew is revered. In contrast, contemporary use of Hebrew is suspect at best and always acts as a mark of an elsewhere.

Matthew's *Chronica* has been noted as an early representation of nascent English national sentiment; Matthew includes with his global *Chronica* one of the first maps of England, drawn in his own hand. Despite the capacious historic and geographic scope of his text, he maintains a core focus on England.[11] In another of his entries for the year 1252, Matthew laments that kings have permitted the pernicious predations of foreigners on native English, especially on religious men. As part of his critique of kings, Matthew at times can seem sympathetic to the Jews, pointing out that they have been exploited by the King along with his other subjects. Like the rest of his portrayals, this use of the Jew is instrumentalist and always based on the Jew as a foreigner, come to England from elsewhere. The Jews thus serve as foils to native Englishness in Matthew's construction of a nascent national consciousness. Linguistic difference is a key

mark of Jewish foreignness, and the words of the Jew are seen positively only when used in the service of Christianity, as in the case of the Wandering Jew, a tale from elsewhere.

Matthew's Wandering Jew, then, puts a positive valence on the figure's transnationalism. The borders his legend crosses help to increase the faith among peoples and even between the church in the West and in Armenia. The Wandering Jew speaks to people from many lands. In the 1602 *Kurze Beschreibung*, influenced by the *Chronica*, the Wandering Jew's ability to communicate Christian truth to people in their mother tongue is emphasized. But this view of language as a means to connect Christians should be understood in the context of Matthew's other, far different representations of Jewish language.

As his representation of the Wandering Jew shows, this relationship is not always purely negative, but rather characterized by negotiations between the native and the foreign, the national and the transnational. Representation of linguistic diversity, both among Christians and between Christians and Jews, plays a major role in Matthew's depictions. Translation, multilingualism, as in the archbishop's visit, can be deployed to relay Christian truth. And when language is used in the service of Christians, as in the witness of the Wandering Jew, language is transparent and useful.

Even, and perhaps especially, a holy language like Hebrew can, however, be used to obscure, or even to harm, as in the description of the Hebrew letters supposedly carved into the mutilated body of a Christian boy. In this complex dynamic of identification with and rejection of a transnational people, a group "belonging nowhere, yet found everywhere," it is both the Jews and their language that become tainted elements of an elsewhere. Considering the Wandering Jew as a translational figure helps us to understand the Jew within Christian cultures more broadly and to consider how authors such as Matthew used the Jew—this figure always from elsewhere—to define the English nation through difference.

The Transnational Jew and Medieval English Literature Studies

The last ten years or so have seen a flowering of essay collections on medieval English language, literature, and culture. These compendia have frequently been organized in innovative ways, focusing on concepts or keywords, including "nation" and "region," rather than on more traditional categories such as time periods, regions, or on theoretical approaches.[12] Usually labeled as handbooks, companions, or guides, these collections are also literary and cultural histories that presuppose some notion of an English national literary tradition even as the essays they contain construct a vision of that national literature. Several of these recent collections include discussion of Jewish-Christian relations, often devoting separate chapters to the topic. Medieval Anglo-Jewish literature, however, is given only scant mention, if it is mentioned at all. In this last section, I want to briefly consider the role of the Jew in the emergence of English national consciousness in relation to how we, as modern scholars, construct visions of English national literature and English national identity.

Let us first turn to Jacqueline Stodnick's essay on "Emergent Englishness" in Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker's *Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, which provides a fascinating exploration of how "[h]agiography works to transmit ideas about communal integrity by investigating and instantiating the relation between bodily incorruption and the past" (499). In her reading of Ælfric, Stodnick describes how a "catalogue of uncorrupted English saints, interwoven as it is with references to the English people and land (as well as, in the following part, anti-Semitic rhetoric), expresses the coherence of English identity, a nebulous and shifting concern, through the wholeness of a saintly body" (503). Stodnick mentions anti-Semitism parenthetically, but I would argue that this rhetoric is not something that exists alongside this expression of English identity; rather, it is integral

to it. The incorruption of the saints, and by extension, of English identity, is created through contrast to the Jew.

In the previous chapter of the same *Oxford Handbook*, Samantha Zacher demonstrates how the nation of Israel was adopted as a formative model for English identity in the same period. The figure of the Jew as it appears in Stodnick's literary example acts as a type of anti-model, one present since the time of the Crucifixion. The very intactness and lack of corruption of the saintly English body is proved by its resilience against Jewish attack, a dynamic that Matthew Paris will later also use, as we saw above, in his representation of Jewish violence against Christian bodies or that we can see as well in works such as Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale."

After examining these Anglo-Saxon texts, Stodnick turns to the fourteenth-century poem, *St. Erkenwald*, frequently referenced in relation to nascent notions of English nationalism in the medieval period. Stodnick demonstrates connections to earlier accounts of saints, specifically of Æthelthryth, by illuminating how St. Erkenwald's London encounter with the undecayed corpse of a righteous pagan judge incorporates a pagan past, shaping and subsuming it into an English one. This shaping, I would argue, follows the dynamics of Christian supersession of Judaism, another shaping and subsuming that generates a new Christian identity that nevertheless retains a trace of Jewish identity.

Even as they have disagreed about the poem's meaning, critics have pointed to the strong significance of political and national concerns in *Erkenwald*.[13] While *Erkenwald* is not explicitly a poem about this Christian-Jewish dynamic, scholars have nevertheless found traces of it and these traces exist, I would suggest, not simply because of the poem's religious content, but because the Jews are an important "lens through which the nation is projected" in medieval English literature (Bale 37). *St. Erkenwald* is set in the seventh century, at the construction of St. Paul's cathedral on the site of a pagan temple. This building project is one of many such "spatial re-inscriptions," as Robert Rouse puts it, including the dedication of "Þe synagoge of þe Sunne… to oure Lady" (line 21). Rouse, building on a reading by Karl Steel, has argued that the reference to a synagogue here may be specific, since converted synagogues did act as churches in medieval London.

Whether or not such a specific reference was intended, the dynamic of assimilating both the pagan and Jewish pasts through supersession is clearly evoked. As Monica Otter has remarked, *Erkenwald* concerns itself with "the hermeneutical questions of how we relate to our past and how we read the discoveries we make about our past" (Otter, 404). Rouse reads the indecipherable runes found in the pagan judge's tomb in *Erkenwald* against the Hebrew inscriptions that could be found in London, including Jewish gravestones used to rebuild city walls. He employs Jonathan Gil Harris's idea of "untimely matter" to explore how the presence of traces of Jewish London complicate attempts in both the medieval and early modern periods to construct a vision of a homogeneous past (Rouse 45–46). Like the Wandering Jew, whose existence embodies the "untimely," Hebrew is seen as an uncanny mark of difference.

Jews were the only significantly sized group of non-Christians present in medieval England and memory of that community endured even after their expulsion. This transnational presence lingered not only imaginatively, through narrative and image, but also materially, in inscriptions of Hebrew, a language distinguished from English by the very letters in which it is written.[14] In signs like the Hebrew inscriptions in stone memorialized by early modern writer John Stow, we can see material traces of the dynamic of identification with and rejection of the Jews that both Menache and Zacher have explored. Hebrew is the holy language of the people of Israel, which English national identity figures as its antecedent, thereby bestowing to Hebrew power and prestige. At the same time, Hebrew, indecipherable to almost all non-Jews and figured in tales of Jewish violence as a dangerous, transnational secret code, signals a Jewish identity that must be rejected.

Kathy Lavezzo has explored how the English nation *Erkenwald* attempts to represent "is not a cohesive, coherent, and clearly defined nation, but a heterogeneous, hybrid, and shifting England" (366). The dual valence of the Jews, who are simultaneously venerated ancestors and threatening foreigners, plays a role in this complex, malleable forming (Lavezzo 366). Hebrew, as we have noted above, is portrayed with this same duality.[15] As in Matthew's *Chronica*, Hebrew seems to hold secrets. These can be holy secrets to be unlocked by scholarly Christian Hebraists, or deadly ones, like the Hebrew words Matthew claims were carved into the body of a murdered child.

We have been considering medieval English Christians views of Hebrew, which they perceived as a language from elsewhere. But what of the medieval Anglo-Jewish relationship to Hebrew? Scholars such as Alexander Kulik and Judith Olszowy-Schlanger have explored manuscript evidence of the linguistic sophistication of the medieval Anglo-Jewish community. Eva de Visscher and Kirsten Fudeman have explored the nuances of Jewish multilingualism, suggesting how Jews might have used Hebrew, Latin, English, and French in their daily lives in complex ways. How might further inclusion of both this new research and of new understandings of Christian reception of Jewish linguistic practice inflect understandings of the complex development of "Englishness"?

What if we consciously acknowledged that, while writers like Matthew of Paris may have regarded Jews, even those born in England, as a "foreign" presence, we are under no compulsion to accept fully this point of view. Nor is it, from my perspective at least, only "misty-eyed" idealism to consider the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of Jews as a religious and linguistic minority, even if we cannot know whether medieval Anglo-Jewish authors would have had any "desire to participate in… a national literary heritage."[16] As scholars such as Colin Richmond and Elisa Narin van Court have powerfully argued, the recognition of Anglo-Jewish history within greater understandings of what constitutes "English history," including literary history, has real-life implications for us as readers of those histories. A reader's assessment of the "virtue of inclusiveness" can vary greatly depending on whether that reader is included or excluded in the community being determined.[17] From the perspective of European Jewish communities, for centuries always marked as "wandering Jews," always from elsewhere despite a presence of centuries, these issues seem particularly compelling. And, given the many intricacies of the linguistic context of Anglo-Jewry, a transnational community with roots in the realms of what we now know as both England and France, the most historically astute answer may be one that causes us to reconsider the terms of inclusion and exclusion themselves.

In Meir ben Elijah of Norwich's poem "Put a Curse on my Enemies," for example, we find a voice speaking out against forms of medieval English persecution against the Jews from the Jewish point of view. Which criteria do we employ to determine whether or not this work is not only Jewish, but also English? Extant Anglo-Jewish literature in Hebrew is, admittedly, a very small body of work. Might it not, however, change our vision of the literature of medieval England if we considered "the Jew" not simply in terms of religious difference, but also in relation to multilingualism? How might our vision of a multilingual literature, and by extension our vision of medieval England, be expanded by including an Anglo-Jewish Hebrew poet like Meir ben Elijah of Norwich and thereby including the Jews not only as objects but as authors? [18] What do the concepts of nationalism and transnationalism mean in relation to such a poet and his historical context?

How we answer such questions influences our understandings of what constitutes "English literature." Many influential anthologies of medieval English literature, such as those published by Norton and Longman, have now expanded to reflect the linguistic diversity of the medieval British Isles by including works in Anglo-Norman, Old Irish, and Middle Welsh. What might it mean to represent Anglo-Jewish literary history by including one or two of the Hebrew poems

of Meir ben Elijah of Norwich that are now available in translation? By understanding medieval Anglo-Jewry as marked in Christendom as a "familiar enemy" not only because of the Jewish roots of Christianity, but by the transnational nature of Jewish existence in medieval Europe, we may be able to develop new ways of considering the medieval canon that better reflect the linguistic and cultural complexities from which the literature of medieval England emerged.

If we are trying to solve, or at least want to better understand (to go back to Khagram and Levitt's "philosophical transnationalism"), the "puzzle" of the development of the nation-state and its associated literary canon, then there are grounds for promoting greater inclusion and for seeing the role of the transnational in the development of the nation. The diasporic Jew, like the Wandering Jew, was seen as "belonging nowhere yet found everywhere" (Akbari 33). How we decide to treat the Jew's linguistic mark of elsewhere plays an important role in how we see the nation and, by extension, in how we determine who was—and is—truly included within its boundaries.

Short Biography

Lisa Lampert-Weissig is Professor of English Literature and Comparative Medieval Studies at the University of California, San Diego, where she also holds the Jerome and Miriam Katzin term chair in Jewish Civilization. She is the author of *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* and *Medieval Literature and Postcolonial Studies*.

Notes

* Correspondence: Lisa Lampert-Weissig, Literature, UC San Diego, San Diego, CA, USA. Email: llampert@ucsd.edu

[1] An important exception is the collection edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Cultural Diversity*.

[2] "Philosophical transnationalism does not deny the importance of bounded or border social groups. Rather, one of the central meta-theoretical puzzles it attempts to solve is why certain boundaries arise to begin with and how are they reproduced and perpetuated. A transnational ontology assumes, for example, that the emergence of the nation-state system is historically idiosyncratic—a set of social facts that needs to be explained and interpreted" (8).

[3] Stacey, "Jews and Christians" 343–4 and 341–3 and "Jewish Lending" 86–7.

[4] Roger of Wendover. *Flores Historiarum*. Trans. J.A. Giles. *The Flowers of History*. 2 vols. London: Bohn, 1849, volume 2, pages 512–13. Further references to this translation (used with some minor modifications) will be referenced in body of the text as *Flowers* with reference to volume and page number. The Latin entry for Roger's 1228 account can be found in *Rogeri de Wendover Liber qui dicitur Flores Historiarum ab Anno Domini MCLIV* [FH] Ed. H.G. Hewlett. 3 vols. London: Rolls Series, 1886–1889 in Volume 2, pp. 352–5.

[5] On the differences between Roger and Matthew's accounts, see Anderson 20–21.

[6] See Menache, "Tartars."

[7] See Nissé 508 and 512.

[8] Nissé 512.

[9] See also Hames, 50, Fudeman 43–44, and Cluse. I thank Robert Stacey for sharing his yet unpublished translation of the Adam of Bristol account.

[10] On the trope of the "Jewish voice" more generally, see Gilman 10–37.

[11] On Matthew's early national sentiment see Heng 137.

[12] These include collections edited by Brown, Crocker and Smith, Cummings and Simpson, Treharne and Walker, and Turner.

[13] See, for example, Nissé, "Coroun," Grady, and Lavezzo.

[14] See Harris chapter 3.

[15] On representations of Hebrew see Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, Volume 1, 95–108.

[16] I draw here from Ardis Butterfield's reading of modern literary histories, particularly her critique of the ethics of inclusion in the 1988 *Columbia Literary History*.

[17] Butterfield comments on the assertion in the *Columbia Literary History* that ethnic writers belong just as much to the American literary tradition as those from New England: "Clearly it is difficult to have an inclusive approach to a literary history that does not in some way make a virtue of inclusiveness; that is perhaps only proper" (*Familiar* 50). See also Fudeman's discussion of medieval Jewish voices in French literary histories on pages 5-9.

[18] See Krummel, "Meir" and Einbinder, which includes an edition of one of these poems in Hebrew with English translation.

Works Cited

Akbari, Suzanne Conklin. 'Placing the Jews in Late Medieval English Literature.' *Orientalism and the Jews*. Eds. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar. Waltham, MA: Brandeis UP, 2005. 32–50.

Anderson, George. *The Legend of the Wandering Jew*. Providence: Brown UP, 1965.

Anon. *Kurze Beschreibung und Erzählung von einem Juden mit Namen Ahasverus*. Bautzen: Wolffgang Suchnach, 1602.

Bale, Anthony. *The Jew in the Medieval Book*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.

Baron, Salo. 'Medieval Nationalism and Jewish Serfdom.' *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman*. Eds. Meir Ben-Horin, Bernard Weinryb, and Solomon Zeitlin. Leiden: Brill, 1962. 17–48.

Barkey, Karen and Ira Katznelson. 'States, Regimes, and Decisions: Why Jews Were Expelled from Medieval England and France.' *Theory and Society* 40 (2011): 475–503.

Beit-Arié, Malachi. *Hebrew Manuscripts of East and West: Towards a Comparative Codicology*. London: The British Library, 1992.

Brown, Peter, ed. *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture* c. 1350–1500. Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

Butterfield, Ardis. *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years War*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

——. 'National Histories.' *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*. Eds. Brian Cummings and James Simpson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. 33–55.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome, ed. *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*. New York: Palgrave, 2008.

——. 'The Flow of Blood in Medieval Norwich.' *Speculum* 24 (2009): 26–65.

——. 'Pilgrimages, Travel Writing, and the Medieval Exotic.' *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*. Eds. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker. New York: Oxford UP, 2010. 611–28.

Crocker, Holly and D. Vance Smith. *Medieval Literature: Criticism and Debates*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Cummings, Brian and James Simpson, eds. *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.

Davies, Rees 'Nations and National Identities in the Medieval World: An Apologia.' *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine/ Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis* (BTNG/RBHC) XXXIV (2004): 567–79.

De Visscher, Eva. 'Hebrew, Latin, French, English: Multilingualism in Jewish-Christian Encounters.' *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066–1520)*. Eds. Judith A. Jefferson and Ad Putter. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013. 89–103.

——. *Reading the Rabbis: Christian Hebraism in the Works of Herbert of Bosham*. Boston: Brill, 2014.

Einbinder, Susan. 'Meir b. Elijah of Norwich: Persecution and Poetry among Medieval English Jews.' *Journal of Medieval History* 2 (2000): 145–62.

Fudeman, Kirsten. *Vernacular Voices: Language and Identity in Medieval French Jewish Communities*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2010.

Gilman, Sander. *The Jew's Body*. NY: Routledge, 1991.

Grady, Frank. '*St Erkenwald* and the Merciless Parliament.' *SAC* (2000): 179–211.

Guibbory, Achsah. *Christian Identity: Jews and Israel in Seventeenth-Century England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.

Hames, H. J. 'The Limits of Conversion: Ritual Murder and the Virgin Mary in the Account of Adam of Bristol.' *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007): 43–59.

Harris, Jonathan Gil. *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Hastings, Adrian. *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Heng, Geraldine. 'The Romance of England: *Richard Coer de Lyon*, Saracens, Jews, and the Politics of Race and Nation.' *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*. Ed. Jeffrey Cohen, NY: Palgrave, 2001. 135–71.

Hyams, Paul. 'The Jewish Minority in Mediaeval England, 1066–1290.' *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25 (1974): 270–93.

Kaufman, Heidi. *English Origins, Jewish Discourse and the Nineteenth-Century British Novel: Reflections on a Nested Nation*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009.

Khagram, Sanjeev and Peggy Levitt. 'Constructing Transnational Studies.' *The Transnational Studies Reader*. Eds. Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt. New York: Routledge, 2008. 1–22.

Krummel, Miriamne. 'Jewish Culture and Literature in England.' *Handbook of Medieval Culture*. Ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 2. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015. 772–793.

——. 'Meir b. Elijah of Norwich and the Margins of Memory.' *Shofar* 27 (2009): 1–23.

Kulik, Alexander. 'Jews from Rus' in Medieval England.' *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 102 (2012): 371–403.

Lampert-Weissig, Lisa. 'The Wandering Jew as Relic.' *ELN* 53.2 (2015): 38–96.
Lavezzo, Kathy, ed. *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
—— 'Nation.' *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*. Ed. Marion Turner. New York: Wiley, 2014. 363–79.
Levy, Lital and Allison Schachter. 'Jewish Literature/World Literature: Between the Local and the Transnational.' *PMLA* 130.1 (2015): 92–109.
Lewis, Suzanne. *The Art of Matthew Paris in the* Chronica Majora. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.
Matthew Paris. *Matthaei parisiensis, monachi sancti albani chronica majora*. Ed. Henry Richards Luard. Vol. 7. London: Rolls Series, 1872–1884.
——. *Matthew Paris's English History*. Vol. 3. [EH]. Trans. J.A. Giles. London: H.G. Bohn, 1852–1854.
Mellinkoff, Ruth. *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*. Vol. 2. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993.
Menache, Sophia. 'Faith, Myth, and Politics: The Stereotype of the Jews and Their Expulsion from England and France.' *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 75 (1985): 351–374.
——. 'Matthew Paris's Attitudes toward Anglo-Jewry.' *Journal of Medieval History* 23.2 (1997): 139–62.
——. 'Tartars, Jews, Saracens and the Jewish-Mongol 'Plot' of 1241.' *History* 81 (1996): 319–42.
Nissé, Ruth. ''A Coroun Ful Riche': The Rule of History in *St Erkenwald*.' *ELH* 65.2 (1998): 277–95.
——. 'A Romance of the Jewish East: The Ten Lost Tribes and theTestaments of the Twelve Patriarchs in Medieval Europe.' *Medieval Encounters* 13 (2007): 499–523.
Olszowy-Schlanger, Judith. 'The Knowledge and Practice of Hebrew Grammar among Christian Scholars in Pre-Expulsion England: The Evidence of 'Bilingual' Hebrew-Latin Manuscripts.' *Hebrew Scholarship and Medieval World*. Ed. N. de Lange Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. 107–28.
Otter, Monika. ''New Werke': *St. Erkenwald*, St. Albans and the Medieval Sense of the Past.' *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24 (1994): 387–414.
Pease, Donald. 'Introduction: Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn.' *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies*. Eds. W. Fluck, D. Pease, and J. C. Rowe. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2011. 1–48.
Ragussis, Michael. *Figures of Conversion: 'The Jewish Question' and English National Identity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995.
Reiner, Emily. 'Meanings of Nationality in the Medieval Alexander Tradition.' *Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages: Transcultural Perspectives*. Ed. M. Stock. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2016. 30–50.
Reynolds, Susan. *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900–1300*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.
Richmond, Colin. 'Englishness and Medieval Anglo-Jewry.' *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*. Ed. Tony Kushner. London: Cass, 1992. 42–59.
Wendover, Roger. *Rogeri de Wendover Liber qui dicitur Flores Historiarum ab Anno Domini MCLIV*. Ed. H. G. Hewlett. Vol. 3. [FH]. London: Rolls Series, 1886–1889.
Roger of Wendover. *Flores Historiarum*. Vol. 2. [*Flowers*]. Trans. J.A. Giles. *The Flowers of History*. London: Bohn, 1849.
Roth, Norman. 'Salo Wittmayer Baron (1895–1989).' *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*. Eds. Helen Damico and Joseph Zavadil. Vol. 1. New York: Garland, 1995. 277–87.
Rouse, Robert. 'Emplaced Reading, or Towards a Spatial Hermeneutic for Medieval Romance.' *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*. Ed. Nicholas Perkins. Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2015. 41–58.
Shapiro, James. *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.
Shoulson, Jeffrey. *Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
Smalley, Beryl. *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*. 3rd. ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.
Peterson, Clifford, ed. *St Erkenwald*. Philadelphia: U Penn, 1977.
Stacey, Robert. '1240–60: a Watershed in Anglo-Jewish Relations?' *Historical Research* 61 (1988): 135–150.
——. 'Anti-Semitism and the Medieval English State.' *The Medieval State: Essays Presented to James Campbell*. Eds. John Maddicott and D. M. Palliser. London: Hambledon Press, 2000. 163–77.
——. 'Jewish Lending and the Medieval English Economy.' *A Commercialising Economy, England 1086-c. 1300*. Eds. Richard H. Britness and Bruce M. S. Campbell. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995. 78–101.
——. 'Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century England: Some Dynamics of a Changing Relationship.' *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*. South Bend, Indiana: U of Notre Dame P, 2001.
Steel, Karl. 'The Past as Past is its Disappearance' NCS Siena, July 2010. Web. https://www.academia.edu/1669569/The_Past_as_Past_is_Its_Disappearance_Erkenwald_and_the_Jews. 22 March 2016.
Stodnick, Jacqueline. 'Emergent Englishness.' *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*. Eds. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker. New York: Oxford UP, 2010. 496–515.
Turner, Marion, ed. *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*. New York: Wiley, 2013.
Treharne, Elaine and Greg Walker, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

——. *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
Van Court, Elisa Narin. 'Invisible in Oxford: Medieval Jewish History in Modern England.' *Shofar* 26 (2008): 1–20.
Volkov, Shulamit. 'Jewish History: The Nationalism of Transnationalism.' *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*. Eds. Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006. 190–201.
Zacher, Samantha. 'The Chosen People: Spiritual Identities.' *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*. Eds. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 457–77.
——. 'Judaism and National Identity in Medieval England.' *Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*. Ed. Mark Knight. New York: Routledge, 2016. 367–78.