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2013

https://doi.org/10.25595/2178

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Mittman, Asa Simon: *Gates, Hats, and Naked Jews : Sorting out the Nubian Guards on the Ebstorf Map*, in: FKW : Zeitschrift für Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur (2013) Nr: 54, 88–101. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25595/2178.

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GATES, HATS, AND NAKED JEWS: SORTING OUT THE NUBIAN GUARDS ON THE EBSTORF MAP

Maps produced by medieval Christians contain a remarkable array of imagery of Others. In addition to the dragons for which they are famous, they also depict headless Africans, Pygmy Asians, and dog-headed Scandinavians. They contain representations of peoples with one foot, with one eye, with four eyes, with eyes in their chests, with eyes in their shoulders, and on. The images of Others, though, are not confined to imagined Others, rooted in Herodotus, Pliny, and related Classical sources (Friedman 1981). Medieval Christian mapmakers also represented – and abjected – known peoples, most particularly Jews. Rooted in earlier anti-Semitic tropes, the detailed world maps of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries contain multiple curious, problematic representations of this notable Other, perceived at once as distant in time and space, and also eminently current and local.

The Hereford World Map, produced in England around 1300, is a massive, encyclopedic sheet – five feet tall and containing over a thousand inscriptions (fig. 1). It has been seen as a terrestrial map, a universal map, a biblical compendium, a history – "cest estorie," as it calls itself (Westrem 2001:11) – but it is also an argument, or a collection of interlocking arguments, about the nature of England, and of Christians and Christianity, about the difference between Europeans and the peoples of Asia and Africa, about Jesus and Mary, Heaven and Hell, and about Jerusalem, to name just a few of the most prominent examples.

The Hereford Map contains one clearly labeled image of Jews, nestled between the forking arms of the Red Sea (fig. 2).[1)]



// Abbildung 1
Hereford World Map, Hereford Cathedral

1)
Camille, Gothic Idol, 171, provides very brief discussion of the image.



// Abbildung 2
Hereford World Map, Hereford Cathedral, detail of Jews

Here, in an image ostensibly illustrating the Worship of the Golden Calf, four men kneelin prayer before an altar on which the Calf – not represented as golden – squats. This twisting figure, labeled "Mahun," is defecating on the altar. *Mahun* is a generic term "frequently used in European anti-Islamic contexts to describe an idol purportedly worshipped by Muslims" (Westrem 2001: 120 and Camille 1989:135). This image, though, clearly presents Mahun's worshipers as Jews; they are labeled "Judei" in red lettering. The choice to label the figures "Jews" is of note, since at this point in the narrative, Moses has not yet descended from the mountain with the Tablets of the Law. These are the ancient Israelites, but the mapmaker labels them with the *medieval* term for their descendants, thereby conflating ancient and contemporary groups. The one figure whose face can be seen is shown in the standard caricature: as Debra Strickland describes, this "stereotype was male [and] bearded," with "particular significance assigned to exaggerated, elongated, broad, or hooked noses and beards" (Strickland 2003:105 and 108). On the Hereford Map, the only figure whose face is visible is depicted in full-profile to highlight the large, hooked nose and beard.

Directly beneath the squatting calf is a series of roundels bearing on them the motif of the cross. Given the small scale of the image, here – the whole vignette is about two-and-a-half inches high – and the loose nature of the representational style of the mapmaker, it is unclear what these represent. They may merely be a decorative motif (though it is one that does not appear in the *thousand* other images throughout the map, as far as I have been able to find). On the other hand, they may represent a decorated altar cloth. There does seem to be a cloth hanging over a stone structure, with a curving lower hem. The mapmaker places similar design panels on other altars on the map. Or, perhaps most potently, these round disks bearing the imprint of the cross upon them *may* be the wafers of the Eucharist, placed carefully atop the altar upon which the idol (and by implication, its idolaters) defecate(s). In this case, the idol would be defecating not merely on the altar of Christ but, according to the dogma of Transubstantiation, affirmed by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, on the body of Christ, itself. This would mirror common medieval accusations of host desecration (Nirenberg 1996:53, Little 1978:52), and other entirely fictional acts of defamation suggesting that in the medieval present, Jews carried ceaselessly

on, humiliating and killing Christ through ritual reenactments of the crucifixion.

In discussions related to this project, Susan Nakley asked if "relationships among race, religion, politics, art, and geography … might render geography beyond the point. Does it then," she asks, "become a strategy? A tool? A weapon, void of content?" This is an excellent characterization of the power of maps. Mapping is certainly a strategy, a tool, and at times it does come to be a weapon wielded, often at disempowered peoples. Native Americans and Africans of the Colonial era, for example, were surely the target of weaponized cartography. I'd argue that the Hereford image – produced shortly after Edward I's 1290 Edict of Expulsion of the Jews – is weapons-grade mapping. Unlike some other images on the Map, the image of the Jews was distant neither in space nor time from the context of its production. While the image ostensibly presents the Worship of the Golden Calf from the Exodus narrative, set in the distant past and a far-off land (a sort-of medieval version of "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away…"), the image is rendered current and local through the use of medieval European styles of clothing and hairstyle, as well as the Christian markers on the altar.

There are no other images of the worship of the Golden Calf on medieval maps that I have thus far found, though I continue to search for others. The best chance was the thirteenth-century Ebstorf Map from Lower Saxony, a sort-of giant cousin to Hereford, bearing strong similarities and notable differences (Chekin 2006: 146–161) (fig. 3). The Map was lost in the bombing of Hannover in 1943, but survives in a full-scale reproduction. However, the section containing the region around the Red Sea is one of the areas that were already lost at the time the reproduction was made. There is, though a very peculiar little image, just adjacent to the missing segment, which might be related (fig. 4). The image

2)
Westrem, 90, #193, notes that there is no record of such a city, though the people are documented. The mountain and gates also appear on the Sawley Map.



// Abbildung 3
Ebstorf World Map (reproduction)

depicts two figures, naked but for their hats, armed with shields and with spears that they cross over a crenelated city gate. The city above them is labeled "Nybia civitas," that is, "The City of Nybia [or Nubia]" (Westrem 2001:90).[2] The text above this city informs us:

"*Locus qui dicitur Moyse id est aque ortus. Qui hic habitant, Nibei vocantur. Gens hec est semper nuda ...aum modum veridica, christianissima, auro dives est; negotio vivit; tres habet reges et totidem episcopos. Ierusalem cum multa turma et cum multa pecunia frequenter venit et sepulchrum Domini multa pecunia honorat et ditat" (Martin Warnke 2009).*

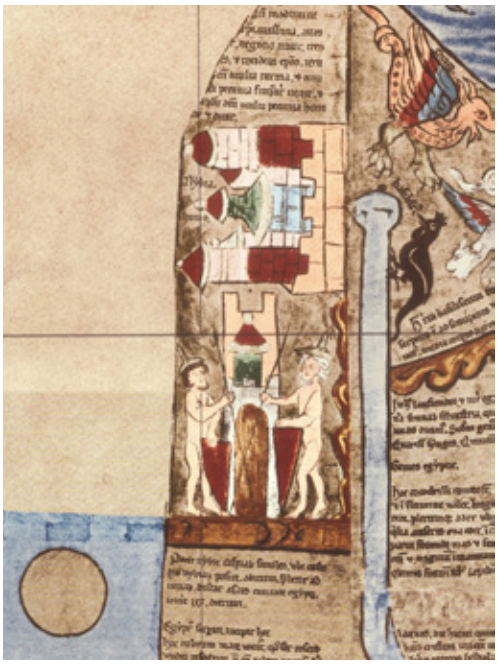
The place that is called Moses, that is to say, the Rising of the Waters. Those who live here were called Nibei. This group is always naked [...] They are truthful, most Christian, [and] rich in gold; they live by trade; they have three kings and as many bishops. They travel often to Jerusalem in large groups, with much money, and enrich and honor the sepulcher of our Lord with much money (translation mine).

The reference to the Rising of the Waters is likely connected to the source of the Nile, just to the right of the city. The text below the gate and the figures reads:

"*Porte Nybie, Caspiarum similes, ubi custodie Nybiarum posite aditum praebent advenarum. Distat a Sais civitate Egypti itinere LXX dierum" (Martin Warnke 2009).*

The Nybie [or Nubian] gates, similar to the Caspian, where the guards control the access of foreigners (translation mine).

It seems reasonable to conclude that these texts and images are all interrelated, forming a single vignette about the Nubian people, their city, and the gates by which it is entered. All the texts refer to the Nibei people, who seem likely to be the "Nubaei Aethiopes" located by Pliny "along the upper Nile" and known in medieval pilgrimage accounts as Coptic Christians, "praised for their piety" (Westrem 2001:92). The icon for the city is a rather generic image. That for the gate, though, calls for attention. The figures of the guards are most curious. They are naked, as the text states that the Nibei are, but for their hats. These, though, suggest a rather different reading of the image. They are clearly *Judenhüte*, also known as *pilei cornuti,* the tall, pointed hats mandated for Jews by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 (Lipton1999:15–21). Modern scholars debate their origins as indigenous to Jews or imposed by Christian rulers. Numerous



// Abbildung 4
Ebstorf World Map (reproduction), detail of Nubian Gate

3)
See Rudolf von Ems, Weltchronik, St. Gallen, Kantonsbibliothek, Vadianische Sammlung, Ms. 302, f. 50r, ca. 1300, Germany. For a digital facimile of the manuscrupt, see E-Codices (2009): ,,St. Gallen, Kantonsbibliothek, Vadianische Sammlung, VadSlg Ms. 302: Rudolf von Ems, History of the World. The Stricker, Charlemagne." <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/vad/0302> (accessed November 2012).

images of *Judenhüte* survive in medieval Christian and Jewish sources. Although there are multiple forms of the hat, the type depicted here is common. It bears a broad, sloping brim, with a tall, narrow cone rising from the center, as depicted in a contemporary image of Moses and Aaron, also from Germany.[3)] The hat is often, as in these examples, yellow or beige, a color tied to other markers of Judaism, including the badges in the shape of the Tablets of the Law, also mandated by the Fourth Lateran Council (Krummel 2011:31). An image from the Bamberger Psalter is a very good cognate for the rightward figure on the Map, as both bear the common feature of a pair of bands around the base of the cone.[4)] The best evidence for the reading of these hats as *Judenhüte,* though, comes from the Map, itself. Toward the North, we see the peoples of the city of Dioscuria, who are identified by the inscription as the tribes of the Colchi, Augeri and Cyrci (fig. 5). Leonid Chekin misidentifies the key attribute, saying that "the group in the center wear helmets" (Chekin 2006:152). Helmut Kugler, though, in his commentary volume for his facsimile of the Map, writes:

"Die auffällig große Personengruppe von drei mal drei Figuren in 23/B1 könnte die in der Legende genannten Colchi, Auferi, und Cyrci meinen. Doch ist eine andere Deutung sehr viel wahrscheinlicher: Die Figurengruppe meint die sog. ‚Neun Guten Helden', eine Zusammenstellung der jeweils drei besten Helden aus heidnischer, jüdischer und christlicher Zeit (Hektor, Alexander, Julius Caesar; Josua, David, Judas Maccabäus; Artus, Karl d. Große, Gottfried von Bouillon). Das wichtigste Indiz, auf das sich diese Zuweisung stützt, sind die Judenhüte der Mittelgruppe" (Kugler 2007:132).

Why would these naked guards be depicted as Jews? I have yet to uncover a direct answer to this question, but I have been ruminating on interconnections between several images, texts, and contexts that may lend some measure of understanding. We cannot know the unknown cartographer's intentions for the design, but can consider what a medieval viewer familiar with such imagery might have made of it. The first point of contact is that between the Nubian Gate that they guard and the Caspian Gate, said to be 'similar' in the inscription below the figures. The Caspian Gate is not naturally connected to the Nubian – they are on opposite sides of the map, with little to link them beyond their status as gates.

The Caspian Gate is frequently associated with the legend of Gog and Magog, the apocalyptic hordes purportedly imprisoned by Alexander the Great. The legend is mentioned on several medieval

4)
Bamberger Psalter, Staatsbibliothek Bamberg Msc. Bibl. 48, 62v, Bamberg, ca. 1225. For a digital facsimile of the manuscript, see <http://bvbm1.bib-bvb.de/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=2399159&local_base=SBG&pds_handle=GUEST>.



// Abbildung 5
Ebstorf World Map (reproduction), detail of Dioscurii

maps. On a mid-thirteenth-century map of the Holy Land, for example, in *Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library MS 16,* Matthew Paris writes:

"Here through the prayer of King Alexander God enclosed the Jews, who will come forth on the eve of the Day of Judgment and will bring great destruction to the people, according to God's will. The mountains are high and solid. The inaccessible and insurmountable Caspian Mountains" (Chekin 2006:199).

Similarly, on his map of the Holy Land in Corpus Christi 26, Matthew writes:

"The enclosure of the Caspian Mountains. Here dwell the Jews whom God enclosed through the prayer of King Alexander and who will come forth on the eve of the Day of Judgment and will bring great destruction to [(or) openly massacre (Connolly 2009:79)] all the people. They are enclosed by high and great mountains and cannot get out" (Chekin 2006:199).

Both of these texts stress that the Caspian Mountains are the location of the imprisonment of Gog and Magog, the belief that the hordes are 'the Jews,' and the impenetrable nature of their enclosure. The Vercelli Map, from thirteenth-century Southern France, also explicitly connects the Caspian Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Jews, reading "Hic sunt portae quas fecit Dominus precibus Alexandri ne Iudei intrhari possint [...] ad depredandam orbem." ("Here is the gate that God made through Alexander's prayer, so that the Jews would not come out [...] to lay waste to the world") (Chekin 2006: 144–45).

The Ebstorf Map's image of Gog and Magog is particularly fearsome (fig. 6). Whereas most of the maps show the mountains, walls or gates, Ebstorf provides a gruesome image of cannibalism. Two figures sit, gorging themselves on the freshly severed limbs of a third figure, possibly still bleeding to death between them. The inscription reads:

"Hic inclusit Alexander duas gentes immundas Gog et Magog, quas comites habebit Antichristus. Hii humanis carnibus vescuntur et sanguinem bibunt" (Martin Warnke 2009).
Here Alexander enclosed the two foul peoples Gog and Magog, whom Antichrist will have as companions. They eat human flesh and drink blood (translation mine).

I do not believe that there is anything explicit in this image that would lead a viewer to associate these figures with the Jews, at least as it survives in the modern reproduction. Still, the direct

5)
Hamburg, UB, Cod. in scrin. 90b, f. 51r. According to Heinz Schreckenberg, ,,How the them ,red Jew' (for the ten tribes) arose in this web of legend is unclear. Perhaps one contributory factor was that according to a variant of the legend that these apostate and renegade Jews lived far to the East ,beyond the Red Sea" (Schreckenberg 1996: Colorplate 14 caption). An edition of the Wappenbuch is available as Clemmensen,Steen (2012): Das Uffenbachsche Wappenbuch from Hamburg, Staatsbibliothek Ms. in scrinio 90 b<http://armorial.dk/german/Uffenbach.pdf> (accessed November 2012). For color illustrations, see Schreckenberg 1996: Colorplate 14 and Caviness 2008: 25.



// Abbildung 6
Ebstorf World Map (reproduction), detail of Gog and Magog

reference accompanying the puzzlingly Jewish guards of the Nubian Gate ("The Nybie [or Nubian] gates, similar to the Caspian…") points the viewer directly back across the map to Gog and Magog, in vertical alignment, where there is a slight visual echo of the scene, as both images are framed by the oddly rectilinear mountains that dominate Ebstorf's easternmost landscape. In addition, the frequent association of Gog and Magog with the Jews, fostered by the accusations of cannibalism and blood-drinking leveled at Jews in the period, would have allowed viewers to make the connection on their own. An early fourteenth-century image from the *Uffenbachsches Wappenbuch* (Strasbourg, c. 1400–1410), for example, conflates several of these traditions, depicting the hordes of Gog and Magog as the 'Red Jews,' locked into the Caspian Mountains, which are curiously also inscribed as being in India *and* Vinsterberg, Germany (Schreckenberg 1996: colorplate 14 caption)![5] The *Wappenbuch* is a German book of weapons, which includes "fabulous biblical and geographical weapons (i.e. imaginary weapons of biblical rulers and oriental rulers)." In these images, then, there is a strong tension established between the distant threat of Gog and Magog, locked behind their gate in a far-off land, and the Jews, a local group perceived as a threat by the Christian majority.

The Hereford Map's image of the Nubian Gate does not depict the guards. It shows the mountainous wall of the "Montes Nibie," presided over by the imposing tower of the locked and barred "Portee Nibie," behind which stands the Town of Nibie, and an inscription noting that the peoples are "Ethiopes Christianissimi" ("most Christian Ethiopians," my translation). Directly adjacent, though, and also behind the Gate, is an inscription identifying the location named "Moyse – that is, ‚origin of [in the?] waters,'" as was also the case on the Ebstorf Map (Westrem 2001:93). On Hereford, these details are situated in very close proximity to the image of the Jews with which I began, and on maps, proximity is of the essence; indeed, it is one of the main operative principles of cartography.

On Ebstorf, it seems likely that there was an image of the crossing of the Red Sea, the Worship of the Golden Calf, Moses receiving the Ten Commandments, or another scene from the Exodus narrative in the now-lost region beside the Nubian Gate. If this was the case, then the guards are located in a region that, on both maps, is at once declaredly 'Christianissimi,' and surrounded by references to Judaism and Jewish history. What *should* the

Nubian guards look like? It is unlikely that medieval Europeans would have had in their minds the same images we might of the contemporary Nubian populations of Egypt and Sudan. Images of the monstrous peoples of Africa and Asia on the Hereford and Ebstorf Maps and elsewhere tend to look more like their European creators and audiences than like the actual inhabitants of these distant locales. Instead, these 'Asian' peoples – as the map has them – are depicted in the guise of a known, local group, with frequently discussed 'exotic' Eastern origins – the Jews. They appear like wildmen, like giants towering beside their tower, but also marked decidedly as Jews by their *Judenhüte* and beards.

But why, of all peoples, choose Jews as the model for these powerful guards? In the context of the Caspian Gate, explicitly referenced in the inscription for the Nubian Gate, and of the hordes of Gog and Magog, the Jews are rendered again and again on the maps and in related geographical contexts as fearsome and bloodthirsty – literally bloodthirsty, these people who "humanis carnibus vescuntur et *sanguinem bibunt*" ("eat human flesh and *drink blood"*) (Martin Warnke 2009, emphasis added, my translation). Who better to guard the 'most Christian' peoples of Nubia than the fearsome Jews? On the Hereford Map, the peoples of Gog and Magog are also described as bloodthirsty:

"[Here are] all kinds of horrors, more than can be imagined: intolerable cold, a constant blasting wind from the mountains, which the inhabitants call 'Bizo'. Here are exceedingly savage people who eat human flesh and drink blood, the accursed sons of Cain. The Lord used Alexander the Great to close them off, for within sight of the king an earthquake occurred, and mountains tumbled upon mountains all around them. Where there were no mountains, Alexander hemmed them in with an indestructible wall" (Westrem 2001:69).

Indeed, the notion that the Jews are a bloodthirsty group was, by the time that the Hereford and Ebstorf maps were being made, already a well-worn trope. Though its origins are far older, we can trace the beginnings of its medieval efflorescence to the late twelfth century, when Thomas of Monmouth penned the prototype of the blood libel and ritual murder accusations in *Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich,* an account of the murder of a Christian boy several decades earlier. According to Thomas' account, the boy – who is clearly a Christological stand-in – was "like an innocent lamb" (Halsall 1997),[6] seduced and then tortured (with grotesque detail in the narration thereof).The perpetrators

6)
For an excellent discussion of this narrative, see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Hybridity, Identity and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: Of Difficult Middles (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). See also Alan Dundes (1991): The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Antisemitic Folklore. Madison, WI., University of Wisconsin Press.

prick his head with thorns, crucify him, and ultimately kill him with a wound to the side. Thomas says this occurred at the time of Passover, likely a reference to the already-extant belief that Jews used the blood of Christians in the preparation of the Passover matzoh. This utterly spurious narrative became a model for dozens of copycat tales, including most prominently that of *Little St. Hugh* of Lincoln. Such tales' lack of basis in fact did not diminish their efficacy in stoking anti-Semitic hate and violence. Very real people were robbed, imprisoned, tortured, dispossessed, and killed as retribution for these entirely fictional crimes. While the false nature of these tales has long been acknowledged, it was only recently that the monument to *Little St. Hugh* was removed from Lincoln Cathedral and replaced with a plaque explaining that "[t]rumped up stories of ‚ritual murders' of Christian boys by Jewish communities … cost many innocent Jews their lives" (my transcription). There was, then, fertile twelfth-century soil in which the later medieval maps' images were rooted.

The Hereford image of the Jews serves to demonstrate the manner in which exotic Others were fluidly conflated by European Christians, such that ancient Hebrews become modern Jews bowing down in polytheistic idol worship before a Muslim image. John Hartley, writing about modern representations of cultural others, coins the term 'Theydom':"Individuals in Theydom", he writes, "are treated as being all the same; their identity consists in being ‚unlike us,' so they are ‚like each other'" (Hartley 1992:209). Each example allows for the vital property emergent from Theydom – difference: "the contrast between Wedom and Theydom," in Hartley's words, "is visualized as bodily opposition. Theydom is dark, threatening, glazed-eyed terror" (Hartley 1992:217).

Certainly, the nakedness of the figures recalls the common trope of representing others as 'uncivilized,' in contrast to proper, civilized Christians. The monstrous peoples of the *Wonders* or *Marvels of the East* are frequently represented as naked, and many of those depicted on the Hereford Map are without any clothes. This is likely also the case with the Ebstorf Map, though, due to the nature of the surviving reproduction it is difficult to be certain. Still, it is worth noting that this instantiation of 'Theydom' may engage issues of bodily difference in terms of gender or sex. The map was likely made at the Benedictine convent in Ebstorf (Chekin 2006:146). If this is the case, then the nakedness of the male Jews may have added additional potency to the images. Medieval images of Jews are nearly universally male, likely

in response to the belief that it was primarily male Jews that were the source of the threat (Bale 2012:137). Indeed, as Robert Stacey writes of Henry III's Statute of Jewry of 1253, which enforced the wearing by Jews of the badges that had been mandated by the Fourth Lateran Council four decades earlier:

"These measures, intended as they were to segregate and isolate Jews, rested on the fundamental presumption that Jews were a polluting and a dangerous presence in Christian society, and that Jewish ‚malice' took may forms: ritual and malicious murder of Christian boys, the seduction of Christian women, and the destruction, through money-lending, of Christian fortunes" (Stacey 2012:52, emphasis added)

The threat implied by the presence of Jews – at least in Christian fantasy – was, then, not only of military conquest of Christian territory and financial conquest of Christian wealth, but also of sexual conquest of Christian women.

It may be difficult for modern audiences – particularly in the U.S. – to recapture some of this 'terror,' in the face of more prevalent modern representations of Jews as humorous, stammering, intellectual nebbishes cast in the mold established by Woody Allen and other Jewish comedians. I must confess, though, to harboring a love of the image of dangerous, even deadly, mountain-dwelling Jews, awaiting their moment to break out and wreak destruction upon the world.In the Afterward to his adventure novel *Gentlemen of the Road,* set in the Caucus Mountains around 950 CE, Michael Chabon tells us that the novel's "original, working" title was "Jews with Swords". He continues:

"When I was writing it and happened to tell people the name of my work in progress, it made them want to laugh. I guess it seemed clear that I meant the title as a joke. It has been a very long time, after all, since Jews anywhere in the world routinely wore or wielded swords" (Chabon2007:197).

In place of imagining the Jewish soldiers who fought with blades at Austerlitz and Gettysburg, of Jewish courtiers in medieval Granada, or of ancient Jewish warriors like Judas Maccabee, Chabon writes:

"they saw, rather, an unprepossessing little guy with spectacles and a beard, brandishing a sabre.[...] They pictured Woody Allen backing toward the nearest exit behind a barrage of wisecracks and a wavering rapier" (Chabon2007: 197–198).

To examine these images and their texts is to remember that the Middle Ages was a time when Jews were seen as fearsome

warriors and dangerous enemies of the Christian community. Some segments of the world population still fear a 'Jewish threat,' – witness popular television and radio personality Glenn Beck's 2010 "two-day tirade" against the Jewish billionaire George Soros, which aired after Beck was celebrated on the covers of *Time Magazine* (September 28, 2009) and the *New York Times Magazine* (September 29, 2010). As Michelle Goldberg sharply observes, Beck cast Soros "as the protagonist in an updated *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. He described Soros as the most powerful man on earth, the creator of a ‚shadow government' that manipulates regimes and currencies for its own enrichment" (Goldberg 2010). Introduced with title fonts and graphics drawn from Nazi propaganda films such as *Der ewige Jude* (1940), and relying on the "puppet master" moniker, Beck screams, mumbles and weeps on camera about Soros' international conspiracy to create one world government in the most dramatic of terms. Still, as with Beck, now the paranoia much more often takes the form of imagined banking conspiracies, Hollywood cultural imperialism, and even oddly-lingering fears of communism. In the Middle Ages, though, particularly in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, this threat was seen as both far greater in scope – absolutely global and eschatological, and therefore existential – and physical, with images depicting Jews as violent, heavily armed warriors. For example, Matthew Paris provides a paranoiac account of a Europe-wide Jewish conspiracy to arm the 'Tartars' (a medieval Christian term for the Mongols) (Menache 1996: 319–42). According to Matthew, "the Jews [...] thought that these enemies of ours were a portion of their Jewish race, who had been shut up in the Caspian mountains, and had therefore come to assist them, for the subversion of Christianity" (Giles 1889:357). As Chekin writes: "*Matthew derives the Tartars from the ten lost tribes of Israel whom Alexander the Great had locked up. Following Peter Comestor and other scholars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he combines two myths, one about the ten lost tribes of Israel and the other about Gog and Magog enclosed behind the Caspian Gates" (Chekin 2006:197).*

As in so many images of Jewish conspiracy stretching from the Middle Ages forward to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* and recently the focus of Umberto Eco's novel, *The Prague Cemetery* (2010), "numbers of the Jews on the continent [...] assembled on a general summons in a secret place, where one of their number who seemed to be the wisest and most influent among them"

addresses the Jews and tells them that, though they have been "so long oppressed under Christian rule, now the time has arrived for us to liberate ourselves, and by the judgment of God to oppress them in our turn" (Giles, 1889:357). The Jews in Matthew's narrative therefore "at once bought all the swords, daggers, and armour, they could find for sale anywhere"(357–58), and hid it in barrels they told their Christian lords contained "deadly intoxicating wine," so that they would deliver it to the Tartars (358). Once discovered, "They were therefore at once handed over to the executioners, to be either consigned to perpetual imprisonment, or to be slain with their own swords" (358). The lack of truth to this account would not have rendered it any less potent. Indeed, as Eco's repugnant narrator Simonini – a forger of letters – philosophizes regarding conspirators, "do they really exist? many anonymous letters seem to prove it, and in any event it's quite enough to talk about something to make it exists" (Eco 2010: 329–330). In Matthew's formulation, this is a close call for Christendom. Had the Jews' weapons made it through to the Tartars, had their "unheard-of treachery" and conspiracy with the "open enemies of the world in general" succeeded, Matthew implies, the results would have been disastrous (358). Chabon's remarks serve to remind modern readers how estranged most of the modern world is from these fears, and therefore encourage us to reinvest medieval images and texts with some of the potency they once held.

There is more ambiguity, though, to the Ebstorf guards. The Ebstorf Map's image of the cannibalistic peoples of Gog and Magog – like that on the Hereford Map, as well – is incessantly, unremittingly negative, transparently grim and horrifying. The image of the guards is not. It may borrow some of the associations of that other Eastern gate, and may use the trope of the powerful Jewish warrior to denote the power of this stronghold, but does not directly condemn the figures. Instead, in their seemingly heraldic arrangement, they recall other fearsome beasts, surrounding a central coat of arms as signs of power. Rampant lions, rearing gryphons, snarling dragons, *and naked Jews*. Like the wild men that become common emblems of heraldry in the fourteenth century, these figures seem to stand in for "hardiness, strength, and fecundity" (Husband1980:185). As Richard Bernheimer writes in his seminal study on wild men, "The purpose of stationing the wild man as a retainer outside the shield rather than [as] an emblem within it was probably a talismanic one [...] the wild man could surely be trusted to protect and defend the escutcheon"

(Bernheimer 1952:177–78). So, too, these mighty Jewish figures may be serving their masters, protecting the *Christianissima* gens, who apparently cower behind them.

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