



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation in Medieval Studies

of

Zsófia Buda

on

**SACRIFICE AND REDEMPTION IN THE HAMBURG MISCELLANY.
THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY
ASHKENAZI MANUSCRIPT**

will be held on

Thursday, 17 May 2012, at 14:00

in the

**Gellner Room – Monument Building
Central European University (CEU)
Nádor u. 9, Budapest**

Examination Committee

Chair: András Kovács (Nationalism Studies Program, CEU)

Members: Gerhard Jaritz (Department of Medieval Studies, CEU)
Gábor Buzási (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)
Zsuzsanna Urbach (Museum of Fine Arts)
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External readers:

Hans-Wealter Stork (State and niversity Library Hamburg)
Sarit Shalev-Eyni (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection in the CEU-ELTE Medieval Library, Budapest, 6-8
Múzeum krt.

Doctoral Dissertation Abstract

Sacrifice and Redemption in the Hamburg Miscellany. The Illustration of a Fifteenth-century Ashkenazi Manuscript

Nurtured from the same source and with a large number of their members living in the same society, Judaism and Christianity could never ignore each other. There was an ongoing dialogue between them which had a decisive impact on the development of both religions. Polemics were not confined to theology and to written works. They impacted other spheres of life as well. Art was no exception either. There is a long history of the study of the visual expression of attitudes towards Jews within Christian art. These studies focused on how Jews were imagined and depicted by Christians and how they appear in their works of art. In these studies, Jews were merely seen as objects of representations. In the last two decades, some scholars have also started to search for expressions about Christians in Jewish art, seeing it as a possible medium for the Jewish party to argue with the Christian side and/or to strengthen the Jewish side.

The illustration program of the Hamburg Miscellany—produced in the second quarter of the fifteenth century in the area of Mainz—contains numerous scenes which demand a martyrological and/or an eschatological interpretation. Due to the interdependent nature of such Jewish and Christian concepts, besides “articulating” special Jewish ideas, these miniatures are likely to contain criticism of Christian beliefs. On the other hand, its images often show the influence of Christian art in their

iconography. These features make the Miscellany an excellent candidate for an iconographical study focusing on the messages carried by its miniatures in relationship with Christian visual art and concepts.

Several individual studies have been written about certain miniatures of the Miscellany. They provided important contributions to the iconographical interpretation of these miniatures. Nonetheless, none of them placed the images they investigated within the context of the entire illustration program of the Miscellany, something indispensable for a full understanding of the iconographic significance of these miniatures, and no monograph has yet been devoted to the Miscellany. In my thesis, I provide a monographic research study of the Miscellany, investigating its iconographic particularities within the manuscript as a whole as well as in the wider context of fifteenth-century Ashkenaz.

Jewish manuscripts produced in medieval Christian Europe were inevitably influenced by the art of the majority and to a certain degree they used the same “visual vocabulary.” Therefore, instead of focusing only on the Jewish or Christian origin of certain motifs, it is more fruitful to study the integration of these elements within their present context, namely, how this visual vocabulary was used, according to what sort of “grammatical rules,” and in what structures. The painters may have provided the visual vocabulary, but the way they were constructed into meaningful units, that is, “sentences” was determined not exclusively by them but also by other parts of the authorship such as the scribe, the patron, or a Jewish advisor.

There are different degrees in the integration of a foreign element, that is, different levels of intercultural appropriation. A motif adopted from another culture can be placed into the new context untouched. It can be also modified, transformed in order to fit within its new context. The quintessence of integrating a Christian element into a Jewish context is the case where by transformation of the motif the message it carries is turned entirely upside down. That is, the authorship of these images used Christian visual “vocabulary” not only to construct special Jewish but at the same time anti-Christian “sentences.” At first glance, the illustration in the Hamburg Miscellany seems to have contained several images of martyrological scenes or scenes of divine redemption where elements borrowed from Christian iconography were used. In my study, I will examine the nature of Jewish appropriation of Christian iconographical motifs in the Hamburg Miscellany and show whether they became the bearers of special Jewish messages or not through their transformation.

In the first part of my dissertation, I will provide a detailed description of the manuscript both as a literary work and as a material object. The survey of its paleographical and codicological features will be followed by a compendium of its illustration program. The available data on its authorship and its provenance will be also discussed here. A detailed iconographical analysis of the miniatures will constitute the second part of the thesis. The images will be examined in comparison with other Jewish depictions as well as with Christian iconographical traditions. The analysis will not be limited to the possible polemical aspects of the miniatures, but will provide a comprehensive picture of the iconographical characteristics of the illustration program. In the third part, I will assess the results of the

iconographical analysis within the wider context of Jewish martyrological literature, on the one hand, and Jewish-Christian relations in fifteenth-century Ashkenaz, on the other hand.

Curriculum Vitae

Zsófia Buda

Education:

- 2009-2010** Visiting Student at Faculty of Humanities, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
- 2007-2008** Visiting Research Student, Rothberg International School, Hebrew University, Jerusalem
- 2005- ongoing** PhD Candidate at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. Department of Medieval Studies
- 2004-2005** MA studies at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. Department of Medieval Studies
- 1998-2010** MA studies at Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, Hungary. Department of Hebrew Studies
- 1996-2003** MA studies at Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, Hungary. Department of Art History

Employment:

- 3 Jan 2012 -** Library assistant, Muller Memorial Library, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Yarnton Manor, UK
- 4 Oct 2010-** Project Officer: Catalogue of Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts, British Library, London, UK
- 3 July 2011**
- 2002-2004** Curator of the Judaica Collection, Hungarian Jewish Museum, Budapest

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Travel grants

Travel grant, International Medieval Congress 2007, Leeds
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Congress Travel Award, Forty-First International Congress on Medieval Studies,
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Recent Publications (related to the topic of the doctoral thesis):

“Sacrifice in Balance - The ‘Akedah: an Eschatological Perspective.” *Skies of Parchment, Seas of Ink: Jewish Manuscript Illumination*, ed. Marc Michael Epstein (forthcoming).

“Jewish Sentences in Christian Words: Christian Iconographical Motifs in the Hamburg Miscellany.” In *Intricate Interfaith Networks. Quotidian Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Middle Ages*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Ephraim Shoham-Steiner (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

“What shall you tell your children on that day?—Seder eve in fifteenth-century Ashkenaz.” In *Ritual, Images, and Daily Life. The Medieval Perspective*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz (Zürich: Lit, 2012), 173-189.

“Heavenly Envoys: Angels in Jewish Art.” In *Angels, Devils: The Supernatural and Its Visual Representation (CEU Medievalia)*, Central European University, Dept. of Medieval Studies, ed. Gerhard Jaritz, 117-134. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011.