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JUDAS, A MEDIEVAL OTHER? RELIGION, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER IN THE THIRTEENTH--CENTURY MIDDLE ENGLISH *JUDAS*

Exploration of the phenomenon of alterity and, subsequently, of the responses to it, appears particularly pertinent in reference to the epoch which, according to Thomas Hahn, emblematizes otherness itself. Hahn diagnoses the medieval alterity as a result of "the harmlessness of medieval studies, the foreignness of medieval texts"; in the modern world the Middle Ages thus symbolically represent otherness as such[1]. That situation leads to a curious intermingling of both alterities, that of the scholarly discipline at play and that residing in the texts under the analysis, in the case of scrutinizing such texts as the thirteenth-century *Judas*[2]. In *Judas* the archetypal traitor of Christ is paired with an enigmatic character introduced to the audience under the name of his sister, both of whom embody anti-Judaic stereotypes: those of effeminate men and treacherous beautiful women representing that religious and ethnic group. Nevertheless, despite the venomous anti-Judaic overtones transparent in the poem, Judas's female-like portrayal signals all human weaknesses in the face of temptation, even though Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou claims that

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[1] T. Hahn, *The Premodern Text and the Postmodern Reader*, "Exemplaria", vol. 2, No 1 (1990), p. 4.

[2] I will quote *Judas* from *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology* edited by Davies, where the text is entitled *Judas Sells his Lord*, and give the numbers of the lines in brackets; still, I will use the traditional title kept in other anthologies; see *Judas Sells his Lord* in *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology*, ed. R.T. Davies, London 1963, pp. 75–77.

the "story of how Judas came to betray his lord… is scarcely appropriate for emotional identification – especially since the main subject of the story, Judas himself, is not a proper personage for the devout Christian to identify with"[3]. Even more significantly, in the ballad in question responsibility for the act of betrayal is transferred also onto other characters appearing in it, thus exposing the shallowness of identifying Judas as the only agent in the narrative of Christ's torment and death and contributing to the effect of the poem's universalism. The betrayal of Judas, here more effeminate than expected, only signals the advent of multiple treasons of the Lord, including those symbolically committed by sinning Christians in all the epochs to come. Religious and ethnic alterity matters perhaps, as the two could not be set apart in medieval times, but it does not determine all human attitudes in the text in question. In this sense the anonymous author overcomes anti-Judaic prejudice and presents his audience with a fairly complex accusation of humanity as such, regardless of their religious and ethnic background. The questions of Judas's alterity and the story's universality are thus constantly renegotiated in the poem.

As for Christian anti-Judaic attitudes, they could usually find their full expression in narrating the story of the treacherous disciple of Jesus, be it in the form of visual representations or literary texts[4]. Medieval visual arts are replete with portrayals of Judas as the arch-Jew, the embodiment of all the evil allegedly characterizing that ethnic group[5]. One of the miniatures illustrating the manuscript of Peter Comestor's *Historia evangelica* (from the Karlsruhe Landesbibliothek, Cod. Tenn. 8, folio 75) conveys that message when it depicts Judas as the figure informing the Jews in conical hats about the place of Jesus' stay in Jerusalem[6]. Coins are dropped by the Phar-

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[3] K. Boklund-Lagopoulou, *"I have a yong suster": Popular Song and the Middle English Lyric*, Dublin 2002, p. 54.

[4] Medieval anti-Judaism entailed a prejudiced picture of real-life Jews, or alternatively an unfair mental construction of what Sylvia Tomasch termed "the virtual Jew", the one that in medieval English culture substituted real-life Jews, expelled from the country in 1290; see S. Tomasch, *Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew*, in: *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. J.J. Cohen, New York 2000, pp. 243–260.

[5] The most extreme version of the stereotype led to the conceptual exclusion of Jews from the category of the human that Thomas H. Bestul discusses in the context of medieval Latin texts about Passion; T.H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society*, Philadelphia 1996, p. 77.

[6] For a reproduction see H. Schreckenberg, *Die Juden in der Kunst Europas. Ein historischer Bildatlas*, Goettingen, Freinburg, and Wien 1996, p. 198.

isees to Judas in return for the information, while the coins were perhaps identifiable by medieval Europeans as similar to those they themselves used. The miniature in question would thus include elements of what Andrzej Dąbrówka defines as "presentism": the situation when "physical and historical time may be ignored with the result being a sort of simultaneity we know from medieval non-perspectivic pictures, putting different time layers into one view"[7]. The presentism results in the phenomenon when "thanks to this access to the reality out there, it appears or becomes closer. When a text aims not at simple information, but at the formation of the soul, the effects of proximity become exceptionally effective"[8]. Hence even the visual text including anti-Judaic message entails a degree of universality. Evoking Poteet's example of presentism which Dąbrówka uses and which is particularly relevant for our discussion here, "as soon as one sees that Judas has been paid with the same money one has in his or her purse, one should feel a little uneasy"[9]. The ethnicity of the traitor may partly lose its significance since all viewers have the chance of imagining the situation of the one who declared his devotion to Jesus and then betrayed him, merely for the want of profit in the story narrated by the miniature (while in *Judas* he is not motivated by greed, as Boklund-Lagopoulou emphasizes it)[10]. The universality is the quality distinguishing the Jewish presence in the thirteenth-century text[11] from that in *The Siege of Jerusalem*, a late fourteenth-century romance partly based on Josephus's *The Jewish War* from the 1st century AD and a text notorious for its anti-Judaic images[12]. Kim

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[7] A. Dąbrówka, *Medievalism in the Study of European Drama and Theatre History*, http://andrzej.dabrowka.com/MedievalismAD. pdf, pp. 1–16, date of access: 18.05.2008.

[8] *Ibidem*, pp. 1–16.

[9] D.P. Poteet II, *Time, Eternity, and Dramatic Form in Ludus Coventriae "Passion Play I"*, in: C. Davidson and J.H. Stroupe, *The Drama of the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays*, quoted in: A. Dąbrówka, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–16.

[10] K. Boklund-Lagopoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[11] K. Boklund-Lagopoulou calls the text one of the "items from an oral vernacular tradition that can be turned to didactic use in a sermon" rather than a ballad due to the temporal gap between it and the fifteenth-century ballads, even though she also lists Chambers' theory of it being a written clerical composition and Fowler's, that it is a religious folksong; Hirsch in turn openly states that the poem is "the first known English ballad"; see Boklund-Lagopoulou, pp. 48–51, 63; J.C. Hirsch, *The Earliest Known English Ballad: A New Reading of Judas*, "Modern Language Review", vol. 103 (2008), pp. 931–939.

[12] Bonnie Millar differentiates between the poem's anti-Judaism, understood as "an antipathy to the religious beliefs of the Jews which was expounded in doctrinal terms by the

Paffenroth claims that representing the Jews as a group became the source of later anti-Semitism, which was based on the accusation of the deicide[13]. In *Judas* the Jews are also represented as a group, but the characterization of Judas bears marks of individualism, which creates the impression of the poem's universality[14].

Nevertheless, the numerous extant representations of Judas indeed include vitriolic anti-Judaism. They entail the assumption that medieval prejudice directed against the Jews was justifiable due to what was considered to be the "historical" aspect of the Passion and Judas's treachery as its part. Consequently, Judas was expected to be visually presented in a standard manner. According to Ruth Mellinkoff's analysis, the representation of Judas in profile was typical as "a long-standing device for denigration", together with such features as a "dark nimbus" or beardlessness, absent from the miniature we discuss here[15]. Judas's moneybag was also frequently displayed, in the case of the illumination from *Historia evangelica* replaced with the coins falling on the ground while the archetypal traitor is performing the act of betrayal[16]. Moreover, Christian anti-Judaism could also find its full expression in portraying Judas in yellow attire, imposed on Jews in various countries of medieval Europe, thus making that character what Mellinkoff calls "a paradigm of Jewish caricature"[17]. The colour yellow, as Denise L. Despres reminds us, signified carnality and was associ-

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Church Fathers", and anti-Semitism, "a result of social, political and economic pressures" manifested "in the wild accusations levelled at the Jews from the end of the twelfth century"; I would rather see, like Michael Calabrese, all the antipathy to Jews before the modern age as anti-Judaism due to the medieval emphasis on religion rather than ethnicity in perceiving alterity; see B. Millar, *The Siege of Jerusalem in its Physical, Literary and Historical Contexts*, Dublin 2000, p. 140; M. Calabrese, *Performing the Prioress: 'Conscience' and Responsibility in Studies of Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale"*, "Texas Studies in Literature and Language", vol. 44, No. 1 (2002), pp. 66–91.

[13] K. Paffenroth, *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple*, Louisville and London 2001, p. 36.

[14] The two ways of representing Judas, as the religious and ethnic group representative and as an individual, are described by Paffenroth as usually used separately; moreover, according to Paffenroth Judas-the individual is "loathsome"; K. Paffenroth, *op. cit.*, p. 36–37.

[15] R. Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Sings of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, vol. I, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford 1993, p. 51.

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 51.

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 135.

ated with "unclean" excretions, such as bile, urine, and faeces[18]. The Jews thus were to represent the carnal and the lowly, as opposed to the postulated spirituality of Christians.

The stereotype of Judas as a reflection of the medieval Christian outlook on Jews, however, does not find its confirmation in all aspects of the texts, visual and written. Middle-English *Judas* appears to combine the stereotypical representation of Jewish-ness with universality. This only confirms that two attitudes towards Jews tended to clash in medieval culture: as Jerome Mandel indicates, Jews were then viewed either historically, hence as those who allegedly murdered Christ, or typologically, as a nation performing their role in the plan of salvation since their religion constituted the cornerstone of Christianity[19]. Separating those two intellectual approaches co-existing in one and the same text, as it happens in Middle English *Judas*, invariably poses a challenge. Still, the complexity of portrayal indicates that the poem's titular figure does not function as a negative character only, if he is to stand partly for the entire humanity, daily betraying Christ out of weakness. Such a more complex depiction of Judas's treason in the ballad leads to the situation in which we have to face the text inspiring, as David G. Schueler stated, "a feeling of vague frustration, a sense of its perversity"[20]. The interpretative problems arise perhaps from the intermingling of issues related to religion, ethnicity, and gender in one and the same work. Then Schueler's diagnosis that it "has less to do with Judas than with powerful thematic concept, namely, the universality of the human guilt that brought Christ to the Cross" does not exhaust the topic in its entirety at all, even though universalism plays a significant role in the poem's design[21]. The variety of interpretations, or even transcriptions, has been thus summarized by John C. Hirsch as follows: "*Judas* is an important and interesting text, which finally resists any univocal interpretation or transcription, whether for the textual or interpretative critic"[22].

It seems that Judas's identity in all its complexity appears to be important for the text's message, and so does that of the character introduced to the

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[18] D.L. Despres, *The Protean Jew in the Vernon Manuscript*, in: *Chaucer and the Jews: Sources, Contexts, Meanings*, ed. S. Delany, New York 2002, pp. 147–148.

[19] J. Mandel, *'Jewes werk' in "Sir Thopas"*, in: *Chaucer and the Jews…*, p. 61.

[20] D.G. Schueler, *The Middle English Judas: An Interpretation*, "PMLA", vol. 91, No 5 (1976), p. 841.

[21] *Ibidem,* p. 842.

[22] J.C. Hirsch, *op. cit.*, p. 934.

audience as his sister. Firstly Jesus shows his foresight of the betrayal to come when he addresses his disciple with the words: "Judas, thou most to Jurselem oure mete for to bugge; / Thritty platen of selver thou bere upo thy rugge" (3–4). Jesus already knows that Judas may meet his relatives there: "Summe of thine cunesmen ther thou meist imete" (6): accordingly, he meets his sister there[23]. The plot takes the audience back to the reality they were familiar with: medieval Europe where mercantile motivation was widespread, hence the thirty pieces of silver may become a temptation to some characters. Perhaps then not only (biblical) Jews are accused here of being interested primarily in material matters, but also medieval Christians. On the other hand, the identification of Jews as those related to financial matters, since they as usurers and traders were the ones dealing with money in medieval towns, stresses the issue of religion and ethnicity in the poem.

The religious and ethnic background acquires valence in the identification of Judas's "soster", "the swikele wimon" (7). Peter Dronke already noted the ambiguity of the sisterhood by indicating that she could be the mistress of Jesus' disciple and a woman cunning and ruthless in aspiring to receive all that she desires[24]. Alternatively, she could be defined as both his kinswoman and his mistress, as Barbara Kowalik claims, which would strengthen the bond between them and explain Judas's attraction to her even more fully[25]. She embodies the stereotype of femininity perilous through its deceitfulness and an almost irresistible lure that leads even the righteous men astray. Her identification as a Jewess in turn replicates the stereotype that a female representative of that religious and ethnic group must be particularly attractive as far as physicality is concerned, but also devious, which makes her repulsive. The figure of a Jewess has consequently existed in European culture as an ambiguous construct: fascinating and repelling at the same time and thus constructed in the manner similar to what happens to oriental women[26]. Even though Jewish women remained

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[23] F.J. Child's edition provides us with the word "tunesmen" instead of "cunesmen", but Kenneth Sisam explains that the latter version is more correct; see F.J. Child, *Judas*, in: *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. V, New York 1965, p. 288; K. Sisam, *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, Oxford 1921, p. 257.

[24] P. Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric*, New York 1969, p. 68.

[25] B. Kowalik, *"Judas" and Other Middle English Religious Ballads: Towards Reconstructing a Genre and Deconstructing a Stereotype*, "Acta Philologica", vol. 31 (2005), p. 37.

[26] Bożena Umińska writes about the "Oriental Jewess" type as derivative from Romantic Orientalism; the cultural construct, however, appears to go back to older times than those of the nineteenth-century fashionable peregrinations to the East; see B. Umińska,

relatively invisible in the representations of Jewish-ness, the type known as
"die schöne Jüdin", *la belle juive*, or "the beautiful Jewess" was an exception
to the rule. For the sake of contrast the beautiful Jewess could be endowed
with a greedy, ruthless father as a character best illustrating anti-Judaic pat-
terns[27]. That would make her a "pathetic yet desirable victim", which was an
important variation of the image[28]. Judas's sister from the Middle English
poem qualifies rather as another variety of the beautiful Jewess: *la juive
fatale*, cunning and ultimately lethal[29]. As Lampert indicates, this type even
seems to derive from medieval ballads, such as *The Jew's Daughter*[30]. Also
in *Judas* the sister is not only attractive, but also displaying a lot of danger-
ous ruse, and she thus encourages her sheepish lover to abandon Jesus by
dint of threats of stoning Judas: "...thou were wurthe me stende thee wid
ston, / For the false prophete that tou belevest upon" (9–10). The phrase
"false prophete" is here used in reference to Jesus, while medieval audiences
were probably accustomed to it in the context of Mohammad presented as
a conman drawing people away from Christianity as the true faith. Even the
C-version of Langland's *Piers Plowman*, otherwise praised for its ecumenist
spirit, includes the story of the Muslim false prophet pretending to be spo-
ken to by a dove so as to show that he is the one chosen by the holy spirit
(XVII: 165–182)[31]. The audience familiar with the actual denomination

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Postać z cieniem. Portrety Żydówek w polskiej literaturze [*The Character with a Shadow: Por-
traying Jewish Women in Polish Literature*], Warszawa 2001, p. 130.

[27] English medievalist nineteenth-century literature contains a notable instance of the
pair of characters, a beautiful Jewess and her despicably greedy father, namely Rebecca and
her father Isaac in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*; the Orientalist characterization of Rebecca in-
cludes such phrases as "her turban of yellow silk suited well with the darkness of her com-
plexion" or "the feather of an ostrich, fastened in her turban by an agraffe set with brilliants"
and the commentary "the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley"; W. S c o t t, *Ivanhoe*,
New York 1977, p. 122.

[28] L. L a m p e r t, *'O My Daughter!': 'Die schöne Jüdin' and 'Der neue Jude' in Hermann
Sinsheimer's "Maria Nunnez"*, "The German Quaterly", vol. 71, No 3 (1998), p. 258.

[29] Ch. L e a, *Emancipation, Assimilation and Stereotype: The Image of the Jew in German
and Austrian Drama 1800-1850*, quoted in: L. L a m p e r t, *'O My Daughter!'...*, p. 258.

[30] Another type of the beautiful Jewess, less threatening and more tragic, is the charac-
ter that betrays her father for her Christian lover, as Abigail and Jessica do in, respectively,
Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*;
see L. L a m p e r t, *'O My Daughter!'...*, p. 258.

[31] The numbers of the lines refer to Skeat's edition; *The Vision of William Concerning
Piers the Plowman Together with the Vita de Dowel, Dobet and Dobert. Secundum Wit et Re-
soun. Text C*, ed. W.W. S k e a t, Oxford 1873.

of the word "false prophet" must have been sensitive to the inappropriate-ness of the situation when Judas's *leman* employs it when talking about Je-sus. For thirteenth-century Christians, as Delany argues, Jews were identi-fied as another group worshipping Mohammad and thus put on a par with the "infidel" Muslims[32]. Mohammad, a "false prophet", thus became "the anti-messiah of Saracens and Jews", which situates the words in the ballad referring to Jesus in the new light: here one of those who will pray to the Muslim prophet in the future rejects the true Messiah and attempts to draw her lover away from him[33]. Whether the sister is indeed related to Judas or not does not matter since, as Boklund-Lagopoulou claims, "the poem is deliberately ambiguous as to the exact nature of the relationship between Judas and this woman. This allows the text to make skilful use of both the code of *kinship* and an *erotic* code, so that Judas is faced with both a conflict of loyalties and a sexual temptation, and the loss of the money threatens to expose both his disloyal behavior and his sexual guilt"[34]. Paffenroth in turn detects maternal qualities in the Jewess when she lulls Judas to sleep[35]. As for the universalist perspective, Boklund-Lagopoulou detects it when she states that in the Middle Ages all women, regardless of their ethnic origin, were considered to be sinful and deceitful[36]. Judas in turn, with his fear of being stoned, may constitute, as Barbara Kowalik insists, "an anti-type of Christ in his Passion"[37].

The meaningful association of Jews with Muslims in late medieval culture, when "Christian polemic [...] shifted to incorporate both types of religious other", as Lisa Lampert insists, arguably places the figure of the Jewess and her relationship with Judas in a different light[38]. The sister might just as well be modeled on the stereotype of oriental women, fre-quently accused of lacking in modesty and of being interested in ensnar-ing Christian men, while the liaison between her and Judas, remote from the ideal of Christian marriage since it was grounded mostly in sexual at-

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[32] S. Delany, *Chaucer's Prioress, the Jews, and the Muslims*, in: *Chaucer and the Jews...*, p. 48.

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 48.

[34] K. Boklund-Lagopoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[35] K. Paffenroth, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[36] K. Boklund-Lagopoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[37] B. Kowalik, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[38] L. Lampert, *Race, Periodicity, and the (Neo-)Middle Ages*, "MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly", vol. 65, No 3 (2004), p. 400.

traction, perhaps materialized the myth of the Orient as the space replete with *harems* established and maintained by polygamous men. If for late medieval Europeans Jews became as mythical as mysterious "Orientals" inhabiting the lands situated "out there", the actual religious and cultural differences between the two groups must have been disregarded, which produced representations of Jewish-ness similar to those in the Middle English poem, where prejudice against Jews acquires a form similar to that of prejudice against Muslims.

Judas intends to defend the good name of his master against his sister's false accusation, but he succumbs to the psychological weakness dormant in him and he all too willingly agrees to the woman's suggestion: "Ley thin heved i' my barm: slep thou thee anon" (14). His gullibility again may be related both to his ethnicity and to the theory of the gender of male Jews. Anti-Judaic stereotypes often included the myth of the men's effeminacy, visible even in their physiology[39]. The myth of masculine menstruation tended to be associated with the notorious blood libel, which sadly circulated even in the twentieth century. As Gianna Pomata reminds us while referring to Po-Chia Hsia's discussion of the subject, "in several communities of central Europe in the early modern period the Jews are accused of kidnapping and killing Christian male children, allegedly in order to use their blood for therapeutic purposes, and in particular to stop the menstrual flow which afflict their men"[40]. The mysterious physiological process distinguished itself from the same phenomenon observable in non-Jewish men, which did not indicate their effeminacy but rather testified to the medieval and early modern perspective on men as central in discussing human anatomy. According to that perspective female menstruation was only a continuation of the process that afflicted some men[41]. Nevertheless, the myth of Jewish effeteness was a different issue. Jewish

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[39] Sander Gilman claims that even the modern stereotype of the male Jew includes his feminization: he is diagnosed with hysteria, a "feminine" disorder and is thought to have been emasculated through circumcision; see S. G i l m a n, *The Jew's Body*, quoted in: L. L a m - p e r t, *'O My Daughter!'...*, p. 256.

[40] Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia's *The Myth of Ritual Murder* is discussed in G. P o m a t a, *Menstruating Men: Similarity and Difference of the Sexes in Early Modern Medicine*, in: *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity through Early Modern Europe*, ed. V. F i n u c c i and K. B r o w n l e e, Durham and London 2001, p. 120.

[41] *Ibidem*, p. 112.

men were comparable with women and the notorious myth of the eth-
nic group murdering Christian children acquired yet another explanation:
Jewish men needed the blood of Christian innocents in order to survive
physically after the loss of their own blood. The stereotype of the Jewish ef-
feteness was employed as yet another argument in favour of the accusation
which supported the cruelty of Christians directed towards that religious
and ethnic group.

The alleged Jewish male's physiological similarity to women could
then be projected further, onto the domain of psychology[42]. Judas from
the Middle English text indeed appears more feminine psychologically[43],
while his sister is the one who lures him to sleep and perhaps robs him of
the thirty silver coins then, since the narrator only enigmatically states:
"Thritty platen of selver from him weren itake" (16). The indication of
Judas's "effeminacy", his weakness in the face of a masculinized woman
and his gullibility, since he does not blame her for the loss once he dis-
covered it, contribute to the effect of the stereotype somehow conforming
to the later tenets of Orientalism. Here an entire ideological debate on
the relevance of thinking about medieval Orientalism, and particularly
on the concept of the "postcolonial Middle Ages", could start. Instead
let us just consider Katherine Biddick's statement that "the periodization
of colonialism... begins to look very different if one includes Jews"[44]. If
we assume that colonial phenomena were indeed at play in the situation
of medieval Jews, i.e. before the era of the actual territorial expansion of
European political powers and subsequent colonization of the newly-dis-
covered regions, the myth of oriental men's effeminacy might be at work
in the characterization of Jews. Is not then Judas characterized as effete

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[42] Caroline Walker Bynum thus writes about the medieval idea of female weakness,
determined by what male, in contrast with female, writers stated on the subject: "Male writ-
ers saw the genders as dichotomous. They stressed male as power, judgment, discipline, and
reason, female as weakness, mercy, lust, and unreason"; C. W a l k e r B y n u m, '...And Woman
his Humanity': Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages, in: Gender
and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols, ed. e a d e m, S. H a r r e l l, and Paula R i c h m a n,
Boston 1986, p. 277.

[43] Edgar Rosenberg indicates that even in the nineteenth-century English literature
a Jew was often "effeminate like the French"; E. R o s e n b e r g, From Shylock to Svengali: Jew-
ish Stereotypes in English Fiction, Stanford, California 1960, p. 36.

[44] K. B i d d i c k, The ABC of Ptolemy: Mapping the World with the Alphabet, in: Text
and Territory: European Imagination in the European Middle Ages, ed. S. T o m a s c h and
S. Gilles, Philadelphia 1998, p. 291.

also due to the tendency visible in the colonial discourse: the tendency to visualize men representing ethnic difference as not masculine enough and women from those groups as masculinized, as it becomes transparent in, for instance, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*?[45] Curiously enough, Judas betrays Jesus not for the want of profit, but for fear that he will not be able to return the thirty silver coins to the teacher, a motivation resulting from Judas's excessive emotionality at the expense of reason perhaps. When he explains to Pilate "I nul sulle my Lord for nones cunnes eiste, / Bote it be for the thritty platen that he me bitaiste" (21–22), he demonstrates that he completely unaware plays his role in the theatre of salvation: according to the medieval poet, there had to be someone who would perform as a traitor for the crucifixion and resurrection to occur. Judas is ideal for the part as he does not show any resistance to the things that happen to him, receiving everything with passiveness and perhaps even with the sense of powerlessness. Moreover, he remains ignorant of the real significance of his own actions till he is enlightened by Jesus. His question about the traitor's identity: "Lord, am I that [frec]?" (29) proves that he does not even realize the nature and the consequences of his act[46]. Still, the audience knows that he is lying when he adds: "I nas never o' the stude ther me thee evel spec" (30), since the sister's words were openly directed against Jesus. Quoting Boklund-Lagopoulou again, Judas "tries to save his face by denying that he has done anything wrong"[47]. Despite the anti-Judaic stereotypes in it, Judas appears to be more of an everyman, a type of a fallible human. His tragedy lies in his "fatal mistake... that leads to his eternal damnation", as Boklund-Lagopoulou summarizes it[48]. The less negative role of Jews in the poem finds its reflection in the leveling of the ethnic group with those biblical characters who would later identify themselves as the first Christians. There exists a parallelism between Judas, the (conscious or un-

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[45] On the emasculation of women in *The Legend of Good Women* see, for example, Chapter 4, *Different and Same*, in S. Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford 1994, pp. 153–187.

[46] Interestingly, the word "frec" does not appear in the manuscript, which makes the interpretation of this fragment more difficult, hence the square brackets I added to Davies' edition; Hirsch discusses the word as originally absent from Child's edition (where he printed an ellipsis), but added under the influence of Skeat, who "proposed a highly probable emendation" in his transcript; see J.C. Hirsch, *op. cit.*, p. 934.

[47] K. Boklund-Lagopoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

[48] *Ibidem*, p. 59.

conscious) traitor, and the poem's medieval audience, not to mention the treachery of Peter which follows that of Judas. Hence even though no Jews in the text can be admirable, at least Judas appears very humane in his weakness, while that humaneness was not usually attributed to him.

The poem's equivocal quality in relation to Jews contrasts with that in the late fourteenth-century romance *The Siege of Jerusalem*, which is one of the redactions of historical material from Latin or French notorious for its anti-Jewish imagery. On the other hand, that romance also displays the quality of (female) frailty in the Jews it presents, which is a portrayal similar to that in the Middle English text above. The "femaleness" of Jews makes itself visible in the story of their representative, a Jewish mother who out of moral weakness eats the body of her own son. The *Vindicta Salvatoris*, Roger d'Argenteuil's *Bible en françois*, and Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* have been traced as the fourteenth-century poem's sources[49], while Josephus Flavius' *The Jewish War*, written directly after the hostilities, was very likely the source of the account from Higden's text[50]. Thus the ancient text was transferred to the late Middle Ages without any radical changes to the story of the siege or to the ideology it contained. Originally written in Greek and translated into Latin, which ensured its later medieval popularity, the text included what Millar summarizes as "Roman oriented history" that pleased the Flavian emperors[51]. Josephus hailed the victory of the Romans after he changed sides during the war. His account includes the anti-Judaic scenes of cannibalizing one's own offspring by the besieged and thus reveals a far more venomous attitude than that of the anonymous author of *Judas*[52].

The shocking narrative involves the figure of Mary, a Jewish mother whom hunger drove to eating her own son, since she is described as the one who "etyþ a schouldere" (1088)[53]. Citing Millar, the reaction of the community testifies to their acceptance of the inhuman act: "they are sad and repent", as Bonnie Millar writes[54], when Mary confesses "Myn owen

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[49] B. Millar, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[50] *Ibidem,* p. 60.

[51] *Ibidem*, p. 61.

[52] For Josephus's text see Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. G.A. Williamson, London 1981.

[53] *The Siege of Jerusalem*, ed. R. Hanna and D. Lawton, Oxford 2003; the numbers of the lines will refer to this edition.

[54] B. Millar, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

barn haue I brad and þe bones gnawen" (1094), even though the Jews "are not depicted as inherently evil, just tyrannized by wicked leaders who refuse to see reason"[55]. Then despite the atrocity of the story of Mary going against her maternal instincts, the female figure may stand for human, here female, weakness, while the whole community demonstrates a "feminization" similar to that of Judas as he is presented in the thirteenth-century poem. Josephus, the author of one of the romance's most important source, sided with the strong ones when he fled the besieged city at first and then narrated the story of the Jewish weakness during the confrontation with those who ultimately won the war. In the Middle English poem "the Romans are right and the Jews are wrong", paraphrasing the famous phrase from *Le Chanson de Roland*[56]. The siege and destruction from 70 AD appear fully justifiable once the negative characterization of the city's defenders, or at least their leaders, is considered[57]. Notwithstanding that characterization, there rings a tone of sympathy in the anonymous author's statement that the Jews were defeated "by swerd and by hunger" (1176). Except for its mythical representation of Jews, the romance has often been treated as a historical epic, even though Millar refuses to identify it as such when she describes it as a romance[58].

As for the historicity of *Judas*, the story bears traces of anachronism, which, however, did not disqualify a text as historical in the Middle Ages, as when "the riche Jew that heiste Pilatus" (19) buys information about Jesus from the apostle[59]. Here Pilate becomes a typically medieval type of a Jewish money-lender, as Dronke remarks[60], and simultaneously a trader,

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[55] *Ibidem*, p. 93.

[56] An alternative reading of the poem is offered by Suzanne M. Yeager, who claims that "the depiction of the Jews, like that of the Romans, is elastic; not only do the Jews of the poem represent Jewish groups who come before and after them, but they also represent medieval Christians"; see S.M. Ye a g e r, *Jerusalem in Medieval Narrative*, Cambridge 2008, p. 103.

[57] Nevertheless, even here a complexity of the relationships between Jews and Christians can be indicated, as it is done by Christine Chism in Chapter 5, "Profiting from Precursors in *The Siege of Jerusalem*", of *Alliterative Revivals*; see Ch. C h i s m, *Alliterative Revivals*, Philadelphia 2002, pp. 155–188.

[58] B. M i l l a r*, op. cit.*, p. 231.

[59] The anachronistic quality in a medieval text may simply indicate that the text was to be read typologically instead of the historical reading; I am thankful to the reviewer for this remark.

[60] Dronke writes that Pilate is "a caricature of a money-lender"; P. D r o n k e, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

here trading in people, as the two professions were often combined[61]. If Romans in *The Siege* were represented as proto-Christian "knights", as Suzanne M. Yeager writes, then Pilate as the one responsible for Jesus' crucifixion had to be made Jewish[62]. Nevertheless, despite the poem's anti-Judaism, the identity of Pilate again implies the universality of the text: perhaps he is made Jewish also for the sake of showing that anybody, be it a Jew or a Roman, could betray, torture, and crucify Jesus. As Barbara Kowalik noted, the author "attempts to justify Judas or at least to attenuate his guilt by setting it aside the guilt of other traitors" and he displays his "sympathy for Judas"[63].

The gesture of endowing Pilate with the identity of a Jewish usurer appears to transcend the function of merely whitening the Romans, historically responsible for the crucifixion. Here a-historicity may be aimed at rendering the medieval audiences sensitive to the fact that, from the presentist pespective, metaphoric betrayal of Jesus happens in the life of each Christian almost on an everyday basis. The gesture of transferring the events to medieval Europe inhabited by Jews signifies that truth to all Christians[64]. All those changes in the historical narrative produce the effect of a-temporality of the Passion, which make it an event spiritual rather than merely historical. The above finds its confirmation when the poem ultimately focuses on the apostle whose role will be to act as the founding stone for the church, Petrus. The poem's unexpected shift of emphasis to Peter seems to confirm the message of the poem transcending the unjust stereotypes directed against the Jews only[65]. We are confronted with the following exchange between Peter and Jesus, well known from the biblical account:

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[61] On the question of medieval preoccupation with money lending see, for instance, C. Roth, *A History of the Jews: From the Earliest Times through the Six Day War*, New York 1974, pp. 191–197.

[62] S.M. Yeager, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

[63] B. Kowalik, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[64] Interestingly, it is a reverse process to that in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*, where events associated with European Jews are moved to Asia, discussed by Sheila Delany; S. Delany, *Chaucer's Prioress, the Jews, and the Muslims*, p. 48.

[65] Boklund-Lagopoulou remarks that "the ending is sudden, and gives rise to doubts whether the text is complete", while Hirsch claims that "its ending is more or less obviously truncated"; K. Boklund-Lagopoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 49; J.C. Hirsch, *op. cit.*, p. 932.

Up him stod Peter and spec wid all his mighte:
"Thau Pilatus him come wid ten hundred cnightes,"

"Thau Pilatus him come wid ten hundred cnightes,
Yet ic wolde, Lord, for thy love fighte,"

"Stille thou be, Peter! Well I thee iknowe:
Thou wolt fursake me thrien ar the cok him crowe." (31–36)

As Peter Dronke comments, "the two deserters are left standing, with no more to say"[66]. The Messiah will be betrayed not only by the Jews, but also, symbolically, by all the humanity, embodied in Peter who will subsequently continue Jesus' work. Mental vulnerability of all Jesus' disciples becomes exposed, regardless of the fact if they are Jewish, like Judas, or "Christians on the make", with their ethnic origin not emphasized, as it happens with Peter. The question of Jewish-ness disappears from our sight once we have been confronted with the moral fragility, customarily attributed then to women, of everybody that surrounds Jesus. All the events preceding Passion that are related in the poem occurred among Jews, we may reflect, since the history of Christianity is firmly grounded in that of Judaism. Judas's role in the plan of salvation is exposed: it is the role which will finally lead to Jesus' liberation of the souls imprisoned in hell and of the souls of those who are still alive and those not born yet at the time of the plot, namely the poem's audience.

The thirteenth-century *Judas* thus constantly plays with the idea of individual guilt attributed here to a Jew, which makes the story partly anti-Judaic, and the universal betrayal of Jesus by all the sinners, contemporary to him or not. From the perspective delineated by the poem's anonymous author, Judas is both a religious other and a character illustrating the fallibility of all humans, while the weakness was deemed to be a quality more feminine than masculine at the time in question. Judas's sister, *la juive fatale*, complements the picture nuanced due to the complexity of ethnic and gender relations that appear there. The poem is not lengthy, hence the renegotiation of the category of otherness and that of universalism is dynamic. Still, the two categories are not necessarily conflicting, but may both contribute to a fuller understanding of this part of what Jacques le Goff called "medieval imagination" with its positive and negative aspects.

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[66] S.M. Yeager, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

Summary

The article commences with a discussion of the otherness of medieval litera-ture in comparison with the texts from other epochs. The topic of otherness also appears in medieval texts. The religious, ethnic, and gender difference of Judas is complemented by that of his "sister", who similarly to him illus-trates the anti-Judaic stereotypes of the epoch. In the thirteenth-century poem Judas, however, remains a universal figure, since he is one of many traitors and sinners, while his "sister" univocally embodies the type known as *la juive fatale*. Judas' effeminacy, both psychological and physical, seems to be only one of many diverse aspects of that com-plex literary construct. The equivocal nature of representing Jews in Middle English literature is best exemplified by the fourteenth-century romance *The Siege of Jerusalem*, but even this text features the topic of weakness, if not effeminacy, of that ethnic group in their confronta-tion with the Romans. *Judas*, a text more complex in that respect from *The Siege of Jerusalem*, emphasizes religious, ethnic, and gender differ-ence, but also presents the main character as an *everyman*, allowing its modern readers to explore the sphere of medieval imagination to a greater extent.

Streszczenie

Artykuł rozpoczyna się tezą o odmienności (*otherness*) literatury średniowiecz-nej na tle innych epok, która to inność jest również tematem niektórych utwo-rów średnioangielskich. Judasz, odmienny pod względem religijnym, etnicz-nym i płciowym, ma w tym utworze także „siostrę", która tak jak on ilustruje antyżydowskie stereotypy epoki. Judasz jest jednak w tym utworze także po-stacią uniwersalną, jednym z licznych zdrajców i grzeszników otaczających Je-zusa, podczas gdy jego „siostra" jednoznacznie uosabia typ postaci znany jako *la juive fatale*. Zniewieścienie Judasza (psychiczne, ale może również fizyczne) wydaje się tylko jedną stroną tej złożonej konstrukcji literackiej. Typowy dla innych utworów średnioangielskich brak jednoznaczności w przedstawianiu Żydów dobrze ilustruje czternastowieczny romans *Oblężenie Jeruzalem (The Siege of Jerusalem)*, ale nawet tam pojawia się motyw nie tyle zniewieścienia, co słabości tej grupy społecznej w konfrontacji z Rzymianami. *Judasz*, tekst bardziej skomplikowany od *Oblężenia*, uwypukla różnice religijne, etniczne i te dotyczące płci kulturowej, ale też pokazuje główną postać jako rodzaj *ever-ymana*, pozwalając współczesnym czytelnikom głębiej wniknąć w sferę śred-niowiecznej wyobraźni.