Antinomianism as Iconism: The Living Images of the Frankists

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ABSTRACT Emerging in the context of messianic Sabbateanism in Eastern Europe, Frankism's main characteristics are its stern opposition towards rabbinic Judaism and its rigid antinomism. Frankist doctrine and Frankist practice straightforwardly reversed the Law to its opposite. Frankist leaders, and in particular Jacob Frank (1726-1791) himself, employed strategies that took advantage of the multiform contact situations of religious traditions within the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth by metaschematic subversion of religious forms. Frank refused to hide what he claimed to be the true faith, and openly and publicly presented himself as an opponent of the established rabbinic tradition. The open, visible, and public presentation was intended to be an affront by ostensibly/iconically opposing its aniconic stance. Anti-aniconism performed iconically was a deliberate and virtuously employed strategy in the struggle about messianic and eschatological issues. The emphasis on visibility and the deliberate establishment of iconic scenes within Frankist practice also breaks with the Sabbatian conduct of occurring in the environs of the traditional community and not being sharply distinguished from the 'correct' faith. In my article, I will argue that Frank deliberately employed hyper-iconism and living images (tableaux vivantes) to fulfill his messianic role.

KEYWORDS Iconism, tableau vivant, Frankism, Sabbateanism, Rabbinic Judaism, Messianism, Hypotyposis, Jakob Frank

Das bedenkt recht, und führt unter einander dieses Bild aus, so gut ihr nur könnt; setzt eure Betrachtungen so weit fort als ihr vermöget; bildet euren Geist, erhebt euer Gemüt, denn nur so könnt ihr würdig werden, das Angesicht des Groß-Cophta zu schauen. (Goethe, Der Groß-Cophta)[1]

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1 "Consider this properly, and carry out this image among yourselves as best as you can; continue your contemplations as far as you are able; form your minds, elevate your spirits, for only in this way can you become worthy to behold the face of the Great Cophta." All translations by the author unless indicated otherwise.

Imagine Offenbach: A Child's Image

Religious movements may well become the subject of poets' imagination and a source of inspiration. Even if they do not intend to promote religious aims, some authors are eager to use them to put a poetical picture before the reader's eye that is painted in an abundance of color, exotic detail, and decorum. The Frankist movement has been the theme of narrations and novels, most recently and famously in Olga Tocarczuk's 1500-page epic novel *Księgi Jakubowe* ("*The Books of Jacob*") from 2014 that is, among other aspects, critically acclaimed for being full of pictorial descriptions (Justyna Sobolewska) of the religious life in the eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its border regions.

[1]

Thus, being well recognized in contemporary literature, the poetic potential of the Frankist movement, however, is also present in scholarly works, not at last for the purpose of illustrating a particular stage in Frankist history. Few academic texts on the Frankist movement refrain from quoting at least parts of the following lines from a leading German romanticist poet describing the scenery that might be witnessed at the German town of Offenbach at the end of the eighteenth century. Here, the Frankist court displayed its particular splendor. I quote the German original in some length:

[2]

> Seitdem hat sich die Gegend wie die Lebensweise und auch die Bevölkerung ins Wunderbare gespielt, und keiner würde es glauben, der es nicht gesehen, und jeder, der mit seinem Reisejournal in der Tasche von seiner Reise um die Welt hier durchkäm, würde glauben, in die Stadt der Märchen versetzt zu sein; eine mystische Nation wandelt in bunter Kleidung zwischen den andern durch; die Greise und Männer mit langen Bärten in Purpur und grün und gelben Talaren, die Hälfte des Gewandes immer von verschiedener Farbe, die wunderschönen Jünglinge und Knaben in eng anliegendem Wams, mit Gold verbrämt, die eine Hose grün, die andere gelb oder rot, dahersprengend auf mutigen Rossen mit silbernen Glöckchen am Hals oder am Abend durch die Straße auf der Gitarre und Flöte präludierend, bis sie vor Liebchens Fenster haltmachen. Denke Dir dies alles und den milden Sommerhimmel, der sich darüber wölbt und dessen Grenzen eine blühende, tanzende und musizierende Welt umfließt; denke Dir den Fürsten jenes Volkes mit silbernem Bart, weißem Gewand, der vor dem Tor seines Palastes auf öffentlicher Straße auf prächtigen Teppichen und Polstern lagert, umgeben von seinem Hofstaat, wo jeder einzelne ein absonderliches Zeichen seines Amts und Würde an seiner fabelhaften Kleidung hat. Da speist er unter freiem Himmel, gegenüber den lustigen Gärten, hinter deren zierlichen Gittern hohe Pyramiden zierlicher Gewächse aufgestellt sind und mit feinem Drahtflor umzogene Volieren, wo der Goldfasan und der Pfau zwischen den rucksenden Haustauben einherstolzieren, und die kleinen Singvögel jubeln, alles von zartem, grünen Rasen umschlossen, wo mancher Wasserstrahl emporschießt, die Knaben in verbrämten Kleidern goldne Schüsseln bringen, indessen aus den offenen Fenstern des Palastes Musik erschallt. (Arnim 1986, 501–2)

[3]

> [Offenbach] has changed into some kind of a magic tale. … A mystical nation wanders the streets in strange, colorful clothes, old men with long beards, wearing purple, green, and yellow robes, young beautiful boys in gold, one half of the leggings green, the other one yellow or red. They ride horses with silver balls on their necks; in the evening they play guitars and flutes under the window of their beloved. … A prince at the head of these people, with silver beard and long white

[4]

robes, rests on luxurious carpets and pillows in front of the gates of his castle, surrounded by his court. Each person wears the emblem of his function and status. (Paraphrasing translation Maciejko 2011, 239)

The quote is taken from Bettina von Arnim's (1785–1859) first major work as a writer, titled *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* ("*Goethe's exchange of letters with a child*") from 1835. If only for family reasons, as Clemens Brentano's sister and Achim von Arnim's wife, Bettina von Arnim was deeply involved in the German romantic movement, but primarily for her own work that gradually developed from romanticism to political engagement. The book is, though it is partly based on real letters, mostly a work of imagination, if not religious devotion to the power of genius to inaugurate creative processes of the one getting into contact with him, that is, in this case, and consistent with the corresponding cult around his person, Goethe (see Steinsdorff 1989, 245). Bettina von Armin deals with the process in which the artificial figure"Bettine" writes herself (using traits of Goethe's literary figure Mignon) into a subjectivist female autobiography in this book (Becker-Cantarino 2000, 236). [5]

The interpretation of the work is, of course, another story; there are, however, some aspects to be noted regarding the subject of iconism/aniconism. As the lines quoted show, Frankism obviously attracts images and imaginary. The description of the scene quoted above bears strong witness to the author's power to conjure up a specific imaginary. It is prominently about a "mystical nation" that differs from what one might expect at this particular location. Though one might consider the description outright as blatantly orientalist, the scene is almost unbearably picturesque, and the language verges on self-satire of romantic topoi. The Frankist court is easy to depict, using set pieces from common imagination. What is more, Bettina von Arnim explicitly appeals to the imaginative power of her supposed reader ("Denk dir"— "Think to yourself"), her deictic expressions ("da speist er"—"there he dines") pointing at the scene, and her direct references to fairy tales ("Gegend ins Wunderbare gespielt [!]"—"Place played into the marvellous", "Stadt der Märchen"—"City of fairy tales") to paint a picture for himself, accompanied by exotic music, thus evoking "a flowering, dancing and instrument-playing world." If the description is not colorful enough, the picture should indeed become so in the reader's imagination. [6]

Frankist conduct and self-presentation trigger images and imaginary. It is interesting to notice that Goethe himself—albeit critical about the movement and its leader, who reminded him of the "arch-swindler" Cagliostro (see Hoensch 1990, 242–43), i.e., another *Groß-Cophta*[2]—was well aware of the visual and theatrical aspect in Frankist attitude and behavior, as he was informed about the Frankist court at Offenbach as displaying a "comedy" or a "masquerade."[3] Not without good reason, though the leader of the Frankist movement himself would not consider the notion of masquerade as merely derogative. Masquerade is indeed something Frankism is all about. Regarding his outward appearance, he reasons in the gathering of his sayings (*The Words of the Lord* § 423): [7]

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2   Goethe, in his statement pointing at the pitfalls of religious enthusiasm in general, notes "wie leicht hilfs-bedürftige Menschen sich immer wieder von geschickten Schwindlern sich betören lassen, die ihr Übel mit Hoffnung zu lindern verstehen" (see Goethe's short note titled *Biographisches von Frank, getaufter Jude* in Goethe 1986, 468). In summer 1791, Goethe wrote his comedy *Der Groß-Coptha* on a swindler and charlatan taking advantage of his gullible audience.

3   Goethe's remark comments a letter by an anonymous from September 2, 1791 that characterizes the Frankist court (see Goethe 1986, 1116).

> The fool looks at the clothing and the wise man at the one who wears it. You should have known that there is assuredly something hidden behind the attire. You saw that I came in Turkish garments and went about in them in a land where they wear other clothes. From that you ought to have understood that certainly there was some sort of thing beneath that clothing.[4]

[8]

Frankism: A Short Overview

The Frankist movement emerged in the context of messianic Sabbateanism in mid-eighteenth-century Eastern Europe, particularly in the city of Salonika and the border region of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire. It formed and consolidated in a situation of multiple religious contacts that shaped and were deliberately used to shape its particular profile.[5] Pawel Maciejko even claims that "Sabbatianism's singularity was that in it fusing interreligious elements became a positive, and possibly even supreme, value" as it "involved a conscious blending of them" (2017, XXIV). As a consequence, "[i]n Sabbatianism, Judaism ceased to be self-referential: Sabbatian thought developed in conscious dialogue with other faiths. The world's religious and cultural diversity was explored and explained" (2017, XXVIII). Regarding the case of Frankism, one might also add that religious and cultural diversity was exploited as well. In retrospect, it might be claimed that the Frankists masterfully handled situational religiosity (Emeliantseva Koller 2019) and exploited the potentials offered by the diverse situations of contact for the aims of their movement[6]—or the personal aims of their leader. In this sense, Frank may well be called the "pragmatic messiah who managed to adjust his doctrine to new situations" (Doktór 2002, 131)—even if the Frankist project had already failed several times (see Michaelson 2022, 109). It might be argued that situations of religious contact are not at last concerned with questions of visibility, representation, and images, be it of the divine and/or of its prevailing adherents in this world.

[9]

Frankism's charismatic founder and leading protagonist, Jacob Frank (1726?–1791), claimed the heritage of the Messiah Sabbatai Zevi (1626–1676) (see Scholem 1992b), who caused a messianic upswing among all Jews of the diaspora and was acknowledged by a great number of Jews at his time (see Scholem 1992a, 23–24). However, he obviously "did not fit any of the existing conceptions of the messiah" (Maciejko 2017, XV). His strange appearance intensified to its utmost when he, faced with the prospect of martyrdom, converted to Islam and left his followers with the uncomfortable task of explaining that stunning action. "Sabbateanism is founded upon the paradox of the Messiah who broke away and lives by paradox of which one drags the following behind" (Scholem 1992a, 26). Conversion, apostasy, and their theoretical explanation are, therefore, characteristics of Frankist self-understanding as well as the redefinition of the very category of the messiah opposing existing concepts (Maciejko 2017, XVI). Moreover, Frank—in his beginnings closely related to the most antinomian Karakaş sect (Sisman 2015, 150)—included in his messianic pedigree Sabbatai

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4   Frank's teachings are handed down in a Polish collection of his sayings, recorded by his followers: *Ksiega Słów Pańskich* ("The Words of the Lord"), in the following quoted from the English translation by Harris Lenowitz (2004). These and other Frankist writings have been edited by Jan (1997). Scholem 1992, 42 points out that the teaching of the good king dressed in bad clothing refers to the interpretation of the Sohar and the book of Esther.

5   On the intrinsic contact situations of the Jewish Messiah event, see Lenowitz (2002, 105).

6   Just recently, Jay Michaelson examined the strong influence of Western Esotericism on the later Frank and his movement, thus adding yet another influence on the already multiple currents that made Frankism and its development possible (see 2022, 168–81).

Zevi's supposed successor and founder of the crypto-Jewish *Dönme*, Barukhia Russo (Osman Baba) (1676-1720) (see Sisman 2015). Barukhia Russo literally turned Jewish religiosity upside down: "His teaching included the idea that […] the highest Tora […] positively commanded those acts that were stringently prohibited in the Torah […] that governs the lowest realm. […] With Russo, these prohibitions/commandments came to include forbidden sexual activities—incest, adultery, orgiastic practices—as well as forbidden foods and new festivals" (Lenowitz 1998, 170). Frankism, thus, did not only inherit particular content from Sabbateanism but also visibility, publicity, and public interest, as "[t]he eruption of religious fervor around Sabbatai Tsevi in the 1660s was probably the highest-profile event involving Jewish communities prior to the twentieth century. It echoed in innumerable contemporary letters, memoirs, travelogues, and newspaper reports" (Maciejko 2017, XI-XII).

Consequently, the core feature of Frank's movement—to use Ekaterina Emeliantseva's expression—consisted of the radical rejection and voluntary transgression of Jewish religious law (Emeliantseva Koller 2019, 163). Transgression, then, is "the ultimate act of signification" (Michaelson 2022, 55). It generated and gained publicity and notoriety from two remarkable— and well-remarked—events: the disputations at Kamieniec-Podolski (1757) and Lwów (1759) that had no less spectacular effects: the public burnings of the Talmud throughout Poland in 1757 and the mass conversion of Jewish sectarians to the Catholic Church after 1759 that was duly exploited by the latter to visibly demonstrate its unbroken spiritual potential in the contemporary contest with Protestantism and Enlightenment alike. Regarding geography, Frankism first emerged in the politically and religiously contested province of Podolia and gained its later centers in Warsaw, Prague, and Offenbach, where it acted most visibly. Though the real number cannot be satisfactorily measured, the movement supposedly comprised about 500 000 open and secret adherents. [11]

Throughout its existence, Frankism and Frankists made use of established religious traditions, as Frank himself, due to the prevailing situation and supposedly because of religious (messianic) reasons, converted to Islam (on the Muslim converts in Frankism, see Doktór 2002) and, after that, to Catholic Christianity. The interest in and use of other religious traditions is also Sabbatian heritage, as "from the very outset, Sabbatian thought displayed a keen interest in other peoples and other religions: from the moment the messiah entered the foreign realm of the nations of the world, questions concerning foreign traditions became key point of Sabbatian theology" (Maciejko 2017, XXI). The mass conversion of his adherents, that is, (Sabbatian) Jews, to Christianity in 1759 was a unique event in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Emeliantseva Koller 2019, 164). It is, however, well worth noticing that the term "Frankism" was not used to denominate the actions of Frank and his followers until the second half of the nineteenth century with the appearance of the first scholarly accounts of the movement (2019, 168). [12]

Jacob Frank and His Image

Whether Bettina von Arnim's vivid image of the Frankist court at Offenbach is also a realistic one or not must remain subject to doubt. However, there is good reason to assume that the description is not far from Frankist self-representation at that time i.e., that the picture painted by the poet to some degree corresponds to the picture the Frankists deliberately set up for the general public. Frankism not only attracts images and imaginary; it also actively promotes them. The motivation is rooted in how Frankism emerged in its time. As Harris Lenowitz [13]

suggests in his pathbreaking article, the struggles of emerging Frankism against established religious traditions is also a struggle about images, an "*iconomachy*," not last regarding visual propaganda (Lenowitz 2002, see also 2000).

The struggle about image and images emerged from a particular background in a religiously [14] unique setting. Being praised as a land of comparatively high tolerance towards religious dissenters, Poland seems likely to allow heterodox movements to emerge from established religious traditions. Though its rabbinic branch was dominant and even became an administrative partner of the government, Judaism in early modern Poland also displayed an astounding variety of expressions, above all, about extreme forms. It saw the rise of Sabbateanism and Hasidism (with the legendary figure of the *Ba'al Schem Tov*, Israel Ben Eliser, ca. 1700–1760) alike.[7] Both of them greatly influenced the overall image of East European Judaism and contributed to an ongoing argument about images and icons in religious contexts. Since Martin Buber, the poetic (picturesque) potential of Hasidism is not in question. With Sabbateanism, however, images also became a theological challenge to both Judaism and the Christian environment. As Harris Lenowitz has pointed out, already early Sabbateanism interfered with the iconology of the Polish Catholic church: "The portraits of Shabbatai Tsevi and Nathan of Gaza were counterfeit icons and threatened the iconology and iconolatric practices of the Church in Poland by increasing the number of icons and making icons of inappropriate figures" (2002, 107). As it seems, the Church acted with an act of iconoclasm against the anti-icons of the leading figures of Sabbateanism (2002, 110). However, in particular with regard to images, there was still the outstanding religious movement with Jewish roots that was "unique in its extraordinary public profile" (Maciejko 2011, 41), at least concerning (bad) reputation and, as a consequence, increased public interest: The followers of Jacob Frank. The later so-called Frankist movement, for good reason, gained its notorious name after its first leader, for it was his public image that inspired public imagination in his movement.

Without any doubt, *Ya'aqov ben Yehuda Leib*, later known as Jacob Frank, and the Frankist [15] movement provoke some fascination even in detached and matter-of-fact observers. For good reason, Frank "was once the most notorious Jew in Europe" (Michaelson 2022, 1). One cannot prevent oneself from the impression that even scholars are forced to declare position as the movement was "extraordinary in every regard" and Frank's life and teachings "at the same time fascinating and repulsive" (Davidowicz 2004, 7). Frank, as Klaus Davidowicz puts it, "stands for all the elements one only very reluctantly wants to find in a Jewish intellectual history: antinomianism, despotism, even anti-Judaism" (2004, 14). In his seminal study *Redemption through sin,* Gershom Scholem writes on the scholarly interest in the founder and key figure of the Frankist movement:

> Quite justifiably, we are all positive that Jakob Frank was a rotten and unscrupu- [16]
> lous person; however, this man, in a well-known sense, becomes a problem if we
> want to study and understand his "teachings," by means of which he could appear
> as a leader and prophet of a large movement.[8] (Scholem 1992a, 22)

Scholem explains the reservations of Jewish scholars towards the Frankist movement as [17] resulting from the accusation of ritual murder that was employed by the Frankists against

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7   On the relation of Sabbateanism and Hasidism, see Hundert (2006, 182–85).
8   "Zu Recht sind wir uns alle sicher, daß Jakob Frank eine verdorbene und skrupellose Persönlichkeit war, und dennoch wird uns dieser Mann, im bekannten Sinne, zum Problem, wenn wir seine 'Lehren' studieren und verstehen wollen, wodurch er einer großen Bewegung als Anführer und Prophet erscheinen konnte."

Jews.[9] To Scholem himself, Frank may at most display a somewhat dubious fascination as an
"athletic messiah" (*Athleten-Messias*; 1973, 203), or rather, as a libertine and a fraud, while his
followers, according to Scholem, in most cases were not frauds: "Their belief was real," and,
moreover, it was "a real belief, penetrating to the abysses of the soul itself" (1992a, 22).[10]

The two main movements that visibly opposed rabbinic Judaism, Hasidism and Frankism,   [18]
as Davidowicz put it, had one decisive element in common: the establishment of a new re-
ligious ideal in the person of the charismatic preacher with simple (religious) ideas (2004,
12). Frank's aim to establish a new religious tradition is stressed by Jan Doktór, who assumes
that, at least since 1755, Frank propagated a "new religion of the end," sparking from pieces
of revelation by its three predecessors, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, and uniting them
in "one Messianic chariot (*merkavah*)" (1997, 54). A vital element of this new religion was
an image, or better, a *counter-image* that reacts to previous ideals of how the truly religious
present themselves. Frank's counter-image is that of a *prostak*, in Polish and Yiddish a "simple-
ton" or "boor": "Frank uses it as a term of self-praise, rejecting traditional social stratification
and the image of the elite scholar by emphasizing the need for physical hardiness and heed-
less courage" (Lenowitz 1998, 176, see also 181). Thus, he aimed at nothing less than the
"remasculinization of the Jewish Hero" (Michaelson 2022, 141).[11]

Using a distictive counter-image, intellectual sophistication depicted as the Rabbinic scholar   [19]
thus was mockingly opposed by the prostak's sheer brutish force. As sources and scholars
of Frankism agree, Frank himself, for sure, was a self-proclaimed, self-conscious, and not
at last extremely self-confident example of this ideal and presented the traditional eastern
Jewish world an unconditional settling of the score (Davidowicz 2004, 23). He was, in the
words of Harris Lenowitz, "a fearless and physically powerful figure but uneducated and
disdainful of religious traditions, above the Jewish rabbinic elite" (Lenowitz 1998, 167). As
Michaelson points out, Lenowitz' dictum of Frank as uneducated must be subject to doubt
due to upbringing in a highly sophisticated heretical cabbalistic milieu (Michaelson 2022,
35). However, Frank's claim to boorishness remains unaffected by his background. His anti-
intellectualism is a persistent subject of his teachings:

> Woe! Woe to the religious scholars, philosophers, theologians, and these stupid,   [20]
> worldly and able teachers, woe to the pompous rabbis! those false priests, woe to
> all judges because their decrees are unjust, false, all against God's will![12] (Quoted
> in Kraushar 2001, 383)

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9   "Denn hier steht als Stein des Anstoßes die Tatsache vor uns, daß die Angehörigen der Sekte sich nicht
    scheuten, in Disputen mit den Lemberger Rabbinern die Juden des Ritualmordes anzuklagen, ein Akt, der
    das Gefühl der jüdischen Würde stärker verletzte, als die theoretischen Ansichten der Sektenmitglieder es
    vermocht hätten" (Scholem 1992, 16).

10 On the other hand, as Klaus Davidowicz points out, the movement retained connections to traditions emerg-
    ing from a Jewish background: "Man sollte im Frankismus nicht nur die Häresie erkennen, sondern auch die
    literarische Weiterführung der Kabbala. Die jüdische Geistesgeschichte besteht eben nicht nur aus Raschi,
    Maimonides und Martin Buber, sondern auch aus Baruch Spinoza, Sabbatai Zwi und Jakob Frank" (2004,
    125).

11 As Michaelson put it, "Frank's masculine is a striking inversion of norms. […] Frank demands that his fol-
    lowers reject the "effeminate??" Jacob for the "masculine" Esau, i.e. reject powerless Judaism for powerful
    Christianity. As Frank repeatedly boasts of his sexual prowess, he sets himself up as the sexual-typological
    opposite of the rabbinic ideal of Jacob, and the embodiment of the powerful man of Esau" (2022, 142).

12 At times, Frank's emphasis on action rather than discussions reminds us of actionist groups in the twentieth
    century: "I told you several times, we must go and tread. Why do I need your empty words which you so
    constantly chattered; the world exists already longer than 500,000 years, and everybody prayed and talked,
    and what of it? What will what happens with the mouth help? It is all empty wind" (*The Words of the Lord*
    § 237).

Regarding such kinds of utterances, it is understandable that there is considerable reservation against the movement and its leader, not last among scholars of religion. Perhaps it is Frankism's deliberate violation of the tacit agreement, or rather, the unwritten laws on basic rules of decency and non-visibility, that is associated with a 'proper' religious movement as a serious object of scholarly investigation and even leads scholars to engage emotionally and to evaluate the movement and its protagonists. Does Frankism, and Jacob Frank himself, not only affront the religious traditions of his time but even offend scholarship's basic aniconism? Though the movement itself is considered a very plastic and colorful phenomenon—and perhaps because of that—scholars argue that it must be 'fake' (whatever this means in the scholarly examination of religious phenomena), and Frank himself, correspondingly, an impostor. To quote a historian: "To modern eyes, the Frankists appear the most exotic of all. Jankiel Lejbowicz (1727–1791), later known as Jakub Frank, ran one of the most successful religious frauds in modern history" (Davis 2005, 150). Here, Davis combines the picturesque aspect of Frankism and evaluation of the movement in an optical impression. Less evaluative and more phenomenological, Lenowitz describes Frank as follows: "Throughout his life, Frank demonstrated a remarkably fluid identity, ready to be, say, do, wear whatever was expedient" (Lenowitz 1998, 171). Finally, Jay Michaelson provides the perhaps most balanced evaluation: "One cannot contest Frank's opportunism and apparent uses of sex, violence, and verbal abuse in relationship to his followers. But he also developed a coherent, materialistic, and protomodern skeptical worldview that he combined with myths and tales of startling originality. Both are true: both the charlatan and the innovator, the genius and the manipulator" (2022, 27).

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Media of Visibility

In the case of Frankism, the 'simple' ideas of its leader and his counter-image, the self-stylization as a simple who is always ready to put up a fight, do not exclude a sophisticated practice to promote and, finally, to accomplish the new ideal as the *visible* expression of a new religious tradition. By doing so, Frank overcame the conception of the coming messiah as an anonymous or even non-personality (as to be found in rabbinic messianism) for the sake of a sharply shaped visible personality, thereby displaying a "certain sinister fascination" (Scholem 1957, 337). In order to explain, Frank refers to physical facts of optic contrast: "When you saw me without learning, why did you not recognize that I am the darkness from which the light comes" (quoted in Kraushar 2001, 489).[13] Here, Frank obviously refers to a simple optic truth: For reasons of contrast, enlightening light has to emerge from a dark background in order to become (all the more) visible.[14] Nobody can see if there is either only light or only darkness. Visibility must deal with both sides of the contrast—the more contrasting, the more visibility.

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There are a number of material and immaterial media Frank and his followers employ in

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13   Compare "*The Words of the Lord*" § 641: "When they dig a well at first there must flow up muddy and dirty water until they come to the sweet, pure water. You fell into a filthy place. If God helps me I will draw you out of that darkness into light."

14   On the interplay of light and darkness regarding nineteenth-century panoramic paintings, see Sternberger (1974, 16): "[…] [E]ine […] umgebende Wirklichkeit [ist] bis zu dem überhaupt erreichbaren Grade ausgeschaltet, in Dunkel gehüllt, vernichtet, gleichsam hinweggezogen oder abgeschnitten ist. Die Augen des Besuchers haben keinen Halt mehr im Gewohnten. Der Blick wird einzig angezogen von der erleuchteten Szene, die sich vorne darstellt." On the salient importance of the effects of light in *tableaux vivants*, see Jooss (1999, 164–65).

order to achieve visibility in representing religious ideas. Most prominent among them are (public) actions (e.g., disputations and processions), certain rituals that are sure to be reported to others, and, above all, clothing and garments as well as interior design. In any case, there is no doubt that Frank cared about his image and employed diverse strategies to profile and spread it among the general public. With his provocative actions, he followed a "wider strategy of instigating public confrontation with the rabbis" (Maciejko 2011, 32). Image-building and image promotion, thus, were a major part of Frank's and Frankist ideology and an important element of the movement's self-understanding.

Visibility is also sustained by several media not directly associated with the visual. Frankist [24] *writings*, for instance, are characterized by Paweł Maciejko as follows: "Frankist tales are based on an exegetical principle of tendentious rewriting of traditional Jewish narratives so as to invert established hierarchies, discredit honored symbols, and reevaluate the negative characters of the Jewish tradition. *Zbiór słów pańskich* presents the Revelation on Sinai as a monstrous deception in which an evil power bestowed nonsensical and harmful laws upon the people of Israel" (2010, unpaginated). However, at the same time, Frank's and Frankist ideas are presented in a truly imaginative fashion, as even severe critics of the movement have to admit. Frankism, not at last by its outward form, appeals to imagination. "At times, the façade of Frank's ideas astonishes us with its dazzling linguistic expressions. These reveal an unusual play of fantasy and poetic flight in a man who, as we know, did not possess even the rudiments of culture, whose mind was not fed from any fund of ideas, even rabbinic. […] Given that, it is amazing to notice the richness of fantasy in Frank's teaching […] [T]he substance of Frank's sayings in Iwan are clothed in undeniably poetic garments" (Kraushar 2001, 117–18). As the examples of Olga Tocarczuk and Bettina von Arnim show, the poetic garments of Frankist practice strongly resonate with poetic imaginary.

I would like to elaborate on a particularly significant element in the Frankist practice of [25] self-presentation. *Garment and clothing* as visible expressions in form and color were of salient importance to Frank's conduct, appearance,[15] and even theology. The "fable-like clothing" (*fabelhafte Kleidung*) of the Frankists did not fail to make a deep impression on the imagination of outside observers, such as Bettina von Arnim.[16] They served as a means of internal and external communication—but also made a particular statement, as Kraushar remarks regarding Frank's retinue: "The color of Frank's clothing was symbolic, having a meaning for those surrounding him by revealing his humor on any given day" (2001, 320). At Offenbach, Frank presented himself to visitors in a particular dress "according to the Turkish fashion: he wore yellow slippers, long wide red trousers, and a Turkish caftan set with ermine. A high fur cap was always set upon his head" (Maciejko 2011, 234). Clothing, to Frank, is a visible and publicly appealing expression of religious and messianic meaning.[17] It was, above all, green garments that played a particular role in later Frankist self-presentation (see David-owicz 2004, 54; see the secret green signs indicating the graves of the Frankist leaders, ibid.,

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15   Kraushar repeatedly describes Frank's particular clothing and its effects on others, e.g.: "The people of Warsaw looked upon the converts with interest, especially their leader who retained a strange Eastern attire – a tall fur hat and a fur collar on his coat" (Kraushar 2001, 157).

16   In this sense, the poet's imagination may indeed be identified as a "higher art of clothing" (*höhere Bekleidungskunst*) (see Sternberger 1974, 128).

17   Kraushar in his derogative evaluation of Frankist belief also points to this fact, though perhaps underestimating its particular significance: "[T]he belief in the whole monstrous system of fantasy evoked by a simple mind—Frank's—is mixed in a strange way with a tendency to old customs, even as to such insignificant items as outer wear. The proclamation of an unswerving need to change old rites and customs in 'speech, deeds, and dress,' was not reflected in Frank's own retention of old-fashioned Judeo-Turkish attire including a long overcoat, and he was never without a covering on his head" (2001, 295).

153). The equipment of Frankist interiors also provided a valuable means of visible expression and communication.

In his sayings, Frank stresses the importance of clothing and its prominent meaning for the messianic task. In this context, Lenowitz points to the discussion of the relation between clothes and the person who wears them in the Zohar (see 1998, 186) as a possible source of reference. Frank himself claimed to follow the clue given by the first messiah, Sabbatai Zevi: "That First called the two religions, the Turkish and the Christian, the two slippers. From that surely one can conclude, that somebody will have to put them on" (*The Words of the Lord* § 211). This is what Frank actually did, not only by converting first to Islam and, after that, to Catholic Christianity, but also by ostensibly wearing Turkish garments in his Christian environment (see Michaelson 2022, 97). The salience of the visibility of clothing is stressed as well:

[26]

> When we shall be worthy to come to the secret Das, we shall at that time put on a robe, which means attracting everyone's eyes. You will see that I go there in the attire in which I came out from my country. I have not yet worn the robe of Esau at all, and that is for this reason, that many lords in Poland have it in a legend from their forefathers that a certain one from the Jewish estate will be born in Poland, and he, having left his religion, will accept Christianity and very many men, women and children will follow him to that estate. That is a sign for them that soon the Day of Judgment will be fulfilled in Poland. They have very many highly secret things in [their] tradition, but they do not reveal them to any other people. Therefore I have left this attire from my country on me, so that they may not catch on and recognize me, and even if the Jews should inform them that I was born in Poland, they would still not believe it, seeing that attire on me. When we shall be worthy to come to this secret Das, then I and you will put on the clothes which are called the robes of charm.[18] (*The Words of the Lord* § 245)

[27]

As Michaelson stresses, the garments of Esau are real "magical objects that grant great power, such as the power to have children, triumph in battle, and attain immortal life"; it is them "that enable the hero to attain this-worldly goals" (2022, 79).

[28]

Lastly, clothing serves as an important element of Frankist portraits, supporting and even multiplying their iconic and iconological message. Costumes are a substantial part of the portraits, portraying Frank as the 'other' in his prevailing environment and being intended to provoke particular reactions both from his followers and his opponents (Lenowitz 2002, 126).[19]

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Frankist Antinomical Iconism

Frank's practices, however, do not come out of the blue but are dependent on and a significant means of an ongoing struggle with another, already well-established tradition. Frankism's

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18   See on the *Das* in Frank's thinking Michaelson (2022, 95). Regarding Frank's iconism, the deictic German 'das' might be a promising candidate for the reference of the word.

19   See Sternberger's more general thoughts on the subject of clothing and costume within the context of nineteenth century worldviews: "Die Kunst der Bekleidung, des Kostüms müssen alle diejenigen üben, welche den Stoff oder die Materie oder das Wirkliche schlechthin in den Bereich einer höheren Wahrheit oder des Höheren überhaupt emporzuheben den Beruf haben. Banal gesprochen: Kleider machen nicht bloß Leute, sondern auch Ideale" (1974, 127).

main characteristics are its stern opposition towards Rabbinic Judaism in Poland ("Contratal-mudism") and its rigid antinomianism.[20] Frankist doctrine and, above all, Frankist practice straightforwardly reversed the Law to its opposite (see the catchy English book title "Redemption through sin"[21]). Proscriptions were not only allowed but rather turned into imperative commandments. Mortal sins that previously could not be forgiven, such as forbidden sex and idol worship, became mandatory in Frankist religious practice. If indeed, as many rabbis believed, the practice of the Law made the Jew a Jew, the challenge of Frankism that the reversion of the Law made the true believer could not be more radical.

In order to further develop and to protect the movement, Frankist leaders, and in particular [31] Frank himself, employed strategies that took advantage of the multiform contact situations of religious traditions within the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth by (metaschematic) subversion of religious forms and, not at last, by playing one established institutionalized religious tradition off against another (Islam, Rabbinic Judaism, Catholic and Protestant Christianity). Karaite and Hasidic Judaism, Freemasonry, Western Esotericism, and even the rising Enlightenment movement, if suitable for Frankist aims, were involved in the encounter as well.

Ultimately, Frank's anti-hierarchical impetus is directed against the intellectual establish- [32] ment of early modern Polish Jewry. As a consequence, Frank refused to hide what he claimed to be the true faith, and openly and publicly presented himself to be an opponent of the established Jewish tradition. However, the obvious violation of restrictions based on the Second Commandment is only part of the overall Frankist attack on the establishment. The *open, visible, and public presentation* was intended to be an affront against Rabbinic Judaism by ostensibly opposing its aniconic stance.[22] Accordingly, the Frankist practice might be *ex negativo* of interest for the examination of religious aniconism, i.e., by opposing it all too obviously and perfectly clearly. To the Frankists, the visible is far more important than the (aniconic) invisible.[23] After all, it is a telling case of the mutual dynamic of dependence of aniconism and iconism in the history of religions that does not allow one to examine one movement independently of the other in the study of religion.[24]

Frank stresses his anti-aniconic attitude in his self-descriptions, in particular in the reports [33] on the episode that made him notorious among Jews and even within the European public: the so-called Lanckoronie incident. It was in the early year 1756, in the Polish village of Lanckoronie near the Moldavian border, when Frank's movement became an obvious challenge to established religious tradition. Here, a shocking and provoking scene had insulted the eyes

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20 On the particularities of Frank's "antinomianism without nihilism", see Michaelson (2022, 50–51). "Frank," Michaelson argues, "transgresses the law for skeptical/humanistic reasons (because the law needlessly restricts human potential), for religious reasons (because the true God does not want obedience, but personal flourishing), and for experimental reasons (because transgressions is decentering and"pneumatic"). […] This is critique, not nihilism" (2022, 70). In an earlier article, Michaelson stated: "Frankism is no more nihilistic than the generations of subsequent critiques of religion are nihilistic. Frankist antinomianism is not an act of despair; as framed in ZSP, it is a protest of freedom raised against the strictures of religious norms. Frankism is indeed bawdy and grotesque; indeed, as Bakhtin himself wrote, it undermines the"high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity." Yet this "bringing down to earth" is the center of Frank's materialist theology as a whole" (2017, 354–55).
21 On the mistranslation of Scholem's original title, see Maciejko (2017, XVIII).
22 See for a definition of aniconism Gaifman (2017, 338): "[A]niconism can be defined as the denotation of divine presence without a figural representation."
23 See Laura Marks as discussed by Gaifman (2017, 343).
24 "Religionswissenschaftlich lassen sich Bilderfreundlichkeit und Bilderfeindlichkeit nur in wechselseitiger Abhängigkeit voneinander verstehen. In ihrer Beziehung zueinander kommt die religionsgeschichtliche Dynamik von Darstellung und 'Verundarstellung' zum Ausdruck" (Krech and Radermacher 2019, 14).

of traditional-orientated Jews who broke into a prayer meeting of Frankists that had already troubled and outraged them for some time before. The problem for the offended consisted of *what* was presented there and, not less, that it was *presented*. As it seemed, the Frankists conducted a sinister ritual that was, to say the least, abhorrent to witness—not only because of its content but also because it displayed iconic qualities and, seemingly, was intended to become public.

The scandalous self-presentation of the movement immediately bore outstanding public fruit, making it visible far beyond the narrow horizon of a small Podolian village. The unwilling witnesses were shocked and disgusted enough that they themselves unwillingly contributed to the Frankist aim regarding the visibility of the movement. It was the Rabbinic authorities that made the seemingly intrareligious affair public by actively involving the authorities of the hegemonic religious tradition, for they reported the blasphemous scene to the (anti-Semitic) Bishop of Kamieniec, seeking the help of the Catholic authorities against the misbehaving. Anti-aniconism thus became visible—as a voluntarily displayed picture or image. [34]

The earliest and, in fact, only detailed report of the incident in Jewish sources appeared in Jacob Emden's (1697–1776) *Sefer Shimush,* "The Book of the Pious," from 1760. The account of this outspoken opponent of Sabbateanism persistently shows the thrust of Frank's attack against the Jewish establishment of his time and place: [35]

> And they took the wife of the local rabbi (who also belonged to the sect), a woman beautiful but lacking discretion, they undressed her naked and placed the Crown of the Torah on her head, sat her under the canopy like a bride, and danced a dance around her. They celebrated with bread and wine of the condemned, and they pleased their hearts with music like King David […] and in dance they fell upon her kissing her, and called her 'mezuzah', as if they were kissing a mezuzah. (Quoted in Maciejko 2011, 23) [36]

No wonder, then, given the picturesque details of the reports, that the catholic authorities (not last with regard to the "bread and wine of the condemned" involved) began to take an interest in the scandalous group, and so did the wider Polish and, finally, European public. All of them, not least via Jacob Emden's vivid description, got a pretty good picture of the Frankists, and not only in a metaphoric sense.[25] Just recently, Jay Michaelson (2022, 18–19) has uttered doubts if the incident in this form ever took place at all. However, as he remarks, this question is in a way secondary, as the image provided here fits very well into the picture Frankism's opponents and Frank himself wanted to present to the public (Frank himself later made use of it in *The Words of the Lord* § 1311). Emden's description, however, could be a part of his and his father's preeminent intellectual struggle, an iconomachy, as they "conducted a war in pictures against the Shabbatean heresies" (Lenowitz 2002, 113). To Emden, pictures/images were a significant part of heretical practice. Accordingly, Emden himself had considerable difficulties in explaining away the existence of a portrait of his father, the Hakham Tsevi Ashkenazi (1656–1718) (see Lenowitz 2002, 111–13). [37]

The iconomachy displayed in the Lanckoronie scene took place on various levels. Of course, [38]

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25   In his book, Emden also emphasizes the fact that the Frankists' actions were openly displayed: "New scoundrels have come out of the dwellings of the heretics. They have dismantled the yoke of Torah and commandments with an upraised arm and have rejected religion in public" (quoted in Maciejko 2017, 145).

the image displayed by the Frankist conveys many associations and meanings. A possible allusion that would be interesting for the following refers to Marrano practice. In order to be able to follow the Law in times of persecution of Jews on the Iberian Peninsula, the converted Jews still secretly adherent to Judaism employed a subversive strategy. They fixed a statue of the Madonna on the doorpost of their house and placed within her foot the prayer of the *Shema*. By doing so, they transformed the Statue of the Madonna into a *Mezuzah* that is to be kissed upon entering and leaving the house in the very same way as religious Jews will kiss the *Mezuzah*.[26] Using a statue in this manner means subverting idolatric practice by turning the image of the divinity into a mere box for the written Shema. This subversion is, in many regards, in turn subverted by the Frankist practice.[27] Deliberately displaying a strategy of the survival of persecuted Jews in public would neatly add to the list of Frankist insults to rabbinic Judaism. Furthermore, re-idolizing an image that was defused in its idolatric potency by pious and cunning strategy even multiplies the affront. And ultimately, doing so by means of a *living picture/image*, the wife of the rabbi in the flesh representing the divinity brings the challenge to extremes.

It was not at last the Lanckoronie incident that quickly made Jacob Frank and his 'Frankists' one of the great challenges to early modern Judaism in Central and Eastern Europe. In the aftermath of the incident, Frankists even managed to profit from a re-enactment of the notorious medieval Jewish-Christian disputation (these disputations took place at Kamieniec-Podolski and Lwów, 1757 and 1759) that was implemented by antisemitic bishops, including the blood libel and subsequent burning of the Talmud in Poland.[28] The debates provoked great interest in both the Jewish and the Christian public (Maciejko 2011, 72) and the Frankists using ambiguity and outright misdirection to conceal and present their theology at the same time (see Lenowitz 1998, 171). However, the *public display of the disputation* fits well into the Frankist practice of staging and providing images likely to impress both participants and observers.[29] Accordingly, the equally notorious Jewish-Frankist disputations, conducted under the surveillance of the Catholic Church and modeled after the paradigm of medieval disputations (Maciejko 2011, 75), leading to the conversion of the Frankists to Catholicism and the burning of the Talmud, might be interpreted as an attempt to visualize something that rabbinic authorities would have preferred to remain hidden and an internal affair (see Maciejko 2011, 30). However, ultimately even the official Judaism promoted the ostensive separation of Judaism

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26   Compare Trudi Alexy's title of her book *The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot* (1993). David M. Gitlitz reports on a corresponding practice among conversos who used a statue of the archangel Michael for the same purpose: "[…] in the tip of his boots was a mezuzah. Everyone going in would kiss the tip of his boot and everyone else would see what great Catholics they were" (Gitlitz 1996, 528).

27   Michaelson fittingly comments: "Frankism operates within a Sabbatean framework yet inverts the Sabbatean emphasis on faith and the unseen; for Sabbateanism, the *Sod HaEmunah*, the hidden"mystery of the faith," is central—for Frank, faith in the invisible is ridiculous, and the manifest is all he trusts" (2022, 10).

28   Although Jay Michaelson is undoubtedly right in stating that the Frankists were tools in proving the blood libel (2022, 21), their role cannot be reduced to this. The disputations displayed a considerable agency of their own, taking advantage of the forms of contact between two more dominant religions (Catholicism and Rabbinic Judaism) as a third party. Sisman describes the events as follows: "But the Jewish scheme backfired when the Frankists took the opportunity to ally themselves with the church, presenting themselves not as heretics but as anti-Talmudists" (2015, 152).

29   Even supposed Sabbatians as Jonathan Eibeschütz had to take offence against the public display of infamous accusations performed by the Frankists: "[…] he could not tolerate the radical Shabbateanism of Jakub Frank, as it manifested itself in the catechism prepared by the Frankists for the Lviv disputation in 1759. Particularly offensive was the blatant Frankist validation of the blood libel before the very eyes of the Christian authorities" (Leiman 2002, 151).

proper from the annoying sect in an act of public display of demarcation (see Maciejko 2011, 138, 141).

After all, Frank was well aware of the subversive potential of his visibility and the visibility [40] of his religious group and its shocking practices. Anti-aniconism performed iconically thus clearly was a deliberate and virtuously employed strategy in the struggle with rabbinic Judaism on messianic and eschatological issues. Frank himself was frank about that.[30] About the scandalous events in Lanckoronie, *The Words of the Lord* says:

> In my first coming to you to Poland you *saw with your own eyes* that *all my deeds* [41]
> *were all open,* even though you said that you have orders that your journey be in
> secret, but I said on the contrary: *Let the whole world absolutely know and see.* If it
> is an evil thing, let it be annihilated at once; if a good faith, who is there in this
> estate to spoil it. But when I came to Lanskroun and there you sang chants, *having*
> *closed the window at night, I went out and opened the window, so that they would be*
> *heard for sure.*[31] (*The Words of the Lord* § 1311, emphasis added)

However, it is not only Rabbinic Judaism that was under attack by Frankist iconic prac- [42] tice. Other currents in contemporary Judaism were antagonized as well. As for the supposed roots of Frankism in Sabbateanism, the emphasis on visibility and the establishment of iconic scenes within Frankist practice clearly breaks with the Sabbatean conduct of occurring in the environs of the traditional community and not being sharply distinguished from the 'correct' faith (Kahana 2012, 591). Therefore, instead of blurring the boundaries and hiding subversively within an orthodox habitus, Frank, at least in retrospect, by breaking the paradigm of crypto-Sabbateanism (Maciejko 2011, 140) by disclosure of a supposedly secret ritual, made the contrast to traditional Judaism shockingly visible.

> Until now nothing has been in the open, all has been in thoughts and sounds and [43]
> what has come of it? and we must draw her out openly, and then the purpose of
> the work will be known to all. (*The Words of the Lord* § 632)

With his provocative dogma of visibility and presentation, Frank not only referred to prag- [44] matic reasons but also claimed a certain heritage directly related to early Sabbateanism. This claim was manifested by both action and words. It is claimed that early in his career, Frank visited the grave of Nathan of Gaza (1643–1680) in Skopje. The visit served a certain purpose: Nathan of Gaza stood as Sabbatai's prophet and was, in fact, the major theorist of the Sabbatean dialectics of "Holy Sin" (on his role, see Maciejko 2017, XIII). As *The Words of the Lord* reports, on this occasion, Frank *in nuce* formulated his future religious program of absolute inversion and public visibility, his anti-aniconism:

> That Ran [Rabbi Nathan of Gaza] ordered when he died that a bag of earth be put [45]
> in his coffin giving a sign thereby that he wished to convert the world of spirit into

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30   Harris Lenowitz has described the possible significance of Frank's adapted name as follows: "It's noteworthy that the appellative 'fra/enk' is a multivocal one; Turkish Jews use it to refer to a European Jew while European Jews use it to refer to an oriental Jew. Frank employed both these meanings. He appears to be straightforward with himself, but nothing is what it seems to others. As an adjective, 'frank' incorporates all this in an old meaning, 'free from restrictions'" (Lenowitz 1998, 172).

31   Compare *The Words of the Lord* § 549: "How could you fail to understand, when I came to Poland—poor, lowly, feeble—and I said to you that you should be Truebelievers openly and do nothing secretly, that I would lead everything into the open from then on so that all would see fully."

that of flesh. But I tell you that in this world everything which is spiritual must be made into flesh as is ours *so that everyone will see*; just *as a visible thing is seen*. (*The Words of the Lord* § 548, emphasis added)

It is a vital element of Frank's performance and religious practice as well as practice to promote his religious aims: publicity and visibility, in particular given actions others would regard as offensive and shocking.[32] Visibility seems to be directly related to his messianic mission: "*Maisim zorim*—Strange deeds—stands only at [the place of] Jacob, only they are not covered, but all are exposed to view" (*The Words of the Lord* § 159).[33] In order to be considered strange and disconcerting, the deeds must be performed visibly in the open. Moreover, the idea connects to iconophile traditions, as Maciejko traces the later adaption of the concepts of incarnation and the eventual appropriation of Mariology to Frank's first visit to the grave of Nathan of Gaza (Maciejko 2011, 27).

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Frank's practice of anti-aniconic self-presentation, of course, was not confined to a single scandalous action. Hillel Levine quotes a telling example of his deliberate and theologically-based visibility from the *Various Notes and Occurrences*:

[47]

When Frank was in Kopozynce in 1756, as reported in the Kronika, the prophetic spirit descended upon him. He said to his disciples, "If we have the true God and you believe in him, why should we hide? *We will go in the open and let everyone be aware of this.* He who wants to sacrifice his body for the love of the faith come with me." The Kronika reports that this was at the time of the "great feast day, Estertaines." Frank ordered his disciples to eat and drink, at once publicly demonstrating their own faith while violating Jewish traditions and thereby arousing the ire of local Jews. (Levine 1985, 112, emphasis added)

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As is characteristically visible, Frankist actions are and have been subject to conscious creative forming. In Frank's sayings, the doctrine of visibility as a vital element of Frankist practice is closely connected to the *practice of producing images*:

[49]

When I came to the land of Poland, to its capital city, I did not hide but said openly to the priests that I was a messenger. They questioned me, "What kind of message?" I replied, "You will see with your own eyes what happens in the world

[50]

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32   Even outspoken critics of Frankism such as Gershom Scholem, seem to acknowledge the merits of Frankist visibility, in this case, for the sake of scholarly analysis: "Der Beitrag, den eine Diskussion einiger Hauptmomente des Frankismus für die Fragen nach der Beziehung von Häresie und Gesellschaft liefern kann, scheint mir beträchtlich. Dinge, die gerade ihrer Radikalität halber in anderen Häresien oft nur in verstellter Form oder in esoterischen Andeutungen gelehrt werden, sind hier zu klarem Ausdruck gelangt. Gerade der Ausbruch, der hier im rabbinischen Judentum erfolgt ist, hat die radikalsten und kühnsten Formen angenommen. [...] Was radikale Anabaptisten wie David Joris in Luthers Generation, was die russischen Chlysten in der Zeit Peters des Großen und später nur in Andeutungen aussprachen, ist in den Dokumenten der Frankisten zu handgreiflicherem Ausdruck und schärfster Formulierung gelangt" (Scholem 1973, 201–2).

33   Compare § 413: "These words, Maisim zorim—strange/foreign deeds. This means to go to foreign/strange places, because these words at [the place of] Jacob mean, Maisim jofim—Beautiful deeds." On the "strange deeds" (*Ma'assim sarim*) and their relation to garments in reference to the words of the Sabbatean theorist Abraham Cardoso, see Scholem (1992a, 37): "Der Messias muß ma'assim sarim, fremde und befremdende Taten begehen, ein Begriff, der von nun an großen Raum im Zentrum des religiösen Denkens aller Sabbatianer einnehmen wird. Keine befremdendere Tat aber als die Apostasie des Erlösers selbst. Das Befremdende, das diesem Ereignis anhaftet, und das der Prophet ankündigt, ist nur geschehen, um seine Sendung zu bewahrheiten. Der messianische König wird die "Kleider eines Marranen anlegen, daher werden die Juden ihn nicht anerkennen, kurz, er ist bestimmt, Marrane zu werden wie ich"—so die Worte Cardosos."

with my arrival here. All my actions will be open, not hidden. I tell you that what happened up to now, was only the beginning, *in the same way that a painter draws a sketch so that, later, he can embellish it with colors…"*[34] (Quoted in Kraushar 2001, 209, emphasis added)

Frank's metaphorical self-description of his actions as a sketchbook ('*Ausmalbuch*') offering [51] the potential to be filled later on is an important hint for the scholarly characterization of the effects of his persona and his movement. The Frankist preference for vivid images did not go unnoticed, even regarding the movement's writings. Here, Gershom Scholem, though himself extremely critical about the movement in general, somehow reluctantly acknowledges the Frankist's imaginary as to be found in *The Words of the Lord*: "In this collection of sayings, parables and Torah words—if one may call them that—the characteristic meeting of primitive savagery and morality rotten from within becomes clear with uncanny strength. It must be added, however, that this strangest of all "holy scriptures" cannot be denied a certain verve, a *sense of pictorially powerful words*" (Scholem 1957, 348, emphasis added).[35] Summarizing Frank's ability to create images, Scholem characterizes him, though not a speculative spirit, as having a great talent for visual descriptions, for the impressive image and the trenchant symbolic expression that spurs on the imagination.[36] Correspondingly, the world of Frank's narrative reminds Michaelson of an "epic fantasy film" (2022, 81)—that is, a film that intends to overwhelm to viewer by its visual images. The sense of images and imaginary is a vital element of Frankism.

Frankist Hyper-Iconism

Frank's persisting positive attitude towards images and icons can be measured from notewor- [52] thy paragraphs of *The Words of the Lord*. The most famous and perhaps most important and significant case of iconism in Frankist history is Frank's adaption of the Black Madonna cult. After being accused of being a fake Christian in early 1760, Frank was imprisoned by the

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34 See the reference to pictures and painting as well as the emphasis on visibility in *The Words of the Lord* § 148: "In May of 1783 the Lord said, What is that dream which Jacob saw and what is it that he said, Oh, how fearful is that place. It can be nothing else but the house of God!! Know this, if I am Jacob, then you are my children. Be in wholeness, and you will become worthy to enter openly that which Jacob saw in a dream; you will see openly; *because everything that Jacob saw was as accurate as is a drawing from a picture, which must be filled in*, and therefore he saw it only in his dream. But now the house of God *will be visible in the open*, and you will rejoice. *Seeing that in the open*, you will understand and recognize that we go now along that road which Jacob drew for us. Jacob saw a ladder, but he did not step upon it even onto its first rung; if you had gone from the first hour in wholeness, then you would have been given a certain thing which, if you would have held to it, as it stands concerning Aaron, With this Aaron would come to the Holy [place]. Holding on to that power you could have gone from one place to another. Now, however, you will come to the first place, and from it, from afar, it is possible *you will be able to see some thing being at a distance*. I have pushed you away from me with both hands, but now I will begin to pull you near with both hands, because I want to lead you to the true God" (emphasis added).

35 "In dieser Sammlung von Aussprüchen, Parabeln und Tora-Worten—wenn man sie so nennen darf—wird das charakteristische Zusammentreffen von primitiver Wildheit und von innen her angefaulter Moral mit unheimlicher Stärke deutlich. Es muß aber hinzugefügt werden, daß dieser merkwürdigsten aller 'Heiligen Schriften' ein gewisser Schwung, ein Sinn für bildkräftige Worte nicht abgesprochen werden kann." Compare also Scholem (1973, 203): Frank "warf […] die technische Sprache der Kabbalisten fort und übersetzte sie in populäre Sprache und Bilder."

36 "Frank ist kein Theoretiker oder spekulativer Geist, aber er besitzt eine große Begabung für anschauliche Schilderungen, für das einfache, einprägsame Bild und den pointierten symbolischen Ausdruck der die Phantasie anstachelt" (Scholem 1992a, 90–91).

Catholic authorities at Częstochowa and the monastery of Jasna Gorá shortly after his conversion to Christianity. Here, witnessing the cult and the veneration of the icon of the Mother of God, he became an admirer of the Black Madonna (see Fig. 1),[37] an admiration that ultimately led him to proclaim a female messiah that is, in fact, his daughter Eva Frank (1754–1816).[38] "To put it in a nutshell […] Frankism was not about a male God who took a human body upon himself through a human woman, but about a feminine goddess who acquired a human form" (Maciejko 2011, 176). A concrete picture (portrait/*portret*), a real and material portrait (see Michaelson 2022, 76), plays a salient role in this context:

> How could you not understand my words? I told you that there is a certain tower, in which that Maiden hides herself, and whomever she sees laboring for her with all his strength, she drops to such a one her portrait. From that he will recognize the place of her sojourn and will not move until he comes to her. I did not say that to you in spirit, in Heaven, but only in plain view on the ground: that there is a Maiden and there is a tower and there is a painting which is called a portrait. And you gave no ear to my words at all. Now you must be grieved. (*The Words of the Lord* § 1001, also compare Lenowitz' earlier translation in Lenowitz 2002, 124)

[53]

Adapting his teaching to the veneration of Mary, Frank ordered the production of portraits of his daughter (see Davidowicz 2004, 110–11), obviously to be used for veneration purposes, "explicitly related to Christian icons" (Lenowitz 2002, 126). Paweł Maciejko argues that Frankism as a religious tradition emerged in the contact of Frank and the spiritually charged location characterized prominently by its famous icon: "If the Frankist movement as a social phenomenon emerged during the period of mass conversions in Lwów,"Frankism" as a cluster of theological or theosophical ideas elaborated by Jacob Frank and professed by his disciples was born in Częstochowa" (Maciejko 2011, 170). In particular, Frankist anti-aniconism, in its distinctive form, emerged in a situation of contact with religious traditions, comprising the old adversary, Rabbinic Judaism, but also Sabbateanism and Catholicism.[39]

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This cluster of theological ideas supported an iconism clearly directed against existing aniconism, as Frank had to defend and rationalize his new emphasis on pictures and icons. In his sayings, Frank justified his attitude towards the icon as being shared by the wise and powerful:

[55]

> What did Christ show? Just that all [people] do pray to a painted picture. N.B. There is in this world a plaque to which all the kings went; King Solomon looked at that picture more than the others, therefore it is said, He was wiser than all the others. Once the Lord, while indicating the entrance door in Częstochowa said, If

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37 As Ada Rapoport-Albert put it, Frank saw the Holy Virgin "as the Essence of Christianity and the secret of its advantage over both Judaism and Islam. It was precisely the Virgin, in her manifest femininity, who served as the path to the hidden, supernal Maiden – the redemptive female […]" (2015, 187).

38 "How could you think the messiah would be a man? that may by no means be: for the foundation is the Maiden: She will be the true messiah; she will lead all the worlds: for all weapons are given into her hand. That which is said of David, and of the First, they only came to show the road to her; but they completed nothing. Note this now: they are annihilating his religion, but her honor is not touched in the least" (*The Words of the Lord* § 1051; compare Rapoport-Albert 2015, 197). Scholem relates the proclamation of the female messiah to the contact of the Frankists with the Christian sect of the Philipovicits (see Scholem 1992a, 86–87).

39 Lenowitz describes the situation of contact as follows: "Portraits of Zvi were an integral part of his cult in Poland. The sanctified portrait of Ewa may issue from this tradition but gains an enhanced role as a result of contact with iconolatry at Czestochowa" (Lenowitz 1998, 185).
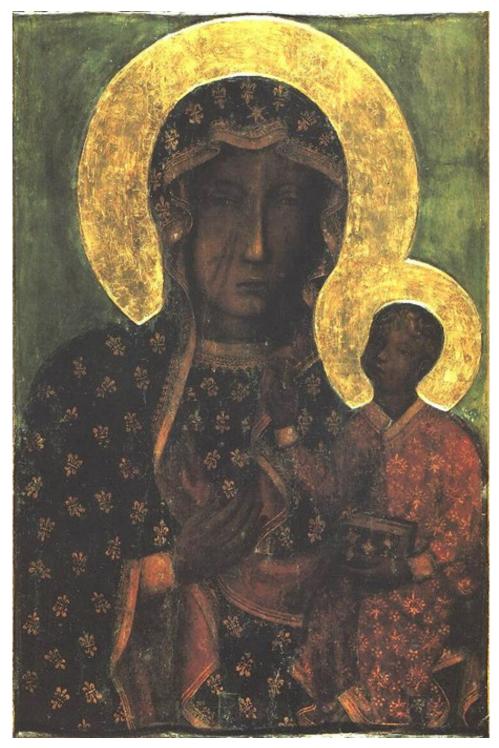
Figure 1   Icon of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa. Licence: Public Domain. Source: https://de.w ikipedia.org/wiki/Schwarze_Madonna_von_Tschenstochau/#/media/Datei:Czestochow ska.jpg.

only a man would sincerely pray here to God at this entrance then here from here God would answer him. (*The Words of the Lord* § 91)

Do the kings and nobles go to the portrait of the Maiden in Częstochowa in great humility for nothing? They are wiser than you, for they see that all power is with her and in her hand, just as they said of Christ, that he arose from the dead, so she will rise from the dirt, truly from the dirt, and all the kings of the earth will bow before her. (*The Words of the Lord* § 778)

[57]

The sayings refer to the practice of Polish monarchs to perform a pilgrimage to the monastery to pay homage to the icon, rendering the location a place for ardent devotion to the icon (Maciejko 2011, 169). In his thinking, Frank replaced the return to the land of Israel with pilgrimages to the icon of the Black Madonna, thus linking the latter to the rise of the Divine Presence from the dust (as expressed in Isaiah 52:2) (Maciejko 2011, 170). The following short narration from *The Words of the Lord* not at last might be considered as an allegory on the emphatic turn towards portraits or images as performed by Frank in Częstochowa:

[58]

I told you the parable of a rifleman who pursued a bird through a forest. The bird sang and the hunter followed its voice. The bird flew in front of him from tree to tree, until it fled inside the palace of the king. The hunter pursued it even there. What did the bird do? It perched behind the portrait of the king and was no longer afraid of the hunter. So we must take shelter beneath her wings, for she is the portrait of the king himself. (*The Words of the Lord* § 193)

[59]

Moreover, the very presence of Frank in Częstochowa was used for image-building as well. Apart from providing Frank with a (romantic) aura of suffering, thus magnifying his significance for the general public, even in the West (Kraushar 2001, 243), the setting of his sojourn thus displayed a great influence on Frankist religious thinking. Kraushar considers it certain that it was nurtured and molded within the walls of the Czestochowa fortress (see Kraushar 2001, 205). Pictures or portraits became an element of Frank's instructions for cultic practice.[40]

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In retrospect, Frank seems to have acknowledged this influence, adapting it to his messianic task: In *The Words of the Lord*, it reads accordingly: "I stayed in Częstochowa and took from there what I needed" (*The Words of the Lord* § 474). Following that, Frank characterizes his religious striving as follows: "Once in Częstochowa the Lord said, We are chasing a portrait" (*The Words of the Lord* § 95). As Pawel Maciejko lucidly stresses, the interplay of iconism, incarnation, and the concept of a female Messiah was molded at the location of Frank's imprisonment. The Christian idea of God's palpable presence among humans, thus "lifting the prohibition against making graven images and thus opening the possibility of His graphic depiction" (Maciejko 2011, 175), is guaranteed by Mary. Mariology emerged in close connection to the debate about the visual portrayal of the Deity and the cult of icons (2011, 175). Frank,

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40   "Only thereafter would I have called 3 from you at a time to come to me to Częstochowa, and I would have given you an order not to come directly to the fortress, but to stay for a while in the little town beneath the fortress. Being there over the duration of that time you would have bought a little portrait for yourselves and after having shut yourselves in well, with the windows closed in a small room and in the most quiet silence among yourselves, you would have had to stay there for 3 days and 3 nights without eating, drinking or sleeping, experiencing nothing but only kneeling to repeat the prayer which I would have ordered you before that portrait, 3 hours before noon, 3 in the afternoon and likewise at night. Doing so, you would have seen one [certain] thing" (*The Words of the Lord* § 194).

moreover, linked iconic worship to the cult of the Virgin and, in consequence, to the acknowledgement and veneration of the feminine principle in the form of the *Shekhinah*, who was not merely pictorially represented but, in fact, present in the Częstochowa icon (2011, 176). This led Frankist theology to some kind of hyper-iconism that even outdid Christian iconism. The costumes depicted in Frankist portraits analyzed by Lenowitz (2002, 126) stressed not only Frank and his daughter as the 'other' of established religion but also underline the pictures being depictions of someone who visibly *portrays* himself as someone who wears a particular costume—a depiction of a depiction, or rather, the icon of an icon. Of course, this iconism did not pass unnoticed by the Jewish opponents of Frankism, who characterize it as idolatry.[41] In Frankist doctrine, Frank's sojourn in the monastery made soteriological sense as to liberate the Divine presence from the icon and establish its concrete revelation in a true incarnation i.e., in his daughter Eve who came to epitomize the Divine Presence (Maciejko 2011, 177).

The theoretical insights were transformed into religious practice immediately. Iconism was   [62]
thus practiced to the point of complete change. In Częstochowa, Frank's followers "were urged to contemplate the Black Madonna icon for several hours every day" as well as "to buy little reproductions of the miraculous icon widely sold to the pilgrims coming to Jasna Góra; they were shut to themselves for three nights in a secluded room and recite a special prayer there, while kneeling before the painting" (Maciejko 2011, 175). Lenowitz states that portraits of Frank and Eva assumed "holy status as a mantra or an icon," a status that was not ascribed to earlier messiahs such as Sabbatai Zevi (Lenowitz 1998, 153 and 175). It seems that at least after Frank's death, the veneration of particular images i.e., those depicting his daughter Eva (see Fig. 2), have become a substantial part of Frankist religious practice: "There, through secret practices, consisting of mystical, cultic rituals, the Lady Eva was regarded as holy and the ruler of the hearts and thoughts of the sectarians. Though the lady was no longer very young […], she surrounded herself with a group of young people who, humbly, fell to their knees before her, and prayed to her picture" (Kraushar 2001, 358).[42] Sustaining the pictorial element of theology based on the experiences at Częstochowa, miniatures of her were given to Frankist followers (Maciejko 2011, 178; Rapoport-Albert 2015, 199).

Regarding the history of the Frankist movement, hyper-iconism, though highly instrumen   [63]
tal in making the movement distinct and visible, seemed to have had serious drawbacks. It might well be the case that the voluntary self-iconisation on behalf of the acknowledged leader of the movement after Jacob Frank's death contributed to the decline of the Offenbach branch of Frankism. Eva, "being satisfied with her role as an icon and the respect given to her person" (Kraushar 2001, 375), thus was not able to maintain the momentum displayed by her religiously dynamic father, who always seems to have found ways to adapt his movement dynamically to changing situations.

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41   See, for example, Eleazar Fleckeles' examination of Frankism and the Sabbatian movement in general in his *Ahavat David* (1800): " […] woe unto the evildoers who are inclined after the carcass of an impure bird and a winged swarming thing that walks in four worlds, and his thoughts are impure and full of materialistic matters, full of idols and pictures that are their folly […] Sabbatai, Berukhiah, and Jacob, the last of the odious messiah, three who are lopped and flawed, who vaunt their idols and walk after the Baalim, and worship the household idols and the fetishes […]" (quoted in Maciejko 2017, 169).

42   See also a report of a visitor of Eva's court quoted in Kraushar (2001, 361) that testifies the salience of dress and images in Frankist impressive self-presentation: "I was led […] to a room where three elderly men in Polish dress with long beards sat in front of a big stack of papers. I noticed with surprise various emblems of the Catholic religion in the room, also a portrait of the lady who had received me, decorated like images of the Holy Mother, portrait of many men and various figures with some kind of Hebrew writing, the meaning of which I did not understand."

Figure 2   Miniature of Ewa Frank in her youth (1775), National Museum in Wasaw. Licence: Public Domain. Source: http://cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/en/catalog/459172.

Frankist Hypotyposis: Anti-Aniconism Presented in Living Images

Given the iconic nature of his theology, it might be suitable to examine Frankist cult and [64]
practices for their iconic aspect. Frank not only emphasized pictures as a vital means for
religious practice and insight, but he also ensured that his images were visibly vivid i.e., that
they were living. This means that they are present, engaging with their environment, moving,
and, not at least, fertile.

About the same time as the rise of the Frankist movement occurred, in the middle of the [65]
eighteenth century, a new art form emerged that gained considerable popularity in European
culture up to the beginning of the twentieth century: the *tableau vivant*. Generally speaking,
the *tableau vivant* combines theatrical and visual arts, as it is a static, stationary, and silent
scenical arrangement, often involving props and a stage set, that contains one or more cos-
tumed and carefully posed actors in a particular immobile constellation.[43] A *tableau vivant*
is a visually experienced art form as well as a form of entertainment and a genre of its own
(Jooss 1999, 13–14). It is, however, in many cases basically intertextual, displaying and re-
ferring to traditional imagery. Habitually, it presents scenes known to the audience as a part
of collective memory. In the following, I would not argue that, at the early phase of the
movement, Frankists consciously employed this kind of practice in their public appearances;
the theory of the *tableaux vivants,* however, might well be employed to analyze and explain
Frankist anti-aniconist practices and Frank's hyper-iconism. It might safely be assumed that
Frank deliberately introduced elements used to describe living images/*tableaux vivants* to ful-
fill his messianic role by openly opposing Rabbinic anti-iconism and, ultimately, the Law as
defended by his rabbinic opponents. Living images, both in form and content, may thus be
considered an important part of Frankist practice, theology, and propaganda.

The history and the particular effects of the *tableaux vivants* in European culture have re- [66]
cently been intensely analyzed by Birgit Jooss (1999) and Bettina Brandl-Risi (2013). As the
latter puts it, the practice of *tableaux vivants* guarantees increased visibility as it produces
sense by means of overexposure (*Überbelichtung*). The *tableaux vivants* work as sudden eluci-
dations of a particular situation that, as such, becomes significant and readable (Brandl-Risi
2013, 14).[44] Living images operate according to the rhetorical principle of *hypotyposis* by
"putting something before the eye" (2013, 61) as a configurational scene (ibid., 75 and 192).
Of course, the living body used to form the scene provides a considerable disruptive element;
the concrete embodiment of a particular content displayed as the living image has a reinforced
astonishing effect. Still in the early twentieth century, before the dawn of the cinema (on the
relation of *tableaux vivants* to the early cinema, see Wiegand 2016), living images were an
essential part of the public and private life of great parts of European high and middle classes
(Brandl-Risi 2013, 120).

In the scholarly discussion on iconism/aniconism or the question of iconoclasm, forms of [67]
living images are somewhat underrepresented. The notion of living images, however, is not
alien to the struggle about icons in religious contexts. Even in the most famous areas of

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43   See Birgit Jooss' definition: "Hinter dem Begriff 'lebendes Bild' verbirgt sich eine Kunstform, die sich in
     ihren zahlreichen Varianten aufgrund formaler und inhaltlicher Kriterien unterscheidet und die grundsät-
     zlich zwischen bildender und darstellender Kunst anzusiedeln ist. Allgemein gefaßt handelt es sich um
     eine Bilddarstellung, die lebende Personen ausführen: ein dreidimensionales Bild, das von einer Personen-
     gruppe für eine kurze Zeit bewegungs- und wortlos gestellt und von anderen durch Betrachtung rezipiert
     wird" (1999, 19).

44   The practice of *tableaux vivants* even led to the emergence of a particular figure of speech used in German:
     Tableau! meaning: "Imagine the situation!" (Brandl-Risi 2013, 16).

iconophily and iconoclasm, the concept appears as an element of the discussion. In the era of Byzantine iconoclasm, monks and holy men were praised as "living images," interestingly reflecting the positions of the icono*clast* party (Brubaker and Haldon 2015, 244). As the theoretical positions of 'iconoclasm' and 'iconophily' themselves emerged only in the discussion, the iconomachy that itself only followed a preceding practice of image veneration by ordinary or laypeople (Brubaker 2012, 115),[45] the Frankist practice of the living image must also be considered as an element of the religious struggle and to be examined with close reference to it. The fact that—as in the case of the paradigmatic Byzantine iconoclasm—"theory (theology) followed practice" (Brubaker 2012, 110) may well be related to the Frankist preference for visible practice over theoretical discussion. In the Italian Renaissance, then, living images played a significant role as *sacre rappresentazioni*: here, the actors involved in these images did not merely perform but rather *embodied* a role. The salient criterium of these religious living images is the (bodily) presence of the holy. Accordingly, the success of the *tableaux vivants* in the late eighteenth century (see Jooss 1999, 54–55) is due to the changing function of the image that did only met allegorical or rhetorical expectations but rather promised a sensate experience of *presence* (Brandl-Risi 2013, 48–50). They are, however, presentations not unrelated to the cultural memory, as they manifest reinterpretations of iconography, thus inherently quoting a particular background of previous representations.[46] The presence of the living human body in a *tableau vivant* hypotypizes the presence of the divine, effecting an outstanding succinctness of the image in question.[47] *Tableaux vivants*, thus, are prevailing and concrete fulfillments of particular model forms that are, as such, brought to life.

Of course, the concept of the *tableau vivant* was not alien to the Frankists, at least not since the Frankist court at Offenburg had been established. Emilia Emeliantseva Koller even identifies the main promotor of *tableaux vivants* in Offenbach as the Polish aristocrat and military, arguably the "most notorious of eighteenth-century Polish History" (Maciejko 2011, 214) Jerzy Marcin Lubomirski (1738–1811), who became the commander of Frank's guard and entertained Frank's followers by staging fashionable live tableaus depicting biblical scenes and scenes from Greek mythology with them (2019, 249). By introducing living images, Lubomirski connected the Frankist court to the latest developments in Western European noble societies.[48] Living images as a societal entertainment among French nobles were first evidenced in 1765 (Brandl-Risi 2013, 101; Jooss 1999, 91). Not only through this practice,

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45 See on the history of the notion of iconoclasm Brubaker (2012, 3–4), following Bremmer (2008).

46 "*Tableaux vivants* als eine Form der körperlichen Aneignung von Vergangenheit stellen sich dar als leibliche Re-Interpretation eines aus der Ikonographie der Kunst rekrutierten Bild-Gedächtnisses, sind demnach stets mit dem Index des Zitierens und Reproduzierens, ja selbst des Klischees versehen" (Brandl-Risi 2013, 110). On the relation of cultural memory and *tableaux vivants* (with reference to Jan Assmann's definition of cultural memory), see Wiegand (2016, 92). The strong tendency towards cliché may well be observed in Bettina von Arnim's description of the Frankist court.

47 The Frankist practice of kissing the living image, as reported in the Lanckoronie incident, fits the Orthodox practice of icon veneration as described by Leslie Brubaker: "The icon as an embodiment of real presence is a window leading to the saint depicted: the appropriate Orthodox response to this understanding of the icon was (and is) veneration, kissing or even […] installing it as a godfather" (2012, 112). On the corresponding Frankist relationship to the *portret*, see Michaelson (2022, 131).

48 On the effects of the *tableaux vivants* on the prevailing audiences, see Jooss (1999, 149): "Es ist die spielerische Suche nach der Verlebendigung und Versinnlichung vorangegangener Epochen, der Wunsch nach Augenzeugenschaft unter Aufhebung des historischen Abstandes, und damit gleichzeitig Ausdruck eines neuen geschichtlichen Bewußtseins. Lebende Bilder als körperliche Aneignungen von Kunstwerken, die zum einen Historie vermittelten, zum anderen teilweise selbst schon Geschichte sind, passen in diesen spielerischen Umgang mit der Geschichte hervorragend hinein. Da sie nicht nur die Möglichkeit boten, eine neue Rolle anzunehmen, sondern auch ein geschätztes Kunstwerk aus der leblosen Ewigkeit in die Wirklichkeit des Lebens zu übertragen, galten sie geistreicher als manch' anderes Vergnügen."

Lubomirski "opened a window for the European high culture and latest fashion" for the Frankists (Maciejko 2011, 215). The (surviving) portraits of Eva Frank follow a similar pattern, as they depict her in a costume of the latest fashion of progressive Europe (Lenowitz 2002, 127). In this sense, Frankists have always been modern[49] in their visual practices (unconsciously) connecting to the latest Western European developments.

Though *tableaux vivants* may have also been used for entertainment purposes, they were highly instrumental in the practical theology of the movement. The Frankist leaders were well aware of this. Frankist living images are intended to provoke and produce evidence by means of presenting what is considered divine. The employment of hypotyposis, the scenery of the Lanckoronie incident, as well as other shocking practices, the lavish display of luxurious garments, the reenactment of disputations, and the stories of the brutish *prostak, as* living images, are manifestations of Frankist practical theology consisting of the succinct presentation of the divine/messianic or rather, divine/messianic action. It is precisely this figure of outdoing (*Figur der Überbietung*)[50] involved in living images that is at play here: the living image outdoes the mere image by adding the element of life into it, thus turning mere representation to a presentation of the content depicted (compare Brandl-Risi 2013, 175) which is at the same time subject of overexposure. As such, the hyper-iconic presence of the divine re-presents (and rejects) the anti-iconic stance of Frankist religious opponents, that is, above all, Rabbinic Judaism. The Frankist practice of hypotyposis via *tableaux vivants*, thus, not only puts something succinctly before the eye but rather puts something distinctly before the eye precisely *as an image.*[51] Countering aniconism and anti-iconism,[52] Frankist images refer hyper-iconically to themselves *as* present/living images.

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Moreover, the self-referential living images of the Frankists display a certain fertility. These *tableaux vivants* not only present but also *generate* images. There is little doubt that Frank's ostensively luxurious lifestyle at Brno and Offenbach (see Kraushar 2001, 303), not least the grandeur of his public appearances (in an ostensively oriental fashion, see Emeliantseva Koller 2019, 248), his private army and his supposed harem, serve as a vital element in his effort to establish a particular imaginary of his person and his movement for the general public that is likely to connect one's own imagination to the visible display of the Frankist and, accordingly, continue to paint a certain picture guided by Frank's publicly displayed sketch. Bettina von Arnim's vivid description in her fictitious journal addressed to Goethe might be a telling example: the often-quoted scenery is a living image/*tableau vivant.*[53] Von Arnim's *tableau vivant*, accordingly, is a secondary, or rather meta-*tableau*, as it depicts a living image

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49 Perhaps iconophile Frankism thus annoyingly opposes post-modern attitudes that are also to be found in scholarly approaches as characterized by Jan Bremmer in his study on the notion of iconoclasm: "Iconoclastic events evidently appeal much more to the contemporary imagination with its postmodernist fascination for fragmentation" (2008, 17).

50 This figure of outdoing is an overall element of Frankist thought and practice. Jay Michaelson lists some other examples, such as Frank's hyper-literalism in *The Words of the Lord* as well as his hyperbolic masculinity that "may be seen as 'queering' rabbinic Jewish conceptions of Jewish masculinity. […] Frank's aggressively masculine, priapically endowed, and violently sexual male figure is a radical disruption of conventional mystical homoerotic rhetoric; it is a queering of the queer" (2022, 142–43 and 144).

51 On the phenomenon of *Metabildlichkeit* ("meta-pictoriality") in the context of *tableaux vivants*, see Wiegand (2016, 27).

52 On the differentiation of aniconism and anti-iconism, see Gaifman (2017, 345). As it seems, Frankism might well be described as directed not so much against anti-iconism but rather even more against aniconism as an *indirect representation* of the divine. Here, Frankism stresses the *direct presentation* of the divine in living images.

53 As musical accompaniment was the usual practice in staging living images, the presence of music in Bettina von Arnim's description should be no surprise (*am Abend durch die Straße auf der Gitarre und Flöte präludierend* […] *indessen aus den offenen Fenstern des Palastes Musik erschallt*) (Brandl-Risi 2013, 115).

provided by the Frankists. Interestingly, the addressee of this *tableau vivant* is not arbitrary in the context of living images: Goethe, above all by the corresponding descriptions in his novel *Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), was a main promotor of the *tableaux vivants* as an often-practiced art form in the nineteenth century (Brandl-Risi 2013, 13; compare Jooss 1999, 73).[54] Voluntary orientalism might also be involved, as Frank publicly celebrated the strangeness of his attire, dispersing the "seed of this poetic image" (Kraushar 2001, 365) to those willing to elaborate on it. Concerning this, Klaus Davidowicz's (Goethean) characterization of the Frankist court at Offenbach as a "great masquerade" (2004, 148; see Maciejko 2011, 232) hints at the fact that it not only provided the leading Frankists with a life of luxury, but also provided an image observers might admire or interpret (more or less) poetically. As Maciejko, in a drier manner, remarks: "Of course, the ostentatious wealth of Frank's court, as well as its exotic rituals, bred gossip and speculation" (2011, 236)—and was intended to do so, giving rise to legends and imaginations, thus proving "the Frankist ability to accommodate to surrounding customs and to fulfill the expectations of the public" (2011, 238).

Jacob Frank's attitude and actions might be deliberately simplistic, but precisely as such, they provide a complicated structure to be analyzed in the context of the iconism/aniconism relation. Frank acted iconoclastically, i.e., as someone who attacks accepted and cherished opinions and institutions (see Bremmer 2008, 12–13), with hyper-iconic means. Via various *tableaux vivants*, he managed to present the image of himself as a living image. Accordingly, he turned his publicly displayed imaginary into a powerful weapon in his struggle for the recognition of his movement—and its revolutionary aims.[55] It may well be presumed that voyeurism plays a considerable part in the success of the Frankist living images. Here, the public display of processions, linking to earlier Christian patterns of religious practice involving mobile living images (as used in Italian religious processions, see Jooss 1999, 28),[56] are comparatively harmless. But at last, with the spicy details of his (religious) orgiastic practice, Frank promoted the production of shocking (and/or attractive) images within the mind of the prevailing reader.[57] Frankism, thus, is cinema of the head (*Kopfkino*) as a subversive strategy—making the observer an (un)willing collaborator of its anti-aniconist agenda. Dolf Sternberger, stressing their "most vivid appeal to the observer," has described the particular effects of the *tableau vivants* correspondingly. "Stopped in mid-motion, these figures and scenes virtually beg the viewer to complete them for him or herself. Here, then, there is no longer any disinterested pleasure. […] Just as the frozen scene is in need of completion, so too is this interested viewer eager to complete, and he pushes himself to confirm his feeling,

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Thus, image and music combine to a *Gesamtkunstwerk* displaying the mutual effects (*Wechselwirkung*) of sensate perception (see Jooss 1999, 138).

54 To Brandl-Risi the *Wahlverwandtschaften* are "Kronzeuge und Inkunabel der *tableaux vivants*-Manie des beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts" (2013, 227).

55 See Caroline von Eck's persistent analysis of the potentially world-changing effects of *tableaux vivants* in Warburgian terms: "Les acteurs du tableau vivants s'approprient l'oeuvre d'art originale et expérimentent la situation, les actiones ou les èmotiones associées à ce tableau. Ils font leurs les puvoires ou l'agentivité de l'oeuvre d'art, changeant par la même de statut: de spectateurs passifs, ils deviennent participants d'un acte visual. La distance esthétique pour Warburg ne prive donc pas l'image de ses pouvoirs, mais contribue à leur incooperation. Le résultat est une image destinée à changer le monde et non seulement à le répresenter" (2014, 175).

56 "Fronleichnamszüge nutzten bis in das 19. Jahrhundert hinein die Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten der Szenen durch lebende Bilder—sowohl südlich als auch nördlich der Alpen. Sie dienten der katholischen Kirche als bewußt eingesetztes, religiös-propagandistisches Instrument und waren in ihrer Erscheinungsform durch die Jahrhunderte stets präsent" (Jooss 1999, 32).

57 On the specific potential of attraction displayed by *tableaux vivants,* not at last as a particular technique for the generation of images, see Wiegand (2016, 136–37).

Figure 3   Jakob Joseph Baron von Frank-Dobrucki during his last years (ca. 1790), taken from Aleksander Kraushar: *Frank i Frankisci polscy 1726–1816* 1895, 401. Licence: Public Domain. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jakob_Baron_von_Frank-Dobrucki/_um/_1790/_(C)/_1894/_A./_Kraushar,/_Frank/_i/_franki%C5%9Bci/_polscy,/_Vol./_2.jpg.

in order to fill in the gaps and close the cracks in the fragments of the picture with the lusts or tears that are challenged" (1974, 61).[58]

Accordingly, in his hypotypotic public actions, Frank performs as "a painter [who] draws a sketch so that, later, he [or others] can embellish it with colors" (Kraushar 2001, 209). As it seems, the effects of this practice are not confined to the contemporaries of Jacob and Eva Frank; rather, they still prevail. Via their living pictures, Frankism is still around, entertaining and forcing believers and scholars alike into a visual and imaginary interaction: "From Goethe's time onwards—and even earlier […] and beyond—the tableau vivant never ceases to challenge us" (Ramos 2014, 32).[59] As Harris Lenowitz, concerning the Frankist movement and its two leading figures, has put it:

[72]

> For Frank and Eva their portraits mean that they are sitting still, looking at the painter, and also looking through the painter at the viewer as they imagine the viewer viewing them (knowing that this visual interaction will endure after they have died). They are thinking of the viewer and how the viewer sees them, as well as of the artist and how he is representing himself as he represents them. This process draws the viewer into the conspiracy of the portraits by the force and

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58   "Mitten in der Bewegung angehalten, flehen diese Figuren und Szenen geradezu, daß der Betrachter sie für sich ergänze. Hier ist denn auch kein Wohlgefallen mehr interesselos. […] Ebenso wie die erstarrte Szene das lebende Bild der Ergänzung bedürftig ist, ebensosehr ist dieser interessierte Betrachter begierig, zu ergänzen, und er drängt sich, sein Gefühl zu bestätigen, um mit den herausgeforderten Lüsten oder Tränen die Lücken auszufüllen und die Risse zu schließen, die das Stückwerk des Bildes vorweist." On the empowerment of the recipient as an aspect of the development of the tableaux vivants in the eighteenth century, thus mirroring the process of the Enlightenment movement, see Jooss (1999, 43).

59   "De l'époque de Goethe—voire même plus anciennement […] et même au-delà—le tableau vivant ne cesse de nous interroger."

evident truth of the argument that "There are two real somebodies here, within a few feet of me.[60] (Lenowitz 2002, 128)

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60   On the portrait as a concrete manifestation in concrete reality, see Rapoport-Albert (2015, 200).

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