Elina Räsänen

14 Advocating, Converting, and Torturing: Images of Jews (and Muslimized Pagans) in the Kalanti Altarpiece

The painter known in modern scholarship as Meister Francke worked in the town of Hamburg in the early decades of the fifteenth century. Very little is known about the man and his craftsmanship, as only four works of art can be attributed to him or his workshop, and there are few, if any, documentary sources that can be connected to this master.¹ The most famous surviving work of art attributed to him is what is known in German research as the *Thomas-Retabel*, now in the Hamburger Kunsthalle. This altarpiece, which has not survived as a whole, consists of painted panels depicting the Life of Christ and Passion imagery, as well as the legend of Thomas Becket.²

The Kalanti altarpiece (*Barbara-Retabel*) is another of Meister Francke's major works. It was added to his *œuvre* in the 1910s, because it bears a clear stylistic similarity with the *Thomas-Retabel*.³ The Kalanti or Nykyrko (in Swedish) altarpiece is a pentaptych consisting of a corpus and two pairs of folding doors or wings: The sculpted central portion depicts the Marian themes of the Dormition and the Assumption, framed by four images on the doors: on the left, two scenes – Nativity and Circumcision; on the right, two miracles – the miracle that prevents an attempt by Jews to disrupt Mary's funeral and the

1 Because Meister Francke is considered as part of the canon of Northern European late medieval art, the very few remaining artworks attributed to him have been the subject of several art-historical contributions during the past one hundred years, the classic study being Martens 1929. See also the articles in the exhibition catalogue *Meister Francke und die Kunst um 1400*, 1969. For more recent contributions, see Camille 1998; Camille 2002; Grötecke 2007, 454–456. The papers presented at the *Meister Francke and the Arts in the Baltic Sea Region in the Fifteenth Century* conference (Helsinki, September 2013), co-organized by the author of this essay, offered several new scholarly ideas about and interpretations of Meister Francke and his work. The essay at hand does not discuss the historical accuracy of the construct known as 'Meister Francke', but instead uses the name for practical purposes.

2 Documentary information regarding its commission by the *Englandfahrer* dates the altarpiece to 1424–1436. Today, it is exhibited as nine separate panels; one of the panels being a corner piece of the once larger Crucifixion scene. On the *Thomas-Retabel*, see Martens 1929, especially 21–39; Leppien 1992; Sitt 2008.

3 The first to attribute the panels to the 'Meister Francke circle' was the Finnish art historian Karl Konrad Meinander (1908, 157–177), and to the painter himself, Adolph Goldschmidt, some years later (1915).

Fig. 17: The Kalanti altarpiece, c. 1420, second view with the Marian images. Dormition and Coronation in the centre; left wing: the Nativity and the Circumcision; right wing: the Jews attacking the funeral of the Virgin and the legend of Theophilus. By the kind permission of the National Museum of Finland.

legend of Mary's intercession on behalf of Theophilus (fig. 17). The outer sides of the inner shutters, that is, the reverse sides of the above mentioned motifs on the doors, and the inner sides of the outer shutters, in turn, portray the martyrdom legend of St. Barbara, one of the four *virgines capitales* and an immensely popular virgin saint of the Late Middle Ages.

This altarpiece, which has been part of the collection of the National Museum of Finland, in Helsinki, since 1903, has received regular, albeit sporadic, scholarly attention over the past hundred years.⁴ This essay will approach the altarpiece from a hitherto unexplored angle – it will focus on the representations of Jews, discernable in multifarious ways, and asks how this imagery, both directly displayed as well as indicated by the visualized stories, evokes

⁴ These include Pylkkänen 1966; Stewen 1995; Liepe 2003; Mills 2005, 106–144; Räsänen 2006; Räsänen and Valkeapää 2014.

discourses about Jews and Jewishness in the Christian narrative.⁵ It will suggest more nuanced iconographical interpretations inbuilt in the altarpiece, as the elements concerning (imagined) Jewishness, incorporated into the Marianic themes, are being illuminated. That Marianic piety was replete of anti-Jewish aspects, and indeed, that her cult played a significant role in the exclusion of Jews from Christian society in the Middle Ages underlies my approach.⁶ The essay also takes interest in the winged altarpiece as an object, clarifying the memorizing functions which its folding structure invites. I will begin by examining the Marian imagery and proposing that the altarpiece's motifs form a closely interlaced nexus of meaning that is intimately bound to the concept of virginity. I will then discuss the St. Barbara cycle, and its social and ethnic undercurrents, and will argue that one of her torturers has a 'Jewish' characterization. The essay will close with a historiographic glance at the art historians who have previously studied the altarpiece, and who experienced a new version of the anti-Jewish reaction, an undertone that the altarpiece too echoes, in their own lives.

The representation of Jews on the Kalanti altarpiece has only been noted in connection with the sculpted relief that depicts the assault by the Jews – the miracle at the Virgin's funeral – and solely on a purely descriptive level. In his 1908 dissertation, K. K. Meinander, who was the first to properly study the altarpiece, identified the motif and provided a brief summary of the legend.⁷ This portion of the altarpiece has subsequently rarely been mentioned due to the focus of the previous studies on the painted panels, treating the sculpted sections of the altarpiece as less appealing and inferior in their craftsmanship. Moreover, the scant interest that has existed towards the sculptures has concentrated on their relationship to Meister Francke's workshop.⁸ For example, in her massive two-volume monograph (1929) on Meister Francke, Bella

⁵ It is worth mentioning that the theme of Jewishness has shortly come up in connection with Meister Francke's *Thomas-Retabel*, because of the 'Jewish hat' detail of the Flagellation panel; see Martens 1929, 162–164. This issue requires an investigation of its own and will not be discussed in this essay. In general, the scholarship on the representation of Jews in medieval art is extensive; the more recent ones include Strickland 2003; Merback 2008; Hourihane 2009.

⁶ Shoemaker 1999, including the thorough bibliography.

⁷ Meinander 1908, 158.

⁸ Today it is generally agreed that the artist known as 'Meister Francke' was not a sculptor. Goldschmidt (1915) felt that the sculpted parts had been made in Francke's workshop under his guidance and according to his sketches; Habicht (1915) strongly supported the idea of Meister Francke himself as a sculptor, which Martens (1929, 42) later rejected. See also Nordman 1965, 323–326. The unsophisticated way in which the sculpted parts have been repainted during the modern era contributes to them being dismissed.

Martens only briefly mentions the motif of the Virgin's funeral and the actions of the Jews.⁹ In subsequent decades, knowledge of the motif seems to have declined, or otherwise been overshadowed, with it being named simply as an image from the Virgin's funeral and not as a specific example of Jews as protagonists whose actions are the issue at hand.¹⁰

Before addressing the actual topic of this essay, a few more words need to be said about the altarpiece. In spite of its relative fame, even the actual structural relationship between the sections of the altarpiece has at times been obscured – for the most part, this is due to misunderstandings caused by the removal of the sculpted parts from the painted panels in the 1920s – and even today it continues to be exhibited in this dismantled state.¹¹ The dating of the altarpiece remains slightly unresolved, but for the purposes of this essay, a dating of c. 1420–1430 will suffice.¹² It has not been established how or exactly when the altarpiece arrived at the Church of Kalanti, a stone structure from c. the 1440s in southwest Finland, which in medieval times formed the heartlands of the eastern part of the Swedish Realm – the discussion concerning the provenance of the altarpiece is, however, more than can be tackled here. The overall style of Meister Francke's paintings manifests what is generally known as international gothic or courtly style, with a notable Netherlandish influence.¹³ While the paintings accord with the style of Conrad von Soest, for example, as well as that of several unidentified masters of the early 1400s, the sculptures reflect the relatively usual craftsmanship typical of the Lübeck region.

This article places the art of Meister Francke and the anonymous sculptor(s) within the overall context of Western Christian Catholicism in Northern Europe, and not just that of a particular church or city. Yet, concentrating on

⁹ Martens 1929, 43.

¹⁰ For example, see the 1969 catalogue (n. 1), 50. In her generally exhaustive study of Marian miracles in Finnish medieval wall-paintings, Helena Edgren (1993, 11) names one miracle, the story of Theophilus, portrayed on the Kalanti altarpiece and thus dismisses the miracle at Mary's funeral.

¹¹ Since the 1920s, the painted panels have been separated from the rest of the artwork. For the history of the conservation of the altarpiece, see Waismaa-Pietarila 1994; Reijonen 2011. Each panel measures approx. 91 × 54 cm, and the width of the entire altarpiece with the doors opened was 260 cm. On the importance of the material knowledge behind the interpretations of this altarpiece, see Lahti and Räsänen 2008.

¹² The St. Barbara panels have previously (Martens 1929, especially 129) been dated to as early as the 1410s, partly on the basis of stylistic analysis. Meinander (1908, 177) dated the altarpiece to 1425–1450, and Brigitte Corley (1996, 156) has suggested a dating of 1420.

¹³ See, for example, Martens 1929, *passim*; Panofsky 1953, 70–71, 123–126; Corley 1996, 152–156; Stewen 1995.

the specific altarpiece and its interpretation, the article will mainly focus on the area where the altarpiece was materially present. Most likely there were no Jewish settlements in that area at the time, which, of course, does not mean that people had not had passing contact with Jewish merchants, doctors, etc. in their hometowns or when travelling. Nevertheless, the existence of Jewish communities in the area is not a central issue in the approach taken here, because Jewishness was abundantly represented in both the visual domain of art as well as in the tales they visualized.

14.1 Attacking Mary – Questioning Virginit

The second opening of the altarpiece is typologically similar to many of the written legends of the saints: First, the events of the holy person's life on earth are narrated, followed by a presentation of the person's death, and finally, a listing of the *post mortem* miracles ends the account. In this case, the protagonist is the Virgin, so the compilation shows events that are crucial to Christianity. Succeeded by the two occasions in her life, namely the Nativity and the Circumcision, the altarpiece's centre scene presents the mourning apostles gathered around Mary's deathbed as well as the Coronation above, her splendid welcome in heaven: Surrounded by angels, Christ crowns his mother. The liminal state between life and the new life in heaven is followed by the two miracles on the right doors. At the moment of Virgin's death, young John, holding Mary's hand, has leant over to close her eyes. A second apostle is lighting a new long candle from the stub of a previous one, while a third is blowing smoke from the censor. It can be deduced from the customary curly hair and short beard that the figure on the right with a somewhat extravagant brooch on his chest is St. Peter. St. Paul, bald with a longish beard, stands opposite Peter holding a book. In the foreground, one apostle is removing a splinter from the sole of his foot and St. James the Great wearily leans his head on his hand, pilgrim's hat flipped to the neck.

The scene of Mary's passing from the world belongs to a large body of events illustrating the post-Crucifixion period in her life. Based on the dating of the earliest text fragments, it appears that interest in this epoch began to increase in the early fifth century.¹⁴ During the subsequent centuries, the stories were included in such widespread 'bestsellers' as *De gloria Martyrum* by Gregory of Tours (d. 594), Gautier de Coincy's *Miracles de Nostre Dame* (c. 1220)

¹⁴ See, for example, Shoemaker 2002, 25–37.

or *Speculum historiale* (1253) by Vincent of Beauvais, which were translated into many vernaculars and, in turn, inspired numerous later writers. After-life miracles, in which Mary intervenes from heaven in the most imaginative ways on the behalf of mankind, were extremely popular during the Late Middle Ages, providing sumptuous material for the visual and performing arts. Many of the miracle tales had Jews as protagonists; generally doubting and attacking Christian beliefs, but sometimes converting under Mary's sway.

The Marian section of the Kalanti altarpiece has altogether six scenes or images which can be deployed to different constellations, thereby multiplying their interpretative potential. To start with, the corpus, described above, and the miracles on the right door should be seen as a unit – the two miracles dealing with imaginary Jews are not 'independent' motifs, but ought to be understood as an integral part of the Assumption. The stories testifying to Mary's miracles – including those not directly linked to her funeral – followed the Assumption in miracle collections, homilies, and other scriptures, and were, in fact, read on that feast day.¹⁵ For example, the extremely widely read *Legenda aurea* (Golden Legend) by Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1230–1298) includes a list of six miracles under the rubric of the Assumption. Among these six miracles is the popular story of the Jewish Boy who took communion, for which his furious father threw him in the oven, with the Virgin interceding to save him.¹⁶ Even the very early Dormition or *transitus* traditions provide examples of miracles; the Jews attacking the Virgin, suffering divine retribution, and converting.¹⁷ Stephen J. Shoemaker has argued that the strong connection of the Dormition texts with anti-Judaism is rooted in the actual Late Antiquity disputes between Jews and Christians over the question of Mary's virginity, with certain rabbinic texts questioning her moral status.¹⁸ Hundreds of years after these debates, the image of the Jews hating and fearing Mary was very much alive in both literary and visual narratives.

The upper miracle image shows how the Jews caused a rampage at the Virgin's funeral, when they tried to overturn the coffin carried by the singing apostles. There are numerous versions of the tale, all of them similar at their core. *Legenda aurea* presents three slightly different versions of the event. In the first, the hands of the offender, the 'prince of priests' (often named as Jephonius), are withered, and in the second, arms are ripped away at the elbows.

¹⁵ Mâle 2000 [1899], 262.

¹⁶ Jacobus de Voragine 1993, 119–120; Rubin 1999 explores various versions of this tale in detail.

¹⁷ Shoemaker 1999, 2002.

¹⁸ Shoemaker 1999, especially 777.

According to the first story, “the populace was excited by such dulcet sound and melody, and came rushing out of the city to see what was going on [...] The chief priest, seeing what was happening, was astounded and filled with rage, and said: ‘Look at the tabernacle of the man who disturbed us and our people so much! Look at that glory that is now paid to the woman’”. After attempting to throw the body to the ground, “his hands were withered and stuck to the bier, so that he was hanging by his hands; and he moaned and cried in great pain”. He cried out for St. Peter to help him, and then, following the advice of Peter to kiss the bier and testify to his belief in Jesus Christ and the eternal virginity of Mary, he was instantly cured.¹⁹ The second version goes a bit further, both in regards to the physical punishment and the act of repentance: In this version, Peter orders the ‘culprit’ to kiss the eternal Virgin’s body. In the third version, one of the offender’s hands falls off like a dried branch, but when he puts his other hand on Mary’s body, he is cured and his hand is restored.²⁰

The episode at the funeral is depicted on the altarpiece not faithfully following any of the above versions, but as follows: A great number of apostles are carrying the coffin, with some of them behind it so that only the tops of their heads can be seen. A beardless apostle, John the Evangelist, leads the procession. After John comes Peter, who balances the bier on his left hand and is looking directly out at the viewers, with his right hand raised, as if to indicate that he is talking. Two bare-armed robust men are hanging onto the side of the coffin. Adolph Goldschmidt, a prominent medievalist who took an interest in the altarpiece in the 1910s, aptly remarked how the tumultuous activity of the armed men is effectively contrasted with the calmness and serenity of the apostles.²¹

John, at the front, originally held a palm branch in his hand – only the stem between his fingers still remains. This now lost detail has significant agency regarding the role of Jews in the story. In various text versions, Mary received a palm branch taken from the Tree of Life from the angel who announced her coming death, and then handed it to John, warning him of the Jews’ plans for her funeral.²² After the attack and the cure of Jephonius, Peter orders the convert to take the palm branch from John and use it to cure and convert the blinded Jews. The palm branch was a sign of virginity, correspond-

¹⁹ Jacobus de Voragine 1993, 81.

²⁰ Jacobus de Voragine 1993, 91–95.

²¹ Goldschmidt 1915, 18.

²² On the ‘Palm of the Tree of Life’ tradition, see Shoemaker 2002, 32–46. See also Hirn 1912, 418; Shoemaker 1999, 798.

ing with the lily of the Annunciation. Its central reference to virginity becomes apparent as the story unfolds. We quote here from Yrjö Hirn's early but still extremely useful study, *The Sacred Shrine*:

When Mary was about to be carried to her grave, a noble strife arose amongst the foremost disciples as to their precedence in the procession. John wished Peter, whom God had chosen as shepherd of His sheep, to walk before the bier with the angel's palm-branch in his hand; but Peter thought that this place was due to John, who had become Jesus' disciple while his body was still virginal. "It is most proper", he said, "that a virgin should bear the Virgin's palm"; and it was Peter's will that prevailed.²³

Hence, it was crucial to underline the virginity which the Jews denied and even ridiculed, and indeed with the very palm branch of virginity their blindness was swiped away.

Anthony Bale makes a remark worth noting about the way in which the Assumption and the interruption on the funeral are intertwined – the latter being an inversion of the former: "The Jews want to drag the body to the ground and burn its physical essence, whereas the Assumption shows the ascending spirit and soul of the Virgin".²⁴ This is underscored in the Kalanti altarpiece in a very visual way, because the Funeral is depicted at the same horizontal level as is the Coronation. Therefore, although the Dormition and the Coronation are customarily placed above each other in the same pictorial space (the corpus) on the altarpiece, and are thus today understood as parts of one 'picture', medieval viewers saw a connection between the Coronation and the scene next to it on the door, the attack at the funeral, too. Moreover, they also perceived a certain resonance with the Nativity scene on the left side, where Mary adorns her Son (the sculpted Infant Jesus has been lost). An image of the Birth of Christ was simultaneously a statement about the source of Mary's divinity, her virginity. There could be no Coronation without it, nor any reason for the fury of the Jews who feared the miraculous power of Mary's body. These three upper images of the altarpiece, the Nativity, the Coronation, and the Funeral are, then, tightly interconnected by the crucial theme of virginity.

In the funeral scene, the clothing of the men attacking the bier is not typically 'Jewish': They are portrayed as soldiers, with short uniforms and armour-like vestments. One of them has a large sword on his hip. The types of garments they are wearing are elucidated by the written sources – according to

²³ Hirn 1912, 425.

²⁴ Bale 2010, 95.

the *Legenda aurea*: “the chief priest sent a crowd armed with swords and clubs”.²⁵ The men’s hands are not severed; instead they seem to be stuck to the bier. The same motif in the stained glass window of St. Peter Mancroft in Norwich, England (built c. 1450), portrays the two offenders in armour, too; one hanging from the bier with his visor raised, the other having fallen down.²⁶ In many of the wall-paintings visualizing the incident in churches in Sweden, the attackers are not soldiers, but a crowd of clumsy jesters with very distinguishable caricatured Jewish facial features and profiles. Also in contrast to the Kalanti altarpiece, the hands being severed from the bodies of the attackers seem to have been a prominent detail. This is the case, for example, in the many churches painted by Hessen-born Albertus Pictor (c. 1444–c. 1507) and his workshop, such as those in Almunge, Täby, Vänge, and Dingtuna, all executed in the final decades of the fifteenth century.²⁷ (See fig. 18.)

There are multiple layers of meaning to the fact that it is hands that are the focus of the miracle. As Anthony Bale has aptly put it, “In a world in which gesture, in particular manual gestures and formal public gestures, were pre-eminent modes of communication, the Jew’s stuck or amputated hand was a potent symbol indeed”.²⁸ The relationship between the hand and doubt recalls a number of themes, including the hand of the midwife Salome, who dared to question Mary’s virginity – so here, again, the funeral image alludes to the image mirroring it from the other shutter, the Nativity. Furthermore, the way the Jew touches the bier and the body of Mary is a counter-image to the tactile aspect of the veneration of relics so central to devotional life in the Late Middle Ages. The viewers would identify the coffin with the reliquaries carried in pro-

²⁵ Jacobus de Voragine 1993, 91.

²⁶ The soldier still hanging onto the bier is dressed in a fine surcoat, while the man on the ground is wearing simple armour; given the particular way in which the first – who is also the one who, in the other window, converts – is portrayed, David King (2006, clxxxvi–clxxxvii, n. 401) suggests that he should be understood to be the ‘prince of priests’. The first man bears the arms of the Duke of Suffolk, obviously an enemy of Robert Toppes, the man who commissioned the window. This window offers a reading where Jewishness is minimized in favour of contemporary politics, but nonetheless is portrayed with negative connotations. The image appears on the church’s eastern window; see King 2006, clxxxi–clxxxvii, 73–75. For other examples of the motif in England, see Bale 2010, 96, n. 23.

²⁷ On Albertus Pictor, see Melin 2009; Karlsson 2009, 255–259. I am not aware of many sculpted versions of this miracle, but a rare example that shows the distinct influence of Albertus Pictor is carved onto the altarpiece of Kila Church (Västmanland, Sweden).

²⁸ Bale 2010, 115.

Fig. 18: *The Virgin's Funeral*. Wall-painting in the Täby church, Sweden, by Albertus Pictor, 1480s. (Photograph: Jonathan Adams)

cessions, and, because these precious objects were supposed to be touched devoutly, the image presents the Jews as the opposite of good and appropriate.²⁹

14.2 Circumcision and the Jewish advocate

Christ's Circumcision, below the Nativity on the left door, is a motif that itself underscores the Jewishness of both Christ and Mary. The event is mentioned as a matter of fact in Luke 2. 21: "And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb". Theologically, however, the essential point was the analogy with the Crucifixion: Christ shed his blood for the first time, not because he had to, but because he was willing to.³⁰ As is convincingly shown by Leo Steinberg, the connection between these two events was recognized in the visual arts by, for example, painting the blood from the crucified Christ's

²⁹ See Bale 2010, 95.

³⁰ Réau 1955–1959, II, 2, 257–258.

wound streaming into his genital area.³¹ The naked Christ Child was simultaneously always a suffering man, the Saviour, but also the Flesh, the host; in numerous stories people either see, or should not see the baby boy when receiving communion. This is what Sixten Ringbom has called 'polar thinking'; certain depictions embodied allusions to others.³² Crucifixion prefigured the Passion, but likewise it was interconnected with Mary's Purification, because the Virgin, spotless and thus without need for such action, agreed to be purified nonetheless.

On the Kalanti altarpiece, the high priest is holding the knife and standing on the right of the altar, opposite a man holding a baby still with both hands. The Christ Child is not in agony, but is resting peacefully on white linen. The party also includes the Virgin and Joseph, with two maidens in the background. Although sometimes Joseph is depicted as inferior to the Virgin and then comes across as a representative of the Old Law, in this case he stands on the similar level as his wife and the maidens. His Jewishness, then, is just as concealed as is that of the Virgin. The master of the workshop or those who ordered the work had the choice of rendering the Circumcision likening a Christian baptism with the high priest resembling a bishop with a mitre, or adhering to what was known about Jewish customs; a fairly rare example of the latter is found on wall-paintings in Denmark which show Christ Child sitting on the high priest's lap.³³ The high priest in the Kalanti altarpiece is not portrayed as a Christian bishop or as a priest, but neither does his attire directly suggest Jewishness – instead, he has a vaguely exotic look. His hood-like cap and his beard, combed into two swirling halves, both tipped with metal bulbs, are worth noting. It is appropriate to ask if there was a certain unwillingness to portray 'good' Jews, because rather than taking the approach of depicting the high priest as a Christian style bishop, an obscure and alien figure was presented.

During the fifteenth century controversial factors inscribed into the Circumcision motif seem to have become more pronounced: The faces of the priests wearing the gowns with the pseudo-Hebrew inscriptions became more unpleasant, and the whole atmosphere became more awkward, as is the case with the famous Master of the Tucher Altarpiece (c. 1450) in the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen. Perhaps they began more and more to incorporate

³¹ Steinberg 1996, 57–61, 168–171.

³² Ringbom 1965, especially 84.

³³ See Haastrup 2003, 350–353. On the paradoxical custom of portraying the Jewish high priests or officials with a mitre, see Mellinkoff 1987; Mellinkoff 1993, I, 82–89; Strickland 2011, 8.

Fig. 19: *The Legend of Theophilus*. Detail of the right wing of the Kalanti altarpiece, c. 1420. Photograph: author. Published by the kind permission of the National Museum of Finland.

the two regularly visualized and interconnected themes, both related to major accusations directed at the Jews. First, we have the desecration of the host, with men using large knives to chop up a communion wafer lying on a table. The other is the blood libel, an image of the ritual murder of a young Christian boy by the Jews.³⁴ Illustrations of these two motifs often carry similar elements and compositional features as does the Circumcision.

The legend of Theophilus is placed below the portion featuring the Virgin's funeral (fig. 19). To date, studies concerning the altarpiece have not been overly interested in the details of this story, and thus have neglected mentioning the existence of the Jewish character in it. This is nonetheless understandable as he is not pictured. Theophilus was a wealthy secular clerk working for the bishop of Cilicia in the sixth-century kingdom of Armenia. Embittered about losing his possessions, he seeks the assistance of a well-known Jewish sorcerer, and with the sorcerer's help, he enters into a legal contract with the devil. In the contract, he denies Christ and His Mother in order to regain his position and wealth, but he later regrets his actions. He begs for Mary's mercy, and she retrieves the contract from the devil, returning it to Theophilus, who, in front of the congregation, burns it, takes communion, and, three days later, dies peacefully. The story, a very early and famous example of Mary's intercessory

³⁴ For examples of these motifs, see e.g. Schreckenberg 1996; Rubin 1999.

powers, was probably translated from Greek to Latin in the ninth century by Paulus Diaconus, who worked in Naples. It subsequently spread widely; so much so, that it has been coined as one of the most important texts to inspire devotion to Mary in Anglo-Saxon England – with a major pan-European impact thereafter. In short, it is one of the best-known of the Marian miracles.³⁵

The Kalanti altarpiece has the crowned Mary sitting on her heavenly throne, holding the naked Infant Jesus on her lap. Her body is wrapped in an ostentatious robe, which is fastened with a decorative brooch on the chest, and her long hair is combed behind her ears. She wears a crown, of which only two finials still survive. Theophilus is genuflecting at her side, in a way that should be understood as in front of her, looking upward. As he calls out for her help, his palms are together in a gesture of prayer, skilfully making his posture a compositionally effective diagonal mirror image for Mary in the Nativity scene. The devil, pictured as half human-half animal, is standing behind her and passes her the contract with his right hand – the left hand of the sculpted figure is missing. The Virgin is regal with an air of passivity, and this differs greatly from some representations of the legend, in which she is furious, and even punches the devil in the eye.³⁶

The presence of the Christ Child within the Theophilus scene underscores the unity of mother and son, one element of the hierogamic relation between Mary and Jesus – an analogous version of which the beholder could also see in the Coronation presenting them as heavenly lovers and spouses. More than this aspect, however, the Kalanti altarpiece stresses Mary's motherhood, but a specific virginal motherhood that the Nativity brought forth: It should be borne in mind that the Nativity scene showed a third image of a naked Baby Jesus, the now lost infant (the hole for the wooden peg that held it in place is visible)

³⁵ See Rubin 1999, 8. For various versions of the tale, see Petsch 1908; Plenzat 1926; Lazar 1972; Boyarin 2010, 42–103. On the appearance of the legend in *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, and particularly on the visual image of the Jewish magician, see Patton 2008. There are numerous visualizations of the Theophilus legend throughout Europe, the oldest one apparently being the carvings on the now dismantled tympanum relief from the Souillac Cathedral in France, dated c. 1100. For this and other examples, see Mâle 2000 [1899], 260–262. For a survey of imagery, see also Edgren 1993, 164–175.

³⁶ This is the case, for instance, in the manuscript illumination (fol. 40^v) in the de Brailles Hours, dated c. 1240, in which the event has the quality of a battle between the devil and the Virgin, who grabs the contract from the ugly looking devil, portrayed, in this case, as a fattish hairy creature grinding his teeth. MS Additional 49999, British Library, London. Accessible online via the British Library's digitized manuscript collection: < http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_49999 >.

whom Mary adores.³⁷ Moreover, the believer could see the naked body of the Christ Child simultaneously as the host, and this association was further emphasized by the existence of the Circumcision on the other side, where, as was indicated earlier, the Christ Child is on the altar. In the Theophilus image, Christ is on his mother's lap, which is, of course, also symbolically an altar.

Adrienne Williams Boyarin has argued that the Theophilus legend shows how, in England in particular, Mary was closely associated with Jewish apostasy, as well as with legal issues, and, above all, had supratextual powers. According to Boyarin, Marian miracles suggest a special connection to Jews – whether for retribution or for conversion – and therefore, Mary's role as *mediatrix* and *legislatrix* also included mediating between Jews and Christians, and portrayed “Mary as legal advocate with special connection to the documentary text and legal literalism associated with her Jewish identity”.³⁸ The Kalanti altarpiece also emphasizes the importance of the book and the written word in the form of a legal contract, in a visual way. The contract is a fairly large object placed prominently at the very centre of the pictorial space. The text – or rather the visible letters – is secondary, and the content of the original layer is unknown.

The courteous figure of the devil, to my mind, reflects the later versions of the tale in which Satan fully acknowledges Mary's power; the Middle Low German versions follow this plot line and in these the devil (Lucifer or Satan) declares her as *Vrowe* or *Herrin* (Lady) and them as her *knechte* (servants).³⁹ Even so, I would propose the figure of the devil has another, simultaneous, meaning: It incorporates both the devil and the *Hebræus*. As said, the devil ‘acts’ as an attorney, standing behind his ‘client’ Theophilus and politely, with a slight bow, hands the contract to Mary. Second, although his face is typical for Satan, it is also the face of an ‘evil Jew’, with a large crooked nose. The strategy of alluding to the Jew in the character of the devil could be juxtaposed to Heinz Schreckenberg's observation concerning the visual amalgamation of, in this time, the Jew and Theophilus: In a Parisian manuscript illumination Theophilus wears a Phrygian hat, a common signifier of Jews particularly in French-speaking regions.⁴⁰

³⁷ The appearance of this lost little figure can be reconstructed using the sandstone reliefs that have survived in Schleddehausen and Bersenbrück, which are either copies of the altarpiece or share a common source; see the catalogue *Meister Francke* 1969, Tafel 39.

³⁸ Boyarin 2010, 7–9.

³⁹ See Plenzat 1926, 167; Lazar 1972, 44.

⁴⁰ Schreckenberg 1996, 266. The manuscript in question is the so-called Ingeborg-Psalter MS 9, fol. 35^v, c. 1195; Musée Condé, Chantilly. The Phrygian hat was a more complex signifier – Ruth Mellinkoff (1993, I, 89–91) concludes that it primarily conveyed foreignness, strangeness, and the magi, all of the qualities in fact fitting the Jew in the Theophilus legend.

14.3 *Imitatio*: St. Barbara tormented by the Jews

When the first doors of the altarpiece were opened, the visual narrative of St. Barbara was revealed in eight scenes, in two horizontal rows (fig. 20). Proceeding from left to right, it starts, in the upper row, with the dispute between the converted Barbara and her pagan father Dioscurus, and then continues to her escape and imprisonment. In the lower row, Judge Marcian's interrogation is followed by torture of the virgin martyr ending with her beheading. As is essential with martyrdom stories, the cycle includes images of violence and torment.

The Otherness of those who torture St. Barbara has not gone unnoticed in the previous studies, but the connection to Jews in particular has not been put forward. Ruth Mellinkoff, in her pioneering study of 'outcasts' in later medieval art, presented the panel showing the cutting of St. Barbara's breast as an example of villainous characters portrayed as indecent: The flagellator's unbuttoned tunic exposes his belly, and "though it suggests the violence of his deed, it also condemns the exposure as indecent", she writes.⁴¹ Madeline H. Caviness, too, has commented on the torturers, stressing their 'ethnic' Otherness, as well as noting the ethnicity of both the father and Judge Marcian: "Although the jailers are designated by dress and physical traits as ethnically other, as if to help a West European Christian audience keep its moral footing by asserting difference, the narrative has to involve her own father and secular ruler as her accusers and they also threaten her with their scimitars".⁴² She, then, focuses on the beholders' identification processes, rather than discussing the deliberate ethnic qualities of the figures. The general 'strangeness', or Otherness, of both Saracens and Jews is inscribed in the St. Barbara cycle in multiple ways, and, intriguingly, it is written into the very name 'Barbara'. Julia Kristeva, in her study on foreignness, has provided the etymology referring to 'barbarians': The Greek word βάρβαρος (*bárbaros*) includes the "inarticulate or incomprehensible mumblings", bar-bar, so the Greeks began to use the word to denote people from the Near East, and eventually, all foreigners.⁴³

What I am suggesting here is that one of the torturers is distinctly and purposefully portrayed as a Jew. He is delineated with the typical caricatured Jewish features – a crooked nose and thick lips. The figure appears in three panels; most notably in the fifth scene, showing the interrogation, where he pushes his face very close to that of Barbara (fig. 21). This, of course, puts visual

⁴¹ Mellinkoff 1993, I, 204; II, x.26.

⁴² Caviness 2001, 115. See also Mills 2005, 106–144.

⁴³ Kristeva 1991, 51. For a stimulating analysis of Kristeva's treatment of St. Barbara, see O'Grady 2003. For discussions of Muslim Otherness in the Middle Ages, see Frakes 2011.

Fig. 20: Meister Francke, *The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Barbara*. Panel paintings of the Kalanti altarpiece, c. 1420. Panels that today are separate from one another once formed

the first view of the altarpiece. Photograph: Soile Tirilä. By the kind permission of the National Museum of Finland.

Fig. 21: Meister Francke, detail of the fifth scene depicting the interrogation of Saint Barbara. Saint Barbara cycle in the Kalanti altarpiece, c. 1420. Photograph: author. By the kind permission of the National Museum of Finland.

emphasis on the differences between these two faces: hers a beautiful God-loving Christian; his that of an ugly, lustful Jew. In two other panels, this character is the one who attacks Barbara's breast, both cutting it and burning it with a torch, actions that serve to denote his evil sexuality even more explicitly than is the case in the interrogation scene.

In the devotional domain, the appearance of the Jew(s) in the martyrdom cycles was meant to underscore the *imitatio Christi* of the martyrs: Their passion was meant to reflect the Passion of Christ. That Meister Francke employed this analogy is made perfectly apparent when the St. Barbara panels are juxtaposed with those of the Thomas Becket altarpiece in the Hamburger Kunsthalle. These include the Flagellation of Christ, with Christ presented in a position and a state of near-nakedness that much resembles Francke's portrayal of St. Barbara. In addition, Pilate and Caiaphas watching the whipping of Christ constitute a pair with Judge Marcian and Dioscurus, who watch over the molesting of Barbara. Moreover, the overall composition of the interrogation scene restates the message of the innumerable images of the Betrayal and Arrest of Christ, and thus *imitatio* technology causes the Jewish character in the interrogation to evoke the image of Judas Iscariot, the archetypal Jew, who, in the Garden of Gethsemane, pushes his face into Christ's and kisses him.

The topic of imitation weaves the threads that bind together the panel paintings and the sculpted sections of the Kalanti altarpiece. The correlation of Mary's life with her Son's was obviously the preeminent *imitatio*, and thus,

the harassment by the Jews at Mary's funeral was a counterpart to the actions of the Jews at the Passion of Christ. Mary's virginity underscores that of St. Barbara, who following her death was also taken to Heaven as the Bride of Christ; Barbara is, then, imitating both Christ and the Virgin Mary. Madeline H. Caviness has pointed out the resonance between the two cuttings, the mastectomy in the painted cycle and the Circumcision in the sculptures, although they did not, evidently, appear side by side, as she erroneously claims, but on the both sides of a single panel.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, she has a valid point, since the very idea of the winged altarpiece is based on the beholder's awareness of all of the object's images – of those visible and of the then hidden images on the obverse. In this case, the image of the Jew holding a sharp knife in the act of Circumcision effectively concealed the other Jew on the reverse, who was ready to plunge the blade into an innocent martyr's flesh.

The visual hagiography of St. Barbara takes place in an Oriental setting, in some imaginary, far-off land. Barbara's father Dioscurus and Judge Marcian are meant to be perceived as pagans, and they are presented in a way that conjures up the imaginary Muslim, or Saracen, who, of course, was the prototypical heretic. Their attire combines contemporary clothing with exotic details and foreign-looking accessories, such as Dioscurus' scimitar which is prominently displayed in the images. These 'exotic' traits should, however, be analysed with caution. For example, in the third scene, which shows Barbara betrayed by a shepherd and Dioscurus pursuing her on horseback, the horse is wearing a crescent moon pendant on its forehead, something which the modern reader might readily associate with the East. Crescent moon appears, of course, as a sign of Jewishness in the medieval and early modern representations, but then as a crescent-horn plate – the tips of the crescent upwards, not down as in the panel – on the mitre of the high priest.⁴⁵ A recent investigation suggests that the crescent moon pendant on a horse, while referring to the contemporary material culture, was used as visual rhetoric meant to make the Christian narrative relevant and accessible to everyone. According to Visa Immonen, "it draws on the pendant's association with hunting and with high social rank to create a certain image of a layperson".⁴⁶

The relationship between Saracens and Jews was complex; on the one hand, they were both considered enemies of Christianity and in the Marian miracles, for example, they might convert in the face an image of Mary coming

⁴⁴ Caviness 2001, 116; Mills 2005, 127. For a critical discussion, see Lahti and Räsänen 2008, 252–258.

⁴⁵ See Mellinkoff 1987.

⁴⁶ Immonen 2013, 187.

to life.⁴⁷ On the other, if the issue of heresy is excluded, Christianity had no obvious conflict with the Saracens, as it had with the Jews, as Jesus was not a Saracen, nor did Saracens kill him. At any rate, they were not seen as completely separate, and as Michael Camille has formulated, they were “inextricably linked together in the consciousness of Christians”.⁴⁸ Sometimes they got ‘mixed’, such as when in the so-called N-Town play the enraged Jews swear by their God ‘Mahound’ (Muḥammad) as they approach the Virgin’s funeral procession, or when the French versions of the legend of Theophilus describe the magician as a Muslim or name him Salatin.⁴⁹ The story of Joseph, who was sold for thirty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelite merchants, offered another kind of version of amalgamation because it was perceived as a corresponding antecedent for Judas’ betrayal of Christ and the thirty pieces of silver he received.⁵⁰ Looking closely at the clothing of the Saracen figures Dioscurus and his men, the decorative pseudo-Arabic letters on their hems and necklines resemble pseudo-Hebrew writing, similar to that which can be detected at the neckline of the Caiaphas figure in the Thomas Becket altarpiece. This tailored detail, often used to mark Jewish officials and distinguish them from the Christian figures, aims to merge the pagan enemies of St. Barbara with the Jews.

As has been suggested by earlier research, the St. Barbara panels demonstrate social status by portraying poor people as unpleasant and ugly, while the equally evil but wealthy are portrayed with neutral, or even aristocratic, features and luxurious clothing – the fabric patterns are from then existent Italian silks. Besides the torturers, the above-mentioned shepherds in the betrayal scene represent the ‘lower class’. According to Erwin Panofsky, they are ‘genre’ figures and “not only ‘small’ in the sociological sense [...] but also conspicuously poor and picturesque”.⁵¹ Their appearance is not determined by moral standing, because the loyal shepherd’s physiognomy is portrayed as just as rough as that of the traitorous shepherd: Social status far outweighed personal morality. The same applies to ethnicity and, indeed, the late medieval practice of portraying high-ranking people as more pleasing to the eye sometimes makes it difficult to distinguish between the so-called good and bad Jews of a higher rank – for example, distinguishing Joseph of Arimathea from the high priest Caiaphas.⁵²

⁴⁷ On the imagery of the Saracen conversion, see Camille 1989; Ringbom 1969, 160–161.

⁴⁸ Camille 1989, 164.

⁴⁹ See Lazar 1972, 39; Bale 2010, 105. Not only Jews, but all kinds of non-Christian peoples were occasionally confused with or simply called Saracens; see Boyd 2011.

⁵⁰ See Mâle 2000 [1899], 156.

⁵¹ Panofsky 1953, 71.

⁵² Usually, important and wealthy Christian men can be differentiated from the Jewish officials and high priests; see Mellinkoff 1993, I, 41.

14.4 Conclusion

Late medieval Christian devotional art could not avoid representing Jews. Moreover, one would be justified in claiming that these representations were found even when they lacked a biblical or 'historical' basis, for example, in the images created of the legends of martyrs. Even if the Jewishness of Christ, the Virgin, the apostles, and the other protagonists of the Christian narrative was acknowledged in an opaque or tortuous manner, there were several other characters whose presence was crucial within the holy events, whose Jewishness could not be questioned, but whose portrayal was more open for variations, such as the 'good' high priest. Any representations of the Virgin's life, for example, required a high priest who received her at the Temple, did the betrothal service, and later circumcised Christ. On the other hand, the scenes of Christ's torture often included mean, indecent, and ugly figures, with caricatured features meant to identify them as Jews, but also the high priest, now turned evil. In the Middle Ages, Jews were portrayed as either good or bad,⁵³ and the Kalanti altarpiece adheres to this general rule with a strong emphasis on the latter; even the high priest and his assistant performing the Circumcision do not have a dignified look.

What, then, did these images convey without directly showing? What did they connect with? In the case of medieval imagery, it is necessary to consider what sorts of narratives were incorporated in the images, and which stories they linked together. In this regard, the violent miracle stories told at the feast of the Dormition might have meant that the image of Mary's (temporary) death, comforting and peaceful in and of itself, could well have triggered associations that were rife with allusions to anger and sheer horror. The image of the Assumption of the Virgin on the Kalanti altarpiece did not even need the associations on a purely imaginative level, as Mary's sovereignty and the 'evilness' of the Jews were clearly exposed in the miracle scenes on its right side.

The Kalanti altarpiece makes broad reference to imaginary Jews and indicates the central role these characters played both in Christian narratives and in the pictorial world so essential to the devotional life. Meister Francke was consciously presenting the figures of Jews in his painting – even when the actual events would not have included Jews. Of the many options available, those who determined the motifs for the carved Marian images decided to include these miracles, which clearly emphasized the wickedness of Jews. As a

⁵³ See the numerous examples in Schreckenberg 1996, and of 'bad Jews' in particular in Melnikoff 1993, II. See also Haastrup 2003.

consequence, these motifs created possible new ways of reading the other scenes as well, stressing Mary's eternal virginity and, for instance, evoking the negative, or even horrendous, connotations inherent in the image of the Circumcision. As I have shown, Mary's eternal virginity is inscribed in every sculpted scene of the altarpiece, whether directly, or through 'polar thinking' or by taking advantage of the entire visual complexity of the work, that is, the power of the images to evoke new meanings of the ones with which they are compositionally connected. Indeed, the emphasis on virginity – as well as on the *imitatio* – bound together the painted and the sculpted parts of the altarpiece.

People knew the stories so it was not crucial to display everything. Just as neither the healing nor the conversion of the Jews is shown in the funeral scene, no one needed to see in order to know how, following her beheading at the hands of her father, the angels carried St. Barbara's soul to Heaven, where she resides wearing her virginal crown and holding her attribute, the tower. Similarly, it was not necessary to show the wicked magician beside Theophilus to know that he belongs to the scene or, if the audience was aware of the fifteenth-century, Middle Low German version (known as *Theophilus T*) not only was there one Jew, but many to whom Theophilus tries to sell himself: Musin, Isaak, Bonenfant, and Samuel, of which the latter then escorts Theophilus to the devil.⁵⁴ Certain details, such as the gestures and positions of the two apostles who face the viewers in the funeral scene, all but invite the beholders to continue and imagine the story in their minds, with a happy ending. The plots and conclusions were rooted in the beholder's consciousness and memory. Moreover, although this essay has discussed the visual and the textual, it is essential to be alert of the performances that powerfully reinforced the messages mediated in the works of art. As a vivid example of this, the devil's face in the Theophilus scene much resembles the masks of the devilish characters in the various mystery plays.⁵⁵ Versions of the Theophilus play survive in many languages including Middle Low German and equally popular were stagings of the Dormition or of the Virgin's funeral.⁵⁶ In actual fact, it has been suggested that the growing audiences and the need for didactic, comic and grotesque elements on stage expanded the roles of Jews in the tales.⁵⁷ Put bluntly, much of what was perpetuated in immobile art was also part of town life in the Late Middle Ages.

⁵⁴ Petsch 1908, 74–103; Plenzat 1926, 182–183.

⁵⁵ See the images in Mellinkoff 1993, II, viii.25 and viii.26.

⁵⁶ Petsch 1908; Plenzat 1926; Bale 2010, 102–111.

⁵⁷ Lazar 1972, 49.

14.5 Epilogue

The threads connecting Meister Francke and his art to the sentiments toward and persecution of the Jewish people continued into the twentieth century. Adolph Goldschmidt (1863–1944), the scholar who attributed the St. Barbara panels to Meister Francke, was a distinguished Berlin-based professor of art history. He was one of many ‘assimilated’ Jews who had strong patriotic feelings for Germany, and he resisted emigrating until the final moment: He left for Basle only after he was no longer granted access to the university library.⁵⁸ The Meister Francke scholar Bella Martens (1891–1959) had Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) as her *Doktorvater* (doctoral supervisor).⁵⁹ Panofsky, also a German-born Jew, but a generation younger than his teacher Goldschmidt, became one of the best-known art historians of the twentieth century. He moved to Hamburg in 1921 to teach, and three years later he was nominated as a professor *ordinarius*. In 1933, he was forced to leave his professorship, and very soon thereafter fled with his family to the United States.⁶⁰

In 1950 Panofsky received a letter from his former student and friend William S. Heckscher (1904–1999), who was also a refugee, but had now visited post-war Hamburg and its Kunsthalle. He wrote, “The only moving thing was of course to see Meister Francke and Bertram and a few of the other things again”.⁶¹ Panofsky probably would have shared his friend’s feelings, since not only had he overseen Bella Martens’ research, he unquestionably also had a personal interest in Meister Francke. In addition to the previously-quoted book on Early Netherlandish painting, he took Meister Francke up in what is perhaps his most influential essay, “Die Perspektive als ‘symbolische Form’”, as well as in his study on the *Imago Pietatis*, the motif of the Man of Sorrows (both 1927).⁶² Moreover, it is fascinating to consider his attention to Meister Francke increasing once he had personally examined the St. Barbara panels when they were in the Hamburger Kunsthalle for conservation, and during the subsequent exhibition in the 1920s.⁶³ We need not speculate about whether or not he then saw the altarpiece, because in a letter from 1967 he mentions that he

⁵⁸ On Goldschmidt, see the *Dictionary of Art Historians*; on Goldschmidt’s scholarly legacy, see Brush 1996.

⁵⁹ In the preface to her book, Martens (1929, 2) thanks her “teacher and friend” Erwin Panofsky, who had spared no effort in supporting her work.

⁶⁰ On Panofsky’s life, see Heckscher 1995.

⁶¹ Heckscher to Panofsky 30 June 1950. Published in Wuttke 2006, no. 1383.

⁶² Panofsky 1991 [1927], 59; Panofsky 1927.

⁶³ See footnote 11.

still remembers this “beautiful altarpiece”.⁶⁴ The Kunsthalle was a significant location in many ways: Panofsky’s art-history seminars were held at the edifice; Bella Martens worked there as an assistant to Gustav Pauli, the director until 1933, and a close friend to Panofsky.⁶⁵ In the same year, Bella Martens also lost her post and she was relocated to the department of prints and drawings (*Kupferstichkabinett*).⁶⁶

Although Panofsky, as far as we know, was not religiously observant, with the rise of the Nazis, simply being a Jew would play a major role in his fate. His exile, and the reasons for it, continued to have an impact throughout his life, something that many of those who have analysed his work believe greatly affected his theoretical thinking.⁶⁷ It is no exaggeration to say that the collapse of classical German academic culture had immense consequences for art-history scholarship overall. To simplify: Subjective interpretations tied to Hegelian ideals and drawn from the general *Weltanschauung* were no longer accepted after the war and would ultimately be replaced by Anglo-American analytic and scientific positivism. This development was primarily advanced by E. H. Gombrich (1909–2001), yet another refugee and a major art historian during the twentieth century.⁶⁸ Although the degree to which Panofsky’s views changed is open to debate, French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman’s treatment of him places Panofsky firmly within the sphere of harsh rationality.⁶⁹ Didi-Huberman makes metonymical use of a mystical Jewish tale to frame his analysis: Rabbi Azriel saves a young girl possessed by a *dybbuk* by exorcizing it and, to Didi-Huberman, the exorcist rabbi is like Panofsky.⁷⁰ He is an art historian who

⁶⁴ For Panofsky’s letter to Prof. Päiviö Oksala (11 April 1967), see Wuttke 2011, no. 3403. The letter was connected to an invitation to deliver a lecture that the University of Helsinki had extended to Panofsky. Although he travelled to Europe, Panofsky had to decline the invitation.

⁶⁵ Wendland 1994. For a historical overview of art history education in Hamburg, see Dilly 1994. Gustav Pauli, although not a Jew, lost his job because he supported the artists whose work was labelled ‘degenerate’ by the Nazis.

⁶⁶ Martens’ letter to Panofsky 20 April 1953; published in Wuttke 2006, no. 1599. She considered trying to have the order compensated and asked Panofsky to send a statement. In his response, Panofsky mentions the unquestioned quality of Martens’ monograph on Francke and the unanimous appreciation it holds among the experts – but even this would not help her in the legal issues; Wuttke 2006, no. 1600.

⁶⁷ Elsner and Lorenz 2012. I will be examining this thesis in my forthcoming article “Panopticon of Art History: Some Notes on Iconology, Interpretation and Fears” (2015).

⁶⁸ Gombrich came from a Jewish family that had converted to Lutheranism; on Gombrich, see the *Dictionary of Art Historians*. On the rejection of Hegel and its connection to the Second World War, see Gaiger 2011.

⁶⁹ Didi-Huberman 2005, xv–xxvi.

⁷⁰ Didi-Huberman 2005, xxiv. Didi-Huberman, himself of Jewish origin, makes a point of claiming that Panofsky must have known the tale – this is, however, somewhat meaningless

could not ‘understand’ images, but could only ‘explain’ them authoritatively and, “satisfied with his well-constructed answers”, he exorcized power and efficacy from images.⁷¹ Panofsky’s caution in the face of what images can evoke in people is, in Didi-Huberman’s analysis, reduced to a fear of images.⁷²

Early art history seems to have been fairly indifferent to the part played by images in the persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages. The dismissal of the function of the images lies in part with the historical developments and traditions of the discipline of art history; interpreting works of art by contextualizing them within the society in which they were created was by and large introduced following the war, and, in actual fact, was very much indebted to Erwin Panofsky’s iconological ‘method’.⁷³ Thus, the early scholars did not necessarily recognize that the ugly Jewish face painted on an altarpiece in early fifteenth-century Hamburg was not only an artistic feature summoning earlier influences and models, but a formative agent in the era in which it was painted.

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speculation, as it is rather implausible that Panofsky would have identified himself with the exorcist rabbi.

⁷¹ Didi-Huberman 2005, xxvi.

⁷² For a positive appraisal of Panofsky’s ‘warnings’, see Dilly 1988.

⁷³ Panofsky 1939.

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