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VISUALISING THE OTHER:

SPLITTING IN EARLY RENAISSANCE NORTHERN EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS VISUAL CULTURE

BERNARD RATIGAN*

Abstract: This paper focuses on the representation of Jews and Judaism in the visual culture of Northern Europe in the period from about 1400 to the early 16th century CE. It uses psychoanalytic concepts as tools for understanding some aspects of the paintings, sculptures, prints, manuscripts and other objects of the period and their backgrounds. In particular, the paper makes a distinction between differentiation and splitting. Where the former expresses an acknowledged fact, like the monotheistic religious split into three distinct groups, the latter, splitting, expresses a particular form of differentiation where we are led to an antagonistic and *hateful* view of the Other. The paper will argue that towards the end of the first and the start of the second millennium CE there was a shift in the visual representation of Jews, from images that differentiated Jews and Judaism from Christians and Christianity, to ones that increasingly demonized them and where splitting was the dominant mechanism. These changes will be linked with developments in spirituality and Biblical hermeneutics. Three examples of the manifestation of splitting will be discussed: first, the contrast between two significantly similar female figures, the failing *'synagoga'* and the thriving *'ekklesia'*; second, the development of the cult of *Corpus Christi*, which became linked with anti-Semitism particularly through the 'blood libels'; and third, the growth of passion iconography as an expression of the vilification and demonization of Jews by Christians, particularly on the charge of 'deicide', the killing of a god.

From text to image

Psychoanalysis has, from the time of Freud, been willing to tackle the existence and persistence of hatred (and love) in human beings, tracing it back to the early years of life. The demonization of Jews and Judaism over the centuries has a claim to be in a class of its own in the history of hatred culminating as it did in the 1930s and 1940s CE in genocide, also known as the Shoah. This paper explores some of the imagery that was to find a place in twentieth century European history by exploring the representation of Jews and Judaism in the visual culture of Northern Europe in the late middle ages/early renaissance period.

Recent decades have seen a growth of interest in the art of Northern Europe in the early renaissance period especially in Netherlandish and German art (Nash 2009; Richardson,

2007; Smith, 2004). One characteristic of the art itself is its refusal to conform to the tenets of classical theory and instead to be concerned with realism, with people and objects looking as they were, not as they ought to look. For this reason it took some time for art history/criticism to give the art of this period the significance it warranted. Consequently, psychoanalytically informed approaches have been equally slow to move the primary focus of attention from the Italian peninsular in a northerly direction to a wider perspective. Glover has recently surveyed the field of psychoanalytic aesthetics (Glover, 2009). The earlier position, stemming from Vasari in the sixteenth 16th century, saw innovation coming solely from Italy, especially from the cities of Florence and Venice, and spreading northwards. Now an evidence-based understanding is that there was two-way traffic, both creative and mercantile, between Flanders and Italy in the 15th century (Nuttall, 2004).

Much of the art of Europe in the middle ages/early modern period had a religious, often Biblical, story to tell. Although most of the central characters in specifically Christian visual narratives were Jewish, some were made to look stereotypically Jewish by making images that were grotesque parodies of human beings and others (Jesus and Mary) to look markedly different, in the sense of 'normal'. Laplanche (2007) and Girard (1986) are also part of the background theorizing of this paper. The former takes the paper to its roots in early sexuality and the latter takes it to anthropology, literature, religion and ritual/drama/liturgy in the attempt to grasp the complexities of the material. The paper is also part of a project to develop a psychoanalytically informed, general theory of difference where the levels of hatred, rage and a-rationality can be better understood. A basic assumption behind the paper is that as the human infant, after birth, is subjected to very powerful emotions which rapidly divide the world into good and bad, so these are probably related to the parallels between the early experiences of the neonate/baby as it attempts to grapple with the external world and that of the adult threatened by alterity. One of the chief mechanisms is that of splitting, where the world is divided into the good and the bad with nothing in between these two binaries. This concept has been of considerable use in the sustained psychoanalytic attempts at linking the inner and outer world and this study builds upon these attempts (Rustin, 1991; Ratigan, 1995).

In the Christian scriptures, there is a thread between the scriptural use of the words *Hoi Ioudaioi* as 'The Jews' – in a context where all the actors, or almost all of them, were Jewish, as were the writers of the stories, the visual and actual demonization of Jewish people in the middle ages and early modern period and what happened in the Shoah (Burke, 1993).

Indeed, as early as I Thessalonians, written about 49CE, the phrase is to be found. Hence, the adoption of one of the most significant mechanisms, splitting, as a way of understanding the role played by the visual culture in the late medieval/early modern period. This paper is also a contribution to another recent development: the academic study of the relations between Judaism and Christianity (Kessler, 2010) by introducing perspectives from psychoanalysis and the study of visual culture. Much of the record of Jewish/ Christian tensions, conflicts and newer self-understandings is textual; however, there remains some iconographic material that this paper seeks to understand from a psychoanalytic perspective (Schreckenberg, 1996).

Splitting, in the human infant, a developmentally early and primitive form of defence mechanism here transposed to an historical situation, was already discernible then in the first century CE texts (Chilton, 1992). As the followers of Jesus, both Jewish and gentile, found it more difficult to stay within Jewish belief and orthopraxis (or right practice), towards the end of the first century CE, writers found it necessary to distance themselves from the Jewish mainstream. The earliest distinctively Christian writings, the letters attributed to Paul, are concerned with matters of similarity and difference. The discourse is not initially anything other than disputes within a disputatious family or tribe (Levine, 2011b). The more remote the dating of the scriptures are from the events that they record there is an observable growth of anti-Jewish, especially passion story located, rhetoric (Crossan, 1995). The texts of what were to become the canonical gospels were written to distance the new Christian groups from their Jewish patrimony. Modern Biblical scholars are able to discern the processes at work in the first century CE by which an increasingly distinctive Christian/Jewish sect emerged followed by an autonomous Christian community of communities (Levine, 2011a; Vermes, 2012). It seems in the period that is the focus of this paper, c.1400-1600 CE, such nuances were not generally available and it was not until the development of the 'higher criticism', Biblical hermeneutics and textual analysis, linked with the writings of Schleiermacher in the early 19th century CE in Germany, that it did become more widely known (Foster, 2008). What was available were texts that plainly spoke, to those who needed to see them, of *Hoi Ioudaioi,* as an alien grouping that had killed Jesus. The role of oral transmission here is important as it mediated the story/text of the scriptures being a dominant mode of dissemination in a largely non-literate society. Even 15th century CE papal attempts to protect Jewish people from mendacious attacks proved useless, such was their ferocity and, one presumes, the welcome the message was given (McMichael, 1999). In this period images were an important and powerful medium of transmission of the texts. Then, as now, images

also served to simplify and condense complex historical and ideological conceptions. Even contemporary scholarly translations generally persist in translating *Hoi Ioudaioi* as ‘the Jews’ rather than, for example, less dangerous phrases such as ‘the leaders of the Jews’. In this manner splitting continues to pass on from generation to generation.

The representation of Jews in the visual culture of the late middle ages and early modern period was based upon a developing Biblical hermeneutic that is seen in a definitive form in the works of Thomas Aquinas. He taught that there were four levels in the interpretation of scripture: the literal or historical; the allegorical; the tropological or moral; and the analogical, that which points to the transcendent. In some ways, the visual culture under examination in this paper needs to be seen in the wider context of the broader set of ideas current at the time (Kerr, 2009). A version of the ‘period eye’ (Baxandall, 1988).

Freud, the ‘Godless Jew’ (Gay, 1987), was clearly fascinated by visual culture, notwithstanding the Jewish prohibition on graven images in religious practices. His main interest, however, was in the visual cultures of ancient Egypt and of classical Greece and Rome but only in some aspects of renaissance art (Sayers, 2007). Perhaps his relative lack of interest in the latter was due to the fact that most of the European medieval and early renaissance visual culture that he would have encountered, especially in Vienna, was related to Christianity and he viewed religion, especially the Judeo-Christian tradition, as significant, but ultimately an illusion without a future (Freud, 1927). Perhaps, too, his experience of growing up as a (secular) Jew in a predominantly Catholic world, made him antipathetic to an art that, as we shall see, often contained harshly anti-Jewish images. It should also be remembered that the Catholicism of Freud’s time and locality was unrelenting in the opprobrium it poured on Jews and Judaism. Nonetheless, the ideas, approaches and concepts that derive from Freud remain pertinent to an understanding of that art. Taking one term, alterity, and one example of this ‘otherness’ – the visual representation of Jews and Judaism in the early northern European renaissance – by way of illustration, the paper seeks to show how the history of all three monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, for the last two millennia, has been a story of differentiation and splitting. By the time the last of the four canonical Christian gospel narratives, attributed to John, came to be written, possibly by 90 CE, the followers of the ‘new’ faith were being strongly differentiated from *Hoi Ioudaioi* (Brown, 1993; Vermes, 1973). With regard to visual culture, there is evidence of differentiation but not of toxic splitting in much early Christian art. Christian iconography in this period did not come from nowhere: it was, understandably, derivative of classical Greek

and Roman models. There are, however, some examples of distinctively Christian art but not much of it remains. Shortly after the emergence of Islam in the 7th century CE of Islam, a distinctive new Abrahamic faith, colour markers of difference between the three faiths began to emerge. By the 8th century CE, in Muslim lands, Jews had to wear yellow, Christians blue and Samaritans red. Within Christianity, a defining moment in the relationship between Jews and Christians was the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 CE that, *inter alia*, mandated Jews to wear a colour that made them conspicuous. Jews were also compelled to wear small white *tabulae* of the Ten Commandments.

Hats generally, and especially the *Judenhut* or *Pileum Cornutum* with its associations to horns, the devil and the phallic, became distinctive marks of alterity, as did the wearing of finger rings, and is to be seen in representations of Jews in early Northern religious art. The central dynamic was the avoidance of contamination by Outsiders; especially Jews and 'Saracens' (i.e. Muslims) were seen as polluting the purity of Christendom. Warning signs had to be worn to discourage contact (Boureau, 1986; Merback, 2006). One of the functions of these markers, which effectively operated as visual indicators of taboos, was to maintain a Christian version of ritual purity by identifying those with whom sexual relations were forbidden. Underlying much of these processes are unconscious substrates linking purity and danger. Douglas has written generally about the link between the two (Douglas, 2002) and also subjected the book of the Leviticus, especially the so-called 'holiness code' with its articulation of what is ritually clean and what is impure, to detailed anthropological analysis (Douglas, 1999).

Yellow, as a major marker of danger in particular, came to have significance in this version of alterity. It influences the brain, and therefore the mind, as a danger signal and warning sign. It is a truism that 'yellow takes the eye' and from a biopsychosocial perspective it links biology with psychology and the social. It has consequences including distancing, prohibition and solidarity; standing out as it does, shouting that there is danger about. Few other colours, then as now, have such a powerful impact. In late medieval and early renaissance visual culture and palette, Judas Iscariot, the archetypal condensation of Jewishness, is often clothed in yellow and has a red/ginger beard (Mellinkoff, 1982) as is frequently found with other male Jewish characters (Klassen, 1992). From a psychoanalytic perspective, yellow may be associated with that which is evacuated, as we will see later. My contention is that yellow is used as a proxy for excreta especially faeces. In visual representations of the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus, those who would try, torture and

kill him were negatively represented often with grotesque physiognomies representing the actors in the Biblical narratives but wearing the dress and in settings of contemporary early northern Europe: the use of the dress of the era was to make the visual link with Jews then alive, so stirring up hatred against this particular Other. A special feature was ugly noses: psychoanalytically, these have been linked with male genitalia and with circumcision. Such highly negative representations served powerful religious purposes, although not universally so (Gilman, 1991). Variations existed but the overall picture was that of an increasing polarization between the Christianity (portrayed as good) and Judaism/other (portrayed as bad); a tendency towards the paranoid-schizoid position that left little space for thought. In the visual culture of the period under review, and in more recent times, the processes become clearer. The signifier, the so-called Jewish nose, stood for the symbol, here the circumcised, weakened phallic object, with the purpose of warning any other possible rivals not to meddle.

In order to appreciate how striking the manifestation of splitting in the Christian art of the middle of the second millennium CE was, it is instructive to look, by contrast, at how the division between the new and old faiths, of Christianity and Judaism, was represented in the first millennium CE. For most of that period the two female personifications, *synagoga* and *ekklesia*, were dominant images and may have been seen as symbolizations or condensations of what Christians had come to call the ‘old’ and ‘new’ testaments. They had been the main representations by Christians of the difference between Judaism and Christianity. The differentiation between them was relatively mild compared to what was to follow in the next millennium in the Oedipal, fragile and murderous dynamic that developed between Judaism and what had been originally a Jewish sect and gradually, by the end of the first century CE, was becoming or had become an autonomous religious faith.

Illustration 1: Ekklesia and Synagoga Notre Dame de Paris. (Source: author's own photograph)

The figure usually on the right, *synagoga* represents Judaism. Her eyes are covered, she is blind to the new law (Christianity) by virtue of her adherence to the old Law (Judaism). She usually leans away, holding upside down the tablets of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments of the Torah). Her broken lance and her crown lie on the ground, symbols of lost power and now of defeat. Whereas *ekklesia* – (holy mother) the church – stands erect with the chalice of the New Testament, an unbroken lance, eyes wide open, wearing a crown (Lipton, 2002). Potency and the future are balanced by impotence and the past. There is a fine example at Strasbourg Cathedral and another example, heavily restored, can be found on the west front of Notre Dame de Paris. It serves to show just how widespread this splitting imagery had become by the start of the second millennium. The mechanism of splitting is clearly shown with the difference between the two female images being emphasized at the expense of similarity. It remains unclear why women were used to illustrate the differences between Judaism and early Christianity except there are traditions in the Tanakh, or Old Testament, of assigning gender in both the Hebrew original and in Greek translations known

as the Septuagint or LXXX (for example, Sophia). But from early days of an autonomous Christian identity existing, the verbal and visual image of the mother had been widely used to represent the church as in 'Holy Mother, the Church'. The depiction of church and synagogue has been seen as expressing a state of simultaneous conflict and complement between the two sister religions, whereby the images explain one to another, and the one cannot exist without the other (Katz in Rubin and Simons, 2009).

Illustration 2: Judensau late 15th century CE German wood-block print. (Source: Creative Commons)

The pig is an animal considered unclean and polluted by both Jews and Muslims. In medieval Europe both Jews and Muslims tended to be seen by Christians as similar rather than different, a condensed other – unbelievers (Kalmar and Penslar, 2005). The figures crawling over the beast are, we know from their head coverings, Jewish, and just in case there is any doubt there are Hebrew characters on some of the clothing. The trope of anality is characteristic of the denigratory rhetoric that is often present in attacks on racial and sexual minorities. The *coup de grace* of this cheap-to-reproduce, popular, wood-block print is to be seen in the lower right hand corner – the pile of faeces: the anal attack. It is interesting in the expression and representation of hatred, how often the trope of anality, and especially faeces,

feature. The olfactory helps separate 'us' from 'them'. In contemporary society it is not unusual for the despised minority to be verbally attacked as 'shit', for faecal material to be used in terrorizing people and for olfactory denigrator terms to be used against minorities (*they* smell). The current use of the word 'gay' as a synonym for 'rubbish' is a contemporary example of the anality trope in alterity.

The roots of this may lie in evolutionary biology, as higher primates need ways of detecting by smell that which is *ours* and which is not *ours*. Within psychoanalysis, the trope of anality, and especially the faecal, used to be something addressed more frequently and perhaps more easily than it is now. With the post-Freudian domestication of the rawness of the original psychoanalytic vocabulary, the focus has moved to perhaps more acceptable aspects of human biology. It is in need of some resuscitation as a useful vector in thinking about the rhetoric of prejudice and hatred. Anal rhetoric does not go away even if it is not mentioned much in polite bourgeois society. Put simply, the other smells and we do not.

The use of the visual to condense complex ideas and show difference rather than similarity gathered pace during the sixteenth century when failed internal attempts to reform the Catholic Church led to the establishment of new religious movements set up in protest. Protestant artists and craftsmen such as Lucas Cranach (1472-1553), Luther's friend and colleague in the work of challenging ecclesiastical corruption, was able to produce highly sophisticated, theologically dense, binaries of the difference between the old and new dispensations/testaments in works such as *The law and grace* (Koerner, 2004). Here a link was made between, on the one side, the unreformed Catholic Church and Judaism and, on the other, a reformed church and the purity of the New Testament. The earlier *synagoga/ekklesia* split was now being portrayed in a new light.

Illustration 3: Attributed to Cranach. The Law and the Gospel. (British Museum with permission)

This woodblock print manages to include a whole world of theoretical understanding of difference, whilst being essentially propaganda; it occludes the similarities between the Catholic and Protestant versions of Christian faiths. The imagery is an encyclopaedia of salvation history from Adam and Eve to the day of judgement. The doctrines held in common far outnumbered those that separated the two faiths. The other is utterly other: the paranoid-schizoid position is far easier to inhabit than the cognitive and affective messiness of the depressive position. Images that are more toxic than this had already become available in the popular prints: for example, the *Judensau*.

Illustration 4: Blood libel Woodcut early 16th century. German. (Source: Creative Commons)

The cult of Corpus Christi and the blood libels

By the twelfth century CE, fictional stories began spreading in northern Europe that Jews were stealing Christian children, usually always boys, so that they could use their blood in their liturgical practices (Rubin, 1999; Bynum, 2007). There was never evidence for the veracity of such stories, which flourished long after Jews had been driven out of England, but they were used as a basis for the rounding up and extermination of many Jewish people – hence, the name 'blood libels'. Psychoanalytically, the boys may be seen as unconscious symbols of Christ. In the illustration, the markers of alterity can be seen in the clothing of the figures and the yellow badge each of them wears as a marker of their otherness. The ubiquity and ferocity of this violence is open to a number of interpretations. One is that it is possible to read the idea of the blood libels as Oedipal revenge for the Christian charge against the Jews of deicide and a possible link here may be with the contemporaneous development in northern Europe of the cult of *Corpus Christi* (or the Blessed Sacrament). At the same Council, that of the Lateran in 1215, already mentioned, Jews were compelled to wear distinctive hats and yellow badges, transubstantiation became official doctrine. Originating in the Jewish Passover ritual, by the early 13th century, Catholic Christians had come to believe that the bread and wine consecrated during the Eucharist became the actual flesh and blood of

Jesus.

From a psychoanalytic perspective there is a problem in having an object that is so sacred that it is called The *Blessed* Sacrament, *Corpus Christi*, and towards which no negativity can be consciously conceived or tolerated; it is wholly other in the sense that it is a totally inconceivable 'good'. However, given there may be a tendency for the opposite always to be unconsciously present, as in the love/hate binary, where is the hate to go? Among the candidates then available in northern Europe were the Jewish people. Hence, the growth of deeply anti-Semitic blood libels which enabled Jews to be rounded up and killed, especially during festivals. Jews were necessary as containers for the inexpressible hate part of the love/hate binary. By way of contrast, the association of the sound of Jewish music with cacophony closely parallels the visual with which this paper is mainly concerned (HaCohen, 2011). Two paintings made especially for *Corpus Christi* guild chapels towards the end of the 15th century CE are illustrative. The first is a Northern Last Supper, or altarpiece of the Blessed Sacrament, in Leuven (Louvain) now in modern-day Belgium. This work, the first Netherlandish Last Supper, was commissioned by the Leuven Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and executed by Dieric Bouts the Elder, under the supervision of two professors of theology – to ensure doctrinal orthodoxy. Jesus sits at the head of a democratic table with his apostles, including Judas. Four small panels that show the Jewish roots of the Eucharist surround the main panel. These typological prefigurements were at least some attempt to see continuity rather than difference – as in the phrase 'old' testament to describe the Hebrew bible (*torah + Tanakh*). Bouts, influenced by or a pupil of, Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden, is generally recognized as the first northern painter to use single point perspective and here it illustrates the process of splitting. The left side wing panel probably showed Abraham and Melchizedek above the Passover feast and the gathering of the manna is above Elijah and the Angel on the right wing. From the Christian perspective, they are all read as prefigurements of the meal taking place in the central panel. Three of the side panels have head coverings indicative of Judaism; the central panel has Judas at the table.

Illustration 5: Leuven: Blessed Sacrament altarpiece Dieric Bouts the elder (Source: Wikigallery)

Another Last Supper was in the *Corpus Christi* guild chapel in Urbino in Italy. Although it was a work for an Italian corporate patron and site it is nevertheless essentially a northern panel from a technical viewpoint – albeit with an Italian devotional twist. The apostles are now on their knees receiving the Blessed Sacrament from the hands of a standing Jesus. This linked the Catholic viewer with the Mass whereas the Leuven Last Supper some may think to be a proto-Protestant communion service owing more to the Passover meal of the Jews than to the sacrifice of the Mass. Justus van Gent painted it, again to a commission by a local *Corpus Christi* guild. However, as it was Urbino, the local duke figured strongly in the panel. Jesus is distributing the Blessed Sacrament, to his kneeling apostles. Judas is just viewable in the frame at the left, sinister, side – his original yellow clothing now faded by exposure to daylight. To the right is the distinctive and distinguished figure of Federico de Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, engaged in a lively discussion with a man usually identified either as a convert Jew and physician or the former ambassador to the Shah of Persia. A visual counterpoint, the message is clear: the Blessed Sacrament is universally available to those of whatever provenance as long as they repent and believe. Katz has argued that this panel and the predella by Paulo Uccello that used to sit under it, were part of a message from Federico to his Jewish citizens and denizens: 'You are welcome here in my territory as long as you behave yourselves' (Katz, 2008: 22). The two works, the panel and the predella, link the doctrine of transubstantiation and Jewish people explicitly. Judas is shown physically

isolated but it would take a Leonardo to show him both psychologically alone and isolated.

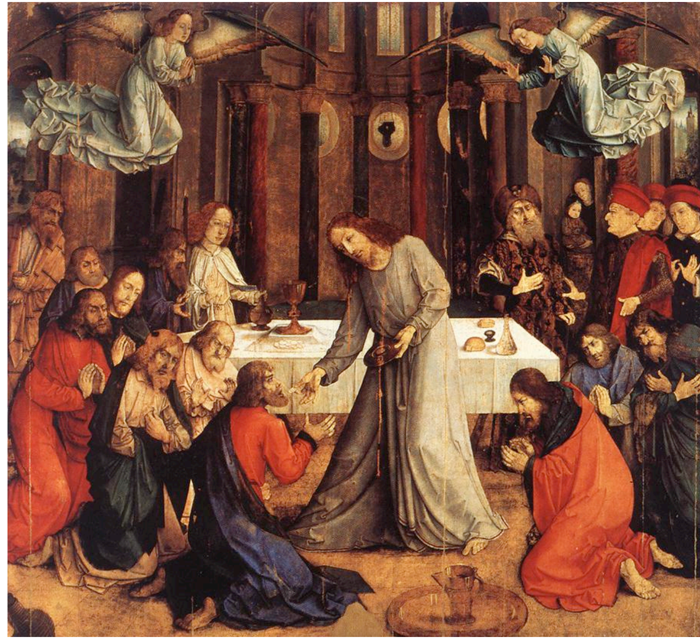

Illustration 6: Urbino: Blessed Sacrament altarpiece Justus van Gent (Source: Web Gallery of Art)

These two Last Suppers, both Netherlandish panels, although one was painted for an Italian setting, do not appear to demonize, or over-demonize, by splitting 'good' from 'bad' Jews. We are a long way from the harsh crudities of the *Judensau* and from the Passion iconography to which we turn next. My contention is that, south of the Alps, there was a less toxic attitude to Jews than there was developing in the German speaking lands to the north.

Passion iconography

Representations of the torture and death of Jesus in the visual culture of the late medieval and early renaissance period were widespread and popular, becoming a major source of anti-Jewishness. They illustrate how contempt, sadomasochism, denigration and anality were translated from the narrative of the Christian scriptures into the everyday world of the time. Again, the mechanism of splitting is much in evidence. The Christian canonical gospels contain four accounts of the last days of Jesus of Nazareth. The accounts are broadly similar as they tell of Jesus being hailed as he triumphantly enters Jerusalem and a few days later being arrested, tortured and executed by crucifixion. The accounts collectively known as 'passion' narratives, form part of the liturgy celebrated by Christians every year in Holy

Week, the most dangerous for Jewish people living in Christian lands. The late medieval/early renaissance stress was increasingly on a form of empathic attunement. The objects of visual culture – paintings, woodcarvings, sculpture, books of hours, woodblock prints – were all major conduits for the transmission of the message of who killed Jesus (Marrow, 1979). They became part of the internal world of the pious Christian believer as a result of the new forms of mentalization and contemplation, which I discuss below. Northern passion iconography, developing in German-speaking lands in the 15th century CE and exemplified in such painters, as Katzheimer and Bosch could not be more different from the Italian panels. A dynamic was afoot in Europe north of the Alps that was pushing an increasingly wide split between Jews and Christians. Factors were increasingly in place that put Jews in a very dangerous role as scapegoats for unconscious processes that would provide identity and support for Christendom as it struggled against internal and external threats such as Islam. Works such as de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* (*The Golden Legend*) provided rich imaginative material to feed the hunger for stories about the death of Jesus and the role of Judas than that which is found in the canonical accounts.

Illustration 7: Wolfgang von Katzheimer Crowning with thorns, Bavarian National Gallery, with permission

As practices in spirituality changed in the 14th and early 15th centuries there was an increasing demand for illustrations, and panel painters rose to the challenge (Belting, 1997; Benjamin, 1973). In this genre, nothing was left to the imagination. It was important to feel

the suffering. The job of the panel painter was to provide the images to intensify the experience. Perhaps what distinguishes pornography from art is that in the former, all is shown, whilst in the latter the imagination is allowed space for invention and fantasy. This is the territory of perverse sadomasochistic sexual arousal. The modern notion of *The Jew* may be problematic (Geller, 2011) but in the pre-modern context it is possible to see, in the visual culture of the time, aspects of a fetishized object based upon the images of the bodies, especially noses, represented in the some of the works discussed in this paper. (Puppi, 1991). It is also worth keeping in mind that the etymology of pornography leads us to the Greek words for flesh and writing/drawing. By the late 15th century, a painter based in Bavaria, Wolfgang von Katzheimer (1450-1508) was making panels in a very different emotional atmosphere from the one that had existed in earlier centuries. Not a painter of the first rank, and probably representative of many others, nevertheless his panel is instructive. The body of Jesus shows the marks of his scourging. The Hebrew lettering is probably fictive, intended to further stress upon the viewer the difference between the torturers and Jesus; the edge of Jesus' red robe has Greek lettering. The use of the colour yellow, the *Pileum Cornutum* and the dog in the panel are all noteworthy. Yellow draws the eye, once again. Although an almost unknown painter now, von Katzheimer's work is of great interest.

Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516) had a deeper understanding than von Katzheimer of the dynamics of the internal world: a pious, but critical, Catholic with links to the *devotio moderna*. Bosch had few illusions about the human condition and none about the fallibility of the institutional church (Silver, 2006). Notwithstanding the problems of attempting to psychoanalyze the internal world of such a complex character as Bosch, de Rijck, a Dutch psychoanalyst, has convincingly written on the *Garden of Earthly Delight* (in Baneke et al. 1993). Alterity, the focus of this paper, and the mechanism of splitting are illustrated in some of Bosch's passion panels – especially those at Princeton and in Ghent and especially, and most subtly in, the panel in the National Gallery in London. Bosch shows a development from what might called 'crude splitting' yet even within his passion works there are some that are more drenched with splitting than others. In the London Bosch, the story is again the crowning with thorns, that symbolic moment when the claimed kingship of Jesus is being mocked.

Illustration 8: H Bosch Crowning with thorns, National Gallery (Source: Wikigallery.org)

This painting shows Bosch was well aware that the other was indeed the other, but it was not necessary to turn it into a figure of hatred. This is why Bosch is an artist of the first rank and why hardly anyone has heard of, or remembers, von Katzheimer. There are many theories as to who the four outlying torturers might be, or represent. They have the qualities of portraits rather than some of the stereotypes often seen in the paintings of the time. The man at the top right is often seen as a representative of the conventional church (much disliked by Bosch). The dog's collar might refer to the Dominican order (pun on *Domini canes* – God's dogs) because of their super-ego masochistic and sadistic role in enforcing orthodoxy in the Inquisition. The oak leaves might refer to the venal Pope Julius II (1503-13) because his family emblem was of oak leaves and acorns. The man, top left, may represent the oppressive secular state about to place the crown of thorns (which might also be a nimbus or halo) on Jesus' head. The man, bottom right, may be a Jewish merchant. He is grasping the white clothing of Jesus and therefore may, or may or may not be desecrating the body of Jesus (*Corpus Domini*). The old man, bottom left, wears a head covering with both a crescent and a star representing Islam and Judaism, both indications of unbelief and alterity, yet appears genuinely tender in the way he handles Christ's hand.

The Jew/Muslim is being portrayed not as the hated other but as a human being who has tenderness. The 'subtlety' lies not in visual technique, so to speak, but more fundamentally, at the level of belief and intention. The crescent and the star are there to

indicate unbelief and difference but surely not to indicate Otherness, in the sense of the other that has to be hated. That potential message in the crescent/star symbols is trumped by the tenderness with which he touches Christ's hand – a trumping that is then endorsed, so to speak, by Christ's refusing to return any hatred and evidencing the need to be careful to distinguish between those illustrations of difference that do speak to alterity/hatred of the Other, and those that merely indicate difference. However, what is clear is that all four are looking at Jesus; they are in an intense relationship with him, if not with each other. They mock, tug, torture and hate, and Jesus does not return their hatred but looks at the viewer. It is not necessary to be a religious believer to see that this is a very powerful painting. We are in a timeless frozen moment before the crown of thorns pierces the skull of Jesus. Bosch knew Jewish people who were his neighbours in 's- Hertogenbosch in the present day Netherlands (Hartau, 2005). Here we can see images, which might be representative of alterity, especially the two men in the lower part of the panel, but we also see a moment before an act of torture. de Rijck observes that one of the mechanisms used by the paranoiac to solve the problems with the father figure is submission and trust in the figure of God (de Rijck, 1993). He offers as evidence of identification with Christ on the part of Bosch; pointing out that the Son of God is being tortured whilst remaining tranquil. However, another reading might see Bosch, and this panel, as an invitation to the viewer to be in a relationship with the victim of torture (Gibson, 1972). For Bosch, as in Thomas á Kempis' *Imitatio Christi*, this painting seems a powerful summary of his religious beliefs but here put into visual form. Instead of the crude dichotomies and splitting of the von Katzheimer panel, or the almost surreal grotesques of Bosch's more well-known allegorical panels with their genital and sometimes anal preoccupations, here we are moving towards, yet sometimes away, from a depressive position linked with alterity by having the central figure of the quintet directly engaging the viewer – in the method of the *devotio moderna*. We are invited to be a witness to the torture but are we also asked if we are complicit in the torture?

Discussion

A question to ask of the visual culture of any period is what its function may be? Most of these panels, sculptures and prints were made for use – some objects were used as aids to devotion and/or meditation (Von Simson, 1953). The visual representations of Judaism in Christian art in the first millennium CE were stylized owing much to their classical sources

and models. Whereas in the later middle ages and moving into the early renaissance, especially north of the Alps, the visual culture began to change; in this it was following earlier developments in spirituality and methods of devotion. The relationship between prayer/meditation and the image had been contested since the time of Augustine (354-430 CE) and Gregory (540-604 CE). Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 CE) had made a distinction between the holy image of God, being born, suckling, teaching, dying, resurrecting or ascending and the achievement of the realization of the goal of salvation. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE) developed this further, making a distinction between the *vision intellectualis* and the *visio imaginaria*, with the former, not surprisingly, having precedence (Kerr, 2003). Images were part of the necessary basic equipment but only in the foothills of the ascent to the summit of the mountain of enlightenment. Although the images of the Virgin Mary dominated the visual culture of the time, usually with their sense of untroubled calm, occasionally she was clad not in oceanic blue but in red which pointed to the torture and execution of her son (Von Simson, 1953). Indeed, one might see a project underway in which Mary, or Miriam in her Jewish name, has not only her Jewishness removed but she is increasingly made into a serene female object with just two sets of emotions: bliss and compassion (Rubin, 2009).

Images of the suffering and passion of Jesus in the last few days of his life were also very common and especially powerful in their psychological impact. The textual content of the passion narratives, simple or elaborated, immediately brings to light splitting mechanisms. Although the canonical passion narratives in the synoptic gospels, and in John, were painful accounts of torture and death, they were mild compared with the elaborations that began to appear in the 14th and 15th centuries. At the heart of the narratives, simple or with elaboration, lay a constructed, false, binary that dynamically protected the viewer from having to think that Jesus was Jewish as those who would have rid of him. Only difference, a bogus difference at that, could be seen. One and a half millennia of cultural and psychological distancing still needed reinforcing and the visual culture had its part to play in differentiating between 'us' and 'them', Jesus, and most of the actors in the narrative, could not be seen as Jewish. Only in recent decades has this aspect been able to be considered and this in scholarly rather than popular imaginations (Vermes, 2003; Kessler, 2011), and I would argue that powerful mechanisms of repression have been collectively at work to achieve and maintain this form of scotomization or selective blindness. Marrow has written powerfully of the animal imagery in much passion iconography. Although an art historian, 'the imagery of

Psalm 21 was no longer an allegorical conceit in the 15th and 16th centuries. Its translation from figurative allusion to literal description – from metaphor to enacted simile – was a complete one; Christ's tormentors *were* the dogs and lions of the psalm.' (Marrow, 1979: 180) He goes on to write of the impact on the creative imaginations of the time of these literal and figurative images at both conscious and unconscious levels. With the insights now of psychoanalysis we might want to add that the images constructed out of the internal world found powerful expression in such objects as bulls, lions and dogs. Artists, such as Bosch with his attachment to a surrealistic pallet before his time, were well used to representing aspects of the internal world, dynamic unconscious and toxic material in their paintings. The London Bosch, as representative of a type of passion iconography in the early years of the 16th century, seen through the allusions of Psalm 21's imagery, points to a profound grasp of the inner world both on the part of the painter and of the audience. This Bosch is an illustration of the sophistication of the *devotion moderna* at its best – the transcendent made ordinary.

The role of liturgy, especially the emotionally hyper-cathected liturgies used during the last three days of Holy Week, are of the greatest importance in understanding how ideas were transmitted. These last three days (the *Triduum*) mark the torture, death and resurrection of Jesus, and had by the 15th century CE, acquired many texts, scriptures and prayers that specifically indicted the Jews with deicide. These were the days when it was not safe for Jewish people to appear in public. The formal solemn public liturgies, especially on Good Friday, described Jews as 'perfidious'. There are substantial records of acts of terror being perpetrated against Jewish people at these religiously highly charged times (Rubin and Simons, 2009). The power of the introjections of hatred into the internal worlds of their recipients, especially at the dangerous (for Jews) times of the *Triduum* and again at the feast of *Corpus Christi* must have been significant. It is not surprising that Jewish versions that exalted the character of Judas and vilified Jesus (Reider, 1960; Tarachow, 1960) came into existence to balance, and somewhat defend against, the ferocity of the attacks felt by Jewish people. It has recently been asserted that these developments in spirituality, especially those regarding the passion, foreshadow the emergence of modern psychotherapy (Merkur, 2007). The argument is that the intense identification with the characters in the passion narrative, including Jesus, provided the affective and cognitive bases for the psychic changes that are one of the aims of the contemporary psychotherapies. Bosch's passion works are not only technically most accomplished but also they reveal an insight into the internal world that

transcends time and place. In his London crowning with thorns painting the central figure gazes calmly out of the frame. I assume Bosch, in making the panel, was giving us an insight into his internal world. In societies where levels of literacy were low, the visual provided a necessary source of meditation material for the non-literate and an addition to the text for those who could read. At another level, the imagination of the viewer, literate or not, was engaged by the visual in a different domain from that of the text. The controversy over images in Christianity following its Judaic roots had effectively been overturned by a three-fold justification attributed to Gregory in the 8th century CE. The belief was that the eye is more impressed than the ear, which forgets (Baxandall, 1972; Belting, 1997). One area of agreement, however, is that many of these works are painful to behold. They are not conventionally beautiful and perhaps that is another reason why they have not often been the subject of aesthetic attention.

At the heart of much of the works discussed in this paper lies violence. The works are sometimes reflective of violence, as in the Man of Sorrows iconography, more generally which start off devotionally but develop into attacks on religious minorities, or are intended to stir up violence, as in the blood libels wood block prints which rapidly spread because of their ease of production and low costs and – one assumes – their popularity. This paper has reflected on types of visual culture that have not so far been the subject of much psychoanalytically informed art criticism. It has taken one concept – splitting – and applied it to a number of objects to illustrate how, in Europe north of the Alps, the *other* was made to look strange, different and bad. This had the effect of strengthening the differences between Judaism and Christianity, rather than emphasizing those things that were shared. This made the *Other, Hoi Ioudaioi, The Jews,* toxic and, by making them non-human objects justified their eradication. Thus the religious visual culture of the time became part of the wider hermeneutic of vilification of Jewish people. These violent processes did not come out of nowhere and it has been argued that they were part of the very fabric of the religion of the late medieval period (Merback, 2002) but by the 16th century had become highly articulated, both textually and visually, and went on to develop further culminating in the Shoah, the genocidal tragedy in the twentieth century.

Note on Images

Because of intellectual property laws it has not been possible to reproduced illustrations of all

the works mentioned in the text. Those not shown can be found in the generous Web Gallery of Art www.wga.hu or via Google Images. I am especially grateful to the Bavarian National Gallery for the help they have given in the preparation of this paper, to the British Museum and to the National Gallery.

* Just before going to press, we learned the sad news of Bernard Ratigan's death on 29 September 2012. We convey our condolences to his family and friends. Correspondence can be directed to Malcolm Caphorn at the email address: bjr@dircon.co.uk.

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