

The Search for an Artist's Identity

Or how to get lost in the biographies of
Isaac Grünewald[†]

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... identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think.
(Stuart Hall)

In the autumn of 2015, one of the largest publishing houses in Sweden, Bonniers, published a biography of Swedish artist Isaac Grünewald (1889–1946), written by author and publisher Per I. Gedin (b. 1928). In his introduction, Gedin writes that he was surprised to find that there was no “monograph on his artistic production, nor a broader biography of him as an artist and person.”² He continues by pointing out that Grünewald has yet to be presented in the series of artist biographies published by the Swedish Association for Art.³ Gedin gives the impression that his book is the first true biography of Grünewald. I was very surprised when I read this, since I would count Gedin’s book as at least the fourth biography of the artist since 1934, and if I were to be more generous in my definition, I could surely add a few more publications to that list. Of course, Gedin is well aware of all of these previously published biographies, but we seem to disagree with regard to definition. On the other hand, perhaps, it is more likely that Gedin finds the perspectives of these previous biographies to be too narrow and that they are consequently incapable of presenting the complex image of Grünewald he believes the artist deserves. He writes that what has previously been “written about Isaac Grünewald essentially provides a rather one-sided image of an unusually talented person, who started painting early on and who became more and more successful. He is primarily presented as a colourist and as a positive person with a large appetite for life.”⁴ Although I find that Gedin’s biography adopts a different approach compared to the earlier biographies, just as all the earlier biographies differ from each other, I would say that this image of Grünewald is also what Gedin primarily presents. Gedin’s quest for a “broader biography of him as artist and person” and his attempt to write a biography in full describing the complexity of Grünewald as a person can be seen as an attempt to write the “final book” on the artist. Although I find this attitude deeply problematic, it sparked my interest in rereading all of the previous biographies of Grünewald. What caught my eye during this process was the biographers’ preconceptions regarding his Jewishness.

In this article, I thus analyse the art historiography of Grünewald, while paying particular attention to preconceptions regarding his Jewishness. This perspective, although limited, focuses on the biographical and promotional texts that sustained and developed the notion of who Grünewald was as well as his place in Swedish modernist art history.

Research field

In the field of Swedish art history, Jewish self-identification and anti-Semitism in general seem to be of almost no interest. An exception is a 1988 article by art historian Lena Johannesson, where she analyses anti-Semitic caricatures in the Swedish fanatical and radical press from 1845 to 1860. Yet, other than this, there are very few in-depth studies in the field.⁵ Within other fields of study, things look different, although art, artists or art historians are seldom mentioned.⁶ The only extensive study of what may be described as an analysis of an anti-Semitic visual culture in Sweden so far was written by historian Lars M Andersson in his dissertation *En jude är en jude är en jude... Representationer av "juden" i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900–1930* from 2000.⁷ These studies, which are outside the field of art history, clearly indicate the influence of anti-Semitism on Swedish society. Although the explicit anti-Semitic attacks on Isaac Grünewald are well-documented, there are no studies on the impact of anti-Semitism on Grünewald and his art, his self-identification or in what way anti-Semitism has become incorporated into Swedish art historiography.⁸ With this article, I hope to contribute with an understanding of the continuation of stereotypes and narrative repetition in the biographies of Grünewald.

Internationally, research on anti-Semitism and Jewish history is comprehensive; however, of particular interest here is the literature on Jewish identity and self-identification.⁹ Two ambitious contributions within this field of study are the anthologies *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity* (1995), edited by art historians Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, and *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History* (1999), edited by art historian Catherine M. Soussloff.¹⁰ In the former anthology, Jewish identity is analysed as constructed, received and expressed within a wide cultural spectrum from painting to literature and film. In the latter, Jewish identity and its meaning are analysed from several perspectives in relation to the history of art. These anthologies are exemplary in terms of their focus in the research field, either on Jewish identity as expressed within the arts or on the importance of Jewish émigré art historians for modern art history. This article serves as a contribution to this field of research, but with a

clearly defined topic and focus on a concrete example of the historiography of an artist.

Identity

Gedin's above-mentioned biography of Grünewald closely follows his life's work as an artist, but also characterizes him as a person, both professionally and in his private life; thus constituting a combination of a classical life's work biography and an existential biography.¹¹ At the core of the biography is Gedin's ambition to describe who Grünewald was, to close in on his identity. However, as argued by cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall, "identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, [...] we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation."¹² A key aspect is the notion regarding identity as not only a *process*, but also as something constituted within *representation*. Nevertheless, we also have to remember that this process is not only internal (as part of an individual's identification), but also as argued by David Theo Goldberg and Michael Krausz, the editors of an anthology titled *Jewish Identity*, something that "after death is often carried out by others, in one's name."¹³ From this point of view, I understand identity as located in history and, consequently, open to change in meaning, retrospectively as well as contemporaneously. As such, it is based on action or communication within specific contexts, manifesting itself verbally and aesthetically within representation. The production of identity in relation to Grünewald is a process that took place not only during the artist's own lifetime but also continues after his death. As such, it occurs in close relation not only to an understanding of the social conditions under which he lived and produced his art, but also to the later construction and renegotiation of Swedish Modernism and its historiography. My interest in the biographies of Grünewald lies in their role in constructing his identity and positioning him within Swedish art history. Although I look upon the biographical genre as fiction, I do not see these texts as necessarily tantamount to *untrue* or even *false* and I have no ambition to judge them accordingly.¹⁴ From a critical historiographical perspective, my interest is not in whether the biographical characterisations of Grünewald are "true"; rather, I am interested in the ways in which these characterizations of him are linked to contemporary discourses, in what ways he was individualised, stereotyped and whether these characterizations changed or remained the same over time.¹⁵

Anti-semitism

A central aspect here is Grünewald's Jewishness and the influence of anti-Semitism. I here use the broad definition of anti-Semitism formulated by American sociologist Helen Fein as a term denoting a wide range of different historical manifestations of hostility towards Jews in order to emphasize its historical continuity as a cultural phenomenon, but also to allow me to distinguish between different anti-Semitic manifestations at different levels.¹⁶

In Sweden in the early 20th century, anti-Semitism was perhaps most noticeable in the comic press, with its stereotypical and ostensibly harmless notions regarding Jews. Here we find numerous examples of Jews as liars, as greedy and incapable of creating anything original, in addition to preconceptions of Jews as nationally rootless individuals, a cosmopolitan people threatening any national identity. In his extensive documentation and analysis of the comic press in Sweden, Lars M Andersson has pointed out anti-Semitism as a hegemonic discourse in Swedish society during the first three decades of the twentieth century – a natural part of the public debate and an important part of the construction of a cultural and national identity.¹⁷ Andersson describes this anti-Semitism as a form of *salon anti-Semitism* (although I prefer the term *everyday anti-Semitism*); in other words, what British historian John C.G. Röhl defines as the first level of anti-Semitism ending with the fifth level of the Holocaust.¹⁸ Everyday anti-Semitism is not necessarily linked to a specific economic, political or cultural sphere, but operates more as an unreflective frame of reference, something that was prevalent in the early 20th century.

Since the biographers of Grünewald may hardly be identified as convinced anti-Semites, Fein's broad definition and understanding of anti-Semitism as manifest at different levels, together with the term everyday anti-Semitism, provides me with the analytical tools for understanding the different characterisations of Grünewald within their historical contexts and contemporary anti-Semitic discourse.

*Early reception – everyday anti-semitism,
allosemitism and racialism*

There is an art critical discourse originating from Isaac Grünewald's first exhibition in 1909 up until today. This discourse provides an important resource in terms of notions of who he was as an artist and his position in the art world. These sources include hundreds of articles and forewords to exhibitions catalogues containing biographical annotations and the like.

All of this is important for understanding the production of Grünewald's identity; however, in this article, I focus on the biographical discourse, although excerpts from art criticism and other relevant types of material are also included. I have chosen this approach as it can be argued that all of these biographies are attempts to synthesise a more general discourse and to in one way or another *freeze* the image of Grünewald. A biography may be compared to a history survey text or a handbook in a microcosm, a text setting the standard, which teaches us how to understand a person and his or her *œuvre* in a form designed for longevity.¹⁹

Evidence of anti-Semitism can be found even in the reception of the very first exhibitions in which Grünewald participated. However, it is in relation to the great debate regarding the decoration of the Civil Marriage Chamber in the Stockholm City Law Court building that this reception becomes more explicit and where he also becomes a publicly known person.²⁰ Although this is not the place for a broad analysis of the critical reception of Grünewald's work, before entering into the explicitly biographical literature on him, I nonetheless discuss two texts originating from the art critical discourse: one written by one of the most canonical critics in early 20th century Sweden and the other written from a French perspective, clearly displaying both similarities and differences in the reception of Grünewald. Early in Grünewald's career, one of the most established art critics in Sweden, August Brunius (1879–1926), made a concerted effort to understand, explain and promote his art. Although Brunius was initially hesitant to praise the artist, he later became one of Grünewald's most important supporters. In a 1922 article, Brunius coined the expression "1909 års män" [the men of 1909] and highlighted Grünewald as the leading figure in this esteemed group.²¹ 1909 was the year when Grünewald and several other young male artists made their debut with an exhibition at Hallin's Art Gallery in Stockholm.²² In the same article, Brunius characterised him as follows:

There is an un-Swedish fire and swiftness to Grünewald; he is a man of many ideas, rather than a single one, made spokesman and warrior; a practical mind and a volatile temperament. His exotic being and appearance, his boyishness, and, most of all, his passion and drive, of the kind so typical of Stockholm, made him a target for the wider public's deep-rooted reluctance towards the typical artist. Early on, he became the brazen, new-fangled incarnation of modern art – much to the chagrin of his companions, who did not wish to admit that his artistic importance justified this central position; they forget that whilst he received the most fame, he was also dealt the most scorn.²³

Brunius clearly recognises Grünewald as a key figure motivated by his own artistic achievement. At the same time, Brunius points out that his fellow artists did not always appreciate him and that he was always at the centre of the debate – the one who received the hardest criticism as an artist. Brunius partially explains the artist's position by stressing his “un-Swedish fire and swiftness” and by describing him as a “warrior” with a “volatile temperament”. Brunius is ambivalent – he praises Grünewald as an artist but cannot at the same time accept him as truly Swedish; in Brunius' opinion, he has too foreign a temperament to be seen as such. With the words “exotic being and appearance”, he is clearly referring to Grünewald's Jewishness.²⁴ In this article, which is very important in relation to the historiography of Grünewald's generation of artists, we can trace some of the dominating themes in the reception of his art. He is identified as a foreign element in the Swedish art world, in both a positive and a negative sense. He is also described as a polemic person, always ready for an argument, and as an artist who quickly understood the importance of marketing his art. Sometimes, this is seen as if he needed to market his otherwise mass-produced art lacking in originality. At other times, however, his marketing acumen is seen as proof of his avant-garde position and as verification that he was a leading figure when it came to this propagandistic approach, which paved the way for other modernist artists. Helen Fein has listed the most common anti-Semitic stereotypes, and her first example is the Jew as a betrayer and manipulator and the second being the Jew as an exploiter, personifying usury or modern capitalism.²⁵ Grünewald's marketing acumen and his polemic character, as described by contemporary critics, thus clearly corresponds with Fein's examples of anti-Semitic stereotypes. When it comes to the negative aspects in the rhetoric regarding Grünewald's early reception, we may consequently easily recognise both racial and anti-Semitic terms in the characterisations of Grünewald; however, on the positive side, these perspectives align with well-established notions regarding an avant-garde artist in the early 20th century. The avant-garde artist was supposed to be a polemic person going against the grain, and Modernism, clearly an international movement, was at the time seen as avant-garde. There is thus a risk of conflating the characterization of an avant-gardist with the stereotypes of Jewishness, at the same time both undermining and strengthening Grünewald's position within Swedish Modernism.

Beyond the extensive art critical discourse in relation to the artist and his work, the first promotional text of a biographical nature was André Warnod's *Grünewald: L'homme et l'œuvre*, published in Paris in 1928. Warnod (1885–1960) was a French art critic who is best known for his support of artists such as Marc Chagall and Amedeo Modigliani, as well as other

foreign artists then working in Paris, dubbed by Warnod as the “School of Paris’ in 1925. At the time of publication of Warnod’s booklet, Grünewald had already been living in Paris for several years, although he still kept a studio in Stockholm. In Warnod’s booklet, the author begins by pointing out the fact that Grünewald at that point was better known in Sweden than in France. Warnod then continues:

His art has a distinctive character originating from his temperament as a painter but is also dependent on his personality, which is composed of two essentially different parts: one Nordic and the other Oriental.²⁶

This synthesis of the two opposing sides of Grünewald’s temperament corresponds very well with Brunius’ ambivalence regarding the artist’s personality. However, Warnod sees this dichotomy as being entirely advantageous for Grünewald.²⁷ According to Warnod, the bright, lively colours of the Nordic artists are in Grünewald’s art given “a deeper, more nuanced sensitivity, sometimes actually romantic, mystical and sensual, with an air of Oriental voluptuousness.”²⁸ Grünewald “loves life [...] beautiful, colourful harmonies trembling with vitality, valuable materials” and he wishes to “give joy to the eyes.”²⁹ When describing Grünewald’s interest in sensual and valuable types of materials, Warnod aligned himself with a long tradition of describing “Jewish art”. Nineteenth-century art historical handbooks often included a section explicitly devoted to Jewish art. The notion of Jews as “Orientals” is found already in the first art historical handbook, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (1842) by Franz Kugler, stating that the ancient Jews had a particular interest in external luxury.³⁰ Albeit with some modifications, the basic structure of Kugler’s handbook prevails even to this day, indicating the narrative repetition within the genre.³¹ In Warnod’s understanding of Grünewald as an artist, there is no question that Grünewald possesses an “Oriental” or Semitic origin. Yet, Warnod does not refer to the artist as being a polemic person or a troublemaker.

Although both Brunius and Warnod use racial and anti-Semitic rhetoric, both of them also served as important promoters of Grünewald’s art. As in the case of the first art history handbook to introduce Grünewald into the modernist narrative (written by Finnish art historian Bertel Hintze), these early writings about the artist combine an ambivalent mixture of racial and anti-Semitic rhetoric with an appreciation of Grünewald’s artistic talents.³² These early texts on Grünewald have to be understood in relation to a widespread form of anti-Semitism permeating European social life. This anti-Semitism knew nothing about Auschwitz-Birkenau and was in many cases ideologically and politically unreflective – an everyday anti-Semitism.

However, since both Brunius and Warnod were essentially positive with regard to Grünewald and his art, their intentions were probably not explicitly anti-Semitic. Against this background, I would argue that we are here faced with an attitude based on what Zygmunt Bauman has referred to as *allosemitism*. According to Bauman, allosemitism “refers to the practice of setting the Jews apart as people radically different from all the others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them [...]” This represents an essentially non-committal attitude that “does not unambiguously determine either hatred or love of Jews, but contains the seeds of both [...]”³³ I understand this as representing a specific version of what philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah refers to as *racialism*. Racialism is based on the idea that humans can be divided into “races” and that each “race” ascribes “certain traits and tendencies” beyond morphological characteristics.³⁴ However, racialism is not a doctrine based on a normative perspective and, Appiah argues, racialism “is at the heart of nineteenth-century Western attempts to develop a science of racial difference.” From this perspective, the writings of Brunius and Warnod align themselves with early 20th century *normal science*. As a presupposition for other doctrines, however, racialism easily becomes normative and as such turns into the seed for “a great deal of human suffering and the source of a great deal of moral error.”³⁵

Instead of discussing the clearly anti-Semitic and racial rhetoric among Grünewald’s contemporary antagonists, as manifested in numerous art critical reviews, I have here chosen to analyse texts by two of his early promoters. My intention is to illustrate that racialism, allosemitism and in many cases also anti-Semitism were clearly not only part of the negative, and frequently unserious, reception, but also something we find almost everywhere in early 20th century art criticism. This is of great importance, as the early art critical discourse has played a key role in the formation of the later established historiography.³⁶ The characterisation of Grünewald we have seen in these two texts as an “Oriental”, Jewish, foreign element in the Swedish art world and as someone with a violent temperament, I would argue, remains a persistent theme in the biographies of the artist.

The biographies

The first biography of Isaac Grünewald was published in 1934 as a part of the series *Bonniers Konstböcker* and was written by art historian Sixten Strömbom (1888–1983). *Bonniers Konstböcker* was published between 1933 and 1936 and consisted of 14 brief biographies over contemporary artists, all of them still well-known today as part of the modernist narrative.³⁷ Grünewald had been awarded a professorship at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm

already in 1932. In other words, at the time of the publication of the first biography of Grünewald, he was a very well-established artist in Sweden and at the height of his career. No more biographies of Grünewald were published during his lifetime, although he himself was in contact with the Bonniers publishing house regarding a biography written by Josef P. Hodin (1905–1995). Bonnier rejected the book, which was not published until 1949 when it was published by the publisher Ljus.³⁸ Hodin was an art historian from Czechoslovakia who had settled in Stockholm during World War II before moving to London at the end of the war.³⁹ It is obvious that his biography of Grünewald was written in close collaboration with the artist, who (according to Hodin) read and commented on the manuscript just before his death in 1946.⁴⁰ Hodin's book on Grünewald has until recently been considered the essential biography of the artist. In 1949, the same year as Hodin's work was published, another much briefer biography was also published: Tage Nilsson's contribution to the series *Forums små konstböcker*. Nilsson (1915–2010) was an editor and writer with a close relationship with the Grünewald family.⁴¹

A decade later, and 50 years after Grünewald's debut at Hallin's Art Gallery, the Swedish Association for Art arranged an artist exhibition at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts.⁴² That same year, the Swedish Radio journalist specialising in fine art, Karl Axel Arvidsson (1915–1962), edited a collection of articles and speeches by Grünewald, titled *Isaac har ordet*. The publication of this book resulted in several of the artist's articles and speeches becoming known to a wider readership.⁴³ The same year, Arvidsson also wrote a series of articles on Grünewald, which were published in the weekly magazine *Veckojournalen*.⁴⁴ Arvidsson's articles do not comprise a proper biography of the artist, although the five-part series does provide a brief account of his life and work.

In 1980, a new book on the artist was published. This time, however, the approach to Grünewald's life takes the form of a novel by Ralph Herrmanns (b. 1933), who transforms himself into a fictitious student of the renowned artist.⁴⁵ The story is much in line with the earlier biographies; however, in this case, the material is dramatized and a large number of new details are added. Although it is a novel, Herrmanns seems to have been well-acquainted with the family and it was written at a time when several of the individuals mentioned in the book (who knew Grünewald very well) were still alive.⁴⁶

Ever since the mid-1980s, there has been increasing interest in Grünewald's first wife, Sigrid Hjertén (1885–1948). This trend has continued into the 21st century.⁴⁷ In many respects, the renewed interest in Hjertén has had a direct influence on the reception of Grünewald. In 1995, novelist Anita Goldman (b. 1953) published a novel on the life of Hjertén based on

the letters Grünewald and Hjertén sent to one another. The book is titled *I själen alltid ren. Om Sigrid Hjertén*.⁴⁸ As a result of Goldman being a distant relative of the artist couple, their son Iván Grünewald (1911–1996) gave her permission to read the letters and publish several of them for the first time. Due to its heavy reliance on this empirical material, this book is essentially a cross between a novel and a dual biography.

Goldman's book became the primary source of information for the 2005 documentary film about the two artists, *Sigrid & Isaac*, by author and filmmaker Anders Wahlgren (b. 1946). He later developed the film into a dual biography with the same title, which was published in 2007.⁴⁹ Chronologically speaking, this brings us back to our starting point and to the latest biography of Grünewald, by Per I. Gedin, published in 2015.

Who was Isaac Grünewald?

One might imagine that reading all of the above-mentioned biographies one after the other would constitute nothing but a series of endless repetition, but there are differences in how the biographers present, understand and explain Grünewald's character. Nonetheless, in the end, they all basically tell the same story, a story that conforms to the typical structure of the biographical genre, which can actually be found as far back as Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of Artists*, if not before.⁵⁰ The biographical formulae examined by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz in their classic treatise are all there; one such trope being that of the divinely gifted artist who is discovered when someone gives him (usually, it is a boy or young man) the chance to develop his talents, as if he was a born artist.⁵¹ However, according to Michel Foucault, who views such seemingly eternal and commonly accepted concepts as the idea of the divinely gifted artist with suspicion, this premise must be regarded as a social construction.⁵² The "artist anecdote" identified by Kris and Kurz as the "primitive cells" of the genre prevents us from understanding the artist as a product of historical and critical practices in society.⁵³ Several preconceived roles are not only assigned to the artist, they also willingly project these, and this is something we could analyse within its specific cultural situations in relation to, for example, various role theories.⁵⁴ Since none of the published biographies of Grünewald is the result of scholarly work, they contain no theoretical discussions concerning identity or social roles. An academic work would probably increase theoretical awareness but would not necessarily result in problematising identity or social roles. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that these biographies constitute the core of the historiography on Grünewald and thus generate the established image of Grünewald.⁵⁵ Here, however, I am not primarily interested in whether

or not Grünewald played these roles or whether or not the biographical characterisations of him are “true”. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which these characterizations of him are related to contemporary discourses and the construction of his identity.

Beyond the narrative, in which we can follow Grünewald’s life from his early beginnings (he was born in Stockholm to poor Jewish parents and demonstrated a talent as a gifted painter when still only a child) through his rapid upward mobility within the field of fine art (from being considered part of the avant-garde to becoming a central figure in Swedish culture), several recurrent characterisations of Grünewald exist in the biographies. As we have previously noted, all of these characterisations were already evident in the early critical reception of his art. At the core of these characterisations lies the positioning of Grünewald as a foreign element within the Swedish art world, as someone with a volatile temperament capable of paving the way for himself and for his art and as someone accustomed to being at the centre of attention. An important part of the narrative seems to be devoted to all of the debates and scandals surrounding his art and his person, and especially his Jewishness.

From the beginning of his biography, Sixten Strömbom makes it clear that Grünewald always belonged to the “now” and was always engaged in the questions of his own time, an active participant in the cultural debate. While he never uses the term “avant-garde” to describe the artist, he presents him as the predicator of international Modernism and consequently a leading figure of the Swedish modernist movement. Strömbom then continues:

No great acumen is needed to be able to interpret the public’s intense reactions to Grünewald; the Swedes’ rage or enchantment for the pronounced unfamiliar temperament that flourishes in unrestricted self-assertion. It would be just as unnecessary for the Swedish people to highlight his Jewish ancestry as it would be for them to point out that the Stockholm Olympic Stadium is red in colour.⁵⁶

Here, Strömbom is clearly following the earlier characterisation identifying Grünewald as a foreign element with a temperament that elicited violent reactions from “Swedes” for whom his Jewish origins are self-evident. The violent reactions or delight of the “Swedes” are explained by this foreign temperament. Strömbom continues:

Even in his early youth, Grünewald found strength in his racial awareness, both morally and artistically. And the image of his art and personality are, in their entirety, a glowing example of how richly the Semitic psyche can develop within a Swedish environment.⁵⁷

In this statement, Grünewald is represented as an excellent example of an assimilated Jew who flourishes within Swedish culture. His actions and temperament are explained as a catalytic reaction between his race and his Swedish environment. Although Strömbom never engaged in contemporary discussions on the subject of Jewish assimilation, in the quotation above he describes an ambivalent assimilationist standpoint: Grünewald is presented as a contributor to Swedish culture, while Strömbom at the same time identifies him as belonging to a specific race with a unique culture.⁵⁸ In discussing the importance of Grünewald's Jewishness, Strömbom also compares him to Ernst Josephson (1851–1906), a celebrated Swedish artist a generation older than Grünewald. Yet, as Strömbom writes, Josephson came from a Jewish bourgeois family that had established itself in Sweden many generations prior, whereas Grünewald belonged to a recently immigrated “Eastern Jewish” family (in other words, a poor family). This is an important distinction, since public opinion regarding these two groups differed; the latter wave of immigrants was viewed in much more negative terms.⁵⁹ This was also expressed within the Jewish community, where “Western Jews” considered themselves more secularised and integrated into Swedish society, thereby making the acceptance of “Eastern Jews” even more problematic. Hence, by describing Grünewald's poor background, Strömbom not only positions him within the Jewish community but also emphasises his upward mobility. For Strömbom, however, the most important point is understanding the impact of Grünewald's Jewishness on his art. Strömbom is unable to provide a large number of examples of Jewish themes in Grünewald's art, but he states that he suspects they will come to present themselves.

All the extroverted and the sensational, however, was never enough for Grünewald in the long run. The desire for sensual advancement in an immeasurable sense of life and desire for rhythmic freedom later led him to a source of darkness deeper than the works of Matisse. He found this darkness in the works by Ernst Josephson created during his periods of illness. Here, he met something more full of secrets than the voice of the day – the expression for the fantasy world of his own race. Just *how* deeply he submerged himself in this source has yet to be revealed to us by Grünewald. Nevertheless, the fact that it greatly inspired him can be seen clearly in the oriental dream imagery later present in his illustration of Oscar Levertin's “Kung Salomo och Morolf” [King Solomon and Marolf]; from their depth resonate the ancestral tones of his Jewish heart.⁶⁰

Strömbom here presents Grünewald's Jewish background as an explanation for his temperament and colourful expressionism, which serves as

clear evidence of racialism and the rhetoric of an everyday anti-Semitism. Strömbom, however, has difficulties in terms of describing the Jewishness in Grünewald's art, which may partially be explained by the positioning of Jewish art in art history. Art historian Margaret Olin argues that the interpretation of art according to national styles following the formation of nation states in the 19th century not only erased much of Jewish art in art history, but also made it impossible except as a "primitive" precursor. Lacking a nation, Jewish art lacked any identity.⁶¹ This leads to a contradiction in Strömbom's attempt to acknowledge Grünewald as both a Jew and an artist.

In the following two biographies by Tage Nilsson and Josef P. Hodin, the discussion on the artist's Jewishness is not as clearly racial in its nature. Nilsson never explicitly discusses Grünewald's Jewishness, although he does note that the artist came from a Jewish family. Yet, when it comes to his position as a leading figure in the modernist movement, Nilsson draws a direct parallel to Grünewald's temperament, since "his vitality, eloquence and powerful reply made him extraordinarily well-suited for making his case for his own art and for expressionism. [...] Isaac's polemic talent, in combination with his magnificent temperament, of course served to win him both friends and enemies".⁶² Hodin would most likely have agreed with this characterisation. He also describes Grünewald as a polemicist who always responded to every single attack by defending himself and the position of the artist in Swedish society.⁶³ Although he never does so in explicitly racial terms, but rather approaches the issue from a psychological perspective, Hodin attributes Grünewald's character and temperament to his background as the son of two poor Jewish parents.

If he inherited his sense of the beautiful and the poetic from his father, his mother is to thank for his positive vitality, his faith in his own power and a sense of humour that was a characteristic of her nature and which sustained her through the trials and tribulations of life.⁶⁴

Hodin recognises Grünewald's Jewish background and stresses his Jewishness as a cultural identification, but never discusses contemporary anti-Semitism and the attacks upon the artist motivated by this. Among the many characterisations of Grünewald and his art found in art criticism and art history, Hodin quotes several examples of racial and/or anti-Semitic rhetoric, which he then never comments. Moreover, while Hodin describes the suffering Grünewald personally experienced upon hearing of the persecution of European Jews in the conclusion of his biography, he does not reflect upon the fact that Grünewald himself was severely attacked by anti-Semites.⁶⁵ Although Hodin, himself an *émigré* Jew, must have been painfully aware of

European anti-Semitism and its consequences by 1949, he does not seem to recognise it in a Swedish context. I see this as an example of the widespread reticence regarding Jewish experiences in the West prior to World War II, not least among art historians.⁶⁶

In 1959, the situation seems to be different. The series of articles by Karl Axel Arvidsson published in *Veckojournalen* was introduced by the magazine as the first time that its readers would have the opportunity to read about Grünewald “as he really was.”⁶⁷ In this series of articles, Swedish anti-Semitism is for the first time explicitly discussed in relation to Grünewald. Arvidsson gives examples of the numerous anti-Semitic attacks on the artist and describes anti-Semitism as a fundamental part of Grünewald’s youth and as paramount to his development. Arvidsson explains the artist’s “Oriental temper” as both originating from his Jewish background (as a racial characteristic) and as a strategy to survive in a society in which Jews were marginalised.⁶⁸ In Arvidsson’s characterisation, Grünewald’s temperament not only becomes a consequence of his race, but also a psychological response to anti-Semitism. In his preface to the collection of speeches and articles by Grünewald, *Isaac har ordet*, Arvidsson summarises his perspective as follows: “Grünewald’s childhood home in the south of Stockholm was of a completely Eastern Jewish character, and his assimilation into Swedish society, which at the time was not without anti-Semitic traits, unquestionably created in him a certain arrogance, which was challenging.”⁶⁹ This challenging arrogance seems to be fundamental to the character of an artist who, according to Arvidsson,

from his debut [...] to his death [...] was at the centre of Swedish artistic life. Not through his works, but because of his vitality, his fearlessness, his generosity with himself. He invested his entire being in his tireless and invaluable struggle in the name of expressionist art. The brush was his magic wand, which he occasionally used for performing some far-too-simple tricks, but the pen was always his supple foil.⁷⁰

In Arvidsson’s preface, Grünewald’s merits seem to lie more in his verbal ability to promote modern art, as well as in his willingness to sacrifice himself for that art, than in his skill as an artist. Considering that the book consists of a collection of Grünewald’s speeches and articles, it is not altogether surprising that Arvidsson stresses the artist’s verbal eloquence. Yet, at the same time, he reinforces the perception of Grünewald as a particularly polemic person and an ardent promoter of modernist art, something that meshes well with his persona as a leading artistic figure and avant-garde artist but which is also in line with anti-Semitic preconceptions of the “Jewish” artist.

Anti-Semites often accused Grünewald of promoting his art as if he was an advertiser or publicist rather than an artist.⁷¹ Arvidsson is one of the first to use the word “commercial” in a positive sense when describing the artist’s methods for promoting his art, even though Grünewald’s antagonists frequently used the term. There was probably no anti-Semitic intention in Arvidsson’s articles and he was clearly aware of the anti-Semitic attacks on Grünewald. However, although he recognises the anti-Semitic nature of the verbal attacks on the artist, as well as the anti-Semitic motivation behind some of the judicial proceedings mounted against him, Arvidsson does not seem to be aware of anti-Semitism in the form of visual discourse. Among the illustrations accompanying Arvidsson’s series of articles, we find several caricatures clearly emphasising anti-Semitic preconceptions of the “Jewish” body.⁷²



One of the illustrations in Karl Axel Arvidsson’s articles made by Victor Bergdahl. Previously published in *Stockholms Tidningen* December 31, 1913. Bergdahl here ridicules Grünewald and his proposal for the decoration of the Civil Marriage Chamber in the Stockholm City Law Court building. In the drawing, we not only recognize a detail from Grünewald’s sketches for the Marriage Chamber but also Grünewald himself, with his ‘Jewish’ facial characteristics and ‘flat feet’ clearly exaggerated.

Beginning with Hodin's biography, and stated more clearly in the texts by Arvidsson, the explanation behind Grünewald's character, his volatile temperament and arrogance shifts from being based on racialism to being based on socio-psychology. Yet, there is a major difference between the narratives of Hodin and Arvidsson, as the two authors have divergent views when it comes to the importance of the anti-Semitic discourse. Hodin seems to ignore contemporary Swedish anti-Semitism, whereas Arvidsson recognises its existence. In later texts about Grünewald, the socio-psychological explanation for his temperament dominates, thereby ruling out a racial explanation in accordance with the generally anti-racist tendencies in later society.

In his novel about Grünewald, Herrmanns emphasises his vitality, temperament and appetite for life. The image of Grünewald created by Herrmanns is certainly not as idealised as in earlier texts; Herrmanns stresses both his arrogance and the ignorance he showed later in life when it came to accepting and appreciating other artists. He writes:

There was one cardinal problem with Isaac – he had a big mouth. Furthermore, he could never keep quiet. Even if he had nothing to say or if he ought not to speak, the words simply flowed from him. He was superciliously uninterested in other living Swedish artists. Were he to mention them at all, his words were generally dismissive or taunting. Isaac Grünewald was to be the focal point; he was to be the topic of discussion. The person who spoke the most was Isaac himself.⁷³

Clearly, since Herrmanns's book is a novel staging fictionalised dialogues between Grünewald and his closest friends, the text breathes life into the character of the artist as a person and creates a feeling of really getting to know him. In his characterisation, Herrmanns not only emphasises Grünewald's temperament but also his innovative ability to promote his art and his unapologetic relation to these promotional activities. Even though Grünewald was certainly eloquent and knew the importance of promoting his art, this is a description of him that fits very well into anti-Semitic caricatures of him as an artist. For example, in 1924 the comic magazine *Strix* published a caricature of him as driving his sale's car showing his paintings with signs saying things like "Try my exquisite still lifes!"



Caricature of Isaac Grünewald with family driving his 'sale's car' published in *Strix* in 1924.

Himself a Jew born in Berlin who came to Sweden during World War II, Herrmanns had personal experiences as a Jew in Sweden and hardly had any anti-Semitic intentions, although he describes Grünewald as different. Herrmanns also described the massive anti-Semitic attacks against Grünewald, several of them not known to the public before. In Herrmanns' characterisation of the artist, he never seems to have felt as if he was truly accepted as a Swede. However, even though he seemed to look upon himself as a foreigner in his own country and was deeply affected by the persecution of Jews in Europe, taking an anti-Nazi position, Herrmanns gives the impression that on a personal level, Grünewald did not seem to be all that bothered by contemporary anti-Semitism. It is a highly arrogant and self-centred Grünewald, resembling the classical *merchant Jew*, described by Herrmanns in his novel – in other words, a highly stereotypical representation.

My understanding of both Arvidsson and Herrmanns is ambivalent. Reading these texts today in 2019, it is difficult to overlook the similarities between their descriptions of Grünewald's volatile temperament and financially savvy strategies for promoting his art and the anti-Semitically influenced descriptions of him from the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s. While these two authors are the first to openly discuss the anti-Semitic attacks on Grünewald, they also clearly emphasise several anti-Semitic preconceptions regarding the artist. Nonetheless, there is clearly a fundamental difference in terms of intentions and the two authors clearly disassociate themselves from the anti-Semitic attacks on the artist.

The texts by Hodin, Arvidsson and Herrmanns also have to be considered in relation to when they were written. Unreflective everyday anti-Semitism and racialism were seen in a completely different light after World War II, and we can see a general tendency away from the kind of rhetoric earlier used by, for example, Brunius, Strömbom and Warnod. Still, the characterisation of Grünewald remains almost the same and the allo-Semitic perspective clearly reveals itself when the former authors describe Grünewald as different. Although Arvidsson and Herrmanns describe the numerous anti-Semitic attacks on Grünewald, my analysis of Arvidsson's articles indicates that the existence of anti-Semitism as a visual discourse still appears to be a blind spot.⁷⁴

Herrmanns's novel and Wahlgren's dual biography are not only separated by 27 years but also by a shift in people's attitudes with regard to Grünewald, which is closely associated with a growing interest in his first wife Sigrid Hjertén. In the earlier texts on Grünewald by Strömbom, Nilsson and Hodin, she is introduced as an important companion to the artist during the 1910s.⁷⁵ They are described as an artist couple, working together and providing each other with both criticism and support. From the 1920s

onwards, however, she plays a rather marginal role in these biographical outlines and Hjertén's mental health issues are seldom mentioned. Since it is a dual biography, things obviously look different in Wahlgren's book. He follows the lives of both artists, from the beginning to the end. Although Wahlgren presents his book as the result of years of research and archival studies, his use of quotes from newspapers, books and letters are interwoven with a heavily dramatized narration without any reliable reference system. Wahlgren frequently returns to the anti-Semitic attacks on Grünewald and gives numerous examples from the artist's early years up until the end of his life.⁷⁶ These numerous examples definitely serve to describe the artist couple in relation to the outspread racialism, racism and anti-Semitism of Swedish society. At the same time, Wahlgren's characterisation of Grünewald is essentially the same. He is a vital, provocative and dominant person, and a particular emphasis is placed on his business acumen. In the very first sentences of the book, Wahlgren establishes a perception of Grünewald as a savvy self-promoter.

"TODAY, MR. AND MRS. GRÜNEWALD WILL OPEN an exhibition at Hallins art gallery", it said below a small portrait of Sigrid Hjertén and Isaac Grünewald in *Dagens Nyheter* on April 12, 1913. Isaac had understood the importance of marketing early on. That is why he drew himself and his wife in profile.⁷⁷



The small drawing discussed by Anders Wahlgren in the first sentences of his book *Sigrid & Isaac* (2007) was reproduced on the cover of the first edition of the book.

Without any basis in fact or argumentation, Wahlgren identifies a small drawing over a brief unsigned article informing readers about the opening of the artist couple's exhibition as being a marketing strategy (essentially an advertisement) arranged by Grünewald. Wahlgren cannot resist describing Grünewald as an excellent adman, a characterisation to which he frequently returns.⁷⁸ Since he seems to be completely unaware of the fact that these kinds of characterisations of Grünewald are closely related to the anti-Semitic discourse, he never tries to explain them.⁷⁹ Thus, they become problematic in a fashion similar to the characterisations made in the texts by Arvidsson and Herrmanns. Artists (especially artists who were born into difficult circumstances) were dependent on the art market to make a living, and interactions between artists and the Swedish art market were both necessary and natural. All biographies of Grünewald more or less support the notion of him as an excellent self-promoter and adman; however, due to the close link between this characterisation and earlier anti-Semitic discourse, this is a difficult and delicate subject to discuss. Since the modernist art market was committed to progression within the avant-garde art field and art discourse, negative public reactions in relation to an artwork were considered proof of its quality and thus its (potential) symbolic value.⁸⁰ Ideologically, the avant-garde artist was not supposed to be interested in money, instead conforming to the artist's mythological role as an outsider, a revolutionary or a prophetic leader opposed to the bourgeoisie and rejected by the ignorant masses. Grünewald fits very well into this avant-garde mythology, with the one exception of his supposedly excellent skills when it came to self-promotion, a characterisation of the artist strongly supported by contemporary anti-Semitic preconceptions of him as a "Jewish artist." As we have seen in Wahlgren's biography, these circumstances, as well as the fact that these characterisations of him are primarily based on anecdotes, make it difficult to understand and analyse Grünewald's supposed gift for self-marketing.⁸¹

Although Grünewald's acumen for marketing, his fighting spirit and dominating behaviour are recurrent themes in every biographical narrative about the artist, these aspects gain another dimension in Wahlgren's book. Here, the artist's dominating behaviour is also part of his relationship with Hjertén. Even though Wahlgren clearly describes how important Hjertén was to Grünewald, being both his harshest critic and his strongest supporter, the stagnation of her own career is in part attributed to her dominating husband.⁸² Wahlgren's understanding of the relationship between the two artists is partially based on the characterisation presented in the book *I själen alltid ren* (1995) by novelist Goldman, which is based on the correspondence between the two artists. Similar changes in the description of their rela-

tionship can be found in introductory art history books from the end of the 20th century.⁸³ Generally speaking, we can see how the characterisation of Grünewald as a dominant person who needed to be at the centre of attention shifts its focus from the avant-garde art scene to the family life. It is my opinion that this change in perspective is motivated by an emerging trend toward feminist art history, but also that the negative characterisations of the artist, in these circumstances, have easily been made due to the earlier descriptions of Grünewald as a dominant and arrogant person. However, there exists very little empirical support for this characterisation and it appears that in the post-World War era, we have created a blind spot in our art historiography that has allowed earlier anecdotal (and often anti-Semitic) characterisations to become integrated into our *normal* art history. Consequently, the basic characterisations of Grünewald are subject to being reformulated and redirected into something completely different. This should be understood as being grounded in a structural phenomenon going back to the early academic institutionalisation of art history or, as described by Margaret Olin, “the voice of anti-Semitism was built into the language along with nationalism and became part of the structure of art history, even where anti-Semitism was not the object.”⁸⁴

I started out this article by presenting my disagreement with Gedin on the biographies written before his 2015 biography of Grünewald and that I find his biography as only marginally altering our understanding of Grünewald. However, there are of course differences between Gedin’s biography and the earlier ones. Gedin’s book is clearly a reaction to the writing on Grünewald dating from the 1980s up until Wahlgren’s dual biography in 2007 and the changing understanding of Grünewald and Hjertén’s relationship. When reading Gedin’s book, it is obvious that he is attempting to present another image of this relationship. Although it is much more fully elaborated, his description of their relationship basically goes back to the first biographies, where their relationship is described as initially having been founded on a close friendship and as being fruitful and supportive when it came to their artistic careers, although their artistic ideas and temperaments differed significantly. In part due to Hjertén’s mental health issues, their relationship becomes increasingly problematic, where Grünewald’s dominating behaviour has been toned down in Gedin’s narrative. Gedin also more clearly than before tries to establish Grünewald within an international context in an attempt to strengthen his position as an avant-garde artist, which is a typical modernist strategy of canonisation by association.⁸⁵ Although I think Gedin manages to avoid falling into the most obvious traps of the stereotypes linked to Grünewald, his characterization basically remains the same as in earlier biographies – characterisations that have never been

challenged empirically. Furthermore, Gedin does not enter into a detailed discussion regarding Grünewald's Jewishness and its importance for his artistic achievement.⁸⁶

The Jewish artist

In the background of these biographical narratives, I see an ambivalent attitude with regard to Grünewald and his Jewishness. It seems as if all biographers try, but never manage, to understand Grünewald in the Swedish art world and Swedish society as occupying one single homogeneous position. Even though this critique has much to do with the fact that we are dealing with biographies and their inherent structure, this is still problematic. Grünewald's Jewishness is primarily understood in a rather simplified manner, as a self-evident part of his identification. His Jewishness also functions as an explanatory factor as to why he was subjected to so many anti-Semitic attacks. I have described anti-Semitic rhetoric and racialism as explicitly incorporated in the early biographies; however, my aim is not to identify anti-Semites, but rather to understand the construction of Grünewald's identity. In the early reception of his work, we can see the rhetoric as part of an everyday anti-Semitism and racialism that was prevalent in the early 20th century, but not in the same way as when it comes to the later texts, although Grünewald is always characterised as *different*. Although it can be questioned whether any pure racialism exists, free of a normative hierarchy, racialism and allo-Semitism make it easier to understand not only the existence of anti-Semitic rhetoric within this historiography, but also the biographers' difficulties in terms of identifying anti-Semitic expressions in their source material, not the least as a visual discourse. In the historiography of Grünewald, this ambivalent attitude is evident in the historiographers' relationship to the artist and their understanding of him; their inherent allo-Semitism makes it difficult for them to define Grünewald's place in Swedish art history and society.⁸⁷

There is also an important difference between the earlier texts on the subject of Grünewald, such as those penned by Warnod and Strömbom, and those written after his death. Although Strömbom and Warnod clearly make use of a racial rhetoric, they seem to be interested in Grünewald's self-identification as a Jew and the consequences of this for his artistic production. This is most clearly stated in a passage by Strömbom quoted above, in which he compares Grünewald to Josephson and anticipates something more genuinely Jewish from Grünewald.⁸⁸ In Strömbom's text, we encounter an attempt to understand the intersection between a personal and cultural Jewish identity. In later biographies in which the racial rhetoric is replaced

by a socio-psychological explanation, the reference point solely becomes the Jewish cultural identity, which is presented as something impersonal and homogeneous or static. This resembles Stuart Hall's first definition of cultural identity as "[...] one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common."⁸⁹ However, Hall continues and presents a second definition that

recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute "what we really are"; or rather – since history has intervened – "what we have become". [...] Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as the past. [...] Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power.⁹⁰

This "play of history" is what I have partly managed to describe when analysing these biographies. However, from the perspective of a biographer, we have never entered into an understanding of Grünewald from this second point of view. The ambivalence has been ours and not Grünewald's. It is rooted in our urge to assign to the artist a single, essential identity and one specific place in art history rather than recognising the complexities of identity. There have been no serious attempts to understand Grünewald's Jewish self-identification, nor to relate his experience as a Jew living in an anti-Semitic society to his *becoming* as well as to his *being* as a person. From this point of view, we still seem to have a blind spot. If Grünewald's Jewishness is important for our understanding of him beyond the obvious, we not only need to apply a much more differentiated understanding of identity, but also to be open to its different forms of representation. Even though we can hardly ignore anti-Semitism as a visual discourse, we have, for example, not yet recognised the possibility of Grünewald's art as part of his identity process as a publicly known artist.

He himself certainly negotiated this process of identity-building as part of his artistic achievement, not the least prevalent in his numerous self-portraits and portraits of other Jews and artists. According to Catherine M. Soussloff, portraiture is closely intertwined with identity: "Portraiture describes identity, the 'who', perhaps better than any other visual genre. Through both its material instantiation and the actions around it portraiture invokes identity."⁹¹ The "who" in the portraiture should not be conflated with an essential or categorical identity but a *relational identification* – a process and negotiation.⁹² In other words, if we want to contribute to the

understanding of Grünewald's identity, we have to choose a perspective – which part of his relational identification to describe. Even though I do not think we can reach Isaac Grünewald's identity, I do think that we here have the opportunity to analyze his negotiation in relation to an anti-Semitic society in his identity process as an artist – an analysis yet to be performed. A discussion on this subject is not only entirely within our grasp. It is also essential, lest we otherwise continue to get lost in the ongoing, ambivalent historiography of Grünewald.

Sammanfattning

I artikeln analyseras historieskrivningen om den svenska konstnären Isaac Grünewald (1889–1946) med särskilt fokus på antisemitiskt grundade föreställningar om honom. Undersökningen utgår huvudsakligen från publicerade biografiska framställningarna som dels beskriver hans karaktär, dels positionerar honom inom den svenska modernistiska konsthistorien. I analyserna lyfts de i materialet återkommande föreställningarna om honom som ett orientaliskt, judiskt och främmande element i den svenska konstvärlden fram, liksom beskrivningarna av honom som en person med ett våldsamt temperament med ett behov av att vara i centrum. Dessa beskrivningar av Grünewald analyseras i relation till såväl rasialism som antisemitism och socialpsykologisk förståelse. Även om de antisemitiskt och/eller rasistiskt färgade utsagorna mer eller mindre raderats ut i senare biografiska framställningar så påvisas det i artikeln att de grundläggande värderingarna och karaktäristiken av Grünewald kvarstår. I artikeln argumenteras det för att dessa biografiska framställningarna domineras av en allosemittisk attityd som behöver mötas upp med en betydligt mer mångfasetterad förståelse av identitet som ett möte mellan en personlig och en kulturell judisk identifikation i en relationell process av vad Stuart Hall kallar ett *becoming* såväl som ett *being*.

Notes

- 1 The research behind this article was carried out within the research project “The Jewish Modernist: Anti-Semitism, Self-Identification and the Historiography of Swedish Modernism”, which has received support of The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences.
- 2 “någon monografi över hans konstnärliga verk eller en bredare biografi över honom som konstnär och människa.” Per I. Gedin, *Isaac Grünewald: Modernist och människa*, Stockholm 2015, p. 10.
- 3 The series is presented by Gedin as “the final recognition of an artist's work”, Gedin 2015, p. 10. I would say that this statement is partly true, but it is important to keep in

- mind that there are numerous Swedish artists with a prominent position within our art historiography yet to be represented in the series, not least several influential female artists.
- 4 “[S]krivits om Isaac Grünewald ger i huvudsak en ganska ensidig bild av en osedvanligt begåvad person, som redan tidigt började måla och som blev alltmer framgångsrik. Han framställs framförallt som kolorist och som en positiv människa med stor livsaptit”. Gedin 2015, p. 12.
 - 5 Lena Johansson, “‘Schene Rariteten’. Antisemitisk bildagitation i svensk rabulistpress 1845–1860”, in *Judiskt liv i Norden*, Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom & Mattias Tydén (eds.), Uppsala 1988.
 - 6 See, for instance, Henrik Bachner, “Judefrågan”. *Debatt om antisemitism i 1930-talets Sverige*, Stockholm 2009; Lena Berggren, *Nationell upplysning. Drag i den svenska antisemitismens idéhistoria*, Stockholm 1999; Henrik Rosengren, “*Judarnas Wagner*”. *Moses Pergament och den kulturella identifikationens dilemma omkring 1920–1950*, Lund 2007.
 - 7 Lars M Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude... Representationer av ”juden” i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900–1930*, Lund 2000.
 - 8 For a thorough analysis of anti-Semitic rhetoric in the Swedish comic press from 1900 to 1930, with a section about Grünewald, see Andersson 200, pp 368–410. For an analysis of anti-Semitism in what was most likely the most important critical debate involving Grünewald as a primary figure, the 1913–1914 debate regarding the decoration of the Civil Marriage Chamber of the Stockholm City Law Courts, see Ludwig Qvarnström, *Vigselrummet i Stockholms rådhus och det tidiga 1900-talets monumentalmåleri. Historia, reception, historiografi*, Uppsala 2010, pp 212–235. Grünewald’s grandson, Bernhard Grünewald, has assembled an extensive collection of anti-Semitic expressions in the Swedish press from 1909–1946 in his book *Orientalen. Bilden av Isaac Grünewald i svensk press 1909–1946*, Stockholm 2011. None of these studies enters into an analysis of the importance of anti-Semitism as part of a positive art criticism or as part of *normal* and established art history. One exception in the field of study is an in-depth case study of the anti-Semitic rhetoric in the first art history handbook on early Swedish Modernism, see Ludwig Qvarnström, “The Jewish Modernist: Isaac Grünewald in Bertel Hintze’s Art History”, *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 15, Dec. 2016.
 - 9 One example is Michael Berkowitz, *The Jewish self-image in the West*, New York 2000, where he analyses modern Jewish iconography.
 - 10 Linda Nochlin & Tamar Garb (eds.), *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, London 1995; Catherine M. Soussloff (ed.), *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, Berkeley 1999.
 - 11 For a discussion on these different biographical genres, see Eva Österberg, “Indviden i historien. En (o)möjlighet mellan Sartre och Foucault”, in *Det roliga börjar hela tiden. Bokförläggare Kjell Peterson 60 år den 20 december 1996*, Stockholm 1996, p. 326.
 - 12 Stuart Hall, “Cultural identity and diasporas”, in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, J. Rutherford (ed.), London 1990, p. 222.
 - 13 David Theo Goldberg & Michael Krausz (eds.), “Introduction: The Culture of identity”, in *Jewish Identity*, Philadelphia 1993, p. 1.
 - 14 My understanding of the biographical genre as fiction goes back to the thinking of Michel Foucault; however, here I more directly refer to Hayden White, “The Value of Narrative in the Representation of Reality”, in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore 1987, pp 1–25.
 - 15 This critical historiographical perspective originates from the writings of Michel Foucault and especially “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire”, *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, Paris

- 1971, English translation "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow (ed.), New York 1984, pp 76–100.
- 16 Helen Fein, "Dimensions of Antisemitism: Attitudes, Collective Accusations, and Actions", in *The Persisting Question: Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Antisemitism*, Helen Fein (ed.), Berlin and New York 1987, p. 67.
- 17 Andersson 2000, p. 14.
- 18 John C. G. Röhl, *The Kaiser and his Court. Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany*, Cambridge 1994, p. 194 f.; Andersson 2000, p. 17. Andersson uses Röhl's term "salon anti-Semitism" [salongsantisemitism]. Another similar term, "the anti-Semitic background noise [antisemitiska bakgrundsbruset]", is used in Swedish research; see, for example, Karin Kvist Gevert in *Ett främmande element i nationen. Svensk flyktingpolitik och de judiska flyktingarna 1938–1944*, Diss., Uppsala 2008. Nevertheless, I prefer the term "everyday anti-Semitism" [vardagsantisemitism] originating from Moshe Zimmerman and used in a Swedish context by Henrik Rosengren in Rosengren 2007, p. 59.
- 19 This is similar to the function of an atlas, as described by Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison in *Objectivity*, New York 2007, pp 23–26.
- 20 Qvarnström 2010, pp 153–250; on nationalism and anti-Semitism, see pp 212–235.
- 21 August Brunius, "1909 års män. Den nya linien i svensk målarkonst", *Vintergatan*, Sveriges författareförenings jultidning 1922, pp 39–47.
- 22 The expression "The Men of 1909" has become widespread and indicates 1909 as a year of important artistic significance, when young artists broke with the old guard. However, in terms of modernist artists clearly breaking with the earlier national romantic generation, the following exhibition of 1910 provides a much more appropriate and clearer delineation.
- 23 "Grünwald har en osvensk eld och snabbhet, han är idéernas mer än idéns man, skapt till talesman och stridsman, praktiskt huvud och våldsamt temperament. Det exotiska i hans väsen och yttre och den pojaktiga och, trots allt, stockholmska gåpåartonen ha gjort honom till skottalva för den stora publikens djupt rotade ovilja mot den typiske konstnären. Han har tidigt kommit att stå som inkarnation av det fräckt nymodiga i den moderna konsten – detta till föregelse för hans kamrater som icke velat medge att hans konstnärliga betydenhet motiverar denna centrala ställning; de glömma, att om han fått den mesta ryktbarheten har han också fått det mesta ovettet på sin lott", Brunius 1922, pp 44–45.
- 24 For a discussion on the Jewish body, see Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, New York and London 1991.
- 25 Fein 1987, p. 72.
- 26 "Son art a un caractère particulier, dû au tempérament du peintre et aussi au fait que sa personnalité est faite de deux éléments essentiellement différents, venus, l'un de Scandinavie et l'autre d'Orient.", André Warnod, *Grünwald: L'homme et l'œuvre*, Paris 1928, p. 7.
- 27 Warnod 1928, p. 10.
- 28 "[D]'une sensibilité plus profonde, plus nuancée, romantique même parfois, plus trouble, plus sensuelle, et qui vient d'un Orient voluptueux", Warnod 1928, p. 11.
- 29 Warnod 1928, p. 11.
- 30 Margaret Olin, *The Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses on Jewish Art*, London 2001, p. 12.
- 31 Robert S. Nelson, "The Map of Art History", *Art Bulletin*, 79:1, 1997; Mitchell Schwartz, "Origins of the Art History Survey Text", *Art Journal*, 54:3, 1995.
- 32 Qvarnström 2016.

- 33 Zygmunt Bauman, "Allo-Semitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern", in *Modernity, Culture and "the Jew"*, Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds.), Cambridge 1998, p. 143.
- 34 Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Racism", in *Anatomy of Racism*, David Theo Goldberg (ed.), Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press 1990, pp 4–5.
- 35 Appiah 1990, p. 5.
- 36 August Brunius position as one of, or perhaps *the*, most important art critic in early 20th century Sweden was consolidated in Gösta Lilja's dissertation *Det moderna måleriet i svensk kritik 1905–1914*, Malmö 1955, followed up in Bengt Lärkner's dissertation, *Det internationella avantgardet och Sverige 1914–1925*, Malmö 1984 and Catharina Elsner's dissertation *Expressionismens framväxt. August Brunius skriver om konst 1904–1913*, Stockholm 1993. Anti-Semitism or anti-Semitic rhetoric are not brought up in any of these dissertations.
- 37 The editorial board of the series consisted of artists Isaac Grünewald, Nils Sjögren, Otte Sköld and Birger Simonsson, all of them professors at the art academy, in addition to art historian Sixten Strömbom.
- 38 Gedin 2015, p. 11. In a letter from Tor Bonnier to Grünewald dated January 28, 1944, he criticises Hodin's language and asks for a new revised version. However, it seems as if they did not continue collaborating on the book, since it was later published by the Ljus publishing house. There is a transcript of the letter in Isaac Grünewald's Archive I, 3b:2, Riksarkivet, Stockholm. There are also two versions of Hodin's manuscript in the archive (from 1948 and 1949), with corrections probably made by Isaac's son Iván Grünewald, which implies that he read and approved the manuscript prior to its publication, 5d:1.
- 39 Lee Sorensen (ed.), "Hodin, J[osef] P[aul]", *Dictionary of Art Historians* (website), <https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/hodinj.htm> (retrieved Dec. 7, 2016).
- 40 Josef P. Hodin, *Isaac Grünewald*, Stockholm 1949, p. 11.
- 41 In 1944, he married Brita Palme, who was previously married to Iván Grünewald, son of Isaac Grünewald. Paul Harnesk (ed.), *Vem är Vem? 1, Stor-Stockholm*, 2nd edition, Stockholm 1962, p 960.
- 42 *Isaac Grünewald 1889–1946: Stockholm 7 febr. – 1 mars 1959*, Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna, Stockholm 1959.
- 43 Isaac Grünewald, *Isaac har ordet. Föredrag och uppsatser*, Stockholm 1959, with foreword by Karl Axel Arvidsson.
- 44 Karl Axel Arvidsson, "Isaac – den store livsnjutaren", *Veckojournalen* 1959:16; "Isaac Grünewalds liv II. Skjortan hans första målarduk", 1959:17; "Isaac Grünewalds liv III. Svältkonstnären", 1959:18; "Isaac Grünewalds liv IV. Isaac chockerar", 1959:19; "Isaac Grünewalds liv V. Vad den karlen var fantastisk", 1959:20.
- 45 Ralph Herrmanns, *En fest för ögat. Romanen om Isaac Grünewald*, Stockholm 1980.
- 46 Herrmanns has stated that he based his book on several interviews with Grünewald's students, his son Björn Grünewald and his sister Berthe Grünewald; telephone conversation Dec. 15, 2016.
- 47 See, for instance, Elisabet Haglund, *Sigrid Hjertén*, Stockholm 1985; Katarina Borgh Bertorp & Lollo Fogelström (ed.), *Sigrid Hjertén*, Stockholm 1995.
- 48 Anita Goldman, *I själen alltid ren. Om Sigrid Hjertén*, Stockholm 1995.
- 49 Anders Wahlgren, *Sigrid & Isaac*, Stockholm 2007. Since Wahlgren's book grew out of his work on the documentary with the same title, I base my analysis on the book rather than the film.
- 50 Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri*, 1550 and expanded in 1568.

- 51 Ernst Kris & Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*, transl. Alastair Laing and revised by Lottie M. Newman, New Haven & London 1979 [1934]. As Catherine M. Soussloff writes, Kris and Kurz' book "provides the first and only theory of the figure of the artist in culture." Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*, Minneapolis 1997, p. 94. Soussloff's contribution is a thorough analysis of the concept of the "artist" and the biography as crucial for the formation of art history. She further demonstrates the earliest and most persisting elements of biography, the "artist anecdote", as essential in the construction of the figure of the artist.
- 52 Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow (ed.), New York 1984.
- 53 Kris & Kurz 1979, p. 11.
- 54 See, for instance, Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, London 1990 [1959].
- 55 Although several of the biographical texts discussed in this article use some kind of reference system, none of them has gone through a proper peer-review process. Hence, these texts belong to the realm of the popular scientific discourse. However, since the majority of what has been published about Grünewald belongs to this category, and since several of the texts discussed here are often used as references in academic texts, they certainly play an important role in the general understanding of Grünewald.
- 56 "Det krävs intet större skarpsinne för att tolka publikens häftiga reaktioner inför Grünewald: svenskens ilska eller förtjusning över det utpräglat främmande temperamentet, som blommar i ohämmad självhävdelse. Det vore också lika onödigt att för svenska folket påpeka Grünewalds judiska börd som att Stockholms stadion är tämligen röd till färgen", Sixten Strömbom, *Isaac Grünewald*, Stockholm 1934, p. 4.
- 57 "Redan i sin tidiga ungdom har Grünewald moraliskt och konstnärligt tagit stöd i sitt rasmedvetande. Och bilden av hans konst och personlighet är i sin helhet ett lysande prov på hur rikt det semitiska psyket kan utveckla sig i svensk miljö", Strömbom 1934, p. 4.
- 58 In the early 1930s, there was an intense debate among Jews regarding different approaches to assimilation. For instance, Grünewald was criticised by other Jews for being too publicly visible as a Jew and was advised to focus on his contributions to Swedish culture and to think of himself first and foremost as a Swedish citizen. One example of this attitude is expressed in a letter to Grünewald from Wilhelm Josephson April 22, 1933, Isaac Grünewald's Archive I, 3b:7, Riksarkivet, Stockholm.
- 59 Rita Bredefeldt, *Judiskt liv i Stockholm och Norden. Ekonomi, identitet och assimilering 1850–1930*, Stockholm 2008, pp 63–67.
- 60 "Allt det utåtvända och sensationella blev i längden dock ej nog för Grünewald. Lusten till sensuell stegring i en omätlig livskänsla och begäret efter rytmisk frihet förde honom efter hand till en källa av mörkare djup än Matisses konst. Han fann den i Ernst Josephsons verk från sjukdomstiden. I dem mötte han något mera hemlighetsfullt än den egna tidens röst – uttrycket för den egna rasens fantasiliv. Hur djupt han druckit ur denna källa, har Grünewald ännu inte röjt för oss; men att den verkat starkt befruktande på honom visar tydligt de orientalistiska drömbilder varmed han senare illustrerat Levertins "Kung Salomo och Morolf". Från djupet i dem klinga hans judiska hjärtas hemlandstoner.", Strömbom 1934, pp 17–18. Oscar Levertin (1862–1906) was a Jewish poet, leading critic and literary historian of the late 19th century.
- 61 Margaret Olin, "From Bezal'el to Max Liebermann: Jewish Art in Nineteenth-century

- Art–Historical Texts”, in *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, Catherine M. Soussloff (ed.), Berkeley 1999. See also Olin 2001.
- 62 “[H]ans vitalitet, vältalighet och slagkraftiga replik gjorde honom utomordentligt väl ägnad att föra sin egen och expressionismens talan. [...] Isaacs polemiska talang i förening med hans magnifika temperament skaffade honom givetvis både vänner och fiender.”, Tage Nilsson, *Isaac Grünewald*, Stockholm 1949, p. 12–13.
- 63 Hodin 1949, for example p. 65, 144.
- 64 “Om han ärvt sitt sinne för det vackra och poetiska från fadern, så hade han modern att tacka för sin livsbejakande vitalitet, tron på sin egen kraft och en humor, som var karakteristisk för henne och som hjälpte henne genom livets svårigheter.”, Hodin 1949, p. 15.
- 65 Hodin 1949, p. 194.
- 66 Soussloff 1997, pp 131–137. See also Soussloff 1999.
- 67 Arvidsson 1959:16, p. 31.
- 68 Arvidsson 1959:18, p. 41.
- 69 “Grünewalds barndoms hem på Söder i Stockholm hade en helt östjudisk prägel och hans assimilation till det svenska samhället, som på den tiden inte saknade antisemitiska drag, skapade utan tvivel hos honom en arrogans, som utmanade”. Karl Axel Arvidsson’s foreword in Isaac Grünewald, *Isaac har ordet. Föredrag och uppsatser*, Stockholm 1959, p. VII.
- 70 “Ända från sin debut [...] till sin död [...] stod Isaac Grünewald i centrum för det svenska konstlivet. Inte genom sin produktion, men på grund av sin vitalitet, sin oräddhet, sin frikostighet med sig själv. I sin outtröttliga och ovärderliga kamp för expressionistisk konst satsade han hela sin person. Penseln var hans trollstav, som han väl ibland förleddes att göra några alltför enkla tricks med, men pennan var alltid hans smidiga florett”, Arvidsson 1959, p. VII.
- 71 Andersson 2000, p. 412.
- 72 See the illustrations in Arvidsson 1959:16 p. 32, 33; 1959:19, p. 28. Lars M Andersson has documented these kinds of anti-Semitic caricatures in his dissertation, Andersson 2000. For a discussion on anti-Semitic preconceptions regarding the Jewish body, see Gilman 1991, pp 38–59, 169–193.
- 73 “Isaac hade ett kardinalfel: han var för stor i käften. Dessutom kunde han aldrig hålla tyst. Även om han egentligen inget hade att säga eller inget borde säga rann orden ur honom. Han var överlägset ointresserad av andra levande svenska konstnärer. Om han alls nämnde dem var det i allmänhet avfärdande eller pikande. Isaac Grünewald skulle stå i centrum: om honom skulle det ordas. Den som ordade mest var Isaac själv”, Herrmanns 1980, p. 42.
- 74 In Gösta Lilja’s dissertation as well, we can in a similar way find several uncommented anti-Semitic caricatures of Grünewald, Lilja 1955.
- 75 Strömbom 1934, p. 12; Nilsson, p. 11; Hodin 1949, p. 63, 70.
- 76 Wahlgren 2007, p. 26, 59 f., 63, 106 f., 114 f., 134, 164 f., 180 f., 247, 278 f., 290 f., 342 f. Although Wahlgren never mentions it, several important studies on Swedish anti-Semitism had been published the decade prior to his book. I especially think of Lars M Andersson’s dissertation where several of the examples mentioned by Wahlgren are described, Andersson 2000.
- 77 Wahlgren 2007, p. 9.
- 78 Wahlgren 2007, p. 9, 33, 199, 248, 345.
- 79 The drawing by Grünewald discussed by Wahlgren in the first sentences of his book was on the cover of the first edition of Anders Wahlgren’s book. In the second edition,

- he had to replace the drawing with a photograph of Isaac and Sigrid due to a conflict with the Grünewald family, who refused to give him permission to publish the drawing. This conflict was fuelled by disagreements concerning the author's understanding of who Isaac was and concerning Wahlgren's use of references. Mimmi Fristorp, "Bok om Hjertén och Grünewald stoppas", *Dagens Nyheter*, December 19, 2008.
- 80 As described by Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, translated by Susan Emanuel, Cambridge 1996.
- 81 We can see similar difficulties in challenging and bypassing this established narrative in Andrea Kollnitz' attempt to analyse Grünewald's self-marketing in an article from 2012. Andrea Kollnitz, "Promoting the Young – Interactions Between the Avant-garde and the Swedish Art Market 1910–1925", in *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1900–1925*, Hubert van den Berg (ed.), Amsterdam 2012, pp 275–290.
- 82 Wahlgren 2007, p. 33, 36, 73, 81, 117, 205, 261, 300, 306.
- 83 Elisabeth Lidén, *Sveriges konst 1900-talet. Part 1, 1900–1947*, Stockholm 1999, p. 42; Folke Edwards, *Från modernism till postmodernism. Svensk konst 1900–2000*, Lund 2000, p. 47. See also Shulamith Behr, "Modernity, Family and Fashion: Performative Strategies and the Artist Couple Sigrid Hjertén and Isaac Grünewald", in *Sigrid & Isaac. Modernismens pionjärer*, Birgitta Flensburg (ed.), Norrköping 2002.
- 84 Olin 1999, p. 30.
- 85 For an analysis of this kind of narrative strategy, but in relation to Swedish art historical handbooks, see Jeff Werner, "Turnpikes and Blind Alleys: Modernism from the Perspective of the Provinces", in *Utopia & Reality: Modernity in Sweden 1900–1960*, Cecilia Widenheim (ed.), New Haven 2002.
- 86 However, Gedin is one of few who has done more than simply noting all the anti-Semitic attacks and enters into a discussion about Grünewald's Jewishness, although only briefly and never in relation to Grünewald's position as an avant-garde artist and his work. Gedin's discussion regarding Jewishness is the most explicit in a passage about the problems of Isaac and Sigrid's son Iván in the early 1930s. Gedin, 2015, pp 359–362.
- 87 This is not entirely surprising. According to Bauman, ambivalence is a normal phenomenon of linguistic practice and has its origins in one of the key functions of language: naming and classifying. Since the goal of rational modernity is to create a stable and symmetrical order within all its practices and areas of operation, every form of ambivalence represents a threat. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Oxford 1991.
- 88 Strömbom 1934, p. 18.
- 89 Hall 1990, p. 223.
- 90 Hall 1990, p. 225.
- 91 Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern*, London 2006, p. 23.
- 92 For a discussion on relational and categorical identification, see Roger Brubaker & Frederick Cooper, "Beyond "Identity"", *Theory and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, Feb. 2000, pp 14–15.