Book Section:

Neighbouring and mixta in thirteenth-century Ashkenaz

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In a 2009 lecture, Jeffrey Cohen asked: 'What happens between Christian and Jew, in that interspace where temporal, cultural, geographic, theological partitions break down?' He showed that it is possible to glimpse, even in seemingly recalcitrant texts, 'narratives of coinhabitance more vivacious and complex than the reductive, hostile, and historically frozen representations at their surfaces'.[1] The value of attending to coinhabitance or neighbouring/proximity, he suggested, is that 'Jewish-Christian coinhabitation can open a dialogic and reciprocal space (or network) where all identities are susceptible to change … a heterodox space born of proximity…'. My aim here is to puzzle out 'a more intricate story of coinhabitance, of lived spaces between Christian and Jew where orthodox partition breaks down into heterodox quotidian praxis'.[2]

It is a story of a passage from cultural mimicry to cultural translation made possible by a dialogue in the everyday between minoritised Jewish patrons and scribes on the one hand, and Christian illuminators on the other. This dialogue involved common speech (most likely in the emerging local Franconian vernacular, one of the components of Middle High German) uttered at the invisible interstices between Latinitas and Hebrew text culture—mutual attempts to learn 'the language of the monks' (Latin) and the 'holy language' (Hebrew). And it also involved an act of cultural negotiation and translation. So a Christian illuminator learned something about Hebrew letters (which way was up, and how to shape them) and about the taboos and sensitivities of his Jewish interlocutor. But pushing my argument further, I will reconsider the well-known, though under-interpreted, interdiction against anthropomorphic imagery in Ashkenazi illuminated manuscripts: my view is that it was not a pre-given prohibition, but actually took form as a taboo during this process of

dialogue. The alleged ban against anthropomorphic images took its characteristically

Ashkenazi form – the use of human-animal hybrids and other methods of concealing the

human face – in the course of Jewish-Christian interaction. In other words, it was through

speaking and working with Christians, rather than by heeding pre-existing norms, that Jewish

patrons came to eschew, mask, alienate, and hybridise anthropomorphic imagery. So this

study is of that unstable in-between space of cultural negotiation, or 'that interspace where

temporal, cultural, geographic, theological partitions break down', that shaped

(inter-)subjectivities. As Stuart Hall said about Black British and Caribbean cultural

performance:

> Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and
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> position ourselves within, the narratives of the past … Cultural identities are the
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> points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are
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> made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning[3]
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> … [Identity is] constituted, not outside but within representation … not as a second-
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> order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation
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> which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to
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> discover places from which to speak.[4]

Hall's point, vis-à-vis a Derridean play of différance, is that identification is not merely

arbitrary, but can also constitute a political (self-)positioning: 'Hence, there is always a

politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an

unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin'.[5]

Instead of focusing on the chimera of a pre-existing identity, I will emphasise

encounters, neighbouring and proximation (Jeffrey Cohen's terms) as the vehicles of new

forms of self-positioning. This self-positioning occurs precisely in the 'lived spaces between

Christian and Jew where orthodox partition breaks down into heretodox quotidian praxis',[6]

making it possible for Jewish patrons to commission works that may have been controversial in their own communities, even 'tainted' by proximity to, or neighbouring with, Christian image practices, and hence requiring strategies of difference. This unstable identity, already impure because dialogically constructed, could only be learned in dialogue with an Other – a dialogue that occurred as Jews crossed cultural as well as physical thresholds by entering Christian painters' workshops in the first place. This dialogue was made possible by new patterns of production in the thirteenth century: Christian lay illuminators' workshops flourished in urban centres and as itinerant businesses, while at the same time Jewish scribes organised book production in increasingly professionalised family businesses. These parallel developments – professionalisation of Jewish scribes and access to urban lay illuminators' workshops—worked in tandem. It is this collaboration across the ideologically policed boundaries of communities that ultimately gave rise to the phenomenon of the 'zoomorphic' mixta as the normative representational code in Hebrew book culture between 1236 and 1348.

This essay will be devoted to theorising the transition between two illuminated books made for one Jewish patron by different scribes and workshops. I propose to trace three steps in this transition, all happening within a very few years. The first step was taken when a Jewish patron engaged a Christian artist: the patron's intention was to imitate the socio-cultural trappings of aristocratic Christianity – not as a 'faith' but as a performance of status.[7] This form of imitation of status symbols might be called mimicry in the sense in which Homi Bhabha used it.[8] Paradoxically, while mimicry calls for a complete 'becoming like', it is nevertheless partial, 'almost the same but not quite' in Homi Bhabha's formulation based on Samuel Weber's reading of Freud:

> colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a
> difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say that the discourse of
> mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must

continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.[9]

This ambivalence described by Bhabha often results in a subversion of the thing mimicked, precisely because of an indeterminacy with which mimicry is 'stricken':

> Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power … and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers.

Although the relationship between the Jewish minority and the Christian majority in medieval southern Germany is not strictly speaking a colonial one, Bhabha's insights into mimicry's double articulation make visible precisely what was so problematic about this first step of asking a Christian workshop to illuminate a Hebrew manuscript. In a second step, the initially unproblematic figures were defaced, signalling the limits to mimicry and a rejection of it. The third step involves the invention of a new, 'non-idolatrous' mode of representation, by means of hybrid and monstrous figures. These figures figure doubly—on the one hand, they figure a strategic, critical hybridity, a new self-positioning as Jewish vis-à-vis a hegemonic image culture; on the other, they figure an ambivalence about the purity of one's own identity. My contention is that these illuminated books engage in forms of translatio, that is cultural translation, transfer, and rewriting/re-inscription.[10] In this process of re-inscription across the boundaries of Christian image culture (but is Jewish image culture in thirteenth-century Europe ever quite outside of Christian image culture?), the Christian 'Old Testament' images are modified, defaced and turned into hybrids.

Between 1232 and 1238 a patron named Joseph ben Moses, probably a wealthy layman from Ulm (Swabia) attracted to Würzburg by the rapid growth of that community, commissioned two large-format and lavishly illuminated codices in Hebrew: the complete

Bible with Targum (Aramaic paraphrase) and Masorah (grammatical and lexicographic annotation), and a biblical commentary compilation (based on Rashi and his school, but also including recent German glosses). The nature of these texts suggests strongly that Joseph ben Moses was a layman, for these texts were the staple of basic Jewish literacy and piety, not scholarly rabbinic works of law. The indications of use – marginal annotations – come from a later period (judging by the script). These books were not (at least not initially) school room books. They are splendid, costly copies, indicating a wealthy householder able to acquire, and keen to bequeath to his descendants, visible signs of both status and piety.

The commentary is dated first, in the year 4993 since the creation of the world, i.e. between September 1232 and September 1233, and signed by the Würzburg scribe Salomon ben Samuel (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Cod. Hebr. 5/I and II). Originally a single volume of nearly 500 large folios, it would have served to showcase its owner's devotion to traditional learning. The backbone of this compilation is the (by then classic) commentary of Rashi (RaShI – Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, of Troyes, d. 1105); it is enriched by the inclusion of comments from his followers, and glosses by German scholars, all the way down to the scribe's own time. What we have is thus both a vademecum of exegesis and a dynamic text captured at a transitory moment by a creative compiler. Solomon ben Samuel's elaborate double colophon also gestures towards a cultivation of learning. This colophon's middle part contains a messianic prayer full of learned allusions.[11] Nevertheless, the patron's choice reflects a ritualised performance of piety rather than an active participation in the Würzburg Yeshivah: at that academy, the emphasis was on Talmud study and elucidation, as well as on the study of mystical texts.[12] The commentary text, arranged in accordance with the liturgical use of the Hebrew Bible, points to an environment of bible study in its communal setting. This liturgical/communal arrangement is reflected in the structure of the illumination cycle, whose initial word panels cross-reference to the major and minor liturgical divisions of the

biblical text that the commentary text refers to (figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4).

The real novelty of this manuscript as a material object lay in the initial word panels illuminated with biblical narratives. Jewish patrons had not previously commissioned manuscripts illuminated with narrative images. There were drawn illustrations in the form of micrography (i.e. text written in the form of ornamental or narrative images shaped out of lines of tiny lettering).[13] But the use of painted narrative imagery was unprecedented. The set was never completed, but the empty spaces indicate that consistency was sought. The five books of the Torah, the weekly synagogal readings from them (figs. 1, 2 and 3), and the historical and prophetic books (fig. 4) were all to have been prefaced with narrative/historiated initial word panels; the initial words and the text endings of the weekly Haftarot (non-pentateuchal/prophetic passages complementing the pentateuchal ones) are marked in decorated initial words. In addition, a full-page illumination of the Menorah (seven-branched candelabrum, see Exodus 25:31-40) may have been based on a didactic drawing originating in Rashi's school. That the painters were not Jews is evidenced by a double guidance system: Latin instructions for the illuminator specified the subjects (subsequently erased and now mostly undecipherable, but clearly in Latin), and Hebrew letter templates guided the painter (fig. 2). Despite the guidance, however, the golden initial words are flawed, especially when compared with the wonderful penmanship of the scribe Solomon ben Samuel.[14] These guidance notes are the material traces of dialogue and cultural translation.

A few years later, Joseph ben Moses, this time specified as originating 'from "Ulmna"', i.e. probably Ulm, commissioned a complete Hebrew Bible (Milan, Bibl. Ambrosiana B 30-32 Inf).[15] The Pentateuch concludes with two colophons, one by the main scribe who wrote the consonantal biblical text and the Aramaic paraphrase, and one by the vocaliser who also added the marginal Masorah. The scribe Jacob ben Samuel (related to the

Würzburg scribe Solomon ben Samuel?) signed the first colophon on 10 January 1236.[16] Two years later, in January 1238 (only the month of Shevat is specified, which corresponds roughly to January), the vocaliser (specialist scribe who added the Hebrew vowel signs) and masorete (specialist copyist of Masorah, often in tiny lettering) Joseph ben Kalonymos, who is also known as a liturgical poet, signed his share of the work.[17] This time, a different illuminators' workshop was engaged, again very accomplished, whose work is not otherwise known (figs. 5 – 8). Its elegant and expressive, if largely conservative, style fits into the profile of production known across Franconia, the Upper Rhine and Swabia during the 1220s and the 1230s. All twenty-four books of this Bible open with illuminated initial word panels, some of which are narrative-allegorical (figs. 6 – 8). In addition, two miniatures emphasise the (messianic) End: at the end of the book of Ruth (fol. 2v), the arrival of King David (Ruth's descendant) is adumbrated. And uniquely, at the end of the final volume an apocryphal-midrashic apocalyptic double page scene forms a kind of continuation or fulfilment of the redemptive scenario implied at the end of the book of Chronicles: the planets rejoice among the four creatures seen by Ezekiel in his vision; Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz engage in apocalyptic battle, and the Just feast in Paradise (fig. 8). Although modelled on the layout of the picture quires prefacing Latin Psalters, this double-page spread, coming as it does at the end of the Bible, nevertheless follows a very different temporality – one that staked a claim to completing the Bible's narrative in a culturally specific way, in polemical dissonance with Christian visions of Apocalypse, Judgement and Second Coming.

Yet the most salient difference between the 1232/3 biblical commentary and the 1236–1238 Bible is not stylistic, nor iconographic; it lies instead in their distinctive representational codes. Whereas the biblical commentary was initially illuminated with narrative images whose figures were indistinguishable in their anthropomorphicity from the work of that workshop for Christian patrons (figs. 1 – 4), the Bible of 1236–1238 was a field

of experiment for a new mode of representation – a mode that thereafter became characteristic of Hebrew illuminated books for the next century and more: human figures with concealed or animal faces (figs. 5 – 8).

The two splendid codices made for Joseph ben Moses of 'Ulmna' mark a process of rapid change in Jewish book culture and visualities. The 1232/3 commentary appears to be the first extant Hebrew book in the medieval west illuminated by professionals – and in this case, known Christian illuminators. It thus marks a radical departure from the known established modes of Hebrew manuscript decoration, which had tended to be non-narrative, or consisted of micrography/ drawing by scribe-artists. However, the full integration of 'Western' or 'Christian' modes of book illumination was almost immediately interrupted. Although all faces in the commentary's illuminations were initially fully and finely drawn (as the un-tampered face of one of the executioners on fol. 209v of vol. II shows, see fig. 4, centre), they were then systematically, carefully and deliberately defaced. The facial features, especially the eyes, were almost totally erased. While angels were treated in exactly the same way as mere mortals, on fol. 47v (fig. 3) a more radical approach was taken: there, we have to assume that a divine figure had appeared as Moses' interlocutor; infringed the taboo against depicting the deity, so the bust or half-figure was erased in its entirety. It is almost certain that this defacement took place fairly soon after the illuminations were completed, rather than decades or centuries later.

There are several complicated grounds for this claim. By 1236–1238 (when Joseph ben Moses' 'Ambrosian' Bible was illuminated with a variety of concealed faces and animal heads substituted for human heads), it was clearly becoming less and less acceptable for the patron to own a manuscript illustrated with fully anthropomorphic images. Another Bible, signed by the same vocaliser-masorete Joseph ben Kalonymos in 1237/8, was still illuminated with anthropomorphic figures – and they too were deliberately and carefully

defaced.[18] Thereafter, manuscripts from this region, if illuminated, were illuminated with concealed or animal faces. We can be fairly certain of the timing of erasure, because this drastic form of intervention ceased once the new 'animal-headed' representational mode was fully established. Moreover, only in Munich Cod. Hebr. 5 is erasure applied systematically. Elsewhere it is carried out partially, with decreasing frequency and consistency. Already in the Ambrosian Bible not all faces are concealed – some are defaced. By the late thirteenth century, erasure was already quoted rather than actually executed as a physical intervention.[19] Later narrative manuscripts were never subjected to erasure.

There is also a theological argument. An ancient Talmudic procedure called 'annulment of idolatry' (bittul avodat kokhavim), which involved partial and strategic defacement by 'idolaters' (non-Jews) of specific facial features before their Jewish owners could legitimately take possession, may have been invoked to compel a Christian (the illuminator himself?) to deface the images before Joseph ben Moses took possession. Bittul Avodat Kokhavim specifies that the erasure of facial features, that is the cancellation of idolatry, must take place before the owner takes possession; it thus had to happen straight away, before Joseph ben Moses could take delivery of his book. However, such a tactic was probably chosen ad hoc. Given that the biblical commentary, and Joseph ben Kalonymos' 1237/8 Bible (Wroclaw, University Library, Ms. M 1106.), had initially been illuminated in a mode that was fully anthropomorphic, the customary assumption that image making was widely considered to be in contravention of the Second Commandment cannot be right. Ashkenazi authorities were in fact divided over this issue, and 'popular' practice diverged from rabbinic norms in what is perhaps a surprising way: a rabbinic consensus had gradually emerged that rejected the equation of illuminated books with 'idolatry', yet a popular taboo persisted in regarding anthropomorphic depictions as tainted, on account of their similarity to Christian image practices.[20] The 'annulment of idolatry' through defacement is the trace of

social mimicry attempted and subsequently retracted in favour of visible cultural differentiation, or a strategy of cultural difference.

This strategy of cultural difference can be seen for the first time in Joseph ben Moses' Bible of 1236–1238, where most faces were concealed or masked from the start: some heads were designed in such a way as to avoid showing the face (Adam and Eve with their faces covered by their hair (fig. 5); Abraham and Moses with their faces averted (figs. 6, 7). In the initial word panels to Leviticus and Deuteronomy, some human faces were used, and then defaced (strangely enough, two of these belong to angels). Other heads were replaced with a variety of animals heads – lions mostly, but also eagles, bulls/oxen, and stags/does (fig. 8). Throughout, only their heads and necks are thus transformed, while their hands remain human. Some even sport human hair and beards, as if these were signs of culture (like hair coverings and crowns). Some animal heads were subsequently defaced, as if still somehow too human-like. The resulting animal-faced figures are curiously monstrous; following Bynum's exploration of wonder and mirabilia, they may be classified as mixta (sing. mixtum, from Latin miscere, to mix), 'conjoined things'.[21]

Although the margins and inhabited initials of Latin manuscripts from the thirteenth century teem with mixta or hybrids, they very seldom feature the specific kind of mixtum under discussion here: the mixtum consisting of a human body and an animal or bird head, which characterises Ashkenazi illuminated manuscripts from the Bible of 1236–1238 until the Black Death.[22] The best known exception to this rule (absence of animal-headed humans in Latin alphabet manuscripts), which Zofia Ameisenowa proposed in 1953 as the iconographic key to the 'zoomorphic' Hebrew manuscripts, is the tradition of depicting the evangelists in zoocephalic form; that is, bearing the heads of their three symbolic animals. Another, unusual example, from early thirteenth century Würzburg, occurs in an illustration of Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31–46), commonly understood as a

parable about the Last Judgement, in the Hiltegerus Psalter (fig. 9).[23] The elect and the damned are thoroughly human, but they have animal heads. It is possible that such animal headed creatures in Latin prayer-books provided the illuminators of the Hebrew Bible with artistic resources (the 'how to') for the concealment and masking of the human face. But there is an important difference: the key to understanding the sheep and the goats in the Latin Psalter is iconographic – their animal heads allegorically index their elect or damned status; by contrast the mixta or biformis creatures with animal heads in the 'Ambrosian' Hebrew Bible should not be understood iconographically – the animal heads here refuse the anthropomorphic order of representation and thereby offer a critique of an image culture perceived as Christian. Bearing in mind Bhabha's comments, cited above, about the indeterminacy of mimicry, it would be a mistake to ascribe a univocal, fully knowable meaning to the animal headed beings.

The transition from the fully human figures in the biblical commentary of 1232/3, to their subsequent defacement, to the development of an alternative mode of representation in the Bible of 1236–1238 represents the move from mimicry via resistance and cultural negotiation to a kind of cultural translation. In the process, a minority, far from losing participation in the visual culture of the time, claimed its subjectivity. Cohen, in his analysis of Gerald of Wales' mestizaje, has argued that 'mixta bridge in their flesh cultures, races, geographies, and temporalities …'.[24] This subjectivity was not a fixed or pure identity, but rather a contingently positioned, contaminated, hybrid, monstrous one.

To return to the topic of patronage as mimicry. As mentioned, Joseph ben Moses was almost certainly a layman rather than a notable scholar; perhaps he was one of the wealthy laymen who aspired to community leadership. He might have moved to Würzburg from Ulm in order to participate in the vigorous growth of the Würzburg Jewish community during the thirteenth century. During the rule of Frederic II Hohenstaufen, the empire was embodied in

Würzburg by the emperor's local deputy, the prince-bishop Hermann of Lobdeburg (1225–1254).[25] The Lobdeburgs were a Thuringian dynasty with close links to the imperial family, who ruled Würzburg as both secular and spiritual lords during the first half of the thirteenth century – not undisputed, of course, as the rising citizenship aspired to self-government (and provided a model for Jewish communal organisation). Hermann of Lobdeburg sought to control Jewish taxes by acquiring the emperor's right to his *servi camerae*, but the citizens contested the 'Judenregal' and for a time Jews were obliged to pay taxes to both bishop and town. The bishop's artistic patronage in Würzburg included the patronage of manuscripts, in particular the 'Dominican Bible' – a four-volume illuminated Latin Bible (dated 1246), which the bishop donated, possibly as a token of his benevolent control, to the newly established Dominican convent.[26] I have noted the Lobdeburgs' Thuringian connections because the Dominican Bible is usually thought to mark a sea-change in the history of the Würzburg school of illumination – a transition from a late Romanesque aesthetic very rooted in the Franconian (Bamberg), Bavarian (Regensburg) and Austrian (Salzburg) regions to a Byzanto-Romanesque-Gothic hybrid style known as Zackenstil (the angular style), imported from its 'homeland', the landgraviate of Thuringia, where it had been developed at the cosmopolitan court of Hermann I of Thuringia (d. 1217). This new style became the hallmark of the luxury psalters produced for aristocratic patrons in the South of Germany. The prince-bishop and the Jewish layman may have chosen the same illuminators' workshop![27] Yet the new style is already noticeable in the Hebrew commentary compilation for Joseph ben Moses, whose colophon dates it to 1232/3, i.e. more than a decade before the 'tone-setting' Dominican Bible of 1246. What matters here is that Joseph ben Moses was eager and able to employ one of the most fashionable workshops of his day to produce, in cooperation with the Hebrew scribe, a miniature cycle equivalent to the most luxurious objects of Christian patronage.

To understand Joseph ben Moses' patronage as initially an act of mimicry, we need to

understand what he was emulating. Comparable Christian counterparts include the so-called luxury Psalters made for the German nobility, and especially for noble ladies.[28] The high-end prototypes for this expensive but portable object of piety and display are without doubt to be sought amongst the Psalters made for the Thuringian Landgraves during the 1210s: the Elisabeth Psalter (Cividale, Bibl. Communale, Ms 87) and the LandgrafenPsalter (Stuttgart ,WLB, ms H B II bibl 24).[29] The surviving examples (or fragments) localisable to Franconia are numerous, but usually impossible to ascribe to known owners; all are characterised by extensive narrative picture cycles.[30] Besides the normative Marian and/or Christological picture preface (a textless set of full-page or half/half-page scenes from the life of Mary and Jesus, including apocryphal episodes), some of these splendid books feature additional narrative cycles or elements. Thus Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 3900's calendar is accompanied by a St. Catherine cycle, indicating its ownership by a noble lady. The deployment of narrative panels in the above-mentioned Hiltegerus Psalter, is particularly close in layout: in addition to full-page illuminations, Psalm initials are historiated with biblical and apocryphal narrative scenes, some set in framed panels (fig. 9).[31] Many further examples likewise indicate that biblical narrative imagery was closely associated with the performance of piety by the local nobility.

In commissioning a Bible and biblical commentary with illuminations, Joseph ben Moses was imitating, albeit partially, a stratum of society to which he did not, could not belong. The identification is not with Christianity but with a particular social elite. Nevertheless, it was an impossible identification, which could only ever be partial, and yet was potentially subversive. This potential for subversion worked both ways: it potentially shook the foundations of noble power, but it also called into question what it meant to be Jewish. This aspect of subversion finally disrupted the act of mimicry, specifically by means of deliberate violation – the careful but merciless defacement of all the completed narrative

miniatures. This defacement disrupts the act of mimicry, and constitutes a rupture that articulates cultural difference in all its antagonistic dynamic. The defaced figures do not reflect a pre-given cultural antagonism. Rather, the defacement makes a claim for antagonism by rejecting the already performed mimicry, by refusing to completely mimic the cultural practices of the neighbours. The illuminator's workshop was forced to make explicit a cultural difference claimed by the minoritised neighbour. It's worth reading this process against Homi Bhabha's thoughts on the performance of affiliation and antagonism:

> Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.[32]

The monstrous or mixta representational code developed in the 1236–1238 Bible was to remain normative into the mid-fourteenth century. This mode of representation, while visualising hybridity, stood for the Jewish refusal of bridging or mixing, while paradoxically figuring the very hybridity or impurity of Ashkenazi Jewish culture.

The very cultural patterns of Ashkenazi Judaism show this society to be riven by impurity, which is figured in the mixta while being denied textually. Entanglement and impurity in high medieval Ashkenazi culture have been the subject of research and theorisation in recent years by scholars such as Yuval, Marcus, Baumgarten, Malkiel, Goldin, Przybilski, so I will point only briefly to stories of proximation and boundary crossing.[33] Particularly provocative embodiments of boundary-crossing are converts in both directions. While Jewish apostates (converts to Christianity) have been thoroughly researched, proselytes (Christian converts to Judaism) have received less attention.[34] Rami Reiner has

traced a significant change of attitude towards proselytes between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, a change towards more acceptance and integration—assimilation, one might say, into a newly hybridised ethnic body.

Conjoining was deemed impossible on both sides, but stories of neighbouring, proximity, and mixta are detectable between the lines of the official narratives. Both Christians and Jews forbade mixed marriages, and proscribed apostasy. On the side of the Church, especially once the Inquisition was established, apostasy was punishable by burning alive at the stake. Jewish law quite simply did not recognise apostasy – a Jew always remained a Jew, and apostasy was merely a transgression considered reversible, atonable by a regime of penances. Like canon law, Halakhah denied the possibility of border-crossing. A proselyte, or convert to Judaism, was considered like a new-born baby, and hence (at least in theory) his or her prior family bonds and inheritance were considered null and void. Converts could not mourn for their Christian parents, nor bequeath their property (though these disabilities were at least partially removed between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries). Offences committed before conversion were also voided upon conversion. A case first decided by Rabbenu Tam (d. 1170) continued to occupy several generations of legists: a Jewish wife has had an adulterous affair with a Christian; is divorced by her husband; converts to Christianity and marries her Christian lover; reverts to Judaism; her Christian former lover and now husband converts to Judaism; they wish to be married according to Jewish ritual. Some rabbinic authorities considered her adultery never to have taken place, on the grounds that 'the seed of a gentile was regarded by biblical law as null'; others considered the adultery to be voided by the conversion of the Christian lover/husband – now a newborn without a past. Though the legal reasoning was under dispute, the reverted woman was permitted to marry her formerly Christian adulterous lover and husband according to Jewish ritual![35] The multiple border-crossings, even while effectively narrated, are denied on the

discursive level.

The second text that shows how close proximity was, and how porous those strictly policed communal boundaries were, is one transmitted by Rabbi Meir Ben Baruch of Rothenburg (Maharam, c. 1215–1293), the foremost German-Ashkenazi rabbinic authority of the second half of the thirteenth century, and the same rabbi who concluded that illuminated prayer-books were not idolatrous. He attributes to the radical mystic Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid (d. 1217, author of the Sefer Hasidim, or Book of the Pietists) the following legend:

> There is a chamber in the heavens called guf [body] housing all souls destined to enter humans, and an angel appointed to oversee pregnancies takes [souls] from that chamber and implants them in women's bellies. Occasionally [the angel] errs and places a soul worthy of a gentile in a Jewish woman's intestines and her baby becomes meshumad [apostate]. And occasionally he places a soul worthy of a Jew in a gentile woman's intestines and her baby becomes a ger (proselyte, convert to Judaism).[36]

In this astonishing vision of a muddling angel – anxious to shore up the social body of the Jewish community yet unable to police its boundaries – Jew and Christian are no longer distinguishable by ethnic origin Here, 'cultures have crossbred and produced "hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species"',[37] while claiming unbridgeable cultural antagonisms.

By commissioning high-quality illuminators, Joseph ben Moses emulated, even mimicked the nobility, a social group inappropriate to his status as 'serf of the royal chamber'. What matters therefore is not artistic mimesis, but that inappropriate gesture. What Gunnar Mikosch has called Jewish Selbstimagination, self-imaging, was always an act of the imagination, a claim to a self that had no substance except in the imagination.[38] Joseph ben

Moses' Selbstimagination, self-imaging, was as almost a member of the local nobility. To mimic noble patterns of patronage was emphatically not to be noble. As Homi Bhabha put it in a different context: '… the mimic man … is the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English'.[39] In this case, Joseph ben Moses imitated that which he was able to imitate: the noble patronage of splendid illuminated books connected to the performance and display of piety. After all, many forms of patronage were not available to Jewish patrons: the building of castles, the public display of wealth and status, the commissioning of devotional paintings and sculptures, the sponsoring of musicians and performers. Joseph ben Moses' mimicry comments upon the unspoken power relations between the hegemonic Christian image culture and its minor Jewish form. What marks Joseph ben Moses' patronage initially as mimicry is its close and yet partial imitation that reinforced the nobility's inimitable status. It is the partial nature of Jewish imitation that reinforced the superiority of noble patronage – yet also threatened to undermine it, by calling it into question. From mimicry, Joseph ben Moses went on to reject mimicry in favour of a strategy of difference: the defacement of his biblical commentary, and subsequently, in his later Bible, concealment of faces and substitution by animal/bird faces. This strategy of difference was the outcome of neighbouring, proximity and dialogue, and thus reveals the insoluble bond between difference and neighbouring.

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[1] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Between Christian and Jew: Orthodoxy, Violence, and Living Together in Medieval England', lecture delivered at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds, 13 July 2009. My thanks to Jeffrey Cohen for allowing me to quote from the unpublished lecture.

[2] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Between Christian and Jew: Orthodoxy, Violence, and Living Together in Medieval England'.

[3] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in Identity: Community, Culture, and

Difference, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222–37, at 225–6.

[4] Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', 236–7.

[5] Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', 225.

[6] Cohen, 'Between Christian and Jew'.

[7] Eva Frojmovic, 'Ashkenazi Prayerbooks and their Christian Illuminators', in Crossing Borders: Hebrew Manuscripts as a Meeting-place of Cultures, ed. Piet van Boxel and Sabine Arndt, (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2009), 45–56.

[8] Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', in The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1994), 85–92.

[9] Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', 86.

[10] For Bhabha's use of cultural translation, which follows Walter Benjamin's, as displacement of signification rather than replication, see Homi Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory', in The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1994), 19–39.

[11] The prayer alternates prose with lines of rhyming verse. The translation of the verse lines is uncertain, so I quote their original Hebrew as well.

'I Solomon son of R. Samuel wrote these commentaries to the twenty-four books [of the Bible] for R. Joseph son of R. Moses in the year 4993 after the creation of the world. And this will by my memorial when I return to dust.

ברוך ה׳ לעולם אמן ואמן Blessed be God for ever amen and amen

ודברי הטוב יאמן The words of (the) good shall be believed

לכחש בשמן מעוכלֹא ועד תומן For the lean utterly lacking fat [cf. Ps 109:24, with added emphasis based on a poetic expression known from liturgical hymns using a piyut citing mishnaic dry measures!]

בגלות ובמזומן In exile and at the appointed time [cf. Ezra 10:14]

מלֹאכיו לי לזמן His angels to summon me

מצר להיטמן From sorrow to conceal me

כאשר ישא האומן As the nurse carries the infant [cf. Num 11:12].

I Solomon son of rabbi Samuel from the city of Würzburg have written these commentaries of the twenty-four books for rabbi Joseph son of rabbi Moses in the year four thousand and nine hundred and ninety three after the creation of the world. And may the 'place' [i.e. God] give him the merit to study them and to bequeath them to his sons and grandchildren until the end of all the generations, amen. And may the heavenly spirit be poured out onto us and may his secrets illuminate our eyes. And may he bring the Messiah of justice and may he rebuild the Temple. And there will the horn [of redemption] sprout unto us. Amen speedily in our days.'

My thanks to Susan Einbinder for her help with this translation. The manuscript is fully described in Elisabeth Klemm, Die illuminierten Handschriften des 13. Jahrhunderts deutscher Herkunft in der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1998), 198–202. On the Jews of Würzburg, see Karlheinz Müller, 'Die jüdische Gemeinde', in Geschichte der Stadt Würzburg, ed. Ulrich Wagner, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2001), 515–42; Karlheinz Müller, Die Würzburger Judengemeinde im Mittelalter. Von den Anfängen bis zum Tod Julius Echters (1617) (Würzburg: Freunde Mainfränkischer Kunst und Geschichte, 2004), 44–62. Based on the rich historical archive constituted by the medieval tombstones found in 1987, these publications offer substantial revisions to older literature: Seligmann Bamberger, *Geschichte der Rabbiner der Stadt und des Bezirkes Würzburg vom 12. Jahrhundert bis auf die Neuzeit* (Würzburg: Frank, 1906); and Mosze Awigdor Szulwas, Die Juden in Würzburg während des Mittelalters (Berlin: Paul Brandel, 1934).

[12] Karlheinz Müller, 'Bildungsrang und Spiritualität der Würzburger Juden', in Unterfränkische Geschichte, ed. Peter Kolb and Ernst-Günter Krenig (Würzburg: Echter, 1990–2002), vol. 2. Vom hohen Mittelalter bis zum Beginn des konfessionellen Zeitalters

(1992), 374–401.

[13] Drawn/micrographic biblical illustrations do not predate the early thirteenth century either. Joseph Gutmann, 'Masorah figurata: the Origins and Development of a Jewish Art Form', in his Sacred Images: Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages (Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989), ch. XV; Leila Avrin, Hebrew Micrography: One Thousand Years of Art in Script (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1981); Rahel Fronda, 'Attributing of Three Ashkenazi Bibles with Micrographic Images', Ars Judaica 9 (2013), 45-56.

[14] Elisabeth Klemm, Die illuminierten Handschriften des 13. Jahrhunderts, 198–202, mentions the Hebrew templates briefly without exploring their import. The Latin instructions for the illuminator were first noted, and a Christian artist posited, by Robert Suckale, 'Über den Anteil christlicher Maler an der Ausmalung hebräischer Handschriften der Gotik in Bayern', in Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Bayern, ed. Manfred Treml and Wolf Weigand, with Evamaria Brockhoff (Munchen: K.G. Saur, 1988), 123–34, contra Thérèse Metzger, 'Le manuscrit enluminé Cod. Hebr. 5 de la Bibliothèque d'Etat à Munich', in Etudes de civilisation médiévale, IXe–XIIe siècles; mélanges offerts à Edmond René Labande (Poitiers: C.E.S.C.M., 1974), 537–52, who claimed a Jewish ethnic identity for the painters.

[15] Aldo Luzzatto and Luisa Mortara Ottolenghi, Hebraica Ambrosiana: Catalogue of Undescribed Hebrew Manuscripts in the Ambrosiana Library; Description of Decorated and Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts in the Ambrosiana Library (Milano: Edizioni il Polifilo, 1972), 119–25; Kurt Schubert, 'Die Ikonographie der ambrosianischen Bibel', Kairos. Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie, ns 27 (1985) 207–14.

[16] 'I, Jacob bar Samuel the scribe, wrote this book for R. Joseph ben R. Moses of Ulmna and I completed it on the first of Shevat in the year 996 according to the [small] reckoning (4996 from the creation of the world, i.e. 10 January, 1236 C.E.), and may God give him the merit to learn from it, him and his children and the children of this children. Be strong and let us be

strengthened, and may the scribe not languish.'

[17] 'And I, Joseph b[en] Kalonymos, wrote the Massorah and punctuated and completed it in the year 998 according to the [small] reckoning in the month of Shevat (January 1238 CE).' In 1237/8, the same vocaliser Joseph ben Kalonymos signed the third manuscript of this group, Wroclaw, University Library, Ms. M 1106. Its original patron's name was scratched out by a later owner, and the location is not specified beyond the vague Mishnaic geographical label 'Hadyev', i.e. Ashkenaz. See Thérèse Metzger, *Die Bibel von Meschullam und Joseph Qalonymos Ms. M 1106 der Universitätsbibliothek Bresslau (Wroclaw)* (Würzburg: Kommissionsverlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1994). On Joseph ben Kalonymos as poet, see Siegmund Salfeld, *Das Martyrologium des Nürnberger Memorbuches* (Berlin: L. Simion, 1898), 326.

[18] Wroclaw, University Library, Ms. M 1106. A discussion of the method of defacement adopted in the Bible of 1237/8 would exceed the scope of this paper, but it's worth noting that clearly only the eyes were targeted, and two faces escaped the defacement. See Metzger, *Die Bibel von Meschullam und Joseph Qalonymos*.

[19] In the late thirteenth century Mahzor (festival prayer book) Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Parm. 2887, fol. 101v, blank (as if erased) faces were painted in a full-page miniature of the Exodus from Egypt.

[20] Thérèse and Mendel Metzger, 'Meir ben Barukh de Rothembourg et la question des images chez les Juifs au moyen age', *Aschkenas – Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 4.1 (1994), 33–82; Katrin Kogmann-Appel, 'Christianity, Idolatry, and the Question of Jewish Figural Painting in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 84.1 (2009), 73–107.

[21] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Wonder', *American Historical Review* 102.1 (1997), 1–27, at 7.

[22] Zofia Ameisenowa, 'Animal-Headed Gods, Evangelists, Saints and Righteous Men', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 12 (1949), 21–45. Despite her iconographic

'key', she remains perplexed by the Ambrosiana Bible's use of animal features (40–41): 'an evident imitation of the Christian representation of the animal-headed Evangelists. Why the artist who illustrated the three-volumed Bible with such interesting pictures … pictured only three "chajjoth" [creatures from Ezekiel's vision] with the faces of the lion, the man and the bull, and depicted an animal of prey with sharp claws and gleaming eyes instead of the usual eagle-headed creature, is a puzzle to me. He seems to some extent to have disregarded the tradition.'

[23] Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, 4° Cod.ms. 24 (Cim. 15), known as the Hiltegerus Psalter. Jointly commissioned by a lay lady named Sophia and a subdeacon named Hilteger, it should probably be called the Sophia and Hiltegerus Psalter. Ulrich Kuder, 'Der Hiltegerus-Psalter (sog. Würzburg-Ebracher Psalter) der Universitätsbibliothek München 4° Cod. ms. 24 (Cim. 15)', in Studien zur Buchmalerei des 13. Jahrhunderts in Franken. Zum Hiltegerus-Psalter (UB München 4° Cod. Ms. 24 [Cim 5]) und dem stilistischen Umfeld des Komburger Psalters (WLB Stuttgart Cod. Bibl. 2° 46), ed. Klaus Gereon Beuckers (Kiel: Ludwig, 2011), 15–159. A full online facsimile of this codex is available on http://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/10931/ (last accessed 24 November 2015).

[24] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerald of Wales,' in his The Postcolonial Middle Ages (London: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 85–104, at 94.

[25] Alfred Wendehorst, Das Bistum Würzburg. Teil 1, Die Bischofsreihe bis 1254 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter: 1962), 211–26.

[26] Würzburg, Universitatsbibliothek, M.p.th.f.8. Helmut Engelhart, Die Würzburger Buchmalerei im Hohen Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zu einer Gruppe illuminierter Handschriften aus der Werkstatt der Würzburger Dominikanerbibel von 1246 (Würzburg: Kommissionsverlag F. Schöningh, 1987).

[27] Engelhart, Die Würzburger Buchmalerei, thought the biblical commentary and the

Dominican Bible were illuminated by the same workshop. Elisabeth Klemm, Die illuminierten Handschriften des 13. Jahrhunderts, disputes this view.

[28] Jürgen Wolf, 'Psalter und Gebetbuch am Hof: Bindeglieder zwischen klerikal-literater und laikal-mündlicher Welt', in Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages, ed. Mark Chinca and Christopher Young (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 139–179; Christine Sauer, Studium – Lektüre – Andacht; Zur Handschriftenproduktion im 13. Jahrhundert (Stuttgart: Württembergische Landesbibliothek, 1996); Christine Sauer, Fundatio und Memoria: Stifter und Klostergründer im Bild 1100 bis 1350 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993). See Hans-Peter Geh and Gerhard Römer eds., Mittelalterliche Andachtsbücher: Psalterien, Stundenbücher, Gebetbücher; Zeugnisse europaischer Frommigkeit: eine Ausstellung der Badischen und der Wurttembergischen Landesbibliothek zum 91. Deutschen Katholikentag in Karlsruhe 1992 (Karlsruhe: Badische Landesbibliothek, 1992), especially 68–70; Gude Suckale-Redlefsen, 'Buchkunst zur Zeit der Andechs-Meranier in Bamberg', in Die Andechs-Meranier in Franken, Europäisches Fürstentum im Hochmittelalter, eds. Eva Schurr, Kai Uwe Tapken, Ursula Vorwerk (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 239–61; Claudia Bubenik ed., Gemalt mit lebendiger Farbe. Illuminierte Prachtpsalterien der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek vom 11. bis 16. Jahrhundert (Luzern: Quaternio, 2011).

[29] Harald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, Der Elisabethpsalter in Cividale del Friuli: Buchmalerei für den Thüringer Landgrafenhof zu Beginn des 13. Jahrhunderts (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag fur Kunstwissenschaft, 2001); Felix Heinzer, ed., Der LandgrafenPsalter: vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat der Handschrift HB II 24 der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek Stuttgart (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1992).

[30] Melk, Stiftsbibliothek, Hs 1903; Munich, BSB, Clm 3900; Munich, UB, Cim. 15 [= 4° Cod.ms. 24]; Psalter fragments London, BL, Add 17687 and Los Angeles, Getty Library, Ms

4; Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Hs. St. Peter perg. 122. Stuttgart, WLB, HB II 25 and Munich, Graphische Sammlung fragments. The list could be extended considerably.

[31] Kuder, 'Der Hiltegerus-Psalter'.

[32] Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 2, emphasis in original.

[33] Ivan G. Marcus, 'A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Early Culture of Ashkenaz', in Cultures of the Jews: A New History, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 449–516; Israel Jacob Yuval, Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006; first publ. Hebr. 2000); Elisheva Baumgarten, Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); David Malkiel, Reconstructing Ashkenaz: The Human Face of Franco-German Jewry, 1000–1250 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Simha Goldin, Jewish Women in Europe in the Middle Ages: A Quiet Revolution (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Martin Przybilski, Kulturtransfer zwischen Juden und Christen in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011). My thanks to Martin Przybilski for sharing his manuscript with me prior to publication.

[34] Ben Zion Wacholder, 'Cases of Proselytizing in the Tosafist Responsa', The Jewish Quarterly Review ns 51.4 (1961), 288–315; Bernhard Blumenkranz, 'Jüdische und christliche Konvertiten im jüdisch-christlichen Religionsgespräch des Mittelalters', in Judentum im Mittelalter; Beiträge zum christlich-jüdischen Gespräch, ed. Paul Wilpert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966), 264–82; Jacob Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times (New York: Behrman House, 1961), 77–81 'Apostates and Proselytes'; Wolfgang Giese, 'In Iudaismum lapsus est: jüdische Proselytenmacherei im frühen und hohen Mittelalter (600–1300)', Historisches Jahrbuch 88, (1968), 407–18; Ephraim Kanarfogel, 'Returning to the Jewish Community in Medieval

Ashkenaz: History and Halakhah', in Turim: Studies in Jewish History and Literature Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander, vol. 1, ed. Michael A. Shmidman (New York: Touro College Press, 2007), 69–97; Rami Reiner, 'L'attitude envers les prosélytes en Allemagne et en France du XIe au XIIIe siècle', Revue des Etudes Juives 167 (2008), 99–119.

[35] The case is discussed, with sources, in Ben Zion Wacholder, 'Cases of Proselytizing', 291–4.

[36] I. A. Agus ed., Teshuvot Ba'alei ha-Tosafot (New York, 1954), 286; translation in Rami Reiner, 'Tough Are Gerim. Conversion to Judaism in Medieval Europe', Havruta 1 (2008), 54-63, at 63 (gloss in round brackets added); See Reiner, 'L'attitude envers les prosélytes', 115–6.

[37] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands', 96, citing Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands: the New Mestiza = Frontera (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 77.

[38] Gunnar Mikosch, 'Bildverbot? – Selbstimaginationen in der jüdischen Bildwelt des Mittelalters', in Fremdbilder – Selbstbilder. Imaginationen des Judentums in Antike und Mittelalter, ed. René Bloch, Simone Haeberli, Rainer Christoph Schwinges (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2010), 109–34.

[39] Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 87, emphasis in the original.