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Distinguishing the Distinction: Picturing Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam

In a poem from 1723, Dutch Christian Roeland van Leuve observed:

Our city fathers deserve great praise,
For letting men worship in different ways,
Be they Romans or not, be they Christians or Jews,
Who their splendid Portuguese church may choose,
Or the fine smaller church across the way,
Where German Jews worship as in Moses' day.[1]

Van Leuve proudly points to Dutch tolerance of different faiths, a rare case in Europe and in Jewish history, while providing personal remarks on the religious character of the German Jews (by equating them with the Jews of Moses' time) and the affluence of the Portuguese Jews (noting how splendid, or large, their "church" is). J. J. Schüdt, an eighteenth-century German historian, also described his perception of Holland's Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, characterizing the Portuguese service as "much quieter, more orderly and more modest than that of the German Jews."[2] Schüdt stresses the restrained Sephardic mode of worship, contrasting the Portuguese Jews' reserve with the more ostentatious religiosity of the Ashkenazi service. Although the Sephardic synagogue was certainly more opulent and grand than the Ashkenazi house of worship, Schüdt, akin to van Leuve, refers to the less obtrusive nature of Portuguese religious practice, as the Sephardim were more discreet about their Jewishness than their Eastern European peers.

[1] As quoted in Mozes Heiman Gans, *Memorbook: History of Dutch Jewry from the Renaissance to 1940* (Baarn, Netherlands: Bosch & Keuning, 1971), 133.

[2] As quoted in Ibid., 136.

In his monumental volume *The History of the Jews from Jesus Christ to the Present Time*, Jacques Basnage offers similar annotations, with more forceful editorializing: "There are two sorts of Jews in Holland; some are Germans, and others come from Portugal and Spain. They are divided about some Ceremonies, and hate one another."[3] Even if Basnage exaggerates the strained relations between the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities, his observations and those by Van Leuve and Schüdt provide a brief sample of contemporaries who noticed and commented on the different types of Jews in eighteenth-century Amsterdam.

Rarely have the differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews been as sharply pronounced as in Holland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More specifically, as the above remarks demonstrate, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam lived separate lives documented by the non-Jewish population. In recent years, several historians have discussed the wealthy, assimilated, and bourgeois Sephardim, focusing on issues ranging from economics to religious behavior to social status, while the more pious, impoverished, and self-segregated German Jews have received less scholarly attention except in relation to their Iberian neighbors.[4] A handful of art historians have joined in the debate.

Although for many years little of substance had been written since Franz Landsberger's 1946 book, *Rembrandt, the Jews and the Bible*, a few current publications examine the influence of Jews on the Dutch master's art and his relationship to them, if not always how they were depicted.[5] Michael Zell's *Reframing Rembrandt: Jews and the Christian Image in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (2002), for instance, considers Rembrandt's Old and New Testament imagery from the 1650s in reference to his association with the publisher and theologian Rabbi

[3] Jacques Basnage, *The History of the Jews, from Jesus Christ to the Present Time* (London: Printed by T. Beaver and B. Lintot, 1708), 738.

[4] On the Sephardim, see works by Josef Kaplan as used throughout this article; Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London: Litman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000). When I refer to the Ashkenazim in this essay I mean the German Jews. There were some Polish Jews in Amsterdam at this time, however, they were significantly fewer in number and did not have their own synagogue.

[5] Franz Landsberger, *Rembrandt, the Jews and the Bible* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946). Briefly, the year 2006 marked the 400th anniversary of Rembrandt's birth, which deservedly instigated several exhibitions dedicated to his work. The Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, for instance, mounted a show titled "The 'Jewish' Rembrandt" (November 10, 2006 to February 4, 2007), which addressed and questioned the mystique of Rembrandt as especially sympathetic to Judaism (e.g., Landsberger).

Menasseh ben Israel.[6] Particularly relevant to this essay, the second chapter of Zell's book describes images of Amsterdam's Jewish landmarks, such as the newly built synagogues, the Sephardic cemetery (located at Ouderkerk, five miles outside of Amsterdam on the Amstel River), and gracious Sephardic homes. Here Zell notes that by focusing on the Sephardim, artists "ignored the harsher realities of the Ashkenazi lifestyle."[7]

Two other publications discuss depictions of Jews from this period. An older exhibition catalog, Susan W. Morgenstein and Ruth E. Levine's *The Jews in the Age of Rembrandt* (1981), surveys prints of Jewish religious customs and ceremonies, representations of stories from the Hebrew Bible, portraiture, and topographical scenes of Jewish sites (e.g., homes and synagogues). The catalog provides copious reproductions and important groundwork for additional research.[8] In a more rigorous study, Richard I. Cohen explores prints of Jewish ceremonies in Holland (as well as in Germany, Italy, and England) in his excellent book *Jewish Icons*. Cohen argues that several factors converged during this period, including a realist bent in art and an increasingly tolerant environment, which led to an objective interest by Gentile artists in Jewish religious customs.[9]

While I admire these publications and have learned much from them, one important nuance is regularly overlooked. "The Jews" are often presented as an undifferentiated whole, and when they are described as Sephardic or Ashkenazi (for example, Zell notes the geographic origin of the figures, as cited above and at other times throughout his book), it is not in a comparative manner.[10] Although this may be appropriate for the discussions in the

[6] I do not include here Steven Nadler's lauded book *Rembrandt's Jews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) as he uses Rembrandt primarily as a springboard to describe seventeenth-century Dutch Jewish history, but only briefly addresses both painted and print images of Jews (by Rembrandt and others such as Jacob van Ruisdael and Emmanuel de Witte). In other words, and appropriate for his purposes, Nadler, a historian, treats images as illustrative rather than as visual material to be parsed and elucidated.

[7] Michael Zell, *Reframing Rembrandt: Jews and the Christian Image in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 39. Certainly, artists frequently ignored the Ashkenazim, but I will argue in the following pages that the German Jews were of less interest to some artists for other reasons.

[8] Susan W. Morgenstein and Ruth E. Levine, *The Jews in the Age of Rembrandt*, with an essay by Simon M. Schama (Rockville, MD: Judaic Museum of Greater Washington, 1981). Art historians focus less on the eighteenth-century, the period following the golden age of Holland's artistic production as exemplified by Rembrandt and his contemporaries.

[9] Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 25.

[10] Sephardic art patronage does receive scholarly attention. See, for example, Zell, *Reframing Rembrandt*, 7-32 and William H. Wilson "'The Circumcision,' A Drawing by Romeyn de Hooghe," *Master Drawings* 13, no. 3 (1975): 250-58. Wilson convincingly attributes de Hooghe's seventeenth-century drawing of a circumcision to a

aforementioned texts, it is my contention that further information can be gleaned by discriminating between how and when the Ashkenazi and the Sephardic Jews of this period were pictured. To be sure, if scholars find it fruitful to distinguish between the groups in historical accounts, then logically it may also be productive to look at these two separate histories in art, which could yield additional information about the historical moment. Accordingly, the goal of this essay is threefold. Intermixed with a short historiography of the art history scholarship on the period, I intend to clarify how a few seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artists pictured the dichotomous types of Jews, and then present a case study demonstrating what attention to this phenomenon might reveal.

Any discussion of Dutch art in the golden age, and especially representations of Jews in Holland, necessarily begins with Rembrandt (1606-1669). Jakob Rosenberg's early study has one predominant theme running through the text: that Rembrandt was the great penetrator of the human condition, an outlook that instigated the master's interest in the Jews.[11] The period following Rembrandt's move to the Jewish quarter (1639) is described by Rosenberg as one in which the artist "began to study the Jewish population of Amsterdam."[12] Similarly, Gary Schwartz generally mentions that Rembrandt cultivated a relationship with Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, remarking on the rabbi's Sephardic origins, and briefly notes the artist's "presumed use of Jewish models for paintings of Christ."[13]

Certainly, Rembrandt did take an interest in ben Israel and used the Jews of Amsterdam as models, but for him, the true Jews, i.e., the Jews wearing "Oriental" turbans and clothes and living according to ancient customs, were the Ashkenazim – those Jews whose physiognomies he used in his vision of "the authentic people of the Bible," to use Rosenberg's words.[14] Rembrandt

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commission from the wealthy, Sephardic d'Acosta family. Although better known as an illustrator and creator of political propaganda for the House of Orange, Romeyn de Hooghe (1645-1708) made a number of prints on commission for the Sephardim. For more of de Hooghe's work, see John Landwehr, *Romeyn de Hooghe as Book Illustrator: A Bibliography* (Amsterdam: Vangendt & Co., 1970) and Ibid., *Romeyn de Hooghe the Etcher: Contemporary Portrayal of Europe 1662-1707* (Leiden: A. W. Sitjhoff, 1973).

[11] Jakob Rosenberg, *Rembrandt: Life and Work* (London: Phaidon, 1968).

[12] Ibid., 27. Rembrandt lived in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam until 1658.

[13] Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 175-176, 284.

[14] Rosenberg, *Rembrandt*, 109. When working on commission, though, Rembrandt painted portraits for the Sephardim. The pious Ashkenazim more stringently adhered to the Second Commandment (the prohibition against graven images) and thus would not want portraiture in their homes. *David Playing the Harp Before Saul* (c. 1655, The Hague, Mauritshaus) is one of Rembrandt's many canvases utilizing Ashkenazi physiognomies for biblical figures.

was interested in German Jews in their natural habitat, sketching them to amass a compendium of Jewish faces for biblical paintings rather than for ethnographic purposes. Whereas Rembrandt's numerous students who were trained to paint in his manner also imaged the Ashkenazi as biblical figures, a majority of other artists from the period took the Sephardic Jew as their primary subject, gravitating especially toward images of Jewish rituals, particularly in prints.[15]

In an important early article, the first and only one to focus solely on Ashkenazi Jews in Dutch art, Landsberger attempts to identify the locale and Jewish type portrayed in Rembrandt's print, *The Synagogue* (1648).[16] Based on the synagogue's low floor – adhering to Psalm 130's description of emerging from the depths to call upon the Lord – and the attire of the Jews (in addition to their long beards), Landsberger concludes that Rembrandt specifically depicted Ashkenazi Jews at worship. Moreover, Landsberger observes that the ten men in attendance indicate Rembrandt's knowledge of Jewish customs (the necessity for a *minyan* to conduct worship).[17] *The Synagogue*, however, is an anomaly. With few exceptions, the Jewish ceremonies illustrated by most other artists in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Holland were typically those practiced by the Sephardic community, even though the Iberian Jews were less noticeable in their Jewishness and did not provide as vivid ethnographic matter for artists. It is this tendency toward assimilation, I suggest, that made the Portuguese a favored subject for artists of the period who pictured the Jew in the here and now, not as a faraway biblical Other.

Consider the work of the Mennonite Jan Luyken (1649-1712). Luyken designed etchings for a 1683 Dutch version (original in 1638) of the Venetian Rabbi Leon Modena's (1571-1648) *Historia de' riti hebraici, vita ed osservanze de gl'Hebrei di questi tempi* (The History of the

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[15] Rembrandt and his pupils were among the minority in making biblical works, for in the market economy of Holland, portraits, still-lifes, and other specialties found greater demand. Although Emmanuel de Witte's three canvases of the new Portuguese synagogue are filled with worshippers (e.g., 1680, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), I do not believe that we can understand him as a painter of religious or genre imagery as he was more interested in the architecture of the synagogue, considering his specialty as a painter of church interiors. For a discussion of the unknown origins of de Witte's synagogue paintings, see Yosef Kaplan, "For Whom did Emanuel de Witte Paint his Three Pictures of the Sephardic Synagogue in Amsterdam?," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 32, no. 2 (1998): 133-154.

[16] Franz Landsberger, "Rembrandt's Synagogue," *Historia Judaica* 6 (April 1944): 69-77.

[17] Landsberger repeats his argument in his full-length study, *Rembrandt, the Jews and the Bible*, which also discusses Rembrandt's relationship to Amsterdam's Jews in more detail. Rachel Wischnitzer, "Rembrandt's So-Called 'Synagogue in Light of Synagogue Architecture,'" in *From Dura to Rembrandt: Studies in the History of Art* (Milwaukee: Aldrich; Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, 1990), 159-163, debunks Landsberger's argument on the grounds that only nine figures appear to be in the print. Nevertheless, that Landsberger identified the figures as Ashkenazim is my point here.

Rites, Customs, and Manner of Life, of the Present Jews, throughout the World). Concentrating on the Jewish religion from an insider's perspective, the Rabbi's text notes that Jews come from diverse nations and therefore have variations of practice, but he does not specifically distinguish between Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions or manners. However, Luyken's illustrations, which include a circumcision, wedding, divorce, and the refusal of marriage by a man to his brother's childless widow, present this homogenous Jew as Iberian in origin.

The circumcision print, for example, portrays the *mohel* in the act of circumcising the infant, witnessed by comely Jewish Amsterdamers in contemporary dress – therefore Sephardic Jews– standing around an airy room.[18] Some onlookers are engaged by the ceremony, while others in the background converse, with one figure casually sitting on the left with his legs crossed and his hands in his lap. The relaxed figures convey the sense that these Jews are not consumed by religiosity. Similarly, in the wedding scene, a handsomely attired Sephardic couple, wearing then-fashionable clothing, get married while figures around them chat and casually watch the ceremony.

Rembrandt and Luyken serve as examples of seventeenth-century artists who gravitated toward two different types of Jews in order to create two very different kinds of depictions. Living among the Jews, Rembrandt used the image of the Ashkenazi as a means of portraying ancient, pious types from centuries long ago. In contrast, Luyken, while striving for authenticity as well, delineated Sephardic Jews who appeared more like Dutch Gentiles, even though the German Jews were much more conspicuous in their dress and practices, and would therefore be easier to render. The flavor of Otherness so appealing and authentic to Rembrandt did not appeal to the documentarian Luyken, whose prints pictured the Jew current in his day.

Exploring this distinction leads to questions not previously asked about the art representing Jews of this period. Why would Luyken picture the Sephardic Jew rather than the Ashkenazi Jew? Why present the figures as casual in their style of worship? If Rembrandt, the overarching artistic personality from the period, imaged the explicitly religious Ashkenazi Jews, then why did Luyken turn to the Sephardic Jew as a subject when showing religious events? These questions seem to be answered logically by looking at the census from the period. The Ashkenazi community maintained a small presence in Amsterdam during the first half of the

[18] More of Luyken's Jewish etchings can be found in Johann Buxtorf, *Schoole of Juden* (Leiden: H. van Damme, 1702) and Petrus Cunnaeus, *Le République des Hebreux* (Amsterdam: Frères Chaterlain, 1713).

century, numbers that began to expand rapidly due to the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and Eastern European oppression of Jews between 1648-1660.[19] Thus, one could assume that Ashkenazi Jews appeared infrequently in most artists' renditions because they were not as prevalent at the time. The data that follows, however, appears to contradict such an easy assertion.

While in the 1640s the Ashkenazim numbered a meager 500 or so, a century later the balance of Amsterdam's Jewish population had decidedly changed: of the 13,000 Jews residing in Amsterdam, 10,000 were Eastern European.[20] Reasonably, it might seem that the Ashkenazim would then appear in the majority of the images from this time onward. However, the visual evidence indicates otherwise. During the eighteenth century, when Ashkenazi Jews outnumbered their Iberian brethren by eighty percent, artists still predominantly pictured the Portuguese. The case of Bernard Picart's etchings of the Jews in his opus *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* confirms this assertion and further verifies a Gentile preoccupation with the differences between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews extending into the eighteenth century.

First published in French in 1723, the eleven-volume *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (the religions and customs of all the peoples of the world) appeared in five languages and several editions in the eighteenth century alone, including an English translation available in its entirety in London during the years 1733-1739, followed by an

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[19] Yosef Kaplan chronicles this immigration up until 1670 in "Amsterdam and Ashkenazi Migration in the Seventeenth Century," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 22-44 (special issue containing Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands).

[20] Although difficult to ascertain, Kaplan believes the Ashkenazim numbered at "no less than 500" in the 1640s. See Ibid., 26. On 13,000 Ashkenazim versus 10,000 Sephardim, see Herbert I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsport, Penn.: Bayard Press, 1937), 31. Gans quotes the population at 2500 Portuguese to 5000 German and Polish in 1672. See Gans, *Memorbook*, 29. Kaplan asserts that in the 1670s the Ashkenazim and Sephardim had an equal 2500 members in their communities in "The Self-Definition of the Sephardic Jews of Western Europe and Their Relation to the Alien and Stranger," in Benjamin R. Gampel, ed. *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World: 1391-1648* (New York: Columbia University Press , 1997), 132. Population figures differ widely. While in an earlier article, "The Attitude of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews to the Ashkenazic Jews in Seventeenth Century Amsterdam," in *Transition and Change in Modern Jewish History: Essays Presented in Honor of Shmuel Ettinger*, eds. (Jerusalem: 1987), 389-412, Kaplan follows Bloom's figures, in "Amsterdam and Ashkenazic Migration in the Seventeenth Century," he amends his earlier acceptance of Bloom's statistics, commenting that the numbers need to be revised. Even if the numbers vary, the general consensus is that the Ashkenazim did flood Amsterdam in the later part of the seventeenth century and that they outnumbered the Sephardim. Kaplan sees the exaggeration of population figures as indicative of "the enormous impression left on the Dutch population by this . . . mass migration, which altered the character of Ashkenazic Jewry" (37).

abridged version in 1741.[21] In the initial volume of *Cérémonies*, which describes the religious rituals of both the Jews and Catholics, Picart, a French-born Protestant, executed his twenty-three etchings of Jews after his move to Amsterdam in 1710. Picart's etchings are remarkable in their scope and detail regarding a culture with which he was not intimately involved. While Picart did take steps to meet Jews, spending one Passover with the affluent Sephardic Curiel family, these encounters were rare. Picart's etchings were often based on hearsay, not only of the Jews, but also of the majority of religious peoples he pictured. Obviously, this was more the case with such faraway religious customs as those practiced by the Chinese, for instance, than of the Jews, who lived in Picart's immediate environment.

Picart's etchings of Amsterdam's Jewish community carefully distinguish between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews. Nearly every etching showing a ceremony, in fact, includes a label stating the specific geographic origins of the Jews. Of interest for this discussion, only two portray Ashkenazi Jews, as opposed to fifteen prints demarcating Sephardic practices (the remainder of the prints are anthropological in nature, depicting, for example, the implements of circumcision rather than actual Jewish figures engaged in worship). "L'Examen du Levain," the search for the leaven, illustrates a well-dressed Sephardic family cleaning their home in anticipation of Passover. An ambiguous genre-like image, the print offers the group as a family first, and performers of a religious ritual second – which would likely not even be discernable without the print's caption. This approach is akin to several additional etchings in the Jewish suite, which represent comfortable scenes of Jewish family life.

"Le Repas de Paques chez les Juifs Portugais," a scene of a Passover Seder, presents another elegant Sephardic family, here eating at their dining room table amid luxurious items in the china cabinet, a coat nonchalantly laying on a chair, and a cozy roaring fire. Without the caption underneath, which gives the print its contemporary title, the viewer would have no idea that this family was observing a sacred rite of the Jewish people; the books held by some Jews are not obviously *haggadot* nor is the Seder plate clearly differentiated from any other platter of food. Conversely, the two images of German Jews in Picart's encyclopaedic volume are not presented in as attractive a way and in such secure surroundings.

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[21] Odile Faliu, *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde: Dessinées par Bernard Picart* (Paris: Éditions Herscher, 1988), 20. J. Bernard published the first edition, to which I refer. For more on subsequent editions of Picart's *Cérémonies* see Ibid., 31-32 and Alfred Rubens, *A Jewish Iconography* (London: Jewish Museum, 1954), 14-19.

The etching that describes Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement, is specifically captioned to identify the figures as German Jews: "Le Chipur ou le Jour du Pardon tel qu'il se celêbre chez les Juifs Allemands." Twenty-four hours of fasting and prayer characterize this most sober and ritualistic of days. Fittingly, Picart illustrates a moment of solemnity, whereby Jews with heads covered in sackcloth engage in prayer. The image conveys a sense of the sacred through its darkened atmosphere. The German synagogue looks especially small and crowded when compared to “Le Son du Cor au Premier Jour de l’an” (the sounding of the horn on Rosh Hashanah) – a grand, detailed view of the large Portuguese synagogue wherein the Jews sit on benches amid beautiful chandeliers. In the German Jewish scene, there is barely room for the many worshippers because of the below eye-level vantage point of the scene and the close-up view of the figures. The spacious, bright Portuguese synagogue filled with smaller well-dressed figures contrasts sharply with "Le Chipur ou le Jour du Pardon," which presents less couth, pious German Jews packed into a modest space and includes one unassimilated worshipper sitting on the floor at the right side of the image.

The second etching dedicated to the German Jews, titled "Ceremonie Nuptiale des Juifs Allemands," delineates Ashkenazi marriage rites as compared to a Sephardic counterpart, "Ceremonie Nuptiale des Juifs Portugais," representing a typical Portuguese Jewish wedding ceremony. While there are some similarities between the two etchings, such as the small orchestra playing in the background, more apparent are the variances between Ashkenazi and Sephardic customs of marriage.[22] Differences of language, culture, manners, and religious rites separated the two groups, and Picart’s only parallel study of the two traditions illuminates how marked these divisions were, even to an outsider.

Picart’s image of the Ashkenazi wedding ceremony chronicles the German Jewish preference for holding their weddings outdoors, generally in the synagogue courtyard. The etching shows the entire ceremony in front of the German house of worship. Figures on the roof of the synagogue and the young boy with the baton to the left of the musicians contribute to the disorderly atmosphere. Additional figures at the left of the composition stand on stools, peering over the crowd, and the musicians are set up in a haphazard manner at the right side of the composition. Overall, the frenzied, disheveled group who publicly witnesses the ceremony

[22] On Ashkenazi and Sephardic differences in matrimonial practice, see H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim: Their Relations, Differences, and Problems as Reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 166-82.

dominate Picart's German wedding. The Ashkenazim again retain traditional, distinctively Jewish attire in this composition, as opposed to the Portuguese who, as the images described here demonstrate, wore the latest fashions and kept their beards trimmed. Picart's German bride and groom reflect the maintenance of conservative dress and traditions, demonstrated by the wedding belts of the betrothed. Standing with heads bowed under a *tallit* (prayer shawl) and in front of a rabbi, the bride and groom both wear wedding belts comprised of clasps–the bride wears a gold wedding belt and the bridegroom dons one of silver–gifts sent to each other the day before the wedding, which is an ancient Jewish tradition.[23]

The *chuppah* (wedding canopy) affixed to the wall acts as the focal point of the Portuguese ceremony. The Portuguese bride, mother, and future mother-in-law sit underneath the *chuppah*. This elaborate canopy, erected inside the bride's home as per Sephardic custom, differs from the simple *chuppah* of the German Jews, represented by a plain *tallit* placed over the bride and groom's head and shoulders. The Portuguese composition evokes a sense of prosperity and dignity, with the elegant *chuppah*, a beautiful rug, and ornamented mirrors. The houseboy at the right prepares to serve the group, and the musicians in the left corner appear poised and professional. At the center of the Sephardic ceremony stands the groom, breaking an empty glass by throwing it against a beautiful silver platter at his feet, an act that concludes the marriage ceremony.

My point in comparing these two wedding images is to provide a final example of how discrete the German and Portuguese Jews were in the minds of artisans from the historical moment, which accords with the writers described earlier. Specific to Picart's enterprise, I would argue that despite the large number of Ashkenazi Jews in the Dutch community by his day, he attempted to make "the Jews" (in the guise of the westernized Sephardim who seem to be the majority due to his focus on their rituals) appear less threatening because of their level of adaptation, thus posing less of a threat to Protestantism and to the Gentile community at large.

At the outset, I described several scholars who either overlook or do not acknowledge the Sephardic-Ashkenazi distinction in Dutch art. I purposefully withheld one scholar who does work with this distinction, so as to conclude the essay with an example, aside from my own, of what attention to this dichotomy might reveal. Shelley Perlove, in her article "Awaiting the Messiah: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Late Work of Rembrandt," examines how the

[23] Alfred Rubens, *A History of Jewish Costume* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1967), 164.

Ashkenazi community influenced Rembrandt's later art, specifically how he was affected by the Protestant movements of Millenarianism and Pansophism.[24] Believing that the Messiah was soon to come, both Christians and Jews participated in the Millenarian movement. Perlove argues that Rembrandt was motivated by these movements as well as those who expounded the ideals of these groups (including Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, whom she identifies as Sephardic). Rabbi ben Israel's geographic origin is not the most influential factor here, nor is Perlove's recognition of him as Iberian in origin such an anomaly, for most scholars mention this fact. Where Perlove's identifications come into play is in her discussion of when the Eastern European Jewish presence began to affect Millenarians. With the influx of German Jews, Perlove notes that Millenarians interpreted the new immigrants as a sign that the Messiah would also soon arrive based upon predictions in the books of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel that the Messiah's arrival would be signaled by adversity (embodied by the Ashkenazim who arrived in Amsterdam to escape pogroms), and that it would prefigure redemption after the maligned Jews repented and then converted to Christianity. Accordingly, Perlove understands, for instance, that Rembrandt's later prints picturing Ashkenazi Jews (not just "Jews") – such as *Christ Among the Doctors* (1654) which includes unshaven Eastern Europeans wearing *tallitot* and head coverings listening to Jesus – may have been instigated by Millenarian discourse in Holland urging the conversion of Jews so as to facilitate the Messiah's arrival.[25]

Perlove's description of Ashkenazi influence on Rembrandt's art, rather than a broad "Jewish" influence, differs from most scholars of the period.[26] Cohen, for one, understands Picart's etchings of the Jews as "depicting Jewish reality without any expressed criticism. . . . Paradoxically, he both raised the Jewish rituals to the level of other religions, while he lowered them, disenchanting them, by humanizing their sacred character and rendering them as customs alone."[27] As I have done, Cohen refers to the genre-like quality of the images, in particular Picart's circumcision scene where many of the Portuguese Jews are distracted, and it is precisely this humanizing quality that made the Portuguese Jews acceptable (to a degree) to the Gentile Dutch. Importantly, and this is where I diverge from Cohen, the etchings that confirm his

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[24] Shelley Perlove, "Awaiting the Messiah: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Late Work of Rembrandt," *Bulletin: University of Michigan Museums of Art and Archaeology* 11 (1994-96): 85-113.

[25] Ibid., 90-91.

[26] Some of which I mentioned earlier as well as others.

[27] Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, 48, 51.

observation do not present a singular "Jewish reality," but the milieu of the Sephardim, whose presence in Picart's suite of prints provides the viewer with an understandable and safe escape from the pressures of the mass immigration of an exotic Other.

I also take note of Simon Schama's classic commentary about the Jews as rendered in art from this period: "Michelangelo's Moses has horns; Rembrandt's does not. With this minor act of iconographical surgery, the image of the Jew was translated from the realm of monsters to the realm of men. In Dutch art, unlike any other Christian art before it, the Jew is readmitted to the company of humanity. . . . The Jews simply take their place in the teeming human landscape of the Netherlands, along with miscellaneous other social types."[28] Certainly, "the Jews" in question do not have horns, but they are not simply a generalized group, akin to the Calvinists or the Protestants. As I have shown, the Jews were either Ashkenazi or Sephardic, two distinct ethnic types, each acceptable in art for separate purposes: as examples of either Otherness and exoticism or proof that "the Jew" was not a threat to the status quo. In both cases, though, neither group was truly integrated into Dutch society.

Without a doubt, Dutch Jews were granted enormous freedom in relation to Europe as a whole, a fact accurately noted by Basnage in the early eighteenth century: "Of all the States in Europe, there is not one where the Jews live more quietly than in Holland."[29] This autonomy, however, does not appear to be entirely because of an inherent humanism on the part of the Dutch people, but rather reflects a desire to benefit from the Jews' economic usefulness. A subtle form of hostility still manifested itself that kept Jews at arm's length from the majority of society. While allowed to participate in trade, many limitations were still placed upon them. Jews were the only minority religion not allowed to join guilds; Mennonites, for instance, could be members. Full privileges as a citizen had to be purchased; the right to hold civil or military office was forbidden, and Jews could not marry outside of the religion. Until 1796, Jews remained under special strictures, although much less confining than the remainder of Europe. The Jew who assimilated into Dutch society, by wearing undifferentiated clothing and/or keeping religious practice discreetly, was the more acceptable Jew in Holland.[30] As Rabbi Isaac Uziel

[28] Morgenstein and Levine, *The Jews in the Age of Rembrandt*, 3.

[29] Basnage, *History of the Jews*, 738.

[30] On Dutch religious toleration see, for example, Peter van Rooden, "Jews and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Republic," in Ronnie Po-chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop, eds., *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch*

observed in 1616: "At present, [our] people live peaceably in Amsterdam. The inhabitants of this city, mindful of the increase in population make laws and ordinances whereby the freedom of religions may be upheld. Each may follow his own belief but may not openly show that he is of a different faith from the inhabitants of the city."[31]

By showing the Ashkenazim bound to ritual, artists offered a particular vision that fulfilled the imaginings of the Gentile population. In contrast, by picturing the less "serious" (and by extension seemingly less "religious") Sephardic Jew in fashionable attire and with trimmed facial hair, artists presented the Sephardim as understandable within a Dutch context, thereby defying the "physiological and psychological unknown" to borrow Barbara Stafford's apt phrase.[32] The manner by which the Sephardim were pictured in prints during this period gave assurance to viewers fearful of the Other, of the foreign Jew who, in fact, was not so foreign. Moreover, as an observed subject, the Ashkenazi Jew became an understood subject, and even more significantly, the Sephardic-Ashkenazi disparity demonstrated that "the Jew" was clearly able to reform (i.e., become Dutch, to a degree), as the Portuguese Jews had already done. Analysis such as the one offered in this essay, perceived after distinguishing the distinction in the visual evidence from the period, can only further our knowledge of Jewish-Gentile relations in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Holland and help us understand the "roles" Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews played to the outside eye.

Golden Age (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 132-147 and Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, which elucidates possible reasons for Amsterdam's toleration of the Jews (8-53).

[31] As quoted in Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 589.

[32] Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991), 3.