

# *The Depiction of Jews in the Carnival Plays and Comedies of Hans Folz and Hans Sachs in Early Modern Nuremberg*

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Bakhtin's theory of the social function of the carnival play (*Fastnachtspiel*)<sup>1</sup> characterized the primary function of carnival plays as one of relieving class tensions and intra-group hostilities by providing members of diverse groups with an outlet for aggression, turning impulses that would otherwise express themselves in violence or disruptive behaviors into carefully modulated public displays of excess consumption (e.g. drunkenness, gluttony, staged sexual humor) and oftentimes sexual or scatological mockery of ruling elites through easily recognizable type scenes and characters (e.g. the foolish old guildmaster cuckolded by the whoring priest, the merchant deceived into buying a bag of his own feces). While this account of the *Fastnachtspiel*'s role in late medieval German society is certainly persuasive *prima facie*, it has not been accepted as an exhaustive explanation of their public functions and political uses, which included both critiques and affirmations of public authority figures.<sup>2</sup> The most significant flaw in the Bakhtinian model is that it describes a form of theatre that reinforces existing social structures without either threatening the continued existence of hierarchies of authority or changing the political attitudes and behavior of the audience. What follows here will describe how Hans Folz and Hans Sachs of Nuremberg transformed the late medieval carnival play from an outlet for otherwise repressed impulses—the Bakhtinian 'social safety valve' model of carnival—into a means of effecting social, political change.<sup>3</sup> Since this development has already been discussed in some measure by scholars of the *Fastnachtspiel*,<sup>4</sup> I will discuss here more particularly how Folz and Sachs's respective depictions of Jews in carnival plays and comedies effected (or failed to effect) the conditions of Jews living in or around Nuremberg in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This study will thus demonstrate that the Bakhtinian model and its critics both contribute to our understanding of the *Fastnachtspiel* and the development of early modern German attitudes toward Jews.

Those *Fastnachtspiele* which have as their principle matter the place of Jews in the mental world of late medieval and early modern German cities offer, through their changing representations of Jews, insight into the changing conception of and attitudes toward Jews that go well beyond the function of a social pressure valve. The transformation

of the stage Jews of Nuremberg in the period 1470 to 1550 is a valuable object of study because its specificity overcomes problems identified by Salo Baron in his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*. Discussing the role of the stage in reflecting and shaping popular conceptions of Jews among Christians, Baron wrote that it was exactly the popular drama of the Middle Ages that afforded us the best insight into the attitudes of the common Christian German toward his Jewish neighbors, though even these sources (“mystery plays and storytellers”) yield us only limited information.<sup>5</sup> Commenting on the late medieval tendency to “modernize” the depiction of Jews in traditional dramas by giving the stage Jews contemporary dress, names, and professions, Baron argued that it was precisely this modernizing tendency in late medieval German drama, that proved most harmful to the social position and physical safety of Jews in German-speaking Europe, as the resentments and animosities of the urban middle class playwrights (mostly merchants and clergy) fed the common anti-Jewish attitudes of the broader Christian masses (189-90).<sup>6</sup> In its general contours, the social condition of Nuremberg’s Jews in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries represents the nadir of a long decline that had begun with the plague pogrom of 1349 (Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich* 34–5). In the early fourteenth century, the chancery of Nuremberg had still referred to Jews as “Juden, die hier Bürger sind” (“Jews, who are citizens here”); by the end of that century, they were referred to as Jews who were allowed to stay in the city “so lang die Bürger wollen” (“So long as the citizens want”); Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich* 55). It was in that historical context that two writers of Nuremberg, Hans Folz and Hans Sachs, successively moved the *Fastnachtspiel* away from the ‘safety valve’ model of the carnivalesque, and toward a new one as an effective instrument for influencing popular thought and encouraging political action.<sup>7</sup>

As a literary pairing, Folz and Sachs’s carnival plays challenge both Baron’s insights as a historian of the Jewish people and Bakhtin’s insights into the relationship of literature to society. Both Folz and Sachs were members of the “urban bourgeoisie” identified by Baron as shapers of public opinion; both wrote in a time of growing politico-religious and socio-economic tension. They lived in a Catholic city on the eve of (Folz) or in the early years of the Reformation (Sachs). Here, in those turbulent decades, they developed the dramatic use of Jews as socially marginal figures and religious outsiders first to critique and then to influence power relations in their region of Germany. First the Catholic Folz, and then the Lutheran Sachs adapt these figures to serve changing ideological goals. While Folz, in his *Fastnachtspiele*, brings Jews on stage in order to ridicule their religion or justify their expulsion from the city, Sachs seems, on the surface, to treat Jews as figures so marginal as to be nearly beneath serious notice. In the following pages, I will illuminate the development of the religious outsider by these two Hanses of Nuremberg, aiming to shed some light on the development and use of religious outsider as a political foil in early modern German drama.

Scholarship comparing Folz’s early and late work has, in the last forty years, revealed striking differences in his depictions of Jews that point to a change in the social and political goals of Nuremberg’s *Judenpolitik* between 1474 and 1499. Helmut Lomnitzer in his 1964 article first gave voice to the speculation that the two early carnival plays that concern Jews, *Die alt und neu ee* (*The Old and New Law*, written 1474)<sup>8</sup>, and *Kaiser Constantinus* (1475), may have had direct bearing on the real interactions

between Jews and Christians in late fifteenth-century Nuremberg (Lomnitzer 286). The two plays are both rife with vehement attacks on Jewish belief and, for the time, comparatively moderate in their attacks on Jews as Jews (Ridder and Steinhoff 157). In his multi-volume *History of the Jewish People*, Baron identified *die alt und neu ee* as an example of apparently conflicting Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism in Folz's presentation of synagogue in the stage treatment of the Jewish-Christian theological debate.<sup>9</sup> In Baron's estimation, the "pornography" of the play's attacks on the "dubious rabbinic legends" seemed only part of Folz's general tendency to diabolize the Jews rather than a pointed attack on certain elements of non-biblical Jewish myth and tradition. Baron apparently had passages such as these in mind:

THE RABBI

In the book Bereshit Adam,<sup>10</sup> the pure,  
says 'Bone of my bone,'  
Rabbi Eleazar takes this to mean  
That Adam joined himself  
With all animals, from which soon  
Came, man, such marvelous creatures  
Of men but with the shapes of animals.  
Furthermore, Rabbi Schlanis says plainly  
That Adam certainly before Eve  
Had a wife named Lillith,  
Who bore him nothing but devils.  
And Rabbi Ezerei says clearly,  
That Eve coupled just as impurely  
With the snake.

THE DOCTOR

If Adam coupled with the animals,  
Then what else can I learn from that than  
That apes, asses, and swine  
Are the step-mothers of you Jews?  
If Adam ever truly sired  
Devils born of Lillith,  
From that it would be clear as day,  
That you-all are the brothers of devils!  
Therefore, it wouldn't be fitting,  
If you all were not to share in their inheritance.  
If the snake, as I understand it,  
Coupled herself with the snake,  
Then all impure snakes and reptiles,  
Dragons and whatsoever has venom  
Are also your step-fathers by right.<sup>11</sup>

It is not simply that 'der doctor' demeans the Jews as step-children of animals and poisonous creatures, he argues that traditional Jewish commentary on scripture identifies the Jews as such. Thus, Folz's polemic follows a tradition of engagement with Rabbinic Judaism that had its roots in the apologetic writings of high medieval theologians.<sup>12</sup> When

the Rabbi asserts that the stories also apply to Christians, since they too are descended from Adam and Eve, he receives this reply:

THE DOCTOR

By no means would that happen,  
But only to those whom one sees  
Saying such shameful things about their parents,  
They should bear that reproach with them.<sup>13</sup>

(*BVS* 28, 20)

These extra-biblical Jewish legends about the unsavory deeds of Adam and Eve are held up as examples of the corruption of the biblical Jewish religion, things that Jews should not believe about themselves.

The real object of the attack, then, was not the character of Jews *per se*, but Rabbinic Judaism as a religion that, to the late medieval Christian audience, defined their identity. It was Edith Wenzel who proposed that the theological content of the early plays was intended to provide a Christian audience with an introduction to apologetics aimed at a Jewish audience, a proposition that this author, on the basis of her argument and supporting research on the condition of Christian–Jewish relations in Nuremberg in the late 1400s found convincing (Wenzel 30; Martin “Dramatized Disputations” 220). The most important textual evidence for the conversionist impulse of the early plays is the fact that they contain references to extra–biblical Jewish religious writings and to Jewish apologetic texts written in response to Christianity, demonstrating a engagement with lived Judaism unprecedented in German literature and startling for a work of its kind. This engagement was likely influenced by events of the day. Nuremberg and its surrounding cities had been, in the 1470s, the locus of conversion oriented preaching and disputations conducted by the Dominican preacher Petrus Nigri (Peter Schwarz), which reached their high point in 1478, exactly the time when Folz’s anti-Jewish works appear (Frey “Intimate Other” 261; Ridder and Steinhoff 161; Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich* 64-5).

In the play, ‘der christen doctor’ repeatedly refers to apparent logical contradictions in the Talmud—most often anthropomorphisms—as signs that Rabbinic Judaism was not a rational or moral religion. In this, Folz again followed a trend in Christian polemic developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by theologians such as Peter of Cluny and Thomas Aquinas, who argued that the Talmud was rife with irrational fables and therefore harmful to Jews, leading them astray from the pure truth of the Torah and prophets.<sup>14</sup> On the stage, Jews are depicted as moral and rational beings capable of rejecting these “irrational” and “immoral” beliefs in favor of Christianity. That the play also served to strengthen Christian belief over and against any real or perceived challenge from Judaism is also a tenable thesis, given the many clerical warnings against lay people engaging Jews in religious arguments (Frey “Intimate Other” 250-52).

The depiction of the Jews of the earlier plays is distinct from that seen in the later plays, owing to the different social and political goals the plays were destined to achieve. The Jews appear in the early plays, such as *Die alt und die neu ee*, as tolerated outsiders who are also potential converts. The goal of these plays was to show that conversion was both possible and desirable. In the later plays, particularly *Ein spil vom Herzogen von*

*Burgund*, Jews appear as irredeemable reprobates who have no place in Christian society. Indeed, the very plot of each play makes the change in rhetorical impulse clear. *Die alt und die neu ee* is, in essence, a dramatized version of a theological disputation between priests and rabbis, just the sort of disputation that inhabitants of Nuremberg had seen in their own recent past. The dramatic action in *Herzog von Burgund*,<sup>15</sup> on the other hand, turns on an attempt by a group of rabbis and a Jewish 'endechrist' to deceive people into believing that he is the true Messiah.<sup>16</sup> Jews in the first play are intellectual respondents and interlocutors, while in the latter play they are deceivers who wish to bring damnation on Christians. The contrast can be seen in a few key lines from the conclusions of these plays. First, the words of 'der fallend Jud' from the conclusion of *Die alt und neu ee*:

Who can undo habit  
And quickly make the old hound into a good hunter?  
So I cannot learn a trade.  
If I must then give up my possessions.  
Then my first step [toward conversion] is my last.<sup>17</sup>  
(BVS 28, 32)

The stage Jew here laments his inability to change his religion without losing social and economic status. the Doctor then reassures him:

Listen, Jew, one has counsel for you.  
If God does give you his spirit,  
So that your heart becomes enlightened,  
Then no one will deprive you of anything.<sup>18</sup>  
(BVS 28, 32)

Upon hearing this reassurance, 'die Sinagog,' the allegorical stage representative of Judaism and Jewish religious authorities, suggests that, rather than converting straightway, the Jewish listeners in the debate might wish to ponder the theological matters raised in the play before committing to change of belief systems:

Therefore let it be known to him,  
He is commanded to consider this resolution again  
One year from now,  
When, whatever hope there is,  
The arrogance of the Christians shall be laid to rest.  
We wish now to depart from here.  
Listen, host, may God thank you well and fully  
For the trouble that you all have had on our account up to now.<sup>19</sup>  
(BVS 28, 33)

These (for this society at this time) mild closing words of the allegorical Synagogue in *Die alt und die neu ee* contrast sharply with the conclusion of the later play. After the deception of the rabbis and their 'endechrist' has been revealed in *Herzog von Burgund*, the 'hofmeister' addresses the audience:

Now cease talking and be silent all!  
It is the will of our gracious prince  
To render a verdict, how and in what manner  
The Jews are to be punished here,  
For to their eternal shame,

All Jews are enmeshed in deception.<sup>20</sup>

(Przybilski 97)

*Herzog von Burgund* then concludes with a thoroughly repulsive depiction of Jews being forced to eat the filth of swine in order to punish them for their attempt to deceive the audience with their 'endechrist.' The play marks an endpoint in Folz's development of the Jews as stage figures. From the relatively mild depictions of the early plays to this revolting end, Nuremberg's *Fastnachtspiele* have become a political instrument, expressing the long-held hostility toward Jews among the middle and upper classes in Nuremberg. Much in keeping with the Bakhtinian model in form (5-21), the play concludes with the abject degradation of the objects of its "comedy," but at the same time it moves beyond such a model by acting as an instrument to promote political change, in this case, the exile of the Jews from Nuremberg (Brett-Evans 162). Furthermore, there is no sense in which the stage Jews' association with the "material body, lower stratum" is anything but ambivalent, rather entirely destructive and negative, placing Folz's late carnival play much more in line with Renaissance satire than medieval humor (c.f. Bakhtin 22-31; 369-70; 378-81). That is the state of the carnival play in Nuremberg at the close of the fifteenth century. In the new century, Hans Sachs developed both the carnival play and the Jews as figures in those plays to meet new social and political goals. As we shall see, Sachs's plays reflect a different conception of the Jews' place in Christian society.

In addition to writing the *Fastnachtspiele* for which he is well-known, Sachs wrote extensively in the 'new' genres of 'comedi' and 'tragedi' (Catholy 50; Könneke 55-61; Schade 73-6), and in all of these forms, he substantially expanded and altered the function of public theatre in order to address the theological conflict between groups of Christians that was the basis of the Reformation. At the same time, the stage still served Sachs as a means of addressing the essential Jewish-Christian difference in a city that remained Catholic and had expelled its Jewish population in the late fifteenth century. It was necessary, in Sachs's mind, to defend publicly Reformation Christianity as true Christianity on two fronts, defining it over and against both Judaism and Catholicism. The ideological and dramatic goal of reminding the Nuremberg audience of the common Christian heritage and beliefs shared by Reformers and Catholics alike was easy enough to accomplish by reaffirming the common dispute with the Jews about the identity of Jesus. This Sachs does most thoroughly in his *comedia mit xij person, das Christus der wahr Messias sey*. The *comedia* is a dramatic repetition of theological arguments presented in Nuremberg previously by Folz, with one significant difference: the complete absence of any denunciations of the general character of Jews as Jews. The disputation between the Christian Doctor and the Rabbi stock characters familiar to us from Folz's plays and their antecedents in theological tracts, remains in this comedy focused on biblical texts and their proper exegesis. The play begins with the Doctor taking the stage and expositing the matter that he and his interlocutor will address in their disputation:

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTOR ENTERS AND SAYS:

Rejoice, you worthy Christian folk!

For to us is born today

Christus, Messiah, the Savior,

Who was sent from the Father,

As he many years ago  
Promised us by the host of patriarchs,  
Whom thereafter almost all the prophets  
Made known the future to us!  
He has now come and born,  
To us Christians he has become a man for the good,  
For he is ours and we are his.  
Therefore rejoice all the people!  
A JEWISH RABBI JOINS HIM AND SPEAKS OBSTINATELY  
Christian, for what reason should you be allowed to say that,  
How he is supposedly the Messiah?  
He is ours, and promised to us,  
That I shall prove through three witnesses.<sup>21</sup>

Here, Sachs departs from the medieval model by making the 'der rabi' the character who calls the first witnesses for his case. The Patriarchs are called upon to deliver evidence against Christological readings of the Hebrew Bible, with 'der Christen doctor' then re-interpreting the biblical passages for the Christian audience. The appearance of the Patriarchs on stage follows a medieval tradition of religiously didactic dramaturgy, one familiar to students of the Passion plays (Martin, *Representations* 51-5, 71-3; Wenzel 32-45), in which the Patriarchs and Prophets confront representatives of contemporaneous Judaism with Christologically-interpreted passages from the Hebrew Bible in order to dramatize Jewish unbelief and stubbornness.

What separates Sachs from his medieval predecessors is that he does not take pains to emphasize the hostility of Jews toward the Christian interpretation of their own scriptures, as the author of the Frankfurt and Alsfeld Passion Plays had done, but merely presents the conflicting interpretations. We have here no equivalents of the Frankfurt Passion Play's hostile, unreasoning Jews, who respond to their own Prophets disrespectfully (Martin, *Representations* 53). After the first three "witnesses for the prosecution"—Adam, Abraham, and Jacob—have spoken, the Rabbi continues:

THE JEWISH RABBI SPEAKS:  
Here you hear that Messiah shall have  
From our seed his descent  
And not come from you-all.  
Therefore he does not belong to you-all.  
THE DOCTOR OF THE CHRISTIANS SAYS:  
Messiah was promised to you certainly,  
But out of mercy given to us heathens,  
Who broke down the dividing wall,  
And pronounced of two people one.  
For this reason I shall present three witnesses,  
Who shall give the Christ to us.<sup>22</sup>  
(BVS 102, 164)

Following this first round of the debate, the first three "witnesses for the defense" of Christian interpretation of the Torah and the Prophets—David, Isaiah, and Micah—speak. When they conclude, the Doctor and the Rabbi then exchange these words:

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTOR SAYS:

Now hear, Jew, that the heathens  
Through the Messiah also share in salvation!

THE RABBI SAYS:

I admit, that the Messiah really  
Would also be a Savior to the heathens.  
However, he cannot be Jesus.  
For this reason listen to my three Prophets.<sup>23</sup>  
(*BVS* 102, 165)

The three witnesses on behalf of Judaism are David, Isaiah, and Micah, the same prophets that the Doctor has just called in his defense. By having the two disputants rely on the same witnesses, Sachs emphasizes the common Jewish and Christian dependence on the Hebrew Bible and the mutually exclusive nature of their respective interpretations. The Rabbi and the Doctor then continue their debate on the basis of Messianic passages from the prophecies of Isaiah, each adducing as evidence the Messianic passage from Isaiah 61 (*BVS* 102, 166), a passage given considerable attention in medieval Jewish argumentation against Christianity (Berger 96–118). The use of that passage here fits Sachs's apologetic drama into an older tradition, contrary to the 'modernizing' tendency seen in Folz's plays. There follow several exchanges between the Rabbi, the Doctor, and their respective witnesses. One of the most dramatically significant of these involves the interpretation of the passage in Jeremiah 31 that refers to the establishment of a new covenant (*BVS* 102, 168). After the prophet leaves the stage at the conclusion of the exchange, the Rabbi offers his counter-argument, one often used in medieval Jewish anti-Christian polemic: the coming of a kingdom of peace with the advent of the Messiah (*BVS* 102, 169). To demonstrate the scriptural basis for his claim, he calls the prophet Isaiah, who quotes from the "lion and lamb" passage (Isaiah 11) as evidence against Jesus' Messianic nature. He argues that that there is yet war and violence on the earth, therefore Jesus could not have been the Messiah, since his coming would have ushered in an era of peace (*BVS* 102, 169).<sup>24</sup> In response, the Doctor also calls Isaiah to witness for Christianity, this time citing a passage from Isaiah 35 which describes the Messiah as healer. In accord with medieval Jewish anti-Christian polemic (Martin, *Representations* 116; Berger 103-5, 201-4), though, the Rabbi turns the attribution of wonders to Jesus into evidence against his Messianic claim rather than in favor of it:

ISAIAH DEPARTS. THE DOCTOR SAYS:

Look! Christ did all of these miracles,  
While he lived on Earth,  
Therefore he is the true Messiah.  
Tell, Jew, what else is lacking!

THE RABBI SAYS (DEUTERONOMY 13):

Christ was a false prophet,  
[who] did all of that through sorcery,  
For which Moses commanded stoning,  
As my parents taught me.<sup>25</sup>  
(*BVS* 102, 170)

This is the one passage in the Rabbi's various attacks on Christianity that does not refer to

biblical passages shared by Jews and Christians, but rather to traditional Jewish teaching—and that only in a vague manner. Whereas Folz, writing in the 1470s and 1480s, put much of his dramatic focus on the refutation or denigration of contemporary rabbinic Judaism, demonstrating a surprising command of the rabbinic sources, Sachs does not expend his creative energies engaging real, sixteenth-century Judaism in a dynamic and persuasive way. Throughout his dramatized disputation, he adheres to an archaic, high medieval model of Jewish-Christian theological argumentation. Nevertheless, the last exchange between the Rabbi and the Doctor demonstrates that he viewed the conversion of the Jews a worthy goal, an attitude wholly consonant with early Reformation tendencies:

THE RABBI THROWS UP HIS HANDS, GAZES HEAVENWARD,  
AND SAYS:

Oh, alas, it may well be so.  
The time has passed away for far too long.  
And we remain in great extremity,  
Rejected by God completely.  
An object of scorn among all nations,  
Dispersed throughout all lands,  
And shackled in the Emperor's bands,  
Which we deserved by dint of our sins,  
That we did not accept Christ.  
Oh, our rabbis are gravely mistaken.  
Share with me your true teaching,  
What I should do here on Earth,  
So that I finally might become blessed!

THE DOCTOR CONCLUDES:  
Believe in Christ, the Savior,  
The son of God, send to us here!  
In that blessed seed  
Let yourself be baptized, in his name!<sup>26</sup>  
(BVS 102, 172)

The conclusion echoes the conciliatory tone that marks the end of Folz's *Die alt und neu ee*, ending not with the abject humiliation of the Jews, as *Herzog von Burgund* ends, but with conversion and integration into Christian society.

Using a tactic that Hans Folz had employed in his early plays, Sachs engaged the theological arguments in defense of Jesus' Messianic nature, and against Jewish anti-Christian polemic. It is telling, however, that Sachs' argumentation only once departs from the long-used biblical texts that had been the core of high medieval Christian *contra Judaeos* apologetics (Schreckenberg 585-92). Sachs's does not evince in his "disputation" any knowledge of extra-biblical Jewish religious writings, and, as noted above, his stage Rabbi makes only a vague reference to the accusation that Jesus had been executed deservedly for the crime of sorcery, "als mich mein eltern habn beweist." The function of the stage Jew in *Das Christus der wahr Messias sey* was primarily that of the foil who reaffirms the common Christian identity of the audience. There was no longer a question of converting Jews in Nuremberg or persuading the *Stadtrat* to expel them from the city. They had been expelled in 1499 and, in 1530, had not yet been readmitted officially. In

the early sixteenth century, it is most likely that any Jews in the city were visitors. His purpose in putting these Jewish figures on stage was to affirm the common Christianity of his audience at a time when the church was fragmenting and remind them of their recent history as a Christian community united in its rejection of Judaism.

Sachs makes specific reference to the expulsion of the Jews from Nürnberg in his *Fastnachtspiel* titled *Der teuffel nam ein alt weib zu der ehe*. Though the Devil is the figure lending the play its title, the *expositor ludi* in this *Fastnachtspiel* is a character named “Mose der Jude.” Here, one might be inclined to think, in line with Mosche Lazar’s account of literary associations of Jews with the Devil and diabolic spirits in European literature (“Servant of Two Masters” 31-50; “Lamb and Scapegoat” 37-66), that Sachs was making subtle reference to such diabolical associations. Instead of the “Jews as sorcerers” motif, though, what the audience saw in this play was a depiction of Jews as both victims of the Devil’s trickery and usurers, the most invidious of modern, non-religious slanders of Jews. In such, Sachs follows the general Reformation trend of “modernization” with his anti-Jewish tone (Baron 139-46). Before further discussing the specifics of this construction of the Jew as other, a brief summary of the play’s action will prove useful.

The action of the play revolves around the Devil’s failed attempt to live as the husband of an old woman, variously identified as ‘die hexe,’ ‘die kupplerin’ (procuress), and ‘die alt teuffelsbannerin’ (conjurer of devils), having grown tired of living in hell. After fleeing his bride, the devil then takes up with a charlatan, ‘der artzet,’ agreeing to possess people and let himself be “exorcised” for a share in the profits that the ‘artzet’ gains from his patients. Insofar as the ‘artzet’ is held up as a charlatan, the play fits in the comic tradition of satirizing “Quacksalberpfutscher” (Quacks) that dates back at least to the German Easter plays (Brett-Evans 155). In this respect the character fits well within the framework of carnival social satire, attacking the pretensions of the educated class, and conforms to the character type of the charlatan that Bakhtin described in his discussion of marketplace language (185-87). The first victims of the Charlatan and the Devil are Mose and Esaw, two Jewish bankers. When the Charlatan begins his fake exorcism, the Devil, in the person of Esaw, becomes reluctant to leave, saying:

Hey! Why are you dragging me around, dear man,  
That you so soon drive me out  
From this pleasant house?  
It is equipped in a way that pleases me:  
Full of usury, robbery, and theft  
Up to the very limit everywhere.<sup>27</sup>

Though the Jews are not themselves deliberate, conscious servants of the Devil in the *Fastnachtspiel*, as they are in certain versions of the Theophilus legend, they are here depicted as being such greedy, thieving persons that the Devil would quite naturally be at home when possessing them. Where medieval depictions of Jews had tended to focus on their religious otherness in Christian society and their rejection of the Gospel, the early modern depictions—as here typified by Sachs’s Mose and Esaw—demonstrate a secularizing tendency, one that emphasizes greed as an essential characteristic of Jews (Frey, “Zehen Tunne” 177-94). The ‘artzet’ drives the ‘teuffel’ out of Esaw in return for a large sum of money from the thankful Jews. The Devil then possesses Mose,

and, resentful that the Charlatan seems to be profiting more financially, refuses to be “exorcised” until the Charlatan tells the Devil that his wife has come looking. He bears a summons for him to appear before the church court. The Devil promptly flees Mose, preferring to return to hell rather than face his ‘weib’ in court. Both the Devil and the Jews are held up as typical comic villains—petty criminals and charlatans—whose actions make them fitting targets for the scornful laughter of the audience, fitting neatly in the Bakhtinian mold. Furthermore, the exclusion of Jews from Christian polity is emphasized by the play’s conclusion. In his concluding speech, the ‘Esaw der Jude’ remarks:

You gentlemen, don’t take umbrage  
Or be ungrateful for our comedic sketch,  
Which we have done for entertainment,  
As one does now during carnival,  
Without any meanness, as we hope,  
We have hit on Jews and old ladies.  
Now we can be happy that this city  
Doesn’t have any more Jews in it,  
Who might have spoiled such entertainment.<sup>28</sup>  
(BVS 195, 33)

The dramatic irony of the social commentary is given body and voice by the stage Jew who here reminds the audience of the successful petition to expel the Jews from Nuremberg in his “apologia” for offenses his message might have inflicted on his audience. This assures them that they are indeed rid of the Jews, who would have ruined their entertainment. The Jew may not be a diabolist in Sachs’s conception, but he is a usurer with no proper place in a well-ordered Christian society.

By way of contrast, Sachs’s *Der schwanger bawer mit dem fül*, places a Jewish physician among the everyday character types of low scatological comedy typical of the *Fastnachtspiel*, and allows the character to retain his place among his ostensibly Christian neighbors. The Jewish doctor, like all other figures in the play (‘der bawer,’ ‘die bawerin’), is a comic stereotype, an object of mockery, but one with particular literary–historical resonance. The play begins with the medical distress of ‘der bawer,’ who orders his son to find ‘der judenartzt,’ who can, he trusts, correctly diagnose the physical causes of his distress:

THE FARMER SAYS:  
Heintz, then take away my urine sample!  
Ride fast toward Sendelbach,  
And in the inn inquire after  
The Jewish doctor, who is named Isaac,  
And wish him a good day  
From me, that he should examine my urine  
And observe carefully what is wrong with me.  
And help me through his medical skill.  
I will generously pay him for this,  
See, give him the ten twelve–mark pieces in payment.<sup>29</sup>  
(BVS 195, 63)

‘Der judenartzt, Isac,’ introduces himself to the audience with the following soliloquy:

My name is Isaac,  
 And I am of Jewish ancestry,  
 And have long provided for myself with prognostication,  
 Since the farmers ask me,  
 Where something is stolen,  
 Or where somebody might have hidden something,  
 Buried under a spade,  
 That they might have profit from it.  
 I also give farmers a blessing against wounds,  
 And am asked to help in finding buried treasure;  
 I often barely escaped a farmer’s spear,  
 And so have given up fortune telling,  
 And taken up the medical arts,  
 Which I know as well as soothsaying.  
 I never have studied the dark arts,  
 Nor truly practiced medicine,  
 And therefore cannot enter any big city anymore,  
 But can only earn my keep among the peasants,  
 For I put on a show at every village church dedication,  
 Where I without reluctance show  
 A collection of papers, great seals, and letters up and down,  
 That attest to how I’ve helped them;  
 It’s all made up and false,  
 And I have long deceived and pulled one over on farmers.<sup>30</sup>  
 (BVS 195, 64–5)

‘Der judenartzt’ here is a figure in the same mold as *der fahrende schüler auß paradeys*, who plays on the gullibility of the uneducated peasantry for the amusement of the slightly more educated urban audience. What Isaac, is not, however, is as important as what he is. He is neither a magician nor a man intent on poisoning his “patients,” something that Folz’s ‘endecrist’ boasts of in his self-justifying speech in *Herzog von Burgund*:

Yes, if they but knew,  
 What great curses, what hatred and envy  
 We have since [the advent of Christianity] always harbored toward them,  
 How much property we have stolen from them,  
 How many we have deprived of life,  
 Whose doctors we have been[...]<sup>31</sup>  
 (Przybilski 96–7)

The idea that Jewish doctors poisoned their Christian patients was one anti-Jewish slander that the Reformers, Luther among them, affirmed rather than condemned, even while they decried as “papist superstitions” the Blood Libel and the Host Desecration Libel (Baron 139–50, 158–65, 173; Detmers 59–61). Both conceptions of the Jew, the magician and the murderous physician, were part of the late medieval conception of the Jew in German-speaking Europe, Catholic and Protestant alike. Notably, neither of these particularly maleficent constructions of the Jew is developed here. Isaac’s closest literary

cousins are in the figures of Jewish physicians, encountered most famously in legend of Saint Basil (Martin, *Representations* 149–53). That legend, in which the Jewish physician to the saintly bishop is depicted as both benevolent and wise, was widely circulated in the late Middle Ages and provided Christian audiences with a counterweight to the legend of the secretly malevolent Jewish doctor. The kindly, competent, and helpful physician of that literary tradition is also absent here, replaced with the figure of the Jewish charlatan in what could be read as a conscious parody of the “Jewish doctor and Saint Basil” legend. Sachs presents neither the duplicitous, murderous Jewish physician of medieval legend or the benevolent, wise Jewish physician of medieval hagiography on the stage. In this comedy, his audience sees the Jew instead as a buffoon and charlatan.

The most significant social factor explaining the change in dramatic representations of Jews on the Nuremberg stage is clearly the absence of Jews and therefore opportunities for interreligious contact and conflict. The theologically troublesome presence of real Jews was no longer a significant element of daily life for the citizens of Nuremberg in the early 1500s. The mockery here inflicted on them as a group is no longer directed at the most “in” of “out” groups in a Christian polity, but at a group no longer officially present. Jews no longer had a viable, permanent community within the walls of Nuremberg. Indeed, at the end of the fifteenth century, when Folz wrote his anti-Jewish works, the Jewish community in Nuremberg had already been a small one for some years, consisting of less than twenty families (Toch, “‘Umb gemeyns nutz’” 1–21). Though it is certainly possible and quite likely that Jews did frequent the city in the early sixteenth century, characters such as “Mose” and “Esaw” of this play, or “Isac, der Judenartz” of *Der schwanger bawer mit dem ful*, no longer served any polemical or persuasive function vis-à-vis the political behavior of Nuremberg’s Christian inhabitants toward their Jewish co-inhabitants. Rather, they simply reinforced the notion that the author rightly belonged to the Christian community that had expelled Jews from the city some sixty years previous. Uniting Sachs and Folz, Protestant and Catholic, in their representation of Jews in their low comic *Fastnachtspiele* is a principle that Rainer Warning elucidated in his discussion of the *risus paschalis* of the medieval Easter plays. Laughter in such social contexts as the Easter play or the carnival play:

[...]judges in the name of the dominant norm[...]For what stands in contrast to it [the dominant norm], what is excluded from it as negative, inessential, and ridiculous is not merely negative but only something that the particular normative seriousness cannot entirely do away with and that belongs to the whole of life just as much as what counts as positive and essential. (107)

A dedicated Lutheran writing in a Catholic city, Sachs’s depiction of Jews here reinforces the identity of the Reformer as a Christian. Jewish unbelief and the presence of Jews in a Christian polity, while the objects of laughter, are by their very stage presence defined as elements essential and positive to the “whole of life” in Christian, German-speaking Europe. Sachs reassures his audience of their common Christianity only through this staged presentation of a social element that defines their common faith through its otherness: Judaism. By giving his audience such a reassurance, Sachs was as much defending himself from possible charges of “Judaizing” as establishing his authority to represent Reformation Christianity to his public. Such charges had, in fact, been used in

Catholic propaganda to indict both Reformers and Jews, particularly in Eck's attacks on Osiander's philojudaic writings of the early 1500s, wherein Eck accused Jews of undermining the Catholic Church and Reformers of falling under the sway of Jewish theological influences (Detmers 99). The religious outsider here is a form of pre-emptive, rhetorical self-defense, rather than either a tool for distanced, comical social criticism or a figure intended to provoke majority action against a present religious minority. Sachs's stage rhetoric in *Der war messias* varies greatly from Folz's in both its engagement with Judaism and its hostility toward Jews. Where Folz, even at his mildest, did not hesitate to denigrate Jews, such remarks are absent in Sachs's dramatization of religious disputation. The only instances where Sachs does denigrate Jews as such, it is in the depiction of the Jewish banker, in *Der teuffel nam ein weib*, or the Jewish charlatan, as in *Der schwanger bawer* that owe much more to common class rivalry and perceived social status of Jews than to their real religious alterity. Sachs's anti-Jewish stereotypes are therefore precursors of modern, secular stereotypes, and have little in common with the medieval stage Jews who were defined primarily—often exclusively—in terms of their rejection of the Christian revelation.

### Notes

1. Bakhtin's foundation-laying observations and remarks (4-23) are the most specific in his understanding of 'carnival' as inherently subversive and potentially critical and its place in late medieval culture.
2. For a discussion of the debate about the social function of Carnival, see Chris Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival. Festive Misrule in Medieval England* (2-6, 11-36). The book deals with medieval English festivals but the social theory discussed applies to the German Carnival plays equally well.
3. See Humphrey (23-28) on the move away from the 'safety-valve' model in the discussion of Carnival in social theory.
4. We can speak here of the development of *Fastnachtspiele* into "politische Moralitäten" that brought "brennende Zeitfragen" onto the stage by the late medieval urban middle class, said urban middle class being namely "Handwerker, die keinen geringen Anteil an politische Geschehen hatten," as described by David Brett-Evans in his *Von Hrosvit bis Folz und Gegenbach. Eine Geschichte des mittelalterlichen deutschen Dramas. Zweiter Teil: Religiöse und weltliche Spiele des Spätmittelalters* (142-43).
5. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews. The Late Middle Ages and Age of European Expansion 1200-1650*, Vol. 9, *Citizen or Alien Conjurer*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. The passage in question comes from 188-89:  
 In trying to ascertain medieval popular attitudes, we must always bear in mind our lack of real knowledge of the innermost feelings of the vast masses of peasantry, the overwhelming majority of each country's population. In many

western countries few Jews were allowed, or willing to settle in rural districts; even itinerant individuals but rarely stopped off in villages for any length of time. It stands to reason, therefore, that most country folk knew Jews only through some sporadic appearances, if any, or a few atypical persons. As a rule, peasants formed their opinions about Jews and Judaism by what they heard from their parish priests, deduced from mystery plays, or were told by storytellers. Even the urban proletariat left behind few direct records. We can infer, of course, some underlying hostility from its occasional violent anti-Jewish riots and massacres. But we must not forget that, between these violent outbursts, there were long intervals of peaceful cooperation when mutual suspicions alternated with deeds of actual friendliness.

6. Baron (189–90). The passage reads:

[...]by presenting contemporary Jews in their medieval garb with their medieval speech and gestures, sometimes even as bargainers or usurers, the playwrights came close to expressing their own feelings. But even if their plays were intended for broad urban and rural audiences, they themselves were largely recruited from the clergy or, later, from the urban bourgeoisie. They [medieval dramas] may have reflected the prejudices of their respective classes, rather than those of the masses.

On the other hand, these masses could not long remain unaffected by the influential opinion molders, although there is no way of ascertaining the extent and enduring quality of that influence. As in the case of modern audiences listening to sermons or attending theatrical performances, the impact of preaching from the pulpit or stage may have been short-lived; it may have speedily given way to each individual's personal experiences or desires. Yet, at least in the periods of great political and socioeconomic tensions that characterized the late Middle Ages, the hostile feelings generated by such performances must have resulted in both immediate reactions and the revival of long-forgotten memories of animosities.

7. The most important and succinct critical discussions of the *Fastnachtspiel*'s development at the turn of the century are found in Eckehard Catholy *Das Fastnachtspiel des Mittelalters* (89, 41, 50); Barbara Könneke *Hans Sachs* (60–62); Wolfgang Michael, *Das deutsche Drama der Reformationszeit* (17–44); and Richard E. Schade, *Studies in Early German Comedy 1500–1650* (18–31). Michael and Schade both emphasize the role Sachs played in transforming the *Fastnachtspiel* into an important instrument of Reformation propaganda and moral-religious didacticism.

8. This play is also referred to as *Die Disputation* in some secondary literature, particularly in *Frühe Nürnberger Fastnachtspiele*.

9. Baron wrote:

True, one of the chief works of this kind, a carnival play written before 1494 by

Hans Folz (Falz) of Nuremberg, includes the recitation of the authentic Hebrew profession of faith in the liturgical poem *Adon 'olam* (Lord of the Universe); it is given in a considerably corrupted Latin transliteration but with a fairly accurate German rendition. However, the author also cites dubious rabbinic legends which like the prayer he evidently borrowed from the older polemical literature, possibly with the aid of a convert. With his penchant for pornography, Folz used, in particular, the ancient stories concerning intimacies between Adam and the she-devil Lilith, to excoriate the Jews as brothers of that union's offspring and to exclaim, "From this speech it is clear as day that you are brethren of the devil!"

10. This is apparently a bastardization of "Bereshit", the title of a Rabbinic commentary on Genesis.

11. The text here is taken from Adelbert von Keller, ed., *Fastnachtspiele aus dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert* in Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins Stuttgart 28, hereafter referred to as *BVS* 28. The reference here: *BVS* 28, 19-20. The original text reads as follows:

DER RABI  
 Im Buch Broschitz Adam der rein  
 Spricht: Das gepein von meinem pein.  
 Da nimpt rabi Elezer ab,  
 Das Adam sich vermischt hab  
 Mit allen tiren, darbon alsbald  
 kemen man, so wunderlich gestalt  
 Der menschen nach gestalt der tir.  
 Darauf redt rabi Schlanis schir.  
 Das Adam vor Even gewis  
 Ein frauen hett, genant Lilis,  
 Die eitel teufel im gepar.  
 Und rabi Ezerei sagt clar,  
 Das Eva mit der schlangen sich  
 Auch hab vermischt unleuterlich.  
 DER DOCTOR  
 Vermischt sich Adam mit den tiern,  
 Was kan ich mer darauß studiern,  
 Dann das effin, eslin und schwein  
 Eur Juden stifmutter sein.  
 Hat der Adam dann ie gewis  
 Teufel geporn auß der Lilis,  
 Auß diser red am tag klar leit,  
 Das ir der teufel bruder seit.  
 Darumb so wurd sich nit wol zemen,  
 Solt ir nit erbteil mit in nemen.  
 Sol dann die schlang, als ich verstan,

Mit Even sich versmischet han,  
So sein all unrein wurm und schlangen,  
Trachen und was gift hat umbfangen,  
Auch eur stifveter zu recht.

All translations in this article are by the author.

12. Such theologians included Agobard of Lyon, whose writings on the matter of Jewish belief are discussed in Jeremy Cohen's *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (123-45). See also David Berger's comments on Christian-Jewish polemical exchanges from Chrysostom to Petrus Alfonsi in *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages. A Critical Edition of the Sefer Nizzahon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (17-32).

13. DER DOCTOR  
In keinen weg geschicht das nicht;  
Allein die jenen, die man sicht  
Iren eltern solche schand noch sagen,  
Sollen auch das laster mit in tragen.

14. On Peter the Venerable's views of the Talmud, see Cohen 260-70; on Aquinas's views, Cohen 371-72.

15. This play is also known under the title *Der juden messias*, the title that Przybilski used in his edition of the text in Ridder and Steinhoff's collection of early Nuremberg *Fastnachtspiele*. However, this is also the title of a rhymed dialogue that Folz wrote. In order to avoid confusion here, the play will be referred to only as *Herzog von Burgund*.

16. The word 'endechrist' is a pun in the Early New High German, meaning not 'Anti-Christ' but 'end to Christians.'

17. Wer kan gewonheit unterfachen  
Und alten hunt pald peutig machen?  
So kann ich erst kein hantwerk lern.  
Sol ich dann meiner habe enpern,  
So ist ganz ab der anschlag mein.

18. Hor, Jud, do wirt man rat inn haben.  
Tet dich got mit seim geist begaben,  
Das dein herz recht wurd erleucht,  
Der sach wurd keine von dir gescheucht.

19. Darumb wem es sei offenbar,  
Der sei von iez uber ein jar  
Den beschluß zu horen gefodert wider,  
Wann da hoffnung ie gar dernider

Der Cristen hoffart auch zu legen.  
Wir wullen uns itz von stat bewegen.  
Hort, wirt, got dank euch vast und ser  
Der mue, die ir mit uns gehabt habt pißher.

20. Nu schweigt all und seit in stillen!  
Es ist unser genedigen fursten willen,  
Urteil zu fellen, womit und wie  
Die Juden sein zu strafen hie,  
So mit der falscheit sein verwant  
Allen Juden zu ewiger schant.

21. The text is taken from Adelbert von Keller and Eduard Goetze, eds., *Hans Sachs*, Vol.1, Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins Stuttgart 102 (163). Hereafter this volume will be referred to as *BVS* 102. Original text:

Der Christen doctor tritt ein und spricht:  
Frewt euch, ihr werden Christen-leut.  
Wann uns geboren ist als heut  
Christus, Messias, der Heyland,  
Der von dem vatter ist gesand,  
Wie er uns vor mannichem jar  
Verhieß der patriarchen schar,  
Welchen hernach fast all propheten  
Zukünfftig uns verkünden theten!  
Der ist nun kummen und geborn,  
Uns Christen zu gut mensch worn,  
Wann er ist unser und wir sein.  
Ob dem froloket all gemein!  
EIN JÜDISCHER RABI TRITT ZU IM UNND SPRICHT TRUTZIG:  
Christ, warumb darffst du reden das,  
Wie ewer sey der Messias?  
Er ist unser und uns verheyssen,  
Wil ich durch drey zeugen beweisen

22. DER JÜDISCH RABI SPRICHT:  
Hie hörst du, das von unserm samen  
Mesias haben wirt sein stamen  
Und nit von euch sin ursprung han.  
Darumb gehört er euch nichts an.  
DER CHRISTEN DOCTOR SPRICHT:  
Mesias ist wol euch bescheiden,  
Doch auß genad geben uns heyden,  
Der die mittel wend ab hat brochen,  
Auß zweyen völkern eins hat gsprochen.  
Deß will ich dir drey zeugen stellen,  
Die uns Christum zu-teylen sollen.

23. DER CHRISTEN DOCTOR SPRICHT:  
Hie hör, Jud, das der heyden theyl  
Durch Mesiam auch haben heyl!  
DER RABI SPRICHT:  
Ich gib zu, das Messias frey  
Den heyden auch ein heyland sey.  
Der aber kan nicht Jesus sein.  
Drumb hör die drey propheten mein!
24. For medieval Jewish examples of such argumentation drawing on the Isaiah 11 passages, see Berger (101–02; 106–09).
25. ESAIAS GEET AB. DER DOCTOR SPRICHT:  
Schaw! Christus thet all diese wunder,  
Weyl er auff erden lebt besunder,  
Drumb er warer Mesias ist.  
Sag an, Jud, waran es noch bricht!  
Der rabi spricht (Deuteronomi am 13):  
Christus war ein falscher prophet,  
Durch zauberey das alles thet,  
Die Moses versteynigen heist,  
Als mich mein eltern habn beweist.
26. DER RABI WIND SEIN HEND, SCHAUT AUFF GEN HIMEL UND SPRICHT:  
Ach trawa ja, es mag wol sein.  
Die zeit verzeucht sich ie zu lang  
Und wir liegen in grossem zwang,  
Von Got verstossen gantz und gar,  
Ein gespöt aller völcker schar,  
Zerstrewet hin und her in landen,  
Gefangen in des keyzers banden.  
Durch sünd wir das verschuldet han,  
Das wir Christum nit namen an.  
Ach unser rabi irren sehr.  
Teyl du mir mit dein trewe lehr,  
Was ich sol thun auff dieser erd,  
Das ich doch endlich selig werd!  
DER DOCTOR BESCHLEUST:  
Gelaub in Chistum, den heyland,  
Den sun Gottes, uns hergesand!  
In den gebenedeyten samen  
Laß tauffen dich, in seinen Namen!
27. Adelbert von Keller and Eduard Goetze, eds., *Hans Sachs* Vol. 21, Bibliothek des

literarischen Vereins Stuttgart 195 (29). Hereafter this work will be referred to as *BVS*

195. The translation reads:

Ey, was zeichst du mich, lieber mann,  
Daß du mich so bald treibest auß  
Von disem wollustigen hauß?  
Darinn ich sitz in stiller rhu,  
Ist nach meim wolgfalñ grüset zu:  
Vol wuchers, raubes und diebstal  
Biß an den first vol uberal.

28. Ir herren, nemet uns den schwank  
Nit zu verdrieß und zu undank,  
Den wir zu kurzweil habn gemacht,  
Wie man denn ietzt thut zu faßnacht,  
On alles arges, als wir hoffen,  
Habn Jüdn und alte weiber troffen.  
Nun frew wir uns, daß dise statt  
Keinen Juden mehr in ir hat,  
Die solch kurtzweil möcht habn verdrossen.

29. DER BAWER SPRICHT:  
Heintz, dan nem hin den brunnen mein!  
Reit mit eiledn gehn Sendelbach,  
Und in dem wirtshauß frag nach  
Dem Judenartzt, der heist Isac,  
Und wünsch im einen guten tag  
Von mir, daß er mein harm besech  
Und merck mit fleiß, was mir gebrech,  
Und helff mir durch sein artzeney.  
Dafür wil ich im lonen frey;  
Seh, gib im die zwen zwölfher drauff.

30. Ich heiß Isaac mit dem namen  
Und kom her von jüdischem stammen,  
Hab mich lang genehrt mit warsagen:  
Da mich die bawren theten fragen,  
Wo einem etwas ward gestoln,  
Auch wo man einr etwas hat verholn  
Unterm tritscheuffelein eingraben,  
Daß sie darvon das gschoß solt haben.  
Gab auch den bawren den wundsegen,  
Bin auch dem schätzgrabn obgelegen;  
Fehlt mir oft umb ein bawrenspieß.  
Darumb ich vom warsagen ließ  
Und nam mich umb die artzney an,

Die ich wie das warsagen kan.  
Ich hab der schwarzkunst nit studirt,  
Noch medicina doctorirt,  
Darff derhalb kein statt nit mehr  
Und mich nur bey den bawren nehr,  
Dann ich auff all dorff-kirchweih zeuch,  
Da ich auffschlag on alle scheuch  
Groß sigel und brief auff und ab,  
Wie ich dem und jhem geholffen hab;  
Ist doch erdichtet und erlogen,  
Hab die bawren lang beschissn und trogen;

31. Ja, wann sie dennoch wissen,  
Was grosser fluch, was haß und neit  
Wir in stet han getragen seit,  
Wie vil groß guts in abgeraubt  
Wie vil an irem leben getaubt,  
Der ertzet wir gewesen sein[...]

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