

## Article

# The “Jewish Blackness” Thesis Revisited

Ran HaCohen

Department of Literature, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv-Yafo 6997801, Israel; ranhacohen@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** The notion that in previous centuries Jews were considered to be black, or seen as blacks, has gained broad acceptance in scholarly discourse on the Jewish body since the early 1990s. The present article considers the notion analytically and then examines some of the evidence provided to support it. Much of this evidence does not stand critical examination. Therefore, arguably, the notion of Jewish blackness should be reconsidered.

**Keywords:** Jewish body; Jewish blackness; Jews and Blacks

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Yet learned people have at various times expressed a firm conviction that physical ‘race’ differences have always played a role in history.

(Thompson 1989, p. 4)

## 1. Introduction

The notion of the blackness of the Jews, or Jewish blackness, has become commonplace in scholarly discourse. Going back to the path-breaking work of Sander L. Gilman in the late 1980s, scholars often assert that “a strong European tradition, dating back to the Middle Ages, maintained that the Jews were ‘black’ or at least swarthy, and finds sharp expression in modern anti-Semitic literature” (Melamed 2003, p. 31), that “in medieval literature a theory prevailed in which the Jews were part of the black race, or were at least dark-skinned” (Shavit 2001, p. 182), or that “the general ‘look’ of the Jew was considered to be like that of the black” (Parfitt 2013, p. 6). This article is meant as a caveat, or a question mark, on this prevailing notion.

One issue with the notion is ambiguity. Jewish blackness sometimes means that “the Jews were quite literally seen as black” (Gilman 1994, p. 372), which is a matter of colour; but often a more provocative sense is implied, namely that “in the eyes of the non-Jew who defined them in Western society the Jews became the blacks” (Gilman 1986, p. 8), which refers to race. However, proving each of these two senses of blackness—colour or race—requires a different kind of evidence. An evidence that supports one sense might undermine the other. For example, calling a Jew “white Negro” (Gilman 1986, pp. 7, 207) corroborates the racial sense of the “Jewish blackness” but undermines the colour sense, referring to the Jew as white.

Black, then, can refer to several things. It can be race, it can be colour, and it can be a mere metaphor. Even though in our sources these senses are not always easy to distinguish, they must be sorted out at least theoretically. Merging all the senses together and providing evidence that supports any of them, even when it contradicts others, may end up in cherry-picking.

What are the implications of “Jewish blackness” in the racial sense? First, one should be alert to anachronism: the concept of race is a modern construct that emerged just a couple of centuries ago. Talking of Jews as blacks cannot predate the concept of a black race. Second, if Jews are considered one race—a black race—this should be true for virtually all Jews, not just for a specific community, since the traits of a race are supposed to be shared, at least to some extent, by all its members. Furthermore, since some versions of racism go as far as to divorce racial classification from actual

physical characteristics and specifically from skin colour, Jews—at least hypothetically—can be blacks even without being black.

Jewish blackness qua colour has its own issues. Again, in order to justify the notion, the colour must characterise most of the Jews, not just a specific Jewish group. If, for example, the Jews of Ethiopia are considered black, it has little to do with “Jewish blackness”. Moreover, black as colour has many senses: it can mean dark skin colour, whereby dark is always a relative observation. But black can also be the colour of dirt, of illness, even of tanning (as in Song of Solomon 1:5–6), meanings that do not fall neatly under Jewish blackness.

Black can also be used metaphorically. Politically incorrect as it may sound, this colour has always suffered from bad reputation. Humans are diurnal animals that depend predominantly on their sense of sight in order to survive and thrive. Therefore, the symbolism that assigns positive values to white colour (and light) and negative ones to black colour (and darkness) is not a racist Western bias, but universal. Even in the lower Congo, white signifies “right, good order, reason, truth, health, generosity, good luck”, whereas black signifies “wrong, guilt, envy, intention to kill, grief”, and so on (Needham 1979, p. 262). The fact that white garments (or skin) turn dark with dirt, while the opposite is not true, has also contributed to black’s bad image. Racism has viciously strained this colour symbolism in order to impose a hierarchy on humans by means of their skin colours. Scholars, however, should be careful not to read actual (skin) colour into their sources when mere colour symbolism is meant.

For example, when Jerome (347–420)—centuries before the transatlantic or even the Arab slave trade—writes “Since we were black because of our sins and passions, we have taken the lead over the people of Israel and we believe in the Savior”, or even “Thus we, Ethiopians that we were, transformed ourselves and became white” (quoted in Courtès 1979, p. 27), he does not mean the Gentiles actually had black skin before converting to Christianity. Black can be used metaphorically (for sin, evil, etc.), and even blacks (Ethiopians) can be used allegorically (for sinners) without implying an actual (skin) colour. Christians associated all infidels with sin and evil, especially Jews. Therefore assertions such as “the association of the Jews with Blackness is as old as Christian tradition” or “medieval iconography always juxtaposed the black image of the synagogue, of the Old Law, with the white of the church” (Gilman 1986, p. 7) are true as long as “black” is taken metaphorically but cannot be used as evidence for the actual (or perceived) skin colour of the Jews, let alone their racial categorization.

## 2. Examining the Evidence

Let us now analyse in some detail several pieces of evidence for the “Jewish blackness” thesis, taken mostly from the pioneering source on the subject: Gilman’s essay “The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White?” (Gilman 1991; expanded version: Gilman 1994). The essay has been cited extensively and reprinted in textbooks on racism and otherness (Brinker-Gabler 1995, pp. 149–82; Back and Solomos 2000, pp. 294–302), gaining ground in Jewish Studies and beyond.

The initial formulation is: “The general consensus of the ethnological literature of the late nineteenth century was that the Jews were ‘black’ or, at least, ‘swarthy’” (Gilman 1994, p. 368). As the essay continues, however, both the weaker term “swarthy” and the inverted commas (or scare quotes) are dropped, and the term used is “the blackness of the Jew”, and not in a metaphoric sense: “The Jews were quite literally seen as black” (Gilman 1994, p. 372).

The time frame causes some difficulties. The above-mentioned general ethnological consensus on the blackness “in the late nineteenth century” is somewhat incompatible with “Rudolf Virchow’s extensive study of over ten thousand German schoolchildren published in 1886”, which found them to be “indistinguishable in terms of skin, hair, and eye color from the greater masses of those who lived in Germany” (Gilman 1994, p. 375). Sometimes, an earlier period is referred to: “For the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientist the ‘blackness’ of the Jew was not only a mark of racial inferiority . . . ” (Gilman 1994, pp. 368–69), going back even as far as the Middle Ages (Gilman 1994, p. 378). Leaving the Middle Ages aside, however, Gilman insists that the view that Jews were black “had a long

history in European science" (Gilman 1994, p. 368), providing several pieces of evidence from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century onward.

The earliest is François Maximilien Misson (1650–1722), "whose ideas influenced Buffon's *Natural History*" (Gilman 1994, p. 368). Misson's travel guide to Italy is quoted in the English translation of 1714:

"Tis also a vulgar error that the Jews are all black; for this is only true of the Portuguese Jews, who, marrying always among one another, beget Children like themselves, and consequently the Swarthinness of their Complexion is entailed upon their whole Race, even in the Northern Regions. But the Jews who are originally of Germany, those, for example, I have seen at Prague, are not blacker than the rest of their Countrymen. (Gilman 1994, p. 368; quoting Misson 1714, p. 139)

Clearly, Misson "argued *against* the notion that Jews were black", but this was just "a minority position" (Gilman 1994, p. 368; emphasis added) against the backdrop of the "vulgar error" to which he objected.

The Misson quote, however, is a case of mistranslation. First, in the French it is simply an error, not a vulgar one. More importantly, "Jews are all black" is a mistranslation of *tous les Juifs sont basannez*, "all the Jews are swarthy" (Misson 1698, pp. 224–25). Similarly, "are not blacker than" at the end of the quote is in French *n'ont pas le teint plus basané*, "are not swarthier than". No blackness then, just swarthinness. Misson was born in Lyon. People less-travelled than himself, who came in contact predominantly with darker, Iberian Jews, may have overgeneralised that all Jews looked like them. Misson, having seen lighter Ashkenazi Jews in central Europe, just wanted to set the record straight. A far cry from any "Jewish blackness".

Even before Gilman, Misson's words were already quoted in Patai's *The Myth of the Jewish Race* (Patai and Wing 1975, p. 32): both works share the same long quote as well as the reference to the great Buffon (1707–1788). Patai, however, made it clear that it was Misson's view that Buffon adopted, not the so-called "vulgar error". Indeed, in his monumental *Histoire Naturelle*, a highly influential work translated into all major European languages, Buffon wrote—this time in an accurate English translation—that

It has been pretended that the Jews, who came originally from Syria and Palestine, have the same brown complexion they had formerly. As Misson, however, justly observes, the Jews of Portugal alone are tawny. As they always marry with their own tribe, the complexion of the parents is transmitted to the child, and thus with little diminution preserved, even in the northern countries. The German Jews, those of Prague, for example, are not more swarthy than the other Germans. (De Buffon 1792, p. 262)

Both for Misson in the seventeenth century and for Buffon in the eighteenth, the skin colour of Portuguese Jews was Mediterranean (be it Iberian or Levantine), not black. Both of them believed that Jews in general came in various colours. So did the influential American scholar Samuel Stanhope Smith (1751–1819) at the close of the eighteenth century, providing an entire colour palette (black excluded): "In Britain and Germany they are fair, brown in France and in Turkey, swarthy in Portugal and Spain, olive in Syria and Chaldea, tawny or copper-colored in Arabia and Egypt" (quoted in Gilman 1993, p. 375). The English pre-Darwinian scholar William Lawrence (1783–1867) in the early nineteenth century had similar thoughts: "their colour is everywhere modified by the situation they occupy" (quoted in Gilman 1993, p. 375). In fact, Lawrence (1783–1867) felt that the "Caucasian Variety" of man—entailing "white skin, either with a fair-rosy tint, or inclining to brown"—included virtually "all the ancient and modern Europeans" as well as "Phoenicians, Jews, and the inhabitants of Syria generally" (Lawrence 1819, pp. 473–74).

Another evidence is that of James Cowles Prichard (1786–1848), who, in 1808, "commented on the Jews' 'choleric and melancholic temperaments, so that they have in general a shade of complexion

somewhat darker than that of the English people” (Gilman 1994, p. 370, quoting Prichard 1813, p. 186). Again, Prichard refers to particular, English Jews, not to the Jews in general. But being somewhat darker than the English is hardly sufficient to make one black. In fact, one could have blue eyes and flaxen hair and still be darker than the English—as Prichard himself wrote elsewhere:

The Jews have assimilated in physical characters to the nations among whom they have long resided, though still to be recognised by some minute peculiarities of physiognomy. In the northern countries of Europe they are fair, or xanthous. Blue eyes and flaxen hair are seen in English Jews; and in some parts of Germany the red beards of the Jews are very conspicuous. The Jews of Portugal are very dark. (Prichard 1843, p. 145)

So for Prichard too Jews come in many colours, with the Portuguese on the darker end of the scale—“very dark”, but not black. Moreover, as John Efron has shown in detail, Prichard concluded that the “real” or “true” Jews were white (Efron 1994, p. 43). The assertion that all these scholars—Misson, Buffon, Smith, Lawrence, and Prichard, ranging from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century—were just a “minority position” remains to be proven.

A different case is the description of the “typical Viennese Jews of his time” by the Bavarian Enlightenment writer Johann Pezzl (1756–1823). Eight lines into the long, non-continuous citation that opens with “There are about five hundred Jews in Vienna”, Pezzl is quoted saying:

[ . . . ] Excluding the Indian fakirs, there is no category of supposed human beings which comes closer to the orangutan than does a Polish Jew. . . . Covered from foot to head in filth, dirt and rags, covered in a type of black sack. . . . their necks exposed, the color of a Black, their faces covered up to the eyes with a beard [ . . . ] (Gilman 1994, p. 369)

Gilman concludes that “the image of the Viennese Jew is that of the Eastern Jew”. In fact, the very opposite is true. The lines quoted above no longer talk about the Viennese, but about the Polish Jews: it’s *their* exposed necks that have “the color of a Black” (*von der Farbe der Kaffern*, Pezzl 1788, p. 649). In Gilman’s *Freud, Race, and Gender*, the crucial mentioning of the Polish Jews is left out of the quote altogether, so that the Viennese and Polish Jews are indistinguishably conflated (Gilman 1993, p. 20).

Conflation, however, is the very opposite of what Pezzl had in mind. In fact, he stressed the contrast between the impoverished, filthy Polish Jews on the one hand and the wealthy, refined Viennese Jews on the other. He went so far as to claim that “if one were to compare the rich Jews of Vienna with those wretched creatures [i.e., the Polish Jews], one could hardly believe that they shared the same origin with them” (Pezzl 1788, p. 650, my translation).

The exposed black necks are typical not of all Jews but of the Polish Jews alone (whom Prichard may have thought of as “fair or xanthous”, and Buffon as “not more swarthy than the other Germans”). Their necks were not black by birth but simply because they were dirty, unlike the fine Viennese Jews. On top of all that, saying that someone’s neck is black clearly implies that the rest of his skin is not.

Another brief piece of evidence comes from India: “Nineteenth-century anthropology as early as the work of Claudius Buchanan commented on the ‘inferiority’ of the ‘black’ Jews of India” (Gilman 1994, p. 370). Inferior or not, this does not support the “Jewish blackness” thesis at all. On the contrary: if Jews everywhere had been considered black, the “discovery” of black Jews in India would not have been the sensation it actually was. In fact, even in India itself, the newly discovered Jews were not all black: as Buchanan wrote in his seminal report from Cochin, “the resident Jews are divided into two classes, called the Jerusalem or *White* Jews; and the Ancient or *Black* Jews” (Buchanan 1811, p. 200). The two Jewish communities, the one black, the other white, have always been discussed together from that time on. Stating that a specific Jewish community is black clearly implies that not all Jews are.

The evidence does become more substantial as we move on in time:

Within the racial science of the nineteenth century, being ‘black’ came to signify that the Jews had crossed racial boundaries . . . According to Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the Jews

were a ‘mongrel’ (rather than a healthy ‘mixed’) race, who interbred with Africans during the period of the Alexandrian exile. (Gilman 1994, p. 370; cf. also Gilman 1986, pp. 6–7)

Chamberlain’s (1855–1927) denigration of the Jews as a ‘mongrel’ race cannot be disputed, but how important is their alleged blackness, or racial interbreeding with Africans, in his anti-Semitic exacerbation? Chamberlain says: “The later admixture of negro blood with the Jewish in the Diaspora of Alexandria—of which many a man of Jewish persuasion at this day offers living proof—is also a matter of little importance” (Chamberlain 1911, p. 387), because even earlier the Jews were already a product of interbreeding—with the Hittites as well as, significantly, with the “tall, fair, blue-eyed Amorites from the Indo-European group” (Chamberlain 1911, p. 387). This evidence, Chamberlain asserts, “is confirmed in an irrefutable manner by that of science”, quoting the physician and anthropologist Felix von Luschan:

The Jews are descended, first from real Semites, secondly from Aryan Amorites, thirdly and chiefly from the descendants of the old Hittites. These are the three most important elements in the Jew, and in comparison other mixtures are of very little account. (Chamberlain 1911, p. 388)

Luschan does not mention any black or African element in his “diagnosis”, on which Chamberlain comments:

This diagnosis—let it be noted—refers to the Jews at the time when they were separated from Israel, and it is equally applicable to-day; the measurements have been made on old material and on the very newest, and that with the result that the various adoptions of aliens (Spaniards, Southern French, & c.) into Judaism, on which feuilletonists and unctuous moralists are wont to lay much emphasis, have remained absolutely without influence. (Chamberlain 1911, p. 388)

Within the Jewish mongrel, next to Semites and blue-eyed Aryans, the “negro blood” is so marginal that Chamberlain does not even mention it again.

A later evidence comes from a Jewish writer in the interwar period: “In 1923, Joseph Roth, perhaps the most important Jewish novelist in German, whose origin was in the Yiddish-speaking areas of Eastern Europe, writing in the Viennese *Workers’ News*, described his central Jewish character as ‘black’” (Gilman 1993, pp. 19–20). In the third chapter of his novel *Spider’s Web*, Roth indeed refers—just once in the entire unfinished novel—to the Jewish jeweller Efrussi as lank and black (“dem schwarzen, hageren Efrussi”, Roth 1970, p. 20). This, however, has nothing to do with his complexion but rather with his permanently black dress, described in great detail when the character is introduced in the opening chapter: “The jeweller was lank and tall, and always wore black, with a high-collared [the German original has here: black] coat which just revealed a black silk stock pinned by a pearl the size of a hazelnut” (Roth [1970] 1988, p. 7; Roth 1970, p. 9). Repeating the term “black” three times in a single sentence makes it perfectly clear that the colour term, just a few pages later, refers to the overly black attire and not to the skin colour of its wearer. None of the above-mentioned sources supports the Jewish blackness thesis, let alone the claim that it was “the general consensus of the ethnological literature” or that it “had a long history in European science” (Gilman 1994, p. 368). Nor could the assertion that “within the late-nineteenth-century racist tractates published in Germany, the image of the black Jew appears with specific political implications” (Gilman 1986, pp. 6–7) be affirmed; search engines show that the term “black Jew(s)”, both in German and in English, was reserved exclusively to Jews in Cochin or in Africa.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the sensation novel *Die schwarzen Juden und der jüdischen Mädchenhandel* (“The black Jews and the Jewish girl trafficking”), which is probably lost (Fritzsche 1893).



### 3. Some Ambivalent Cases

That is not to say that the link between Jews and blackness was never made by anybody. It would have been surprising if this had been the case. The only significant affirmative instance I am aware of is that of the Scottish ethnologist Robert Knox (1793–1862), who writes explicitly about “the African character of the Jew” (quoted in [Gilman 1994](#), p. 372). Knox considers the “Jewish, Coptic and Gipsy races” to be “the dark races of man” ([Knox 1850](#), p. 300). Though not actually black—“the purest of the Jewish race is a dark tawny, yellow-coloured person, with jet-black hair and eyes seemingly coloured”—the Jews for Knox definitely are (what is nowadays called) Blacks: “there is no mistaking the race when pure: it is Egyptian, that is, African” ([Knox 1850](#), p. 300).

However, Knox himself admits that the Jews were “placed by theorists with the so-called Caucasian race, and at the head of the Caucasian family” ([Knox 1850](#), p. 300). Indeed, none of the major race theorists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century shares Knox’s views. The Scottish polygenist Lord Kames (1696–1782) brings the “white” Jews of Cochin as evidence against climatic determinism: even though they have lived in India since time immemorial, they have “the same complexion they have in Europe” ([Home 1774](#), vol. 1, p. 14). For the French naturalist Georges Curvier (1769–1832), just like for Lawrence mentioned above, the Jews were part of the “Caucasian Variety” of man ([Curvier 1834](#), p. 40). The American skull researcher Samuel George Morton (1799–1851) considers the Jews to be part of the Arabian family; he stresses that the black Jews of Cochin “are not Jews by nation, but only by conversion” ([Morton 1839](#), p. 21). The Swiss-American biologist Louis Agassiz (1807–1873) “insist[s] upon the propriety of considering Genesis as chiefly relating to the history of the white race, with special reference to the history of the Jews” ([Agassiz 1850](#), p. 125). And, last but not least, for the two most prominent American race theorists of the nineteenth century, Josiah Clark Nott (1804–1873) and George Gliddon (1809–1857), the Jewish people “furnishes so striking an example of the permanence of a Caucasian type”; the Jewish skin “may become more fair at the north, and more dark at the tropics, than in the Land of Promise; but, even here, the limit of change stops far short of approximation to other types” ([Nott and Gliddon 1868](#), pp. 111, 118). In the broader context of the “science” of race, Knox’s was clearly a minority position.

There are a few other, minor, and less compelling instances after the mid-nineteenth century. The rare term “white Negro” is one such case; it is attributed both to “Otto von Bismarck’s friend Hermann Wagener” ([Gilman 1986](#), p. 7) and to Bruno Bauer, “the catalyst of Marx’s early, programmatic state on the nature of the Jew” ([Gilman 1986](#), p. 207). Only the latter attribution is correct.<sup>2</sup> Bruno Bauer, not in his *Jewish Question* of 1843 which elicited Marx famous programmatic response, but two decades later, in his less-known essay “*Das Judentum in der Fremde*”, a racist lexicon entry of 1862 ([Bauer 1862, 1863](#)), wrote of “the Jew as white Negro, but the robust nature and the capacity for physical work of the Negro are missing and are replaced by a brain which by size and activity bring the Jew close to the Caucasian peoples” ([Bauer 1863](#), p. 10; quoted in English in [Stern 1977](#), p. 498): the Jews for Bauer are somatically white but share some characteristics with Blacks.

Similarly, almost 70 years later, in 1920, Franz Kafka’s writes to Milena Jesenska that “naturally for your father there’s no difference between your [Jewish] husband and myself; there’s no doubt about it, to the European we both have the same Negro face” (quoted in [Gilman 1993](#), p. 20). But one can wonder whether this insult—based on the prevailing prejudice against Blacks—was regularly associated with Jewishness. In fact, the term “Negro face” (*Negergesicht*), which usually referred literally to the face of Blacks in the ethnological literature, was used in the same years also by Heinrich Mann, who described a marginal—by no means Jewish—character in his novella *Kobes* (1925) as

<sup>2</sup> Gilman relied on Fritz Stern ([Stern 1977](#), p. 498), who relied on Wilhelm Bauer ([Bauer 1937](#), pp. 216–17), who attributed the quote to Bismarck’s ally Hermann Wagener. Wagener was in fact the editor of the lexicon in which the text first appeared, anonymously ([Bauer 1862](#)). A year later it was published verbatim separately under Bruno Bauer’s name ([Bauer 1863](#)).

having a “greyish white Negro face” (*ein grauweißes Negergesicht*) and later as “the white Negro” (*dem weißen Neger*) (Mann 1983, p. 180–81).

Kafka, as Gilman notes, was a fervent reader of the Zionist periodical *Selbstwehr* (“Self-Defence”), in which one Max Warwar published a short feuilleton bemoaning the anxiety of Jews about their own bodies as signs of their inherent difference. Warwar claims that “for the soul even of the blackest of Jews can be as pure as gold” (Gilman 2006, p. 90). This might refer to skin colour, even though—apart from quoting Song of Songs—Warwar only mentions the “true, black-haired Jew” (emphasis added). Rather than associate the Jews’ blackness with Africa as one would expect if skin-colour were at stake, Warwar actually mentions “the marks of their Asian origin” (*Abzeichen ihrer asiatischen Abstammung*, Warwar 1909).

Finally, one last instance has a bearing on Gilman’s castigation of the prominent American psychologist Erik Erikson (1902–1994). Gilman accuses Erikson—who grew up as Erik Homburger in a German-Jewish family—of having “fled his own identity” and of Jewish self-hatred (Gilman 1986, p. 8). Analysing Hitler’s racial typology, Erikson writes that “the Jew is described as small, black, and hairy all over” (quoted Gilman 1986, p. 8). In this case, Gilman actually denies that Hitler propagated an image of the Jew as black—“for Hitler the linkage between the Jew and the black was a political one”—and claims that “Erikson simply recreates the image of the Jew as black with which he himself grew up” (Gilman 1986, p. 8). Whether Erikson grew up with such an image remains to be proven; as for Hitler himself, however, in his *Mein Kampf* he talks of the Jews not only as politically allied with Blacks but also as “these negroid parasites in our national body [who] corrupt our innocent fair-haired girls” (Hitler 2014, p. 236).

#### 4. Conclusions

Pondering over the origin of the human race, Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) wrote in support of polygenesis that no one of sound judgement could trace back the Jews and the Ethiopians to the same protoplast (Smith 2015, p. 97). Working on colour in medieval and early modern England, Lindsay Kaplan has recently found out that Jews (as well as Muslims) could be white, black, and blue—and even black and pallid simultaneously. Her somewhat aporetic conclusion is that

The inconsistency with which Jewish blackness is deployed may account for the failure to take it seriously and analyze its development. Medieval theological, scientific, and visual considerations of Jewish color introduce indeterminacy even as they formulate notions of darkness and difference . . . [R]epresentation in each period fail to secure this distinction, offering portrayals of Jews that are both black and white. (Kaplan 2013, p. 59)

The notion of a pervasive “Jewish blackness” from early times to the twentieth century thus seems to rely on an undifferentiated conceptual framework and inattentive reading of the sources. Clearly, no line can be drawn from a single enigmatic self-reference to Jews as “dark and ugly” in the thirteenth century (Gilman 1993, p. 20) to Kafka’s cultural environment more than five hundred years later, nor can metaphorical and allegorical uses of black be conflated with its use as actual colour or as race. There is some support for the notion, but it is late, sporadic, and often unconvincing. Both theoretically and historically, then, the bitter notion of Jewish blackness should be consumed with a grain of salt.

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