CURSED COMPANIONS:

THE LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF JEWS IN THE MEDIEVAL

AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS IN ENGLAND.

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Abstract

Despite their expulsion from England in 1290, Jews continue to figure prominently in English literature. This dissertation explores how Jews are imagined in absentia in English literature between the late medieval and early modern periods. Implicitly engaging with periodization, I study several literary texts on either side of the Reformation divide. I examine England's absent Jews through two medieval objects: the writing desk (*scrinaria*) and the casket (*archa*) as a means of locating the Jews simultaneously within the literary imagination and historical events. While the New Testament's increasing demonization of Judas entrenched notions of treachery and extended them to all Jews, the Gospels's many contradictions also enabled writers to deploy Jews creatively to explore a host of Christian anxieties.

I propose a revisionist reading of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* by connecting the play's caskets and bonds to medieval history and the economic system of the *archae.* I then move backward in time to explore the original Christian representations of Jews in the Gospels, through the character of Judas, whose contradictory stories make him the first protean Jew. I analyze several of Judas's medieval incarnations: in the *Legenda aurea,* the Medieval Ballad of Judas and the Corpus Christi plays. I argue that while Judas was fiction created to harmonize the disparate biblical narratives, he becomes implicated in subsequent blood libels. Yet, at the same time, the figure is also used to explore more universal concepts such as subjectivity and free-will.

The last section of this dissertation examines how Jews figure in three utopian texts. I begin with Thomas More's *Utopia* and then move to its literary descendant, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis.* By focussing on how Jewish figures appear in these texts, I am able to look at change and continuity on either side of the Reformation divide. I argue that despite the widespread belief that the Jews had a role to play in the millennium, a fundamental ambivalence about actual Jews remains. I conclude with Milton's *Of Reformation,* arguing that this most political of poets exemplifies the radical and persistent ambivalence of Christian writers towards absent Jews.

In memory of my son, Aryeh, whose miraculous life fills mine with wonder.

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Introduction

"Oh, ye merveylous Jewys" (*Croxton Play of the Sacrament* l.719)

In its breathtaking variety of personages, topics and literary genres, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* might be said to evoke the complex texture of medieval England as a whole. Part of this world, depicted in the tale of the Prioress, concerns medieval anti-Semitism. Yet, due to a series of deft, self-subverting textual moves, Chaucer bequeathed to critics and apologists alike a tale constructed to generate enduring debate while eluding definitive resolution. The "Prioress's Tale" takes the legend of the blood libel, previously circulated in chronicles, ballads, sermons and village gossip and, like the Eucharist which helped to fuel its popularity, it is elevated and aestheticized through art. In its brief two hundred lines, the tale presents a version of a popular Marian miracle featuring a hit-list of anti-Semitic tropes: Jews live among Christians because they are sustained "by a lord of that contree/For foul usure" (1680-1) and they themselves are wholly foul: their hearts replaced by Satanic "waspes nest" (1749) while their bodies are rendered abject, by association with the latrine pit into which they cast their dead victim.

While both Jewish and Christian folklore ascribe great power to human blood in general, as R. Po-Chia Hsia explains in *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, in Christian popular belief, Jews specifically required the salvific power of Christian blood in order to perform their rituals and magic. It was believed that Christian blood was used to make Passover matzos, anoint rabbis, stop menstrual bleedings, prevent epileptic seizures and remove bodily odours (2). Hsia argues that the increased frequency of the accusations of ritual

murder in the fifteenth century taps into the growing fixation on Christ's humanity and suffering, as well as the need to *see* the miraculous*:* thus when unsolved murders were attributed to local Jews, the elevation of the pious martyr-victim and the public execution of the Jewish perpetrators effectively recreated the Passion: but one in which all could now participate as eyewitnesses. And this was often followed up by the establishment of a profitable shrine or, as in Hsia's example of the German town of Endigen, the burning of the guilty Jews in 1470 was commemorated with a *Judenspiel*: a play written to celebrate "the triumph of Christianity over Judaism" (37).[1] The narration of blood libel accusations were truly a "win-win": while the Jews were tortured and killed, the Christians were revered as martyrs.

The Jews in Chaucer's tale utter but one word: "nay" (1793), which is their collective response to the terrified mother's question of whether they had seen her child. Their lie seems to echo the denial of biblical Jews in their stubborn refusal to acknowledge Christ: a theological affront for which Christians believed Jews were condemned to wander and suffer. As Anthony Julius points out in his history of anti-Semitism in England, when the boy's grieving mother is compared to a "new Rachel" (1817), the Prioress is appropriating the Gospel (Matthew 2:18) which had *itself* appropriated the Jewish prophet Jeremiah (31:15). As Julius observes: "What began as Jewish lamentation ends in anti-Semitic calumny" (170). Though in Chaucer's tale the Jews do not make use of the blood, the slitting of the child's throat in response to a Pharisaic concern with their "lawe's reverence" (1754) gives the clergeon's murder a

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[1]The *Judenspiel* continued to be performed after the Reformation well into the nineteenth century (Hsia 37).

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ritualistic feel. While the tale is set in *Asye*, as Sylvia Tomasch observes, the anachronistic coda about Hugh of Lincoln, "slayn also/with cursed Jewes.../but a litel while ago" (1874-76), serves to reassert the story's "Englishness" (248). Thus, while England has been "purified" of its Jews, Asia "contains" them in "an eternal, orientalized presence" (73). Embedded within Chaucer's troubling representation of a long-absent Jewry, in which the spectre of the past is raised for present purposes, is the question that launched this project: why do absent Jews continue to figure so powerfully in English texts?

In its representation of the vexed relationship between Christianity and Judaism, this brief tale encapsulates many of my dissertation's strands: the increased fixation on Christ's Passion and the need to bolster faith through its reenactment; the myth of Blood libel, scatology and abjection, biblical appropriation, usury and medieval Jews as tax collectors for the Crown, and the evolving sense of what it means to be English. The continued literary presence of Jews from English texts after their expulsion in 1290 until their readmission in the seventeenth century sheds light on how writers worked through these issues. This dissertation explores how Jews are imagined *in absentia* in English literature between the late medieval and early modern periods. My project forms a part of a recent development in medieval studies in which scholars are seeking to rethink received historical divisions and practice "alternative historicities" which are both transhistorical and heterogeneous in scope (Lavezzo, "New Work" 1). In examining absent literary Jews through two medieval objects, *scrinaria* and *archae*,[2] this project

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[2] *Scrinaria* is a writing desk. *Archa* is a casket. The significance of these terms will be elucidated later in this introduction.

exposes both the recurring ambivalence of Christian writers towards Jews and the imaginative flexibility with which these representations were deployed. By studying several literary texts on either side of the Reformation divide, I challenge the period-based assumption that anti-Semitic attitudes were consistently virulent in the late middle ages. Rather than a trajectory towards greater tolerance, there is a constant oscillation that reflects a variety of Christian anxieties. While my textual analyses are heavily informed by the theological origins of anti-Semitism, the pre-expulsion history of the Jews in England is also central to understanding how intertwined religion and economics are in Jewish representation in Christian texts.

Fast forward almost two centuries to another notorious literary representation of Jews: Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta.* Like the Jews in Chaucer's tale, Marlowe's infamous Barabas embodies many common medieval anti-Semitic slanders. Julius sees his very name as a provocation: as the murderer chosen by the Jews over Jesus in Matthew (27:16-26), he comes to represent *all* Jews and their collective responsibility for Christ's death (176). But Barabas's gleefully boastful enumerations of his heinous crimes creates a comic over-the-top effect that undermines their credibility: "As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights/And kill rich people groaning under walls;/Sometimes I go about and poison wells" (2.3.177-179). A former usurer who is now a wealthy merchant, Barabas is unencumbered by either principles or loyalties. He is "pure ego" (Julius 177). He refers to his co-religionists as "base slaves" (1.2.216) and he ominously describes loving his only child, Abigall, "As Agamemnon did his Iphigen" (1.1.136).

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Appropriately, his motto is the classically inflected: "*Ego mihimet sum semper proximus*"[3] (1.1. 187). In his cunning self-absorption and utter contempt for the dictates of morality and religion, Barabas is less of a Jew and more of a dangerous Marlovian upstart in the manner of Tamburlaine or Faustus.

Like Chaucer's tale, the figure of the Jew in this play deploys entrenched fictions about Jews in ways that might invite the audience to interrogate them. We reject Barabas's nemesis, the Christian governor Ferneze, for his duplicity and hypocrisy as much as we distrust the Prioress, whose "konnyng is so wayk" (1671). But while in Chaucer's tale the Jewish identity of the villains is central to the narrative, in Marlowe's play, Barabas's comic villainy is employed to extend the exploration to issues beyond Jews.

Conversion is a key concept in this play abounding with "counterfeit profession[s]" (1.2.291). Abigall converts twice: once falsely in order to retrieve the jewels hidden in their home, appropriated by the Christians to be used as a nunnery, and the second time, sincerely, out of guilt for her father's crimes. Yet, as Brett Hirsch points out in his article on the "failed conversions" in *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice,* nothing changes for Abigall: both before and after her conversion to Christianity and even as she is dying, she is perceived as a "virginal object of carnal desire" (32). With her death, her body becomes an abject object, Friar Barnardine shifting abruptly from lascivious interest to mild disgust as the friars plan its removal: "First help me bury *this"* (3.6.45. Italics mine). While the idea of the Jews as "unassimilable" and incapable of sincere conversion

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[3]"I am always closest to myself." Adapted from Terence's *Andria* 4.1.12. "Notes to *The Jew of Malta*" in *Christopher Marlowe The Complete Plays.* Ed. Frank Romany.

existed in the medieval period fuelled by representations that often emphasized Jewish physiological difference, the early modern period "cements" this notion of Jewish immutability by the "blood logic" of incipient racial thinking that develops in the Iberian Peninsula (4). Hirsch argues that the idea of the "inconvertible Jew" was particularly appealing to an early modern English audience as it tapped into broader concerns about the instability of religious identity in the aftermath of the Reformation (35). Jews, for all their entrenched wickedness, represented one of the few constants during this time of religious upheaval.

A very different approach is adopted by Peter Berek in his article, "The Jew as Renaissance Man." Zeroing in on Barabas's "aggressive duplicity" (131), Berek argues that the example of the Marranos, the Iberian Jews who pretended to be Christians, was the most relevant to the theatre of the 1590s. Living as New Christians in Elizabethan England, the Marranos, who had changed nationalities and religions several times, had by necessity, developed fluid identities. Berek points out that the Marranos' various roles were all associated with social and economic change and innovation. But change engendered mixed feelings among the English: thus the use of a Jewish figure becomes a safe way of simultaneously exploring and condemning self-fashioning. What begins as a stereotypically anti-Semitic representation, becomes a "trope for anxiety about social change" (Berek 138). While these two critics draw different conclusions about how Barabas's identity resonates: as either stable and immutable or duplicitous and plural, for both, the Jew is ultimately unassimilable. What originally drew me to these analyses and helped to shape my thinking is that they reveal the flexibility with which an anti-Jewish

representation is made to serve a social purpose which may not have any bearing on Jews, either contemporary or historical.

But one cannot ignore history. It is not difficult to mount an argument that Marlowe's depiction of Christian wickedness and hypocrisy relativizes Barabas's own behaviour; when he observes about the Maltese Christians: "I can see no fruits in all their faith/ But malice, falsehood, and excessive pride " (1.1. 114-5), one imagines these to be Marlowe's own sentiments. Julius contends that *The Jew of Malta* is a farce "exceptional in the history of drama for its antinomian subversions of genre, verisimilitude, and received opinion" (178). As such, we might see the play as mocking the received ideas about anti-Semitism. However, Marlowe's Barabas, and even more so, Shakespeare's complex response to it, Shylock, are clear instances of theatre *shaping* rather than *mirroring* culture (Berek). However much scholars may read these fictions as *interrogations* of anti-Semitism or explorations of sites of cultural anxiety, we cannot lose sight of the way they helped to entrench a particularly pernicious view of Jews that was frequently enlisted with deadly consequences by anti-Semites of later centuries. Julius, in his reading of *The Merchant of Venice,* reaches back to Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale," not simply as furnishing the basis of the Jewish stereotype, but as providing the building blocks for the play's blood-libel narrative: a malevolent Jew wields the knife over the "sacrificial Christian victim"; there is a miraculous intervention by a woman, Portia being the secular version of Mary, and the Jews are punished at the end (179). Jewish malice is exposed and destroyed by Christian kindness.

While this dissertation is a work of literary analysis, it was important for me not to lose sight of the fact that these fictional representations had real effects upon living bodies. However absurd charges of host desecration and blood libel might strike the twenty-first century reader, Jews died for these accusations.[4] While my first chapter's reading of *The Merchant of Venice* is both radically revisionist and essentially exculpatory, as it is done through the lens medieval English history, in particular the York massacre, it enabled me to tell some of the stories of the dead.

Though I have chosen not to focus on Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale" beyond this introduction, the evolution of my thinking about the relationship between Jews, history and literary texts is indebted to an essay written about it by Lee Patterson. Patterson begins with the way the tale foregrounds mindless mimesis. Thus, the little clergeon reproduces the antiphon without understanding it, and the Prioress repeats an ahistorical Marian tale, a genre which often features banal miracles and appeals to "superstition and credulity" (517). Patterson argues that the tale enacts the Prioress's fantasy of escaping from both historical consciousness and "true penitential self-examination" (518). But are the Prioress's ignorance and spiritual unsophistication sufficient to exonerate Chaucer from charges of having written a virulently anti-Semitic tale? To use a favourite Chaucerian term, to what extent is Chaucer's own *entente* recoverable?

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[4] Unfortunately, the accusations proliferated in the modern period: there were more recorded instances of blood libel between 1870 and 1940 than during the entire previous seven hundred years (Band 113). After going underground in the Christian world after the Holocaust, the blood libel stories are currently a grisly staple of Arab propaganda. Though certainly exacerbated by the Israeli-Arab conflict, it begins much earlier with the Damascus Blood Libel of 1840. (See Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair:"Ritual Murder," Politics, and the Jews in 1840*. Cambridge, U.K 1997). Thus, in the Arab press and even its universities, Jews are accused of not only shedding the blood of Palestinians, but of using it to bake Purim pastries (Biale 160).

The absence of epistemological certitude is certainly a Chaucerian preoccupation: In The *House of Fame* the bookish dreamer is borne aloft by his eagle-guide to learn about love, but instead, his visit to the House of Fame leads him to question the truth of revered literary and historical sources. Who actually is the hero of the *Aeneid,* the poem asks, Aeneas or Dido? As Deanne Williams has written, the poem interrogates the various forms of knowledge we use to process an event, whether "literary, historical, or experiential" in a way that points to the instability of speech itself (162). A similar strategy is at work in *Troilus and Criseyde,* where Chaucer uses the lovers' epistles to highlight to what extent letters, far from clarifying, as Pandarus suggests, "A soth of al" (1308), both reveal and conceal the *entente* of those who write them, as well as those who misread them (Wise 3). If truth is neither singular nor ultimately recoverable, then is history an undifferentiated mass of unknowable stories analogous to the noisy hive-like "murmurynge" in Fame's hall? (1524). Perhaps Chaucer's answer is to be found in the Dreamer's statement that serves as the poem's one expression of epistemological certainty: "I wot myself best how y stonde" (1878). In a world where Truth and Falsehood are compounded, it falls on the individual to exercise thoughtful judgment.

In Patterson's judgment, there is no escape from history, however multivalent. He argues that the tale *itself* invokes the origins of the enmeshed histories of Jews and Christians (535). For Patterson, this Marian miracle has its source in the Crusades of 1096 and 1146. The First Crusade saw the emergence of crusading militias who deemed the elimination of the Jews a religious obligation (Chazan 169). Their violent attacks engendered an "activist martyrdom" among the Jews of the Rhineland who committed

the ultimate *kiddush ha-Shem*[5]: killing themselves and their children rather than being

slaughtered or forcibly converted by the crusading bands (Patterson 521). Revealing an

acculturation of Christian ideas, these Jews were described by Jewish chronicles as dying

not for their own sins, but for the good of coming generations (526). Historian Ivan

Marcus, cited by Patterson, describes the new focus on Jewish martyrdom as a

"polemical riposte" to Christianity's assertion that Jesus's death replaced the Temple—

thus the deaths were described by the Jewish chroniclers using the language of ritual

sacrifice. [6] However, what emerged in some Christian sources in response to the new

Jewish martyrdom was a different story: thus, the drama and paintings representing the

Massacre of the Innocents, show Jews killing Christian children (530).[7]

Patterson sees the first blood libel, the case of William of Norwich (1144) as

emerging in response to the First Crusade. His argument seems an historically-inflected

version of Alan Dundes' psychological explanation of the blood libel legend as a form of

"projective inversion": Christians accuse Jews of using their blood to deflect their own

guilt for drinking the blood and eating the body of Christ in the Eucharist (Dundes 352).

Patterson proposes that the history of the Crusades is twisted into the blood libel story to

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[5]Literally, the "glorification of G-d's name." This commandment has its origin in the
Bible (Leviticus 22:32). Though the term can denote simply behaving in an honourable
way, its most dramatic expression is in martyrdom. The meaning of *kiddush ha-Shem* as
martyrdom was developed during Hellenistic times as described in 4 Maccabees. This
was the prototype for both Judaism and Christianity. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica.*2nd
Edition, vol. 12, 140-45.
[6]From a Hebrew source attributed to Solomon bar Samson written about 1140: "They
stretched out their necks to the slaughter and they delivered their pure souls to their
Father in heaven. Righteous and pious women bared their throats to each other, offering
to be sacrificed for the unity of the Name" (in Marcus, Jacob Rader. *The Jew in the
Medieval World. A Source Book: 315-179.* p. 131)
[7]The Prioress alludes to the Massacre of the Innocents when she apostrophizes the Jews:
"O cursed folk of Herodes al newe" (1764).

transfer the guilt to the victims by reversing the roles of martyrs and murderers; he concludes that the Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale" invites us to make the connection by pursuing "the same literary and historical pathways" (543).

While there are other critics who employ different means to reach a similar conclusion, namely that Chaucer is holding anti-Semitism at arm's length,[8] Patterson's New Historicist strategy, to paraphrase Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, of mining allusions to recover and interpret the narratives that are *not* directly represented (80), became the dominant theoretical lens for my project. By deploying a long historical reach in his interrogation of a text that strikes most readers as profoundly anti-Semitic, Patterson is able to challenge the readers' assumptions and encourage us to pursue some critical literary and historical contexts.

Given that this project purports to reject periodization while inevitably seemingly engaging in it, some clarification seems in order. Certainly, it is not possible to write about English literature without acknowledging the seismic nature of historical shifts such the Reformation. In a 2007 special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* entitled "After Periodization," Margreta de Grazia cites Fredric Jameson's succinct and accurate observation: "We cannot not periodize" (464). But the problem that Grazia addresses is that the medieval/ early modern divide in particular has functioned less as a simple historical marker and more as a "value judgment" (453). Thus, while Renaissance Studies have thrived through their designation as "the inaugural

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[8]A particularly persuasive structural argument is Mary Hamel's in "The Relationship between the Prioress's Tale and the Tale of Sir Thopas." Hamel identifies the structural parallels between the tales to suggest that the burlesque romance that follows is a "blasphemous parody" of the Marian tale, casting the veneration of Mary in a ridiculous light (256).

period of the modern" (458), Medieval Studies, outside the purview of its own scholars,

has been marginalized in most English departments.

David Aers's "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists" (1992) is still the clearest

elucidation of how this judgmental form of periodization came to define Medieval

Studies. In a much-cited line, novelist L.P Hartley once wrote that "the past is a foreign

country: they do things differently there." This view has certainly governed the way

many people, including scholars, have viewed the Middle Ages. While within popular

culture the very word "medieval" has come to denote primitive brutality,[9] within

historical criticism, medieval alterity, as Aers explains, is based on the erroneous

perception that its society was stable and monolithic. The argument is as simple as it is

fallacious: as medieval society is free of commodity production, economic instability and

ideological conflict, it is consequently free of individual psychology (Aers 181). Lee

Patterson refers to this argument as the *grand recit* that organizes Western cultural history

by designating a "millennium of middleness" to separate the antiquity from the

Renaissance" ("On the Margin" 92). As Aers points out, this static view of an actually

complex historical era conveniently enabled two very different kinds of analyses: the

older, exegetical readings of medieval literature favoured by conservative academics and

the "radical criticism" of more modern critics[10] whose work on the emergence of

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[9]A memorable turn of phrase employing this denotation occurs in the film *Pulp Fiction* (1994) when gangster Marsellus prepares to take violent revenge on his enemy: "I'ma get *medieval* on your a--."

[10]Some of the key works in this category include: F. Barker's *The Tremulous Body: Essays on subjection.* Methuan, 1984; Catherine Belsey's *The Subject of Tragedy*. Methuan, 1985 and Jonathan Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy.* Harvester, 1984. These studies continue to be influential.

individual self-consciousness in the early modern period required a homogeneous medieval culture against which it could be contrasted.

For medievalists, the suggestion that "subjectivity begins with Hamlet" is tantamount to throwing down a particularly worn and ungainly gauntlet. Certainly anyone with a passing familiarity with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* or *The Book of Margery Kempe* is well aware of the exquisitely nuanced self-consciousness depicted in these and many other medieval texts. And certainly, subjectivity begins before the fourteenth-century as well. As philosopher Charles Taylor proposes in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity,* a substantive history of identity, inwardness is introduced by Augustine in the fourth-century. Taylor believes that contemporary philosophers, due to a secular orientation, have tended to eschew the connections between selfhood and morality, or the pursuit of "the good," with which he sees identity as "inextricably intertwined" (x).

While Francis Barker imagined the smooth incorporation of the pre-bourgeois subject into a unified body politic (ctd in Aers 186), the work of medievalists such as Miri Rubin, Robert Stacey and Mervyn James tells quite another story about medieval society. This other story concerns the centrality of the eucharist from the twelfth century on. Once the eucharist was decreed to be the *actual* body of Christ, it needed to be more carefully guarded; not only from mice and mishaps, but in particular from the malevolent heretics and Jews who doubted its divinity or sought to desecrate it. Certainly, the creation of threatening "others" helped to establish a community identity and bolster belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation by safely projecting the doubt of Christians

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onto those outside the eucharistic fold (Rubin "The Eucharist" 44; 53). But the late medieval Corpus Christi feast[11] is also interesting in what it suggests about the needs of a supposedly unified society. While celebrating Christ's body, the Corpus Christi cult correspondingly envisioned society itself as a body. As Mervyn James argues in "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval Town," the "final intention" of the cult was to "contribute to social integration" in urban societies, which lacked the ties of lordship that existed in the countrysides (4). Using the body as a metaphor for society also enabled accounting for the thorny reality of social difference: just as the body has limbs that serve hierarchically under the head's direction, vast differences of class and privilege were elided by subsuming them into a fictional wholeness.

What this central cult of the medieval period contributes to the periodization debate is to put to rest the notion of a homogeneous Middle Ages. What we have instead is a changing society whose primary institution, the Church, empowers a symbol, the eucharist and its celebration, to melt societal differentiation into an imagined wholeness. As James observes, such attitudes were "in historical fact projected [only] by societies which were deeply divided" (8).

Given the erroneous premises of periodization, my project is aligned with the recent English scholarship that has broken away from its ill-fitting straightjacket. By seeking the mutually illuminating resonances between medieval and early modern texts, I am pursuing a recently established path of blurred historical boundaries: an approach that can be best described as trans-historical. My focus on Jewish representation, supposedly a

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[11]The feast was authorized by a papal bull of 1264. Though it is mentioned in English records only by 1325, it may have been widely observed before that date (James, f.n 8).

marginal question given Jewish absence, is also cited as one of the recent innovative

directions within the field (Lavezzo "New Work" 2).

In her introduction to the 2013 special edition of the *Philological Quarterly* "Jews

in Britain—Medieval to Modern," Kathy Lavezzo provides an overview of the changes

and continuities regarding the image of the Jew in England. While Jewish representation

from the Anglo-Saxon period to the twentieth century is only consistent in its

"instability," "multiciplicity" and "unresolvable uncertainty" (2), it is interesting to

observe how the trajectory of scholarship on Jewish representation expands by a reversed

chronology. Lavezzo identifies Bryan Cheyette as the "foremost theorist of the 'protean

instability' of the Jew in English literature" (2). In his studies of modernist writing,

Cheyette sheds light on both the ambivalence and the paradox of how Jews are

constructed: Jews are seen as both culturally "transformable" and racially "unchanging"

(Lavezzo 2). For someone studying early modern texts, the edge of this conclusion's

novelty seems blunted by its resemblance to the very similar dichotomy we saw in

relation to Marlowe's Barabas. Moving back in time, the next big moment identified by

Lavezzo is an early modern one: James Shapiro's groundbreaking *Shakespeare and the*

Jews (1997), whose historical focus on key events as the Spanish Inquisition and the

Reformation demonstrates how the idea of the Jew continues to be difficult to define,

though it was enlisted to consolidate Englishness. Like Cheyette, Shapiro sees the Jew as

an unstable figure, unlike the more "knowable Jew of the medieval period" (2). Enter the

medievalists such as Anthony Bale and Denise Depres and it seems that the Jew is *not* so

knowable after all; as their work and my project attests, the figure in this period is also

observed to be fluid and "protean." [12] Most recently, and not referred to by Lavezzo, there is Samantha Zacher's *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture.* Though this work is beyond the chosen historical range of my project, it is fascinating to see that even *prior* to the arrival of Jews in England in 1066, the early English authors are nevertheless writing "copiously, and at times obsessively about them" (Zacher 6). Zacher's conclusions about "Anglo-Saxon Jews" are also very similar to my own findings about Jews across the Reformation divide: that Jews were written about in original ways that both "constructed and reflected" the politico-theological experience of the writers themselves (6) and that anti-Jewish fictions are reflective of the "doubts and uncertainties about Christian doctrine and belief" (9). These startling continuities are a testament to how much more we can understand about how Jewish difference is negotiated when we observe it trans-historically.

This trans-historical approach is also cited as a new direction in Shakespeare studies. In the 2016 *Shakespeare in Our Time*, Frances E. Dolan uses a series of memorable metaphors to illuminate the expansion of the way current scholars employ context. Thus contemporary critics will speak of the texts as "actors in networks...constellations, assemblages, and affinities," these terms suggesting a "span across space and time, a patchwork rather than a line" (196). "Contexting," used as a verb, is to cast wide the net, so that Shakespeare's texts might also be read against physical objects or more prosaic texts. Dolan points out how the "network" approach both expands and complicates our understanding of both a play's effects and the issues

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[12]This is the title of Denise Despres's article: "The Protean Jew in the Vernon Manuscript" in *Chaucer and the Jews*, ed. Sheila Delany (2002).

with which it engages (197). With an implicit nod to reader-response theory, Dolan proposes that we might think of context as an "interactive concept, what readers are doing or making," so that context need not "delimit meaning" by circumscribing it to what is "historically accurate." Thus the "paths of connection" can be "traced across text and across time" (199). This approach of an expanded use of history is quite reminiscent of Patterson's reading of the "Prioress's Tale" in 2001, and what this study attempts to do in its analysis of literary Jewish representation across time. Thus my first chapter's reading of *The Merchant of Venice* extends the historical context back to the twelfth century by focussing on what I argue is the play's most important objects: the caskets.

My project also engages with Jewish history, where the debates concerning periodization have developed somewhat differently. The tendency in Jewish historiography[13] has been to view the Middle Ages as a monolithic period of unrelenting suffering for Jews in Christian Europe; yet recent work on the history of Jewish-Christian relations has resulted in a more nuanced view. In his recent book, *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe*, Robert Chazan challenges the long-held assumptions of a miserable medieval life by pointing out the many constructive legacies that this period bequeathed to Jews of successive centuries. Beginning with demographic evidence, Chazan points out that while eighty percent of world Jewry in the year 1000 lived in countries under Islamic rule, by 1500 the "center of gravity in Jewish life" shifted to Christian Europe (4). Some of this was simply the result of Christian military conquest:

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[13]Some of the key modern Jewish historians include: Heinrich Graetz, *The History of the Jews*. 5 vols (1891-5); Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews.* 18 vols, (1952-83); Ben Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, (1976) and Yitchak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain.* 2 vols, (1961-66).

yet the Jews of the Iberian and Italian peninsulas, often at the express invitation of their new overlords, made the choice to stay under Christian rule (5). For evidence of social integration, Chazan cites the Jews's use of the dominant language and their adoption of the clothing styles of the Christians; their living contiguously with their Christian neighbours; and the economic restrictions that resulted in regular Jewish-Christian exchange: Jews provided economic services and were themselves reliant on the services of the non-Jews (184).

All of this day-to-day socializing can be inferred by the rules set out by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which sought to re-establish the differences between Jews and Gentiles that this close contact had begun to erode. As Chazan observes, the Church's effort to distinguish the Jews from the Christians arose from fears that the two communities were becoming indistinguishable: so much so that this was leading to instances of sexual intimacy between them (185). Chazan, of course, acknowledges the deadly anti-Jewish violence and expulsions that erupted over the course of this period; but he sees these as limited interruptions in a Jewish life that was more often than not secure and occasioned the flourishing of Jewish economic, intellectual and spiritual development. He also reminds us that despite the Church's theological anti-Judaism, whereby it taught that the Jews were the killers of Christ, nevertheless, its leaders often sought to prevent the killing of contemporary Jews (190). Chazan challenges a periodized view of Jewish history by proposing a more nuanced understanding of the medieval Jewish experience. This is the case, in part, because the European Middle Ages were quite diverse, comprised of different periods and geographic areas and thus its various

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histories reveal the "normal human combinations of constructive and destructive elements" (63). My dissertation's exploration of the more "human" dimension of Judas representations in the medieval period reflects this more balanced view of Jewish life. It was not only an unmitigated tale of woe, but also a tale of cultural and economic exchange. Therefore the sympathetic treatments of Judas might also, in part, reflect the normalized relations between ordinary Jews and Christians during this period.

However, we cannot gloss over the enduring and destructive legacy of medieval anti-Semitism. In his influential *Formation of a Persecuting Society*, R.I Moore identifies Jews, lepers and heretics as three disparate groups who suffered from persecution beginning in the twelfth century. Once again, the Fourth Lateran Council is signalled as a turning point for entrenching notions of heresy and Jewish difference. For Moore, the twelfth century is the root for the calamities borne of intolerance and hatred of difference that continue to plague us. The twelfth century is also identified by Gavin Langmuir as the beginning of medieval European anti-Semitism. Though a suspicion or hatred of Jews based on theological differences certainly existed before this time, Langmuir defines the new anti-Semitism of the twelfth century as "chimerical beliefs or fantasies about 'Jews'...that attribute to [them] menacing characteristics or conduct that no Jews have been observed to possess or engage in" (*History, Religion and Antisemitism*, 297). It is *this* type of irrational belief: that Jews pose a danger to the communities or nations in which they live, that the Reformation or the Enlightenment did not entirely succeed in shaking off.

In his epilogue, Robert Chazan accounts for the persistence of anti-Semitism after the Reformation by drawing attention to an important continuity. French historian Dominique Iogna-Prat, cited by Chazan, sums up the shift towards a religiously unified society in the twelfth century in the following statement: "Christianity had remodeled itself into Christendom" (*Order and Exclusion*, 1. Ctd in Chazan 228). This evokes the movement from a dominant religion to a vision of a completely cohesive society based on a shared identity and the exclusion of dissenting elements. After the Reformation, while the Church continued to provide a unifying vision, in some European nations such as England, the medieval ideal of a cohesive society became grounded in a national identity instead: Englishness. Thus while the goal of societal uniformity persisted, the focus shifted from a religious to a national uniformity. And once again the Jews were "projected as the obviously dissimilar element" (231).

Scholars who study the Jewish presence in English texts after their expulsion and prior to readmission attempt to account for their persistent presence in the literature, sermons and iconography of the period. To that end, they reach for a variety of epithets that reflect this paradox. Stephen Kruger[14] writes of "spectral" Jews whose ghostly presence haunts the Christian imagination, simultaneously "corporeally threatening and decorporealized" (xxvii). Though they are absent from England, Jews are often represented as posing a continued threat. Their Jewish otherness elaborated by the Jewish body that is seen as "deficient and excessive, fragmented and porous, dirty, bloody and excremental" (13). Kruger signals how the standard Christian rationale for continued Jewish survival, that Jews exist in order to testify to both their own perverse sinfulness

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[14]In *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe.* 2006.

and to the truth of Christian prophetic tradition, requires a kind of magical thinking: Christianity attempts to "settle [Judaism] as past, conjure it away [and] provide it ...with its death certificate" (10). And yet, the very *need* to conjure the specters away suggests they are not dead and that Christianity continues to be "haunted" by both the disturbing fact of living Jews and the conflicting hermeneutical traditions they persist in upholding.

Kruger points to Jeremy Cohen's use of both "hermeneutical" (1999) and "eschatological" (2004) which are useful in signalling the way in which Jews are constructed in response to the evolving needs of Christian theology. Legal discourse is the source of Jonathan Bush's term "notional" that he uses to describe the curious reappearance of Jews in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century legal discussions prior to their readmission to England (1225). Like their "hermeneutical" counterparts, "notional" Jews serve to define and delimit membership in a community through their essentially different status and consequently help to construct the emerging community itself, whether it is medieval Christianity or Protestant Englishness. In a similar vein, more recently Samantha Zacher uses "immaterial" as a way of describing the presence of Jews in Anglo-Saxon literature prior to their arrival in England.

The various epithets share two common denominators: firstly, they suggest how Jews exist as a virtual presence, and how within each term inheres the possibility of multiple imaginings. In "Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew," Sylvia Tomasch points out what is actually insidious about "virtuality." Concurring with the other scholars, Tomasch maintains that Jews, in all their varied and sometimes contradictory guises, remain crucial for the "sake of self-definition" (245). Yet she also reveals the way

in which the virtual "surrounds" the actual in such a persuasive and seemingly authentic fashion that it comes to be "mistaken for it" (253). Thus the "actuality" of real Jews becomes "supplanted" by a virtuality which can never lead us back to the actual, for the virtual's "referent is always irretrievable" (253). Tomasch makes the important point that virtuality begins *prior* to the Jewish expulsion, with the determination that medieval Jews are no longer the "true Israel," thus enabling the Christian claim that Christians are now the sole bearers of "Hebrew truth" (254).

Despite their suggestion of a material vulnerability, Kathleen Biddick's "paper" Jews evolve from her analysis of two etchings and one engraving. The etchings are by Albrecht Altdorfer and feature the synagogue of Regensburg, Germany prior to its destruction and the expulsion of the Jews in 1519. The engraving, by an anonymous artist from the late fifteenth century, portrays the ritual murder of Simon of Trent.[15] As the etchings depict the stripped interior space of the synagogue, Biddick terms this translation of a former community into empty architectural space as the "aesthetics of disappearance" (594).[16] The advantage of translating "corporeal inscription" to graphic forms is that they can now circulate beyond bodies. Biddick demonstrates how the corporeal is enlisted in the service of the graphic through the proliferation of engravings and woodcuts depicting the ritual murder of Simon of Trent. After the disappearance of the two-year-old Simon in 1475, eighteen Jews of Trent were tortured and burned at the stake, accused of the child's circumcision and ritual murder. Yet in the engravings, it is the Jews who are endlessly represented as the torturers and murderers of the Christian

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[15] Trento, Italy.

[16] This seems, on a small scale, to anticipate Hitler's unrealized plan to preserve the entire Jewish Quarter of Prague as a museum to the "vanished race."

body. Biddick calls this "conscription through inscription" (599). And once Jews are gone, either expelled or killed, they can become the objects of "study" which Biddick signals as the crucial shift from "ethnicity to ethnography." Rather than dealing with actual Jews, the ethnographic approach enables the reproduction of a particular Jewish story. While the story is disseminated far and wide, it is also highly reductive, for as Biddick points out, "ethnography reduces others to an ontological absence." "Paper" is a powerful metaphor that demonstrates the importance of print culture in the history of anti-Semitism. It encompasses the movement from actual to virtual by demonstrating how for an artist such as Altdorfer, it is no longer about the real contentions between Christians and actual Jews, but rather how the stone used to etch Jewish absence becomes a "crypt" (599). As material itself, paper resolves the dichotomy that exists in some of the other imaginings by seemingly bridging the spectral and material divide. Yet "paper" inevitably involves a kind of stasis once the words or images are set there. As Biddick points out, printing not only represents, but comes to "constitute" and even "resolve" Jewish-Christian conflicts. As such, paper itself does not possess the endless generative flexibility of what lies beneath it: the writing desk on which the stories are composed.

In an attempt to locate Jews within both the literary imagination and historical events, my dissertation will employ two terms, both of which refer to simple physical objects: the writing desk (*scrinaria*) and the casket (*archa*). The first object functions as an epithet, like the ones I have already reviewed, suggestive of the myriad ways in which the role of the Jew is written and rewritten during the medieval and early modern periods. While the *scrinaria* is an ahistorical object used as metaphor for how Jews are perceived,

the *archa* is an object rooted in history that becomes a metonym for Jewish-Christian relations. These two objects also serve to anchor my argument that Jews exist simultaneously on two imaginative plains: as the *archae* were real and reference a contract, they serve to remind us of the vexed history of Jews in England, and how theological accusations against Jews that might strike modern readers as slightly absurd, had very real consequences. The s*crinaria* allow for an even greater range of representations: they include not only how Jews are re-imagined on an as-needed basis, but the metaphor extends to how the figure is used to explore ideas that are beyond the realm of Jewish-Christian relations.

Jews as *scrinaria* is one of several metaphors that Augustine uses to explain the doctrine that distinguished him from his predecessors: that of the Jew as witness. Augustine employed the term to suggest how Jews are implements for "preserving, transmitting and expounding the prophecies of Christianity inscribed in the Old Testament" (Cohen, *Living Letters* 29). Augustine sees continued Jewish existence, though crucially as a scattered and oppressed people, as serving to testify to the truth of the biblical prophecies. In this capacity, Jews are relegated to the essential but subservient role of bibliographic "hewers of wood and bearers of water." Thus in addition to referring to Jews as *scrinaria*, in his *Sermo* (5.5, CCSL 41:56) Augustine employs such similes as *custodes* ("guardians") of (what are now) Christian books, *librarii* ("librarians") and the *capsarii* ("servants") specifically tasked with carrying the books of the master's children to school but never themselves entering the classroom (Cohen 36).

I have chosen to privilege the *scrinaria* for, as the site of production itself, the desk encompasses both actual and virtual Jews and allows for an ongoing re-imagination of their role vis-à-vis their Christian neighbours. But the *desk* is also the most material of Augustine's metaphors for Jews and thus as an insensible object, it gestures towards the base corporeality associated with Jews which prevents them from progressing beyond mere literalism. I am extending the way the term was originally used by Augustine. As the writing desk serves both as material base and site of production for the writing process, it can support more than the theologically superseded but eschatologically necessary role imposed upon the Jews by Augustine in his doctrine of relative toleration.[17] Prior to the expulsion from England in 1290, Jews were chattels of the king and despised usurers. Along with the perennial role of Christ-killers and the related accusations of child murder and host desecration, Jews are variously depicted as despised aliens, blind literalists unable to correctly interpret the Scriptures, sorcerers who serve the Devil, abject and excremental, virtuous exemplars for Christians, witnesses to the truth of transubstantiation and sacred guardians of the Hebrew tongue.

The primary focus of my first chapter is a revisionist reading of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, which I do through the lens of medieval history. Like Patterson, I use history not simply in terms of immediate context, but I take a longer view in an effort to show a possible reading where the play, through its insistent references to caskets and bonds, leads the reader back to the *archae* system that was central to Jewish-Christian relations prior to the expulsion of the Jews in 1290. When the Jews served as

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[17] In this doctrine, Jews live as socially and economically degraded in order to serve as witnesses to the truth of Christianity. This is elaborated in *The City of G-d.* (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

money lenders, the *archae* were the caskets in which the loan documents were locked. Their protection was important because the Crown would demand its share, forcing the Jews to collect on its behalf. As in the "Prioress's Tale," the richness of this playtext is such that its allusions to its sources can take the reader on a historical pathway that can create a bridge between actual and literary Jews. I also contextualize the play's suggested anxieties concerning conversion by looking at both the Spanish Blood laws and John Foxe's sermon on the conversion of a Jew. I end by broadening the focus to demonstrate how the idea of the Jew becomes a vehicle for the exploration of identity in general.

My second chapter focuses on protean Judas and several of his medieval incarnations: his appearances in the *Golden Legend,* the Medieval Ballad of Judas and the Corpus Christi plays. My argument is indebted to Susan Gubar's definitive analysis of this figure in her *Judas: A Biography* where she demonstrates how Judas's trajectory over the last twenty centuries has been anything but consistent. Gubar establishes how Judas's changing representations became a metonym for how Christians see themselves in relation to Jews: in terms of both Christianity's Jewish origins and its necessary differentiation from it. As Gubar's work explores the entire history of Judas, I deepen her argument by focusing more closely on the medieval texts where I provide additional context and a more detailed analysis. Surprisingly, there were often sympathetic portrayals of Judas within a historical period one does not normally associate with benign representations of Jews. This insight illustrates the flexibility with which writers have deployed the figure of the Jew—including times when it becomes a springboard for the

exploration of issues unrelated to Jews and Judaism, as Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* demonstrates.

My third chapter explores the related topics of seventeenth-century millenarianism, philosemitism and the debates surrounding the readmission of the Jews into England. As this was an era of apocalyptic expectation, I analyze three texts that envision an unrealizable ideal: Thomas More's *Utopia*, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and Milton's *Of Reformation* (1641). By engaging with the history of Portuguese Jewry and the literary figure of the Wandering Jew, I propose a new reading of More's text by arguing that Raphael Hythloday functions as a literary Jew. Bacon's text is indebted to More's, both envisioning rigidly controlled societies; as the two works appear on either side of the Reformation divide, they provide a window into some of the key changes during the intervening century. I observe these changes through the lens of their representation of Jewish ideas and figures. My final topic is Milton's prose tracts, in particular, *Of Reformation.* Breaking with More and Bacon, Milton charts a different path towards utopia: the reformation of the individual through the reformation of the Church. Milton's shifting positions vis-à-vis Jews in his tracts demonstrate how despite the debates concerning the readmission of *actual* Jews, Judaism remains a versatile polemical resource.

Throughout this study, I will argue that Jewish representation in English literature remains fluid and improvisational on either side of the Reformation divide, as Jews continue to serve as *scrinaria* on which to allay anxieties about changing religious beliefs or to help develop England's sense of itself. Although due to Protestant enthusiasm for

Hebraic studies there is more positive identification with Jews and their history after the Reformation, resulting in more philosemitic representations, Jews still retain the taint of the unassimilable.

Chapter One: "Making a Jewish Choice"

"He that doth love, and love amisse,
This worlds delights before true Christian joy,
Hath made a Jewish choice" (7-9).

 George Herbert. "Self-condemnation" (1633).

The Sinking *Archa*: The Jews in Medieval England

Though my project looks at the way in which Jews are *imagined* in the literature of both the medieval and Early Modern periods, their *actual* pre-expulsion history in England is both well documented and significant to their subsequent literary representation. A seminal moment in that history illuminates the growing animus towards the Jews in the twelfth century. The history of the massacre at York is well known and has been preserved in the chronicles of both Jews and Christians.[18] In March of 1190, on *Shabbat ha-gadol* (the Sabbath preceding Passover), local barons heavily indebted to the Jews and led by Richard Malebysse, whose name appears as "*chaya raah*" ("evil beast") on a still extant bond due to his terrible temper (Adler,"Aaron of York" 116), attacked the

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This summary is based on the work of R. B Dobson and Cecil Roth who draw on the chronicle material for their account of the incident.

home of a wealthy Jewish money lender, Benedict of York, murdered the inhabitants, plundered their possessions and set the house on fire. The broader context for the attack was the confluence of the following factors: a renewal of crusading fever under the recently crowned (and currently absent) Richard the Lionheart (1189-1199), the Third Lateran Council's (1179) anti-Jewish legislation, and the increased role of Jews as money-lenders from the mid-twelfth century when there was at once a pressing need for capital and an increasingly harsh stance against Christian usury taken by the Church (Chazan 22-3). When the Jews learned of the fate of Benedict's household, they hurried to Clifford's Tower for protection. The besieged Jews, under the leadership of Rabbi Yom Tov of Joigny, chose mass suicide rather than face the angry mob that awaited them outside the castle. The number who died exceeded one hundred and fifty (Roth 23). The few Jews who survived were promised clemency if they accepted Christianity. They agreed, but they were summarily slaughtered as they left the castle. It is in this refusal to accept Jews willing to convert to Christianity that the pattern of events departs from the story of "normal crusading zeal" (Chazan 27). What happened next becomes a template for many subsequent moments in Medieval English-Jewish relations: The conspirators headed for the Cathedral where the Jewish bonds were held for safe-keeping; in a supreme moment of poetic *in*justice, they set fire to them "kindling the flames from the light on the High Altar" (Roth 23). Killing the Jews and destroying the bonds thus became the Medieval version of "declaring bankruptcy." Though the motivation for the York massacre was clearly financial, the Church helped to light the way.

Upon learning of the event, King Richard was greatly disturbed by the great injury to his revenues (Dobson 30). In response to this loss to the royal coffers, the *Scaccarium Judaorum* or Exchequer of the Jews was established. This institution was a department of the Great Exchequer and it safeguarded royal rights by supervising the registration of loan contracts in designated cities, where they were deposited in the *archa.* There had been a precedent for the designation of a governmental branch to deal with Jewish capital: when the unfathomably wealthy Jewish entrepreneur Aaron of Lincoln[19] had died in 1186, King Richard's predecessor, King Henry II (1154-1189), simply appropriated his whole estate rather than taking the customary one third (Mundill 21). As Aaron's debts were worth over £15,000 this required the creation of a new governmental department devoted to collecting these debts called the "Exchequer of Aaron."[20] Though the King had originally been among Aaron's primary borrowers, by the later part of the twelfth-century, in an instance of "why-buy-the cow-when-you-can-milch-it-for-free," the rules of the game were altered and the King stopped being a borrower and simply helped himself to the Jewish debts in the form of taxation. Mundill speculates that the aggressive attempts by the Exchequer to collect on Aaron's debts had contributed to the York massacres by fueling the resentment of debtors (28).

The Jewish Exchequer's primary task was to oversee the system of *archae* throughout England, ordered by King Richard in his "Ordinance of the Jewry" in 1194. The system required that all Jewish transactions be registered in a chest. Henceforth, loans would leave a kind of parchment trail: they would be written in the presence of two

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[19]In a Sunday Times supplement article of March 2000, "The Richest of the Rich," Aaron's wealth was valued at £21.6 billion.
[20] According to Mundill, this would have a current values of about £8,000,000.

Christians, two Jews, two scribes and two clerks. The *archa* was the triple-locked chest in which the bonds were stored. As historian Charles Gross explains,[21] the debt was written in the form of a chirograph, which was severed in two parts over the word *chirographum*. The Jew would retain one half and the other was deposited into the ark. When a debt was repaid, the Jew would write a quitclaim known as a "shetar." Jewish moneylenders accepted a wide variety of "pledges" as security: from costly clothing and knightly armour to bales of hay. And even though it was ostensibly forbidden to pawn holy relics, these were also used as security for loans (Roth 105). But what if the debt was not repaid? There emerged the provision for recompense: *inter-est* is literally "that which was in between" the loan and its eventual repayment (Mundill 31). But *interest*ingly, as usury was forbidden, the bonds did not reveal the actual amount that the creditor had originally loaned to the debtor. This way the charge for a loan that *is* repaid on time, what we consider "interest," could be concealed. So though the nascent capitalist economy in England required lending and interest to build its cathedrals and wage its wars, it was necessary to avoid the appearance of usury, though this seems but a polite fiction. Thus to apply the historical reality to Shakespeare's fiction, the emphatically iterated amount of "three thousand ducats" that Antonio borrows from Shylock would not have found its way into the medieval *archa.* Instead, the bond would merely specify the sum of money (and possibly goods as well) that the debtor would pay the creditor by a certain date. The resonantly derogatory term "filthy lucre" is derived from the legal device of *lucrum cessans* which was the permissible charging of a financial penalty for the failure to repay

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[21] This is a paraphrase of Charles Gross's "The Exchequer of the Jews of England in the Middle Ages" (1887).

a loan on time (31). Curiously, this penalty did not necessarily even go to the creditor: it could be payable to an altar, a shrine or the King (31). This historical arrangement opens the richly eucharistic scenario whereby Antonio's pound of fair flesh, the *lucrum cessans* for his failure to repay his debt, would have been destined for the altar.

As a means of further regulating this system, Jews were restricted to living in one of the twenty-six "archae towns." As Charles Gross explains, keeping the Jews together in a few towns enabled the crown "to protect the flock from the howling wolves, and shear [them] more expeditiously" (191). Though ostensibly designed to protect the interests of both lender and debtor, the *archae* became an effective means for the crown to gauge the wealth of the Jewish community, thereby enabling it to impose royal *tallages* (or arbitrary taxes levied at the pleasure of the king) more effectively. As historian Robin Mundill succinctly puts it, essentially the system functioned as a royal "protection racket" (11). The sinister and violent associations this phrase denotes are not amiss, for English Kings could be cruel collectors. Though stopping short of a "pound of flesh," in the Bristol Tallage of 1210, when a Jew refused to pay his tax, an exorbitant £6,666 (this would have a current value of approximately £5 million), King John sent torturers to remove a tooth each day until he paid in full; after a week, he paid the sum in time to save his last molar (Mundill 12). The system also increased antipathy towards Jews, for each time the king would tax "his" Jews, they would be under pressure to call in their debts. Though Jews were initially hated for theological reasons, moneylending created a new source of animus and the two became indelibly linked in the popular imagination so that usury was inscribed as a distinctly Jewish vice. Thus as the *archa*

system was perfected by a Crown ever eager for revenue, it became more and more constricting for English Jews.

While Shylock complains that Christian Antonio, "...lends out money gratis and brings down/ The rate of usance here with us in Venice" (1.3.41-2), thirteenth-century England actually witnessed an active and mutually profitable collaboration between Jewish money lenders and the Church that Mundill describes as a "sleeping partnership" (100). Because they were transferable, bonds within the *archae* became a de facto form of currency. Access to credit became increasingly important in the later thirteenth century: English merchants needed it to tap in to Continental trade and The Barons' War (1264-1267) created many financially desperate men (Bowers 62). Because monasteries had liquid capital, they were able to step in and bail out debtors, particularly those whose debts had been secured by land. In exchange, they would either receive the use and rights from the lands or, if the landowner was unable to acquit the debt, the monastery would gain the land itself. Though the ecclesiastical houses continued to condemn the Jews for their usury, there is evidence that some actually trafficked in Jewish bonds themselves (Mundill 101). The Jews cease to be the big players in the lending market even before the expulsion. Thus by 1283, an *archa* system was set up for Christians: bonds were enrolled in registries and collection was guaranteed. And it seems that usury was not confined to the Churches: by the 1270s, the Queen and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, merchants, clerks, and even bakers were lending money (114). But it was now called "enrolled recognizance." According to Richard Bowers, this was an agreement with "vicious teeth" in that the debtor who failed to pay his debt was imprisoned until the debt was satisfied

(63). Thus the system of filtering loans through Jews enabled the development of the credit system while adhering to the letter, if not the spirit, of the Church's laws against usury. Once Christians learned the intricacies of credit, they recreated the system themselves (Mundill 97). Though the fulcrum of the financial dealings between Jews and Christians in England, as a richly suggestive term, the *archae* can help illuminate the complexity of this relationship beyond the merely mercantile.

   Archa's denotation in Latin is polyvalent: it is a box, a chest; wealth; a coffin or bier; a cell or cage; and an ark (as in Noah's ark or the Ark of the Covenant). Its various meanings gesture simultaneously toward many different aspects of Jewish/Christian relations. As a box or chest it is meant to contain and protect the bond between Jew and Gentile. But this stability proved to be illusory: despite the elaborate locks, the *archa* remained the grail of choice for rioters seeking to destroy their debts[22] while Kings would periodically order the "sealing" of the *archae* as a way of ensuring the preservation of the bonds within. Certainly, the Jews' role of "royal milch cow" did little to endear them to their gentile neighbours. As Chazan points out, the increased violence against the Jews in the late twelfth century was "clearly and correctly perceived by the English rulers as an assault on royal authority itself" (39). Thus the *archae* functioned as a metonym for the Jews and their despised role as tax collectors for the crown; unfortunately, this was a role into which they were increasingly caged. Like the bonds within, the Jews became an object of exchange: in 1254 a cash-strapped Henry III "mortgaged" the whole Jewish

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[22] This was particularly true during the baronial risings of 1258-66 when the *archae* were regularly stolen, broken open and burned by indebted insurgents (Mundill, *The King's Jews* 88).

community to his wealthy brother, Richard of Cornwall (Roth 47)[23] as chronicler

Matthew Paris pithily observes, "That the Earl might disembowel those whom the King

had skinned" (Adler, *Aaron of York* 144).

The association with Noah's ark is also apt: because of their disproportionate

contribution to the royal coffers,[24] Jews were often protected by the rulers and thus

England became a temporary safe haven when we contrast it to the deadlier violence on

the continent. Yet this ark eventually became a coffin: though the Jews of Norman

England had engaged in a variety of activities including moneychanging and bullion

dealing, the shift to an almost exclusive reliance on moneylending by the twelfth century

increased their vulnerability (Stacey 88). In 1275, the rules of the game were altered once

more. Edward I's Statute of the Jewry forbade usury and Jews could only lend money in

return for commodities.[25] These new bonds continued to be recorded and placed in the

archae. Thus immediately prior to the expulsion, Jews and Christians were engaging in

identical mercantile activities, perhaps provoking the question, "which is the merchant

here and which the Jew?" (*Merchant* 4.1.172).

Finally, the association of the Ark of the Covenant, the structure built by Divine

command in order to protect and contain the sacred tablets of the law, gestures towards

the subject of perennial debates over who possesses the correct interpretation of the

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[23] The absence of Jews is apparent in *Richard II* when the king, in order to replenish his coffers, is compelled "to farm [his] royal realm" (1.4.45). This unpopular decision underscores how useful Jews were to the Crown in both raising revenue and displacing anger.

[24] According to surviving documentation of tallage payments, *archae* records, and inheritance fines, between 1241 and 1256 the English Jewish community paid more than half its wealth to the crown (Stacey 95).

[25] This was known as "Christian recognizance" and it was not considered usury. Repayments were often made in cereal or wool (Mundill, "Anglo-Jewry" 2).

Scriptures. As Christian theologian Rosemary Ruether argues in *Faith and Fratricide*, the *adversos Judaeos* tradition centers on the stubborn refusal of the Jews to accept Christian exegesis of the Old Testament. Once again, we might refer to the "unsealing" of the supposedly impenetrable *archa*: thus the Five Books of Moses and the Hebrew prophetic texts were "ransacked" to create a "catalogue" of crimes proving that contemporary Jewish "apostasy"[26] was simply a part of a long history of Jewish rebellion against G-d (129). Where the Old Testament includes at times both harsh judgment and eternal promise as G-d's bond to Israel, the *adversos* tradition engaged in a selective reading: thus biblical references to chastisement were only directed at rebellious Jews while the promise for forgiveness and messianic hope belonged exclusively to the Church (131). Though we have shifted from finance to hermeneutics, what is contained within the *archa* remains subject to exchange and appropriation.

In the introduction to his 2013 collection of essays, *New Readings of The Merchant of Venice,* editor Horacio Sierra signals the current critical and theatrical interest generated by the play. Sierra identifies as watershed critical scholarship, Janet Adelman's *Blood Relations: Christian and the Jew in the Merchant of Venice* (2008) and James Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews* (1996). Both of these works were central to my project. Employing psychoanalytic and feminist theories, Adelman, like many medieval scholars, focuses on the vexed relationship between Christianity and Judaism with conversion functioning as a particular site of tension. Shapiro provides a densely detailed context for *The Merchant of Venice* by drawing exhaustively from a variety of historical and literary texts. While also focusing on the anxieties surrounding conversion,

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[26] Here used in the sense of the Jewish refusal to accept Christianity.

Shapiro's overall argument is that Jews were crucial to consolidating the sense of Englishness.

I build on the work of these scholars by bringing a medieval context to the study of *The Merchant of Venice*. The exploration of Shakespeare's indebtedness to medieval culture, language and theatre is one of the most active fields in current Shakespeare scholarship (Cooper 3). [27] As Bruce R. Smith explains in "Shakespeare's Middle Ages," for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the Middle Ages did not exist (22). However, he would have recognized "the middle age" in reference to Church history and the centuries between the primitive Church and its recent restoration in Protestantism (23). Smith suggests a number of ways in which we might read Shakespeare in relation to the Middle Ages. Along with straightforward approaches such as historical setting or medieval sources, Smith includes Shakespeare's engagement with the philosophical concerns that occupied his predecessors and his use of medieval dramatic devices such as the "self-identifying direct addresses" of Edmund and Iago, staging arrangements or the use of allegory (25).

An example of the latter is Rebecca Krug's work on Shakespeare's use of the *Gesta Romanorum* in *The Merchant of Venice.* The *Gesta* were a late thirteenth-century collection of tales that served as a handbook for preachers and were made popular in England by way of Richard Robinson's 1577 translation; they are the source for the casket story for Shakespeare's play (Halio17). Krug describes the *Gesta* as a free-standing

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[27] Recent monographs: Helen Cooper's *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (Arden 2010), *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages,* ed. Curtis Perry and John Watkins (Oxford 2009) and *Medieval Shakespeare: Past Presents,* ed. Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper and Peter Holland (Cambridge 2013).

narrative to which a moral is attached, akin to *L'Ovid Moralisé.* The Christian allegorical

coda typically refers to G-d and the Soul. Krug's argument is that while later writers

retold the narratives of the *Gesta* without the moralizing, Shakespeare in *Merchant*

retains the moral and applies it to his own world and to secular concerns such as the rise

of mercantilism. Krug argues that in both the medieval source and Shakespeare's use of it,

audiences were challenged to look at the often inexplicable plots as a means of engaging

with moral choices. This reading is underscored by Krug's identification of the distinctly

medieval quality in Portia's character, as she "fluctuates between human and abstract"

(248), and how the trial scene is indebted to the popular medieval debate between the

four daughters of G-d (246). Krug's exploration of the embeddedness of Shakespeare's

medieval source in *The Merchant of Venice* suggests the use of a plot device to prompt an

audience to play an active role in "moralization and interpretation" (246). My own

reading of the casket story suggests a similar challenge by way of an engagement with

the medieval history of Jews in England.

Playing Shylock

      Just as the polysemous *archae* can help to illuminate the shifting relationship

between Jews and Gentiles, the same might be said about literature's most infamous

usurer. Upon seeing Charles Macklin's ground breaking performance, Alexander Pope

famously proclaimed it to be the definitive Shylock: "This is the Jew/That Shakespeare

drew" (Lelyveld 26). Macklin, who first performed the role in 1741 and continued to do

so for half a century, was the first to play Shylock as a "significant dramatic character"

(22) rather than as the literary descendant of a Medieval Vice figure or a stock avaricious character out of the comedic tradition. But Macklin's reading was hardly a sympathetic one: described as "malignant," "venomous," and "unrelentingly diabolical," his more serious approach nevertheless paved the way for the increasingly sympathetic treatments Shylock received throughout the nineteenth century. In 1814 Edmund Kean further humanized the role by replacing the Jew's traditional Judas-inspired red beard with a black one (8), and by playing him as a "persecuted martyr turned avenger" (51). In tracing performance history, we see that Shylock achieves an importance to the play that is wildly disproportionate to his appearance in a mere five scenes. I would argue that Shylock undergoes the most radical interpretive refashioning in all of Shakespeare: from the antagonist in the sub-plot of a comedy to a tragic protagonist. This shift was particularly apparent in Kean's American tour when the play was actually billed as "Shylock" (54); the character's centrality was further achieved by the reduction of the play to four acts thus ending it with Shylock's exit. This truncated version became normative in the late nineteenth century (71). As critic William Hazlitt wrote, audience sympathy was clearly with Shylock. In the Victorian period, Henry Irving played Shylock as a venerable Hebrew patriarch. In Jonathan Miller's 1970 National Theatre production, Laurence Olivier's Shylock was a dignified, aristocratic financier evoking a figure such as Baron Rothschild (Halio 73). The most powerful production choice occurred at the end of the play: while troubled and isolated Jessica was on stage, a sorrowful voice is heard off-stage chanting the mourners' Kaddish.[28] As Jews would customarily mourn the intermarriage of their children, this Kaddish would have been richly ambiguous: was

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[28] The Hebrew prayer for the dead.

Shylock mourning Jessica's spiritual death, his own forced conversion, or had he died? We might see this *coup de théâtre* as emotionally manipulative and untrue to the sense of the playtext. But it serves as a striking example of how far theatrical Shylock had traveled from his Judas-roots. Shakespeare's character becomes the ultimate *scrinaria* on which to continuously rewrite the shifting perception of what is a Jew.

Among the current Shylocks is actor Al Pacino whose Broadway production (2011), directed by Daniel Sullivan, continues the venerable tradition of sympathetic Shylocks. The setting, which was used for both Venice and Belmont, thereby emphasizing their essential sameness as xenophobic and mercantile spaces, was comprised of tall circular steel gates that could be moved about to enclose a section of the stage. Though the initial impression created by the gleaming metal is sleek and modern, the sharp spear-like ends still suggested the head-bearing spikes of Traitors' Gate. Pathos is created at the outset in the play's dumb show during which a young boy, clad in distinctive Jewish Eastern European dress and with long side curls, pauses to gaze in at the goings-on at the Rialto and when the bankers within (looking decidedly English in Edwardian dress) take notice of him, the gate is deliberately closed in his face.

As with other sympathetic treatments, Shylock is portrayed as a despised outsider who reacts against his Christian tormentors. The production emphasizes Christian cruelty in its stage-business: Shylock is constantly being shut out or spat upon and his forced baptism is staged. When the burly guards in military dress push and hold him underwater the moment is creepily suggestive of water-boarding.

<u>Caskets in Motion</u>

An interesting staging choice, given the play's initial separation of its two settings and plots, is that the caskets in Sullivan's production remain visible throughout. Upstage and out of the light, they appear as three identical, innocuous filing boxes that do not look out of place in the Venetian banking setting. Once the scene returns to Belmont, they are carried downstage and under the stage light, the difference in their metallic hue becomes apparent. The continued on-stage presence of the caskets underscores their centrality to the play as a whole. It also serves to blur the boundaries between the supposed binaries of munificent Belmont and mercantile Venice. Ostensibly, the caskets serve to ferret out suitors who cannot see beyond "outward show" (3.2.73) and deceptive "ornament" (74) to the more authentic values represented by the leaden casket whose uncompromising message ("Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath" (2.7.9)) is suggestive of the unstinting generosity and risk displayed by Antonio and Portia. Additionally, it reassures us that despite his initial admission to friend and creditor Antonio, Bassanio is no mere fortune-hunting Jason in search of the "golden fleece" (1.1.170) to acquit himself of his "great debts" (128).

As the correct choice is made by an act of interpretive reading, the "inner-outer" dualism implicit in the casket test reinforces the play's basic theological opposition between Christian and Jewish exegetical traditions (Lampert 140). Thus Antonio and Shylock debate the cause of Jacob's success in breeding the parti-coloured lambs with Antonio vehemently rejecting Shylock's description of Jacob's skill and its implicit comparison with gold which, as Shylock admits, he "make[s]... breed as fast" (1.3.93).

Though in the midst of a mercantile transaction himself, Antonio is clearly resistant to the use of a biblical example of animal husbandry to illustrate a sordid contemporary reality--particularly if it seems to justify usury, long-considered a most "unnatural" activity. His ire is evident from his peremptory termination of the theological debate by invoking the proverbial: "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose" (95). He follows this with examples illustrative of the discrepancy between a "goodly outside" (99) and the rot and villainy within. What is intriguing about his examples is that they reverse the conventional Christian hermeneutical tradition that privileges "inner" (or allegorical) meaning over "outer" (literal) sense: here it is the inner meaning that is corrupt as "falsehood" hides within a "goodly outside."

Both the Folio and Quarto editions actually refer to four caskets (Teague 162). The fourth is the casket belonging to Shylock's "gentle daughter" Jessica that she fills with her father's "gold and jewels" (2.4.31) before *gilding* herself with even more ducats and making her escape with Lorenzo. Portia's instruction to "draw aside the curtains" (2.7.1) indicates that in early modern productions the caskets would have been placed "upstage in a discovery space" (74). In addition to occupying a spatial focal point, their importance to the play is evident by virtue of the thrice-repeated casket test. As Teague suggests, the caskets themselves would have generated much interest: two were made of precious metals and, as such caskets were customarily used in this period to store women's jewelery, the properties would have suggested riches—thus the stage properties read wealth in a test of non-material values. The caskets are also one of the many links between the play's two daughters, Jessica and Portia. For both, the choice of marriage

partner is circumscribed by the will of a father; both make clandestine escapes from home and don male clothing and both ultimately succeed in making their own choice of a husband whose situation is greatly improved by the riches of his new wife.

Given the play's persistent blurring of the binaries it creates, how might the caskets as stage properties further complicate our reading of the play? In *The Social Life of Things,* Arjun Appadurai coins the memorable phrase "things-in-motion" to describe how objects possess their own life histories that can usefully "illuminate their human and social context" (5). Sometimes, this can result in a stage property telling an alternate story that might be at odds with its ostensible function. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda argue that props have the "power to puncture dramatic illusion by pointing to alternate social dramas of economic production, exchange and ownership" (15). I would like to propose that the caskets, though not linked directly to the Shylock plot, bring a powerful life history to the play through their evocation of the historical *archae* and their long association with Jews, moneylending and broken bonds.

David Lucking situates the Belmont/Venice opposition in relation to a favourite Shakespearean strategy: the plays' themes are dramatized through a "system of contrasts or oppositions" which are subsequently qualified or even undermined as the plays proceed (356). While Bassanio's speech before the caskets appears to be a straightforward disquisition on deceptive ornament, what troubles his virtuous selection of "meagre lead" (3.2.104) is some of the language he employs along the way. During his discussion of the golden casket, Bassanio disparages outward beauty for being false and tainted:

So are those crispèd, snaky, golden locks

Which makes such wanton gambols with the wind

Upon supposèd fairness, often known

To be the dowry of a second head,

The skull that bred them in the sepulchre. (3.2.92-95)

While the woman's blond curls assume a seductive life of their own, it is a deceitful beauty as their true owner is in the grave. These lines, of course, recall the earlier description combining hair, wind and gold: Bassanio's initial picture of the fair Portia, her "worth" inspiring suitors "blow[n] in from every coast" and whose "sunny locks/Hang on her temples like a golden fleece" (1.1.168-70). Thus while Portia's picture might be locked within the leaden casket, she is more associated with the golden one and its taint of appropriation and death. The death imagery in this passage is reinforced when we remember that the golden casket contains a skull and a scroll declaring that "Gilded tombs do worms infold" (2.7.69). The curious use of "bred" in Bassanio's speech, with its eerie suggestion of hair's posthumous growth, also recalls Shylock's unnatural use of this verb in reference to "barren metal" which, due to his practice of usury, he is able to *breed* as quickly as the patriarch Jacob bred his ewes and rams (1.3.93). The golden casket's evocation of a tomb link it to the *archa* and its denotation of a coffin.

The clear dichotomies that the play sets up are further blurred when Bassanio goes on to compare ornament to "the beauteous scarf/Veiling an Indian beauty" (98-99). This rejection of the woman's dark skin clearly echoes Portia's harsh dismissal of her swarthy suitor Morocco: "Let all of his complexion choose me so," she pronounces as he

makes his sad exit (2.7.79). While the casket test ostensibly contrasts deceptive appearance with meaningful reality, its two champions demonstrate inconsistencies in their own judgments that undermine the clear-cut distinctions. These distinctions are further qualified after Bassanio's correct choice of the leaden casket when the couple's language becomes crisply commercial. Thus, after finding Portia's "counterfeit" (3.2.115), a word richly suggestive of financial fraudulence, Bassanio waits to have her "confirm, sign [and] ratify" (148) his "fortune" (130). For her part, Portia wishes that her virtues and possessions could "exceed account" (157), for her "full sum" (157) in "gross" terms, by her own estimation, falls short.

In addition to dichotomizing appearance and reality, the casket test appears to censor mercantile values: "gaudy gold" is dismissed as "Hard food for Midas" (101-102), while "pale" silver is the "common drudge/'Tween man and man" (103-4). Yet the scene's language relentlessly returns to the world of money; and Portia herself, with the play's repeated insistence on her great fortune, so badly needed by the impecunious Bassanio, never sheds her identification as the golden fleece. After learning of Antonio's dire financial predicament, Bassanio comes clean and admits to Portia that his state is actually "worse than nothing" (258) because he had borrowed from Antonio to "feed [his] means" (261), his expression subtly evoking Shylock and his cannibalistic determination "to feed upon/The prodigal Christian" (2.5.15).

The various threads of this casket scene, where deceit, money, usury, debt and death intertwine might recall the role of the *archae* during the baronial uprisings during the reign of Henry III (d. 1272). While the *archae* system had been put in place in 1194 to

protect both the Jews and their bonds for the Crown, during the Second Barons' War

(1264-1267) led by Simon de Montfort, the caskets and the financial records they

contained became the barons' first objective in every city they entered (Roth 61). This

was the case because the baronial party was the class most in heavily in debt to the

Jewish money lenders (61). Thus in the quest for the caskets containing the records of

their debts, under the cloak of anti-Royalist sentiment, in the towns of London,

Cambridge, Lincoln and Canterbury, Jews were killed, synagogues were looted, but most

significantly, the *archae* were either destroyed or carried off (62). We might say that just

as the "golden locks" are haunted by the spectral presence of the "skull that bred them"

(3.2.96), so too are the play's caskets, the means by which the noble Bassanio will acquit

himself of all his debts, haunted by their association with the *archae* and the death and

deception perpetrated by those who pursued them.

When we come to the trial scene, where the focus on Jews, usury and death

becomes explicit, we notice the prevalence of the word "bond." The word is repeated in

4.1 sixteen times, in eleven instances occurring as the final word in an end-stopped line.

In addition to this verbal prominence, internal stage directions suggest that, like the

caskets, it becomes a primary visual focus as it is passed between Shylock and Portia and

repeatedly consulted by the latter. As many critics have pointed out, Portia's courtroom

triumph relies on her strictly *literal* (read Jewish?) interpretation of the bond—and yet it

is also clearly a reinterpretation of Shylock's original agreement with Antonio. We might

say that the courtroom scene is another example of the play demonstrating

supersessionary hermeneutics at work with Christian Portia (rechristened as a "wise

Daniel") claiming to possess the "true meaning" of the Jewish Shylock's text. Although, as I have tried to suggest, the play is rife with blurring between the two story-lines, it is not until the trial scene that the casket and bond tales actually converge.

As we know, the bonds of debt were contained within the *archae* and intended to protect both the interests of the Crown and their Jewish tax-collectors. As we have seen, the *archae* proved to be rather porous as the bonds within were subject to being taxed or sold by kings or plundered and destroyed by the indebted nobility. While it is speculative whether Shakespeare would have been sufficiently familiar with England's medieval Jews to have deliberately evoked the Medieval *archae* in his adaptation of the casket story, the historical association certainly adds another layer of ambiguity to the play's engagement with the "Jewish question." Shylock's representation as a multi-dimensional Jewish character does reflect the Elizabethan preoccupation with (mostly) absent Jews.[29] But this interest represents more than mere fantasy, for at the end of the sixteenth century, "Jews are News": In addition to the trial and execution in 1594 of the Queen's chief physician and Portuguese convert, Roderigo Lopez, there had been the very public conversion of Nathanial Menda in 1578, which had inspired John Foxe to preach a four-hour sermon in Latin that was duly translated into English (Adler 41-42).

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[29] Shakespeare was, of course, familiar with Holinshed. His chronicles vividly recounts the "hurlie burlie" of the "peoples furious and vunbridles pronesse to crueltie" during their attack on the Jews after Richard the First's coronation (Holinshed, vol. 2, 206). After a poignant description of the self-slaughter of the besieged Jews at York, and the murder of the survivors who offered to be baptized, the chronicle describes the systematic destruction of the bonds: "the people ran to the cathedrall church, and broke into those places, where their *bonds* and obligations laie, by which they had diuerse of the kings subiects bound vnto them in most vnconscionable sort...All which euidences or *bonds* thy solemnelie burned in the middest of the church" (211. Emphases mine).

<u>Conversion Matters</u>

Jewish presence in early modern England was also signaled by the curious, continued existence of the *Domus Conversorum*, the home for converted Jews founded in 1232 by King Henry III "for the health of his soul" (Adler 20). After forfeiting all they owned to the Crown, converts were provided with a small stipend and religious instruction (Stacey 267). What is interesting about this institution is that although it was intended as a temporary haven for destitute Jewish converts, the *Domus* continued to receive baptized Jews long after the expulsion and even through the Reformation: the records extend to 1609 and all traces of the building were not abolished until 1891. Though it was set up as a monastic halfway house, where inmates (both male and female) lived a common life together while they attended religious services and were educated in the true faith, many converts remained in it for their entire lives, sometimes even returning to the Domus with their children and grandchildren in tow (273). This is particularly surprising given the fact that the lack of promised royal funding often left the residents in a state of serious privation. In the last two decades before the expulsion, residents, described as "starving, shivering converts," were forced to go begging. The apparent reluctance of these converts to leave the Domus suggests that they experienced difficulty integrating themselves into the mainstream. As conversion would have severed their ties with their Jewish families, these converts remained in this liminal world of their own making that served as both community and family. For many former Jews in medieval England, there simply was no "world elsewhere." Thus the *Domus* served as a kind of permanent Noah's ark for

Jewish-Christians as they lived out their lives adrift from both the religious community they had joined and the one they had left behind.

The location of the *Domus* opens a tantalizing scenario for Shakespeareans: it was on New Street, London, on what is now Chancery Lane (Menache 144). The general proximity of the *Domus* to the Blackfriars and Globe theaters stirs Adler to speculate whether Shakespeare might have dropped in to visit the celebrated Nathaniel Menda, whose confession had been translated into English and printed in 1578, and who might have provided the playwright with some first-hand knowledge about Jewish customs (44).[30] Though Shakespeare's own views remain impenetrable, his works testify to a thoughtful fascination with the process of conversion. Thus at the end of *As You Like It*, the usurper Duke Frederick, suddenly and unexpectedly chooses to eschew the "pompous court" for a quiet life of religious contemplation. The cooly clever observer Jaques announces he will follow him as "Out of these convertites/There is much *matter* to be heard and learned" (5.4.184-5). The word *matter* here denotes "significance or importance" (OED 9b).[31] But Shakespeare's pairing it with *hearing* and *learning* is also richly suggestive of a meaningful story. Given the swiftness with which religious identities were repeatedly altered in sixteenth-century England, many *convertites,* motivated more by expedience than religious conviction, would have had a story to tell about their conversions.

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[30] One wonders where Shakespeare would have learned about less well-known Jewish prohibitions against the consumption of non-kosher wine as when Shylock categorically refuses to "drink" with Christian Bassanio (1.3.35).

[31] Shakespeare doubles the episode by having the suddenly reformed Oliver refer to his own "conversion" (4.3.135).

The ambivalent attitude to conversion in sixteenth century England is readily apparent in Foxe's triumphant sermon, delivered on April 1, 1577 at a small parish church in London's Langbourn Ward, to commemorate Nathaniel Menda's baptism (Shapiro 140). After preaching this sermon, Foxe revised and expanded it for publication. Central to his sermon is the Pauline doctrine that Jewish conversion is necessary for the Christian narrative of the unfolding of history. Thus Jews, even absent ones, continue to serve an important theological purpose in Reformation England. But the abundant contradictions in this celebratory sermon hearken back to the dualism of Jewish representation in the Medieval period: thus while Foxe states in his preface that he hopes "the whole remnant of the circumcised race [will] be desirous of the same communion" and he frequently acknowledges Christianity's debt to its Jewish forbears, this does not inhibit his often scathing attacks on Jews. Like the similarly mistaken Catholics, he depicts Jews as "wallowing in a most filthy puddle of pestilent error" (Ciir). As Sharon Achinstein points out in "John Foxe and the Jews," Jews provide the key historical precedent that justifies the Reformation: like Judaism, Roman Catholicism has been superseded (100). G-d has simply moved on.

Despite the absence of any actual Jews at the sermon, Foxe addresses himself to them. Though we might interpret this apostrophe as merely a convention that allows him to exhort and inspire his actual audience, the assembled Christians, there are moments when the violence of his language concerning specifically *Jewish* affronts makes it difficult to see this as having much relevance to its Christian interlocutors. Anachronistically, Foxe accuses the Jews of crying out for their Temple, destroyed some

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fifteen hundred years before. Speaking confidently for G-d, he reminds the Jews that "G-d is not delighted with such sacrifices, nor dwelleth he in Temples made by men...he taketh no pleasure in externall pompe, and outwarde observaunces, nor gorgeous garnishinges of the body" (B.iii.v). While this accusation would have mystified contemporary Jews, it presumably served to delegitimize the empty theatricals of the papists. But Jews are certainly targeted for their great thought-crime: for stubbornly remaining Jewish despite what Foxe sees as the overwhelming textual proofs from their very own texts. This becomes Foxe's central rhetorical strategy: to persuade the Jews by using evidence from the Hebrew prophets. He is outraged that a people, "most abhorred of G-d and men" (C.i.v), arrogantly persist in viewing themselves as G-d's chosen nation. The ancient interpretive traditions to which the Jews blindly cling are resolutely dismissed as "rotten wormeaten poesies" (E.ii.v). Foxe enlists no less than the Jewish patriarch Abraham, who, if alive, would undoubtedly reject his Jewish descendants utterly and thus becomes a powerfully authoritative conduit for Foxe's vitriol:

> Your intolerable Scorpionlike savagenes, so furiously boyling against the
>
> innocent infants of the Christian Gentiles: and the rest of your haynous
>
> abominations, insatiable butcheries, treasons, frensies, and madness....I do utterly
>
> detest you, and your poysoned deedes, and imaginations (E.iiii.r-v).

But specifically which Jews is Foxe targeting here? Are they the Jews of the Bible, early medieval English Jews or contemporary Jews? Though "Insatiable butcheries" could be read as an allusion to the sacrifices of the Temple era Jews, the gloss at the side of the manuscript reminds the reader that "children here in England were crucified by the Jewes

in 1139 and 1141 at Norwiche."[32] In keeping with the traditional medieval fears about Jews, "Poisoned deeds" seems to refer to the accusation that Jews poisoned the wells, while "treasons" could be a reference to the coin-clipping scandals of the thirteenth century. "Frenzies and madness" appear thrown in for good measure. One senses that Foxe has temporarily run out of epithets to hurl and thus reaches for "madness" as an all-purpose invective.

This contradictory message, where Jews are simultaneously "revered and reviled" (Narin van Court 300), is perhaps not surprising when we consider the ways in which Foxe was dealing with the Jewish question in his *Actes and Monuments.* Achinstein explores the way Foxe edits and expands Jewish stories from his monumental book from its first printing in English in 1563 to the 1583 edition. What she found is that Foxe consolidates the Jewish material so that stories of ritual murder are placed on the same page as the account of the Jews' expulsion from England (110). Furthermore, from 1570, editions include even more stories of Jewish perfidy from the medieval chronicles (112). Achinstein interprets Foxe's greater and more negative preoccupation with Jews as reflecting the "growing commitment to Protestant universal hegemony" (112).

In this famous sermon, Foxe uses the old in the service of the new: medieval tales about the Jews to promote religious conformity in post-Reformation England. Continued Jewish disbelief, the perennial blight on the Christian theological landscape, is both a

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[32]In her analysis of *Acts and Monuments*, Sharon Achinstein points out that Foxe interprets the death of the Jews in the mass suicide at York in 1190 as retributive justice for the killing of Christian children: "every yeare commonly their custome was to get some Christen mans child from the parentes, and on good Friday to crucifie him in despite of our Religion" (97). Thus this medieval legend persists into the sixteenth century.

contemporary threat, like the plague, and an inherited condition: "that unbeliefe, which being more noysome then any pestilent botch may rightly & properly be called the Jewish Infidelitie, & seemeth after a certaine manere their inheritable disease" (B.iii). Given the joyous occasion for the sermon: the public baptizing of a convert, it is curious that it displays so much tension between its putative aim of welcoming a Jew into the Christian fold and reminding its Christian audience how dangerous Jews will always be.

As we will see in Chapter Three, over sixty years after Foxe preaches this sermon, John Milton's prose tract, "Of Reformation," will also employ the still-absent Jews to criticize Catholicism, and will do so in a way that simultaneously embraces and dismisses them.

The reason for my digression on Foxe's sermon is that it was a well circulated document and the varied way in which he makes use of Jews is suggestive of the *scriniaria* approach I am defining: its historically layered and contradictory depictions of Jews make the speech feel improvisational; it is a work-in-progress for a yet-to-be resolved relationship with virtual Jews. Though ostensibly a celebration of a Jew's conversion to Christianity, it implies that conversion is not really possible given the Jewish genetic predisposition to spiritual infidelity. The sermon situates Jews atemporally for castigation while simultaneously assimilating them into the Protestant arsenal for timely use against the Catholics. Foxe's Jews become an illustration of Bryan Cheyette's chiasmic observation that "Jews are subjects of a discourse and not historical subjects" (11). I would argue that Shakespeare's caskets, haunted by the ghosts of their *archae* past, reinscribe Jews within a specifically medieval historical context of reviled money-lenders, broken bonds and expulsion.

For post-Holocaust audiences, one of the most troubling moments in *The Merchant of Venice* is Shylock's forced conversion to Christianity at Antonio's request (4.1.383). This was not in Shakespeare's source, Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone* (1558), which ends with the Jewish money-lender tearing his bond to pieces in a rage. As recent critics have pointed out, the subject of conversion is quite relevant in post-Reformation England where the "official state religion had changed three times within the memory of the oldest inhabitants" (Novy 108). James Shapiro sees the desire to convert Jews as influenced in part by "Protestant millennial expectations" (132). He situates England's fascination with the conversion of Jews as being well established by the late 1570s and early 1580s and thus before the composition of *Merchant* and *The Jew of Malta* (134). Shapiro also points out the curious proliferation of conversion tracts in the first decades of the seventeenth century in which both Protestants and Catholics renounce their former faiths in favour of the "true" one.[33] Shapiro concludes that these doctrinal battles underscore the instability of the Christian religious identity in post-Reformation England. A similar idea is proposed by Novy who views Shylock's forced conversion as a moment for potential Christian identification. As Novy proposes, Shylock's penultimate speech: "I am content" (4.1.389), soon seemingly contradicted by his, "I am not well" (392), echoes the famous apparent submission of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, who began his statements to Queen Mary with "I am content." Immediately prior to his execution, Cranmer "recants his recantation"(112). As this was enshrined in Foxe's *Actes*

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[33] Shapiro explains the relatively late appearance of these tracts to the doctrinal overlap between the Church of Rome and the Church of England that led to some confusion about how they actually differed. The publication of works such as Andrew Willet's *Synopsis Papismi* (1592) helped to clearly delineate the doctrinal and practical differences (139).

and Monuments, it was a well-known episode in Protestant history. To further support the connection, Novy points out the curious choice of words when the Duke's threatens to "recant" the pardon he has granted Shylock (387). While the conversion of Jews provides a comforting reassurance of the truth of Christian doctrine and narrative, as Shapiro argues, hovering over conversion is the unsettling notion that religious identity, even when it is of the "true faith," is not essential or natural but more akin to an actor putting on a theatrical costume (156). (Thus we might add "actors" to our list of myths constructed about Jews.)

In his recent *Fictions of Conversion* (2013), Jeffrey Shoulson describes the simultaneous fascination and anxiety engendered by the anticipation of change during seventeenth century. He cites the burgeoning interest in alchemy, itself a form of conversion, and understood as a "Jewish" science, and how this interest coincided with the mounting millennial expectations (14). Shoulson sees the figure of the Jew as an "embodiment of both the promise and peril of change" (10). Promising because the elimination of the Jews would be achieved through their transformation (5), but perilous, as successful conversion would "disrupt" and "destabilize" Christianity's traditional means of self-definition: its opposition to Judaism (5). Shoulson argues that early modern Englishmen and women would have recognized the *converso* identity: someone whose circumstances required them to counterfeit in order to survive. He sees *The Merchant of Venice* as examining two types of transformations: of the economy through the financial instrument of usury, and of the individual through conversion. He concludes that all conversions are inherently destabilizing (123). Thus, in the early modern period we see a

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radical ambivalence surrounding conversion. Although it is sought out as a means of

reinforcing the truth claims of the reformed church, yet at the same time, it creates

anxiety due to the ever-present concerns about authenticity and change.

Racism: There Will Be Blood

Critics such as James Shapiro and Mary Jane Metzger point to the emergence of

racial ideology in early modern England, particularly as a means of defining what it

means to be English. Shapiro cites William Camden's *Britannia* (1586) as an example of

the "myth of Anglo-Saxon origins" which emphasizes the "racially pure origins" of the

English (44). While Metzger describes the evolving English identity as now based on a

"convergence of color, religion and class" (53). Certainly, even aside from "the Jewish

question," *Merchant* is preoccupied with issues of race. "Mislike me not for my

complexion" (2.1.1) implores the Moor futilely; he will be soon be dismissed with

Portia's decidedly "*un*gentle riddance." Miscegenation becomes a question of degree

when Lorenzo invokes Lancelot Gobbo's unseen pregnant Moor to relativize his own

disturbance of the "commonwealth" through his marriage to Jessica; though he has

already "made [her] a Christian" (3.4.18), the play will effectively ignore her conversion

and continue to insist upon her Jewish origins. The Spanish Aragon is mocked by Portia

as a "deliberate fool" (2.9.79) whose pompous rejection of the gold casket is based on his

carefully reasoned determination not to "rank [himself] with the barbarous multitudes"

(2.9.32). As Adelman asserts, although Aragon is used to satirize Spain's "obsession with lineage" the play itself "replicates the logic of pure-blood laws" (82) in its representation of its two unassimilable converts.

Sixteenth century Spain's "pure blood laws" were actually a response to the problem of *too much* conversion. Firstly, it is worth noting that Spain was the home to the largest number of Jews in medieval Europe (Yerushalmi 8). The pogroms of 1391 resulted in mass conversions of thousands of Spanish Jews who faced the stark choice of baptism or death. Though this might have seemed an event ripe for Christian triumphalism, particularly as it dovetailed with Spain's imperialistic dissemination of Christianity throughout the world, yet the exaltation gave way to anxiety as many converts, variously known as *Conversos* or *Marranos*[34] succeeded in "infiltrating Spanish society on all levels, becoming indistinguishable from their Spanish hosts as they entered the mainstream" (Adelman 20). Converts themselves felt a "tortured ambivalence" (Hoffman 13) and sadly, though perhaps not surprisingly, there were prominent New Christians among the supporters of the Inquisition; presumably, they were eager to demonstrate their absolute fidelity to their new religion, even at the cost of the lives of their former co-religionists. Anna Freud employed the term: "identification with the aggressor" to describe Jews who ingratiate themselves into non-Jewish society through self-hatred. The assumption of this position is explained as a strategic response to their fear of being treated as a Jew (Gilman 18). There is a small moment in *Merchant* that evokes this kind

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[34]*Marrano* means "swine." As Yerushalmi points out, the proliferation of terms to describe the converts suggests the ambiguity of their situation. Other epithets include *tornadizo* (turncoat) and, most interestingly, *alboraique* (after Muhammad's famously indeterminate steed, which was neither horse nor mule) (11). Clearly, the converts were *scriniaria* on which an ever-changing narrative was being constructed.

of identification: when Jessica arrives at Belmont, she is instantly christened by Graziano, that champion of ecumenicalism, as "Lorenzo's infidel" (3.2.216). A few lines later, perhaps as a consequence of her initial embarrassment, Graziano refers to her as a "stranger" in need of cheering (235). When the discussion turns to Shylock, Jessica suddenly pipes up to offer unsolicited and dubious testimony about her father's wickedness, claiming "he would rather have Antonio's flesh/Than twenty times the value of the sum/That he did owe him" (284-6). As Shylock's desire for revenge is only ignited by Jessica's flight, and she has been in Genoa merrily trading away the legacy of her mother with an insouciance bordering on cruelty, it seems unlikely that she would have overheard such a conversation.

The degree to which there was secret apostasy among the converted Spanish Jews remains controversial; however, it is clear that many of these former Jews were living as Christians and even making contributions to both Catholic and Protestant religious development (Friedman 5). Yet despite this success (or perhaps *because* of it), the courts of Inquisition attempted to reestablish the very difference the Church had sought to eradicate through conversion. Fredrik Barth's observations concerning racial boundaries are pertinent here: as they become blurry and permeable, so they require an "especially exercised discursive effort" to reinforce them (qtd in Bovilsky 32). Needless to say, the consequences for the victims of the Spanish Inquisition went far beyond the realm of mere discourse. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi attributes the fifteenth-century "backlash" against the *conversos* to the jealousy of the urban masses: many of the former Jews, now without religious barriers to impede their success, quickly achieved an "upward mobility"

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in all echelons of Spanish society, including the Church. They were simultaneously

perceived as too powerful, too rich, too ubiquitous, too assimilated and still, too

"Jewish," as *Conversos* were believed to have retained their dangerous cunning and their

unbridled lust for money and power: "proverbially Jewish traits" (Yerushalmi 9). Thus,

rather than solving the "Jewish problem," the mass conversions in Spain create another,

more insidious one: what to do with the resented and too successful *parvenus*; the Jew as

a hated but carefully contained outsider had given way to the *Converso* as a feared

infiltrator and usurper who is now living unrestricted in their midst (10).

While the etiology of this kind of resentment can be understood as a common

enough kind of schadenfreude, Spain's "pure blood laws," instituted in 1530 to ferret out,

not crypto-Jews, but *all* descendants of converts, reinvents Christianity as the most

exclusionary of clubs, where membership is not predicated on good works and faith, but

simply on bloodlines. Thus after its "wholesale swallowing" of thousands of Jews and

assimilating their linguistic and exegetical expertise (Friedman 3), their converted

descendants are vomited out. The tragic absurdity of the pure blood laws is that a family

might have converted back in 1390 and lived as faithful Catholics and yet, five

generations later, they would not be considered "real" Christians by virtue of their

ancestry (16). Thus merely having a convert among one's ancestors was sufficient proof

that one was essentially a Jew. Orthodoxy of faith is replaced by the fantasy of racial

purity.[35] But this only occurs *because* of the large scale conversion: had Jews remained

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[35] The fantasy becomes even more absurd when we remember that during the seven
hundred year *Reconquista* of Spain to drive out the Muslims, there was a high degree of
integration between Christians and Muslims as well, making the notion of
"pure" Spanish-Christian blood as unlikely as it is offensive.

Jewish, there would have been no need to "play the race card" as they would have

remained identifiable, contained and outside the social system. Spain resorts to a

biological definition when it is the only means left to reestablish a vanishing difference.

Clearly, Spanish Jews were without an *archa* to contain them. It is not difficult to see why

scholars identify the institution of the *limpieza de sangre* (cleanness of blood) as

heralding the birth of modern racism. Shakespearean scholars grappling with racism as it

is explored in *Merchant,* particularly in the seeming conflation of Jewishness and

blackness as immutable racial qualities, invariably cite the chilling description provided

in 1604 by Fray Prudencio de Sandoval, Charles V's biographer, concerning the utter

intransigence of Jewish blood:

> Who can deny that in the descendants of the Jews there persists and endures the
>
> evil inclination of their ancient ingratitude and lack of understanding, just as in
>
> Negros [there persists] the inseparability of their blackness. For if the latter should
>
> unite themselves a thousand times with white women, the children are born with
>
> the dark color of the father. Similarly, it is not enough for the Jew to be three
>
> parts aristocrat or Old Christian for one family-line alone defiles and corrupts
>
> him. (qtd in Friedman 17)

Thus when the prideful Arragon bemoans the preponderance of "low peasantry"

in "the chaff and ruin of the times" (2.9.47), he is reflecting the hatred for the numerous

New Christians in his country; while his allusion to a "stamp of merit" (2.9.38) as a

prerequisite for obtaining "estates, degrees, and offices" suggests the genealogy untainted

by Jewish blood required in order to participate in Spanish society. But the *conversos*

themselves were not immune from this racialized thinking: in 1518, in an image of vast futility that anticipates the inability of "Neptune's oceans" to wash away Macbeth's guilt, one convert wrote of his "accursed lineage...so dirty that all Jordan could not wash it off even with the help of the Holy Ghost" (Hillgarth 466). We might read the Prince of Arragon's angry disquisition as reflecting his identification with the aggressor, providing a plausible motivation for his vehemence: he himself is a descendant of *conversos*.

The question is, how did these Spanish persecutions affect England? In 1969 in a speech to the National Press Club, Pierre Trudeau famously described Canada's proximity to the United States as "like sleeping with an elephant; no matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt." While Spain is, of course, separated from England by the Atlantic, given the intense mutual enmity, and Spain's great power in the sixteenth-century, we might think of it as as large and dangerously antagonistic elephant perennially lurking in the English imagination.

Yet the two countries share more than mere mutual antagonism: In "Cultural Foundations of Racial Religion and Anti-Semitism," historian Arthur Williamson argues that Spanish anti-Semitism and the British philosemitism that develops in the sixteenth-century actually spring from the same conceptual root. Like England, Spain also saw itself as being a nation elected by G-d to play a unique role in human destiny and the inevitable triumph of "the true faith" (137). Thus their divergent attitudes toward Jews both develop from a similar national apocalypticism (143). Additionally, both Spain and England experienced a "crisis" of national identity whose eventual resolution was

enabled by the persecution and expulsion of their Jews.[36] While Spain builds its national

identity by creating a "biological standard for religious identification" and enforcing it

through the Inquisition (Friedman 3), British Protestant apocalypticism becomes linked

to philosemitism, with great English philo-Semites, such as Thomas Brightman,

expressing profound affection for "our brethren, the Jews" (Williamson 140). But this

post-Reformation philosemitism was only possible in a country where there had been no

enforced conversion and consequently there was still virtually no actual Jewish

population to contend with. A further qualification of English philosemitism is that

though it constituted a significant strain of Protestantism, it was by no means universal.

Protestants of a more conservative ilk tended to align themselves more with Catholic

thought which did not see Jews in such a favourable light. Thus Williamson qualifies

post-Reformation England as philosemitic "with some ambiguity" (137). As one can

endlessly debate the extent to which Shakespeare's play *is* anti-Semitic or is *about* anti-

Semitism, there is no doubt that it taps into this ambiguity. But a further qualification

might be applied to philosemitism itself: A useful term to denote the convergence of

philo and *anti* semitisms, is "allosemitism" proposed by Zygmunt Bauman. As "allo" is

the Greek word for "other," this term denotes relating to Jews as people "radically

different from all others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them"

(143). Serving as a necessary precursor to either extreme, allosemitism is an attitude

defined by its "radical ambivalence" (143).

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[36]As Shapiro puts it, England defined itself as a nation by the fact that it had "purged
itself of Jews" (7).

Though Spain and England take antithetical directions in how they deal with "the Jewish question," Jews, whether actual or imagined, play a role in shaping both their respective national identities. And despite the latter's decided lack of Jews, the virulent racial discourse in Spain might help to explain why England becomes more preoccupied with blood and lineage in the sixteenth-century.

But is the immutability of Jewish difference a concept that only gains currency in the early modern period? Though the Spanish Inquisition is absolute in seeing religious identity in biological terms, the transformation of the position of the Jew in the Christian world actually occurs much earlier: by the early thirteenth century. In "From Jew to Christian? Conversion and Immutability in Medieval Europe," Jonathan Elukin reveals that by the thirteenth century, a converted Jew would face Christians "deeply suspicious of his new Christian identity" (172). As we have already seen with the history of the Domus, though conversion was desired, social integration was rare. Even the most successful of English converts, Henry of Winchester, who was knighted by Henry III, had his appointment as a judge in the coin-clipping trials withdrawn because his "Jewishness" offended Bishop Thomas Cantilupe (175). But the problem is more than one of resentment of rapid social mobility: as Stephen Kruger argues, the Jewish convert becomes a particularly vexed figure for medieval Christianity, as he "calls to mind, perhaps too keenly, the Jewish origins...of Christianity itself" (19).

This new notion of Jewish immutability is reflected in how the role of Jews alters in the stories and theological discussions about them. As Miri Rubin chronicles in *Gentile Tales*, the testimonial quality of the "doubting Jew" who witnesses the miracle of the

Host, converts and inspires other Jews to follow suit, is replaced, by the late twelfth

century, by a more dangerous Jew who now seeks to harm the Host and who must be now

resolutely purged from the Christian body.[37] Although the Jews of the early medieval

period had been cast in the role of protected witnesses under the doctrine of Augustinian

relative tolerance, the *scrinaria* are now employed to rewrite the Jew as a "mythical

threat to Christian society" (Stow 204). The threat is given a transhistorical dimension

through a significant reconceptualization on the part of thirteenth-century Christian

theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), concerning Jewish responsibility for the

killing of Christ. While earlier theologians such as Peter Abelard (d. 1142) had viewed

Jews as "ignorant infidels" and concluded that the Jews had killed Jesus unaware of his

true identity, this relatively benign view is replaced by the more dangerous (for Jews)

position that the deicide, contrived by the ancient Jewish sages, had been deliberate

(Cohen *Letters* 339, 373). Needless to say, all Jews everywhere were deemed guilty and

deserving of punishment.[38]

     Yet along with being seen as threatening deicides, Jews are simultaneously given

a reduced role in Christian theology: as Anna Sapir Abulafia argues, when "carnal Israel"

was seen to no longer refer to the Jews, but rather to the first stage in a Christian's ascent

to G-d, Judaism is reduced to a metaphor for Christian spiritual immaturity; this

effectively obviates the need for actual Jews (72). Abulafia draws attention to another

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[37] One might argue that it is actually the transgressive, host-desecrating Jew who is the
greater believer in the doctrine of transubstantiation: his perfidious intentions suggest he
has no doubts.

[38]The Vatican finally absolved the Jews of deicide in 1965. In the sixties, iconoclastic
comedian Lenny Bruce had referred to the persistent belief in collective Jewish guilt for
deicide with his practical suggestion that all Jewish children should simply sport little
electric chairs around their necks.

scholarly reassessment of the Jew that threatened the Jews's very status as human beings: when "reason" was Christianized and enlisted in arguments to prove the truth of Christianity (and its corollary, the falseness of Judaism), this not only marginalized Jews intellectually, but for theologians such as Peter the Venerable (d. 1156), the lack of reason made Jews more like animals (63). Much of this theological animus is derived from the strong opposition of Christian scholars to the Talmud.[39] Jews are seen as having broken from their biblical forbears due to its centrality to Jewish life. In rhetoric that anticipates both John Foxe's sermon and twentieth-century racial discourse, Peter saw the Talmud as an "infectious disease" that when studied renders Jews "subhuman" (Cohen 262). As Talmudic Judaism was perceived by Christian theologians as a radical rewriting of biblical Judaism, Augustinian tolerance need no longer apply given that *these* (Talmudic) Jews are not *those* (biblical) Jews. Thus, in a radical reassessment worthy of Portia, a long-standing bond between Jews and Christians is neatly reinterpreted with destructive consequences.

Yet along with being too altered, Jews are still somehow not different enough: among the policies instituted by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 was the obligation for Jews to wear the tabula shaped badge and the horned hat;[40] this was ostensibly to prevent *confusio* lest the failure to recognize a Jew lead to "unwitting sexual intercourse

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[39]The Talmud includes the Mishna and the Gemara. The Mishna comprises the codification of the Written Law (Pentateuch). It was originally transmitted orally, but after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E, it was written down and expanded to include discussions of scholars (Gemara). It continues to be the primary focus of Jewish scholarship to this day.

[40]The *pileum cornutum* is characterized by a single point or hump which both covers and calls attention the Jew's horn. These pointed hats served as a "mark of Cain" and continue to be depicted in art well into the sixteenth century (Amishai-Meisels 56).

between the adherents of different faiths" (Roth 40). But if Medieval Jews were so inherently and immutably different, if baptismal waters fled before them and they could never shake off their *foetor Judaicus*, why the need for distinguishing clothing or badges? As we saw in sixteenth-century Spain, *conversos* were at once too Jewish and too similar to their Christian countrymen. *Merchant* seems to tap into the medieval roots of these contradictions surrounding race in the numerous and self-subverting attempts to distinguish between the "fair" Jessica and her father. For Shylock, the matter is clear: he sees even a rebellious Jessica as his "own flesh and blood" (3.1. 32, 35).[41] Conversely, Salarino makes the rather outrageous claim that Shylock and Jessica share *neither* flesh nor blood: the difference between their flesh likened to "jet and ivory" (37) and their blood to "red wine and Rhenish" (38). As Adelman reasons, in order to secure Jessica's whiteness, Salarino has effectively transformed Shylock into a Moor (82). But this remains at the level of empty rhetoric: as we remember, Portia, elsewhere so conscious of racial difference, is unable to distinguish the merchant from the Jew (4.1.171), clearly, Shylock's skin is not a glossy black. Jessica herself does not disclaim her biological link, but rather attempts to distance herself from it through her own behaviour, declaring herself to be "a daughter to his blood,/..[but] not to his manners" (2.3.18-19). In her determination to jettison her Jewish identity, Jessica seems to align herself with the numerous would-be self-fashioners who energetically strut their doomed ambition on the early modern stage. Curiously, Jessica does not refer here to *flesh*, though the play elsewhere insists on her "fair" flesh as what distinguishes her from her father and, of

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[41]Here Shylock is quite unlike King Lear whose unvarying response to daughterly-rebellion is to immediately disavow his paternal blood relationship.

course, as what constitutes the bond. One possible explanation for this is the theory, discussed by Shapiro, that the pound of "flesh" refers, in an instance of circumcision overkill, to the male organ. Shapiro points out that by the late sixteenth century, the word *flesh* is consistently used in place of *penis* (122). If the word retains that association, with all its concomitant psychological baggage of castration anxiety, it is fitting that Jessica does not describe herself as sharing her father's "flesh."

The race discussion becomes further complicated when during the trial scene, Shylock makes a derisive aside after observing the apparent faithlessness of Bassanio and Graziano. Shylock concludes that he would have preferred "any of the stock of Barabas" for his daughter rather than a Christian (4.1.293). If this alludes to Barabbas of the New Testament, it seems an uncharacteristic choice for Shylock whose frame of reference has hitherto been, appropriately enough for an ostensible Jew, the Old Testament. Is this simply an instance of the play signaling that Shylock is a wicked Jew who, like his literary ancestors, continues to reenact the betrayal of Christ? What troubles this reading is the context in which it occurs: Shylock's comment is precipitated by the bad behaviour on the part of the Christians who are, with their boastful speeches, casually breaking their newly-made marital bonds. Shylock's criticism actually echoes the criticism made by both Portia and Nerissa in their asides, placing his judgment squarely, at least for this moment, on the side of the angels. More persuasive is that the allusion would bring to mind Marlowe's Barabas who, of course, was named in honour of the exchanged thief. This seems more plausible given both the popularity of *The Jew of Malta* when Shakespeare was writing *Merchant* and the creative rivalry that existed between the two

playwrights.[42] But if Barabas is read as Marlowe's villainous hero, what do we make of Shylock's wish that Jessica had married one of his descendants? Given Abigail's death and Barabas's spectacular end in a boiling cauldron, the play makes it quite clear that he left none. Thus the only "stock" of Barabas is what was left in the pot.

In her discussion of the instability of race in the early modern period, Lara Bovilsky argues that by virtue of its very impossibility, the allusion to the "stock of Barabas" which suggests "consanguinity" and a "shared genetic stock"(71) underscores the tenuousness and illogic of defining religious or racial groups in this way (72). Though the play problematizes Jewishness as a racial category, it still leaves us with sense that no matter what made Jessica Jewish, be it biology or culture, she is not quite assimilable. Bovilsky rejects the argument made by some critics that Jewish women, because their bodies do not bear the mark of circumcision, are better able to cross the boundary into Christendom than men. Contrasting Shylock's forced conversion with Jessica's voluntary one, she argues that "he is most Jewish before his enforced conversion; she, after her elective one" (88).

The Lion's Shadow: Jessica as Unassimilable Jew

Many critics have looked at the richly enigmatic "In such a night" dialogue between Jessica and Lorenzo enlisting it as evidence for either Jessica's successful integration, or as confirmation of her outsider status. The repetition of "In such a night" as an opening refrain gives it the feel of a playful, dueling duet. Yet, most recent critics read the duet as dissonant: Jessica remains an outsider and the exchange is usually

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[42]One also thinks of the several explicit references to Marlowe in *As You Like It.*

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interpreted as expressing her "postcoital regret"(Metzger 59).   As many readers have pointed out, all the classical lovers mentioned come to tragic ends. Adelman also observes that all the unions are childless (presumably, *after* Medea kills her children). The examples of Troilus, Dido and Medea are particularly resonant as they involve betrayal as well. Despite the tragic denouements, it is interesting that in each of the brief descriptions, the classical lovers are all situated within bucolic settings and engaged in gestures that bespeak their love or longing for their beloved. Even murderous Medea is in a nurturing mode, "gather[ing] enchanted herbs to "renew" Jason's father Aeson (5.1.13-14). This seems in stark contrast to Lorenzo, who when he shifts to include himself and Jessica in this pantheon of ill-fated lovers, drags up a sordid, material aspect of their courtship: that Jessica stole "from the wealthy Jew/And with an unthrift love did run from Venice/As far as Belmont" (15-17). This is certainly a far cry from seeing her "wise," "fair" and "true" as he does after hauling away Shylock's casket of ducats (2.6). Though the movement he charts is away from Venice, this seems yet another instance where shared mercantile values suggest an equivalence between the two imaginative spaces.

The only allusion among the classical pairs that does not involve betrayal is to Thisbe. Though not deceived by her lover Pyramus, she *is* mistaken. As Jessica tells it: "In such a night/Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew/And saw the lion's shadow ere himself/And ran dismayed away" (5.1.6-9). Shakespeare's alterations are curious: as there is no reference made to Pyramus, it would seem that *himself* refers to the lion. But in the

versions that Shakespeare would have known, the lion is most clearly identified as a

lioness. Here is how the animal appears in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*:

> Allas! Than cometh a wilde *lyonesse*
>
> Out of the wode, withoute more arest,
>
> With blody mouth, of strangelynge of a best,
>
> To drynken of the welle there as she sat.
>
> And whan that Tisbe hadde espyed that,
>
> She rist hire up, with a ful drery herte,
>
> And in a cave with dredful fot she sterte. (805-811)

This is quite similar to Golding's translation of Ovid:

> ...there comes besmerde with blood,
>
> About the chappes a *Lionesse* all foming from the wood
>
> From slaughter lately made of kine to slaunch hir bloudie thurst
>
> With water of the foresaid spring. Whome Thisbe spying furst
>
> A farre by moonelight, thereupon with fearfull steppes gan flie
>
> And in a darke and irksome cave did hide herselfe thereby. (Book Four, 120-5)

Given the deliberate way in which his sources identify the beast as a *lioness*, it seems

unlikely that Shakespeare would have forgotten this detail. This becomes even more

apparent when we consider *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which includes a performance

of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. Here Snug the Joiner, while humorously dismantling

the scant remains of the fourth wall, offers the following disclaimer to preclude

frightening the gentle-hearted ladies in the audience: "Then know that I as Snug the

joiner am/A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam" (5.1.221-2). Following David Bevington's

note, this line is part of Snug's repeated reassurance that this is just theatre: he is merely

enacting the part of fierce lion, but in reality he is "no lion's dam" as in Shakespeare's

source (221 n). Alternatively, we might understand the reference to the lion's dam as an

instance of Snugian braggadocio: he is a (masculine) lion *fell*, *not* the (female) lion of the

original story. Either way, Shakespeare's text demonstrates a clear awareness that in the

Pyramus and Thisbe story, the beast is a lioness.

   We also might recall how Shakespeare emphasizes a lion's gender elsewhere: in

As You Like It a lioness assumes a "catlike watch" over the sleeping Oliver. Significantly,

she is described as "suck'd": nursing her cubs has made her thirsty and hence her mother's

milk, normally a Shakespearean shorthand for tender mercies, has made *this* mother more

dangerously predatory.[43] If we accept that this change was deliberate, might it signal an

example of careless *mis*reading? Just as Jessica has misread her Ovid, so she has misread

her husband Lorenzo. The other alteration concerns the shadow. In Ovid, Thisbe flees "in

terror to a *shadowy* cave" (4. 100), which Golding renders as "darke and yrkesome," but

linking the shadow to the lion is Shakespeare's invention.

   The lion itself is a polyvalent symbol richly relevant to the play's preoccupations:

in addition to its well-known associations with strength and majesty, the *winged* lion is

the emblem of Venice, through its association with St. Mark, the city's patron saint. It is

also a symbol of Christ. The Christian association derives in part from the legend that

lion cubs were born dead and only came to life three days after birth; thus, lions are

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[43]Though, like Orlando when he intrudes upon the feast to procure food for Old Adam,
the lioness's ferocity is in the service of kindness.

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linked to the Resurrection (Ferguson 21). The origin of the lion-as-Christ derives from the biblical tribe of Judah, from which Jewish kings descended, and which bears the sign of a lion based on Jacob's death-bed blessing of his son Judah (*Genesis* 49:9). Christian sources emphasize Jesus's genealogy as coming from this royal tribe and thus Jesus is called the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Hulme 164). Yet we see that the Jewish connection persists beyond biblical appropriation: in *The Book of the Beasts,* a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman work by Philip de Thaun, the poet begins by explaining that the lion "signifies the son of St. Mary" but soon the lion's ferocity is directed to one specific prey: "...with a fierce look/he will appear to the Jews, when he shall judge them,/because they made themselves guilty when they hanged him on the cross" (Wright l. 23, 26-28). Furthermore, anatomizing the symbolism of the lion's various parts, he explains that "by the claws, is meant vengeance upon the Jews" (l.38). Thus the play's alteration of the lioness into a lion has the effect of enlisting a powerful Medieval image of Christianity's anti-Judaism to "cast a shadow" over the story of Jessica's conversion and marriage. But the lion of Judah is a contested site in that it continued to be used by Jews, particularly in a redemptive Messianic context, despite the Christian borrowing. Thus the lion also underscores the theme, explored at length in 1.3 during Shylock and Antonio's debate, of the contest over the interpretation of the scriptural past.

Thisbe is Jessica's first example and it is possible to see all the forlorn heroines as bearing some connection to the Jessica of act five, whose melancholy observation: "I am never merry when I hear sweet music," is the last line she speaks before becoming a

silent on-stage presence (5.1.69).[44] If we read Thisbe as a stand-in for Jessica, we can understand her fear of the lion—whether as the literal beast or the ferocious symbol of Christianity. But why is what actually scares her the lion's *shadow*? Might Jessica's treatment as "Lorenzo's infidel" constitute a dark adumbration of a universalist and welcoming Christianity and have been enough to "dismay" her and cause her to regret her conversion? The notion of Christianity and its shadow might suggest the two contradictory strands within it that so affected the Jews in England and in Spain: the desire to convert the Jews and the reluctance to integrate them. Addressing another perennial source of tension, Adelman argues that Christianity is "radically dependent on Jewish origins that must be simultaneously embraced and denied" (65). Thus we can understand the vigorous rejection of Judaism as Medieval Christianity's "differentiation process from ancient Israel" (Lazar 40). These contradictory impulses that we have seen in the historical treatment of Jews are reflected in Shakespeare's play: Shylock and Jessica are at once drawn in as converts and also pushed away; indispensable to the play's exploration of the instability of race and contested biblical interpretation, but ultimately unassimilable.

The Upstart Jew

An aspect of Jewish representation that pertains specifically to the early modern stage is how the figure of the Jew becomes a means of exploring the possibilities of a self-created identity. To the extent that some (former) Jews lived in England in the 1590s, these were *conversos* from the Iberian peninsula, who worked as merchants or physicians

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[44]Like Medea, Jessica has abandoned her own family to become part of Lorenzo's Christian family. Her fortune will surely "renew" the house of Lorenzo.

and lived outwardly as faithful Christians. But this was a small community; according to

Shapiro, the Marrano circle in London numbered less than a hundred (72). In "The Jew as

Renaissance Man," Peter Berek argues that a Jew in England was the paradigmatic self-

created and "anxiety-producing" Renaissance man of the 1500s (128). This helps to

explain Marlowe's[45] choice of a Jewish protagonist for one of his dangerous upstarts: the

Jew now residing in England would have begun his career of self-invention with a

"counterfeit profession" (*The Jew of Malta* 1.2.291) to Catholicism while living in Spain

or Portugal. The move to England would then have required him to act outwardly as a

Protestant, while he continued to live covertly as a Jew (Berek 133).[46] The Marrano, in

so far as he is compelled to play a series of parts, is easy to associate with an overtly

"theatrical" a figure; one which as Berek states, "enables the playwright to express and at

the same time to condemn the impulse in both culture and theatre to treat selfhood and

social role as a matter of choice" (158). Thus in this period emerges a new form of

Jewishness that serves as a vehicle for exploring dangerously exciting new possibilities

for English identity. If the New Christian in England invented a self that was "plural and

unstable," it also drew attention to how, in a more general sense, "identity might be

willed or chosen" (Berek 130). Yet, in keeping with the notion of the ever-changing and

often contradictory nature of Jewish representation, simultaneously appealing to the early

modern audience is the figure of the inconvertible Jew. As Brett Hirsch asserts, given

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[45]Berek's focus is on *The Jew of Malta* as it is the "crucial initiatory text" (128) to which
Shakespeare's play is indebted.
[46]Shapiro cites testimony revealing that London Marranos attended Church faithfully
while observing Jewish rites such as the Sabbath and Passover secretly at home (72). The
fact that recusancy charges are not recorded after accusations are brought against them
suggests that the interest of the State, as it was for its Catholic minority, was primarily in
maintaining a national public conformity.

how fraught the issue of conversion was in the aftermath of the Reformation, the idea of a "fixed and unchanging Jew" (35) had a particular attraction for the English who had endured much violent see-sawing of their official Church.

I would argue that both of these figures find their way into Shakespeare's play. Shylock exhibits the stalwart identification with his people and traditions that we would associate with the "unchanging" Jew. He never reappears after his off-stage forced conversion, and yet he is referred to as "the rich Jew" (5.1.292) after it has presumably taken place. Jessica is closer to the self-fashioning figure. Though we might argue that Jessica changes very little over the course of the play--when we first meet her, she is an aspiring Christian unhappy in her father's home, and at the end of the play, she is still an aspiring Christian, now unhappy in Belmont. Yet, she does set out to unmake her inherited Jewish identity, albeit with Lorenzo's help. As she confidently tells Lancelot: "I shall be saved by my husband; he hath made me a Christian" (3.4.17). Perhaps in presenting her as dependent on Lorenzo, whose own motives for marrying her are suspiciously mercantile, the play is exploring not only the Jewish *penchant* for self-transformation, but qualifying it by suggesting how ultimate success is tenuous and dependent upon the volatile attitudes of others, in this case Christians, to integrating those who are still perceived as strangers.

Though there is only one Jewish play, Shakespeare continues to include allusions to *convertites,* who he finds so full of "matter." We might think of this as moving from exploring conversion through the lens of Jewish particularism to adopting a more generalized focus on the constructed nature of identity. In the "In such a night" dialogue,

the first couple Lorenzo alludes to is Troilus and Cressida and some three years after

writing *Merchant,* Shakespeare revisits conversion with *Troilus and Cressida.* Though

Cressida is unable to escape her literary destiny as the symbol of feminine inconstancy,

like the *scriniaria* Jew I have been focussing on, she also becomes a site on which

various meanings are inscribed. Just as Marlowe relativizes Barabas's bad behaviour by

making everyone in Malta driven by the same "desire of gold" (3.5.4), Shakespeare

adopts an iconoclastic approach to the Trojan War by making it into a brutal marketplace

where all value is in flux and many of the men in both camps, even the conventionally

idealized Hector,[47] display an unnerving volatility. Thus Cressida's famed inconstancy

ceases to be her defining characteristic. Like a Marrano, Cressida initially engages in

some strategic dissembling, self-defensively pretending not to care about the love-struck

Troilus, while in reality, as she finally admits, she had actually loved him "for many wear

months" (3.2.117). When she tells Troilus that: "I have a kind of self resides with

you;/But an unkind self that itself will leave/To be another's fool" (3.2.149-51), her

statement is not only an ironic acknowledgment to what we know to be inevitable, but it

signals her internalization of Ulysses' argument that we can only know ourselves "by

reflection" (3.3.99). Like Jessica, Cressida is dependent on her lover for the temporary

refashioning of her identity. Thus her "inconstancy" might be more accurately understood

as her doomed attempt to conform herself to Troilus's vision of her. In the highly

specularized betrayal scene witnessed by Troilus, Ulysses and Thersites, Cressida

continues to be aware of herself as divided as she struggles between her love for Troilus

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[47]Hector who, "Holds honor far more precious-dear than life" (5.3.28) kills the silent
soldier merely for the sake of his armour.

and her sober appraisal of her situation as a vulnerable woman in need of the brutal Diomedes for protection in the Greek camp. Though she stands condemned from her very first whisper by the men who confidently attempt to "read" and then "write" her, the play emphasizes the fragmentary and self-serving nature of their interpretations. Like the Jews, she is used as a *scrinaria* to confirm Thersites's cynical observation that women are but motivators of "wars and lechery" (5.3.199). Yet the staging of the scene with its layered asides, whispered words and unread letter emphasizes how their interpretations are at best partial. Troilus acknowledges this in his succinctly stated reflection that may well apply to many of Shakespeare's complex and enigmatic characters: "This is, and is not, Cressid" (143). Like the literary Jew, Cressida is saddled by the weight of her inescapable literary history. But while the play acknowledges this history and bows to accommodate its inevitable trajectory, Shakespeare makes her more than just a "daughter of the game." For she, like the *convertite,* is filled with impenetrable matter.

If much of this chapter is historically driven, it is because one cannot make sense of the polyvalent and often contradictory representations of Jew in the Medieval and early modern periods without a sense of the key historical and theological moments that served to keep those *scriniaria* in constant use. *The Merchant of Venice* is, of course, a seminal play in that its enduring stage life has unfortunately disseminated and perpetuated some of the most negative stereotypes about Jews. Yet, as I have argued, the play is so rich that in addition to tapping into so many of the crucial sites of conflict within Jewish-Christian relations such as hermeneutics, circumcision, usury, conversion and race, it also draws attention to the artifice of these stereotypical characterizations by

creating Jewish characters that defy easy compartmentalization. Furthermore, through the prominent use of the caskets and their resemblance to the historical *archae,* the stage props silently evoke the sad history of the Jews in England, the relentlessly broken bonds that characterized their fragile position in a Christian world and their ultimate inability to be integrated into it.

Chapter Two: "Judas as Enabling Fantasy"

"His kisses are Judas's own children" (*As You Like It* 3.4.9)

"He that hath made a sorrie wedding
Between his soul and gold, and hath preferr'd
False gain before the true,
Hath done what he condemnes in reading:
For he hath sold for money his deare Lord,
And is a Judas-Jew" (George Herbert. "Self-Condemnation" 13-18)

"My bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (*Psalms* 41:9).

<u>Four Gospels in Search of a Character</u>

The trajectory of Shylock's performance history from a somewhat humanized vice figure

to a tragic protagonist demonstrates how the character's rich ambiguity enabled him to

serve as a *scrinaria* for changing perceptions and contexts. But if we shift our focus

backward to Shylock's primary biblical and literary antecedent, we see that despite being

consistently associated with history's most notorious betrayal, Judas is a figure whose

very inception in the Gospels is characterized by powerful contradictions. Was the twelfth

apostle a Satanic figure whose actions led to the crucifixion of Jesus or was he the agent

of G-d's will who died of remorse and enabled the salvation of humanity? These

contradictory representations persist as his compellingly enigmatic presence punctuates

centuries of drama, art and film. Judas straddles all forms and levels of cultural

production, from highbrow to glam-pop: He is the swarthy ardent lover of a receptive

Jesus in Ludovico Carracci's erotic painting *The Kiss of Judas* (1589); the idealistic

freedom-fighter with just a tinge of red in his hair who betrays only at Jesus's insistence

in Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation* (1988); and, more recently, Judas is the

"demon" Lady Gaga "clings to" in a catchy electro-dance number about an unfaithful lover (2011).

Building on my *scrinaria* argument of the the first chapter, in this chapter I will illustrate how Judas becomes his own "writing desk" on which Christians work through a variety of doubts and anxieties. Despite his increasing vilification in the Gospels, Judas develops into his own character: one who is riven with contradictions and often reviled, but one who is also sometimes an object of sympathy and even admiration. Judas is so unique that, as my reading of the Corpus Christi plays illustrate, he actually parts company from his co-religionists. While the "Jews-in-general," through their stubborn disbelief, will function as undifferentiated, negative foils for the Christians, Judas will retain his unique status as the ultimate protean Jew.

Unfortunately for Jewish/Christian relations, it is a Judas devoid of ambiguity who has been traditionally identified by Christian theologians, from antiquity through the Reformation, both Catholic and Protestant, with *all* Jews. The Judas from whom all Jews are believed to descend is the Judas of betrayal and base materiality, an abject object whose bursting bowels arouse disgust. And yet, as Susan Gubar argues in her comprehensive *Judas: A Biography*, from the earliest canonical and non-canonical texts, this apostle exhibits "shifting affiliations" speaking at times as a Jew, at times as a Christian, and at times "as a person with no religious affiliations at all" (12). Gubar sees this indeterminacy as reflective of the early "inseparability of Judaism and Christianity, their scandalous melding or permeability" (34). This is clearly something that the Gospels increasingly sought to redress as early Christianity strove to distinguish itself

from the religion that gave birth to it and the Jewish texts it would continue to appropriate and reinterpret.

Judas's impact, like Shylock's, is disproportionate to his relatively brief textual appearance; both have retained their cultural relevance and have been the subject of recent rehabilitation efforts. In a 2009 *New Yorker* essay, Joan Acocella suggests that the revisionary approach to Judas is due to two factors: one is collective guilt about the Holocaust which compels those who seek to defend Jews to begin by disproving Judas's guilt; the other is the 2006 publication of the fragment of the *Gnostic Gospel of Judas*, one of the four texts discovered in a burial cave in Middle Egypt in 1978, and known as the *Codex Tchacos*. Dating from around the second century C.E, the *Gospel of Judas* is not putatively authored by Judas, but rather it is about his relationship with Jesus and what Jesus reveals to him about the nature of the divine. Here Judas is portrayed as the closest of Jesus's disciples. He is singled out from the start as Jesus commands him to "move away from the others" in order to "explain to [him] the mysteries of the kingdom" but he is also warned that he will "go through a lot of grief" (Meyer 55). The duality of Judas, the arch-villain recently re-imagined as hero, seems anticipated in this lost gospel in the destiny that Jesus promises him: though "you will be cursed by the other generations, eventually you will rule over them" (60). Unlike some of the canonical Gospels, here the handing over of Jesus by Judas is not treated as a betrayal motivated by financial gain. The subject is introduced when Jesus tells Judas that "You will sacrifice the man who bears me" (65). Though the statement is enigmatic, most scholars interpret this in a positive light as a necessary act of spiritual enabling with Judas as the disciple

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chosen to release Jesus from his temporary human form. And though the Gospel, which is incomplete, ends with Judas simply handing Jesus over to the high priests, Judas tells Jesus that he saw himself in a vision being stoned by the other disciples, thus there is the suggestion that Judas becomes a martyr in the fulfillment of Jesus's command.

Though the authors of the medieval texts I will be discussing could not have read this recently recovered Gospel, nevertheless, the church father Irenaeus *does* discuss a Gospel of Judas in his attack on gnosticism, *Against Heresies* (c 180) and what he says coincides closely with the fragment (Ehrman 63). Thus, it is possible that through Irenaeus, this subversive and sympathetic approach to an already unstable character might have been known, at least by reputation, in the Middle Ages (Leydon 19). After reviewing Judas's progressive vilification in the Gospels, this chapter will examine several medieval incarnations of Judas: as he appears in the *Golden Legend,* the Medieval Ballad of Judas (MS Cambridge, B.14.39) and the Corpus Christi plays. These diverse texts show us a Judas who transcends easy demonization. Undoubtedly, Judas served as both opponent and enabler of Christ in the New Testament and subsequently, in the early years of Christianity, his traitorous rejection of Christ helped to sharpen the distinction between Jew and Gentile. In this chapter, I follow Judas through his biblical and medieval transformations. Though I argue that Judas was a fiction originally created to harmonize the contradictory accounts within the New Testament, the literary Judas becomes implicated in a feedback loop with actual medieval history: the eucharistic controversies and the blood libels of this period. Yet alongside this often painful history, the Judas of these medieval texts is psychologically complex and his function is

expanded beyond his role as Christ's betrayer to enable an exploration of subjectivity and free-will.

As Gubar points out, whether commentators followed the story of Judas's death from bursting bowels in Acts or the version in Matthew in which he hangs from a tree, they were consistent in emphasizing Judas's "stinky deformity" and "bodily outpourings"; these leakages also serve to feminize him (110). The other perennial association is between Judas and his money—Matthew is the first to identify the thirty pieces of silver as the motive for the betrayal of Christ and even though Luke and John emphasize Judas's satanic motivation, Christian iconography often depicts him with a money-bag. As Freud explains in "Character and Anal Eroticism," the identification of gold with excrement is an ancient one. As he succinctly observes, "Dirt is matter in the wrong place" (172). Freud cites the ancient Babylonian doctrine in which "gold is the faeces of Hell" and the tale whereby the gold given by the Devil to his paramours turns to excrement after his departure (173). Judas, with his money bag and gushing bowels, neatly unites these intertwined antitheses within one detested figure. While I follow Susan Gubar's general argument that the divergent Judas characters sprang from the contradictions within the Gospel accounts (Gubar 94), the readings of the Gospels are my own, informed by the work of a number of other scholars, particularly Frank Kermode. In terms of the medieval texts in this chapter, I add to Gubar's work by including an analysis of the Judas Cyriacus tale from the *Legenda aurea,* and by providing much more detailed analyses of both The Ballad of Judas and Judas's roles within the Corpus Christi

plays. I argue that in spite of the predominance of negative imagery patterns associated

with Jews, medieval writers are particularly creative in their deployment of the familiar.

Any discussion of Judas's development as an enigmatic and protean character

must begin with his biblical origins in the Christian Scriptures. As in the medieval period,

in ancient times textual legitimacy was established by invoking a much earlier *auctoritas*.

For the emerging Christian community, the Jewish Scriptures were the well-known and

ancient source that was used to confer authenticity upon the life of Jesus. But this leads to

hermeneutical circularity. As Northrop Frye points out in *The Great Code* in his

discussion of the New Testament's reliance upon the Old*:*

> How do we know that the Gospel story is true? Because it confirms the
>
> prophecies in the Old Testament. But how do we know that the Old Testament
>
> prophecies are true? Because they are confirmed by the Gospel story...The two
>
> testaments form a double mirror, each reflecting the other but neither the world
>
> outside. (78)

In "Tanakh Sources of Judas Iscariot," Lawrence Briskin uses the term *eisegesis*

to describe how the writers of the Gospels employ the Jewish scriptures as a "source

book for the life of Jesus" (189). While biblical *exegesis* ("to lead out") denotes

extracting meaning from the text through linguistic and contextual analysis, *eisegesis* ("to

lead into") is inserting one's own ideas into the text. Thus by demonstrating that all the

details of the life of Jesus had been foretold in the Jewish Scriptures, the writers of the

Gospels were simultaneously able to invoke the authority of an established tradition and

supplant it. Frank Kermode describes how Old Testament texts were deliberately

collected in codex form for the use of preachers seeking to prove the truth of the New Testament. Such a text was known as a "*testimonium*" (82). Citing the opinion of some scholars that codex forms of collections of these texts circulated even prior to the writing of the Christian Scriptures, Kermode suggests that parts of the gospel narratives may have taken their form through a process of "narrative interpretation" of these collected texts: thus the gospel stories arose out of a process of creative extrapolation: they are the *midrashim*[48] on *testimonia* (82).

The Jewish Scriptures were written in Hebrew and were translated into Greek between 300 and 100 BCE; this is known as "The Septuagint" and this version is the one that early Christians would have been familiar with (Briskin 189). The Gospels were written in Greek and the generally accepted chronology dates Mark at 70, Matthew at 80, Luke at 90 and John at 100. The epistles of Paul are dated earlier, around 50 CE. Though Matthew and Luke are based on Mark, Biblical scholars hypothesize the existence of an earlier text they refer to as "Q" for *Quelle*, which means "source" in German. As there were many gospels in circulation, the selection of these four gospels, between 180 and 200 C.E., involved the denunciation of others, including the Gospel of Judas, as heretical (Pagels *Origin* 70). Some scholars (Briskin, Maccoby, Meyer, Kermode) believe that the character of Judas was cut out of whole cloth for narrative or theological necessity. This

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Midrash is defined as the "Jewish homiletic commentary on ...the Hebrew scriptures, in which free use is made of allegorical interpretation and legendary illustration." (*O.E.D*) What is significant about the use of this Hebrew term is that it posits that methodology, as well as content, are indebted to the Jewish source.

is based on Judas's absence from non-Christian sources like Josephus and the fact that he is not named in Paul. Judas is nowhere to be found in the Talmud. Biblical scholars infer his absence from Gospel Q as well (Robinson 5).

Judas Iscariot's name recalls *Judah* (*Yehuda* in Hebrew), the fourth son of Jacob whose name literally means "to thank G-d." Its derivation came to denote the Jewish people in general, *Yehudim* or Jews. For the origin of "Iscariot" there are two possibilities: it may derive from "*ish Keriot"* which is Hebrew for "a man of Keriot," a city in Judea, or more intriguingly, it might derive from *sicarii*, meaning either "short dagger" or "assassins" and referring to Jewish resistance fighters who used to hide their weapons beneath their cloaks (Gubar 31). The Judas of the Christian Scriptures, with all the pernicious associations he drags along with him like the filthy bag of lucre, followed the same trajectory of generalization as the original Judah, beginning as one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, and then coming to signify *all* Jews. But clearly this was the point: Judas *needed* to represent all Jews in order to consolidate the still-tentative sense of difference between the nascent Christian sect and the Jewish community from which it was drawn. As Jeremy Cohen points out, it was important for the early Christian teachers to differentiate between themselves and the Jews—thus the latter became defined almost exclusively as those who did not accept Jesus, those who should have, as witnesses to the events, more than anyone else, accepted G-d's offer of salvation. Thus the Jews became Christianity's "primary 'other.'" Cohen sees the Jewish refusal to recognize Jesus as the Messiah as leading directly to the notion of Jew as Christ killer (28). Thus Judas was multiply enabling: as the Betrayer, he helped to bring about Salvation; as a representative

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of the demonic Jews, he helped to finalize the divorce of Christianity from Judaism (Maccoby 80) and he retained his relevance by becoming the perpetual emblem for a nation of Judas-Jews. The persistence of this conflation is illustrated by the words of the renowned twentieth-century Protestant theologian Karl Barth:

> Who is this Judas?...he obviously represents the Jews...He merely does that which has made Yahweh's rejection of His chosen people inevitable....These thirty pieces of silver are not a surprise...Judas and all Israel, Judas and in with him the Jews as such! Like Esau, the rejected of G-d, they sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. (*Church Dogmatics,*2:464-65. Ctd in *Christ Killers* 259)

The story of Judas's betrayal of Jesus is at once deeply compelling and very familiar: the notion of the treachery of the "trusted, bosom friend...who ate of my bread" described by the psalmist taps into our own primal fears and evokes the biblical tales of brotherly betrayal such as Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau and Joseph and his brothers. The gospel story of Judas seems to draw some of its details from Judah's sale of his brother Joseph for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. 37:25-28). Like the gospel accounts, Joseph's betrayal is connected with a meal, during which the brothers of Joseph sit down to discuss his fate. The other source that the writers may have drawn upon is the story of Absalom who revolts against his father, King David. Like Judas, Absalom has a history of pernicious kissing: in order to enlist support for his rebellion among the people, "he would put out his hand and take hold of them, and kiss them" (2 Samuel 15:5. Ctd in Gubar 179).

The idea of betrayal in the Christian Scriptures is not found before the gospel of

Mark. Though most standard bibles use this term in the earlier epistles of Paul, when he

refers to "the night in which he [Jesus] *was betrayed"* (I Cor 11.23), without naming a

betrayer, scholars point out that the word *betrayed* is a significant mistranslation of the

Greek word *paradidomi,* which means "to deliver" and refers in other contexts to an act

of G-d (Ehrman 16). Thus all we know from the historically more reliable Paul is that

Jesus was turned over to the Romans. Furthermore, it does not happen during Passover

and there is no mention of a Jewish trial; these details do not appear until twenty years

later (Briskin 195). In *The Genesis of Secrecy,* Kermode accounts for the increasingly

complex treatments of characters such as Judas and Pilate by demonstrating how what

began as a "plot-agent" (Betrayer or Judge, respectively) was elaborated into a character,

thereby generating more narrative. This in turn made the character, as Kermode terms it,

"*disponible,*" thereby generating even more narrative. This "endless elaboration" is only

halted when a work is published or a particular version is canonized (79). We can see this

principle at work with the character of Judas in the difference between Mark and

Matthew: in the former, the incident with the costly ointment used to anoint Jesus

engenders some grumbling against the anonymous woman's profligacy among unnamed

apostles (14: 3-9). Then the next verse announces rather suddenly: "And Judas Iscariot,

one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to *betray* him unto them" (10). Though the

chief priests promise to give him money, this is not Judas's motive; the reader of Mark

must therefore fill in the gap to infer that the ointment episode (where opposition is not

attributed specifically to Judas) is what motivated the betrayal. Though later critics might

read into this a Iago-like "motiveless-malignity," when we compare this account to Matthew, the transformation of a plot-agent to a character becomes apparent: Matthew fills in the gap and provides the motive; thus after the episode of the ointment, (to which *all* the disciples object), the next verse announces: "*Then* one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said to them, 'What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" (26:14-15). They promise him the thirty pieces of silver in exchange. Thus the general indignation about wastefulness at the expense of the poor segues antithetically to Judas's own greed which now becomes his motivation for betraying Christ. Judas has ceased to be a mere function: as the apostle who betrays due to avarice, he is now a character whose every action can be fruitfully supplemented and explained by midrashic commentary.

Before turning to Luke and John, the tangled source of the infamous thirty pieces of silver is worth clarifying. In Matthew, Judas's failed bid at repentance leads him to cast the silver in the temple and hang himself; the priests then use the money to buy the potter's field and the gospel writer, invoking the Jewish Scriptural proof, declares: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued...'" (27: 9). As many biblical scholars point out, the writer seems to have confused the Prophet Jeremiah with the Prophet Zechariah: Jeremiah speaks of "*seventeen shekels of silver*" (Jer. 32:10) making the writer of Matthew thirteen shekels short of a load. There are two sources in the Hebrew bible that refer to *thirty* shekels: the prophet Zechariah recounts how the "shepherd" (of men—the prophet) receives this sum when he is dismissed by the people.

He is then divinely commanded to "cast it to the potter: a goodly price that I was priced at of them" (11:13); the use of "goodly" here is clearly ironic as the meaning of the verse is that this payment was insufficient, for the shepherd's labour has been undervalued. Secondly, in Exodus (21:32) *thirty* shekels is the amount in damages paid to the owner of a slave who dies when gored by another's ox. (The animal is subsequently killed.) Gubar argues that both of these sources are examples of "inadequate reparations" in which the money cannot redress the wrong (69). If in the Jewish Scriptures this number denotes insufficiency, what does this translate to the context of Judas's selling of Jesus? Though it certainly makes the priests appear knowingly wicked for equating the life of Christ with that of a slave, it also situates Judas, as the receiver of this paltry sum, on the side of the under-recompensed victims (69). Though the next verse tells us, "And from that time he [Judas] sought opportunity to betray him" (Matthew 26:16), one wonders whether the ambiguity about the value of the thirty shekels might contribute to sympathetic readings of Judas where he is more "Fortune's Fool" than a miser driven by a love of money.

When we turn to Luke and John, a new motivation is provided for Judas's betrayal: the devil made him do it. In Luke, the episode with the ointment is placed earlier (7:37-39); it is unconnected to the Judas plot and it functions as a springboard for Jesus to teach about the necessity for forgiveness. The Betrayer is introduced seemingly as an afterthought when the writer lists the names of the twelve disciples and Judas whose name appears last, is described as: "Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor" (6:16). After this, the Gospel goes silent on Judas for sixteen chapters until the chief priests and scribes are scheming how to do away with Jesus and, without warning or

provocation, "Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot" (22:3). As Elaine Pagels suggests in her overview of the Gospels, Luke saw Matthew's avarice as an insufficient motive for the betrayal. By attributing Judas's betrayal of Jesus to the work of Satan, Luke's narrative more deliberately foregrounds that this is all part of the unfolding of a Divine plan. The paradox of the demonic motivation is that Judas seems at once more innately wicked and yet perhaps more to be pitied: how can one involuntarily hijacked by Satan to play a pre-ordained role as the necessary Betrayer in the Redemption of Mankind be held responsible for his actions? Might this be in some ways ripe for a *felix culpa* argument whereby the Satanic adversary precipitates the fall that enables a greater future for Mankind?

Pagels argues that each successive version of the story "pictures Jesus increasingly in control of what happens" (24). This is apparent when we compare the versions of the famous kiss of Judas. In Mark, Jesus appears quite passive, silently receiving the kiss and then being taken (14:46); in Matthew, Jesus still receives the kiss, but he addresses Judas with a loving (and presumably knowing): "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (26:50). In Luke, Jesus aborts the intended kiss and confronts Judas with an accusation: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (22:48). Finally, the Johannine Gospel features a divine Jesus who orchestrates his own arrest. Judas seems to fade into the background here: there is no mention of a kiss, and though the Betrayer shows up with a band of men, here he is reduced to part of the cowering crowd, as Jesus, "knowing all things that should come upon him" (18:4) sallies forth and introduces himself to armed men who arrest him only at his sufferance.

The Johannine deification of Jesus and the demonization of Judas and the rest of

the Jews, occur simultaneously.[49] John speaks less of priests and Pharisees and more of

Jews who oppose Jesus at every opportunity. Jesus does not mince words here: he tells

the Jews, "You are of your father the devil" (8:44). As David Resperger writes in "Anti-

Judaism and the Gospel of John," the Fourth Gospel is "pervaded by hostility between

Jews and Jesus" (121). Thus it is not surprising that John is responsible for more

Christian anti-Semitism than any other New Testament book (122). John's treatment of

the ointment episode attempts to harmonize the inconsistencies in the synoptic Gospels

and enhance the narrative with the addition of vivid details. Firstly, the costly "ointment

of spikenard" (12:3) used to anoint the feet of Jesus is aromatic now, filling the house

with its fragrance. And while Matthew's Judas is motivated by avarice and Luke's Judas is

possessed by Satan, John harmonizes the two versions by suggesting that both are true.

Judas is repeatedly linked to the devil in this Gospel: early on, he is singled out from the

twelve when Jesus delivers this harsh accusation to his gathered disciples: "one of you is

a devil" (6:70). John announces the story of the betrayal with: "the devil having now put

into the heart of Judas Iscariot...to betray him" (13:2). A mere twenty-five verses later,

seemingly superfluously, once again Satan "enters into him," after Judas eats the sop

given to him by Jesus, in a demonic inversion of the Eucharist. While in the synoptic

Gospels *all* the other apostles share in the sacramental meal, here the spotlight is on

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[49]Another manifestation of the vilification of the Jews is the very deliberate exoneration
of Pontius Pilate in who gets "mellower in each gospel" (Pagels 33). The actual Pilate
was known from sources (both Jewish and Roman) to be a "brutal governor" whose
administration was characterized by "frequent executions without trial" (30). As
Kermode suggests, the gospel accounts depict him as "compassionate" and he was even
canonized by the Coptic church (96). Like Judas, Pilate began as a function (the Judge)
and then the story went in search of a character, creating more narrative along the way.

Judas, the only one to receive the Satanic sop. Though the devil is given a more prominent role in this Gospel, the writer makes it clear that Jesus is still very much directing events. Thus he instructs the doubly-possessed Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly" (13:27).

Yet along with its emphasis on Satan, the Johannine text also embellishes the story of Judas's greed. Where the other gospel writers have the disciples in general grumble about the costly ointment, here it is *only* Judas who objects, asking why the ointment wasn't sold for "three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" (12:5). John seems to attempt to smooth the disconnect in Mark and Matthew where a general objection to Jesus's profligacy is followed by one disciple acting, at least in Matthew, out of greed. He does this by writing what sounds like a parenthetical clarification: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor: but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bore what was put therein" (12:6). Thus Judas is not just greedy: he is now a thief and, despite Christ's foreknowledge of his essential demonic nature, he is the disciple who was entrusted with the divine purse. These resonant new details are an apt illustration of Kermode's theory of the transformation of function into character. Kermode makes the interesting observation that it takes "very little to make a character: a few indications of idiosyncrasy, or deviation from type" (98). This Johannine detail, of Judas and the money box, is one that becomes central to his representation through the ages. Judas is literally left holding the bag: and this goes far beyond the thirty pieces of silver, for as George Steiner and others have pointed out, this enmeshing of Jews with money will engender

Shylock and his ilk and, outside the world of literary representation, "the daemonic ambiguities of money ...will cling to the Jew like leprosy" (Steiner 417).

In his defence of John, David Rensperger argues that this Gospel, which is so relentless in its demonization of Jews and Judaism, was the creation of a "dissenting" but powerless community that spoke "from the margins" against the authorities whom it called "the Jews." Rensperger sees the problem of John as arising only from a later historical context, when the Christians were no longer an oppressed minority. Thus once the heirs of the marginal position became the establishment, the discourse of dissent was inappropriately enlisted in the defense of authoritarianism (151). Though this argument might temper our judgment of the unknown writer of John as someone not merely driven by anti-Judaism, when we consider the extent to which the Gospel emphasizes that the antagonism is between Jesus and his followers and "the Jews," rather than Pharisees, or priests as in the Synoptic Gospels[50], and places the blame for the crucifixion squarely on Jewish shoulders, it is difficult to see it as Rensberger does, as an "intra-Jewish debate" (159).

In terms of the enduring impact John has had in (mis)shaping Christian attitudes to Jews, George Steiner's analysis of the last moments of the Last Supper is the most insightful. Like Auerbach's scar of Odysseus, Steiner begins with a small, resonant textual detail that opens up into an historical abyss: the Gospel relates that, once instructed by Jesus to act quickly, the last words he speaks directly to his disciple, Judas

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[50]Jeremy Cohen counts the use of the collective "the Jews" as appearing more than sixty times in John while only fifteen times in all three synoptic Gospels combined. John also depicts Jesus and his followers as "distinct from the Jews" creating an opposition between "us and them" (*Christ Killers* 33).

goes into the night (13:30). Steiner sees Judas's departure into this literal darkness as emblematic of the "never-ending night of collective guilt" to which the Jewish people have been consigned:

It is sober truth to say that his exit is the door to the Shoah. The 'final solution' proposed, enacted by National Socialism in this twentieth century is the perfectly logical, axiomatic conclusion to the Judas-identification of the Jew...That utter darkness, that night within night, into which Judas is dispatched and commanded to perform 'quickly', is already that of the death-ovens. Who precisely, has betrayed whom? (417).

Though after his departure the Johannine Judas does make a brief appearance among the crowd come to arrest Jesus, he never speaks and we do not hear any more about him. For the details of his death, we have to turn to the two conflicting accounts found in Matthew and Acts. Matthew presents us with a sympathetic sinner whose rejected repentance and subsequent suicide elicit pathos:

Then Judas...repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.' And they said, 'What is that to us?'...And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, departed, and went and hanged himself. (27:3-5)

The chief priests, reluctant to put "blood money" in the Temple treasury, use it to purchase the potter's field for the burial of strangers. Briskin suggests that the incident is based on the death of the traitor Ahitophel, a former advisor to King David, who hangs himself (II Sa. 17:23) (194). The second version of the death of Judas is found in Luke's

Acts. Here we are told that Judas himself is the one to purchase the field and: "with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem" (1:18). As in Matthew's version, the name of a field near Jerusalem, "Field of Blood," is said to be derived from the incident. Though Judas's gruesome death by unexpected explosion seems unusual, there seems to be more than one possible source: Crossan argues it is modelled on Nadan who betrayed Ahiqar and consequently swelled up and burst (74), while Briskin finds the precedent in the death of the wicked king Jehoram (II Chr. 21:15) whose bowel disorder was more of of a chronic nature, causing him to die only two years later. My own suggestion is the story of the *Sotah*: the wife suspected by her husband of adultery. This ritual is designed to provide incontrovertible proof of either her guilt or her innocence, in the case where the husband has only imagined her guilt, because he is overcome by a "spirit of jealousy" (Numbers 5:14). If she refuses to confess her sin, she is compelled to drink the bitter waters. If innocent, the waters will act as a blessing and she will conceive, but if she is guilty of this most private betrayal, the drink, administered to her publicly by the priest, will cause "her belly [to] swell, and her thigh [to] rot: and [make her] a curse among her people" (5:27). What these sources and Judas's death in Acts have in common is the suggestion that an awful, repulsive death is the fitting recompense for a treacherous life. Perhaps there is even an element of measure for measure justice in the punishment meted out: just as the betrayer has "turned" on those closest to him, he deserves literally to be "turned inside out" so that what is foul and hidden becomes exposed. The person's body becomes as loathsome as their crime.

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One additional version of Judas's death is included as it serves as a vivid illustration of how images of scatology, pathology and sexuality are conflated to inscribe Judas's perfidy on his body. This description was found in a text by the second century bishop, Papias of Hieropolis. Though outside the Christian Scriptures, this version was preserved in later collections of commentaries on Matthew and Acts (Crossan 75):

> Judas was a dreadful, walking example of impiety in this world, with his flesh bloated to such an extent that he could not walk through a space where a wagon could easily pass...His private parts were shamefully huge and loathsome to behold and, transported through them from all parts of his body, pus and worms flooded out together as he shamefully relieved himself...Not even to this day can anybody pass by the place without shielding his nostrils with his hands! Such is the afflux that goes through his flesh [and even pours] out on the ground. (*The Fragments of Papias*; ctd in Crossan 75).

This description is a significant departure in that while Luke describes a loathsome *manner* of dying, here the abject object has become Judas himself: a smelly, incontinent and vilely sexualized monster. Thus when we think about the way Jews become increasingly "monstered" in the Middle Ages, it is important to qualify the "newness" of this conception, drawing, as it does, from a much earlier tradition.

Though I have been arguing that the four Gospels exhibit a progressive demonization of Judas, it is still possible to read in John moments of tantalizing ambiguity where Judas might still be understood as a devoted disciple whose betrayal heroically enables Christ's Passion. Once again, if we turn to the final moments of the

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Last Supper, it seems strange that, in spite of Jesus's answer to Peter that the betrayer is the one to whom he will give the sop (13:26), then handing it to Judas, the other disciples still appear clueless as to the meaning of Jesus's exhortation for Judas to act quickly: "no man at the table knew for what intent he spoke this unto him" (13:28); they are similarly perplexed as to where Judas is going, the Gospel recording the dramatic irony of their innocent speculations: perhaps Jesus needed Judas to take his bag and do some shopping or distribute some charity (13:29). Steiner suggests that this scene is only intelligible on "any naturalistic plane" if the exchange between Jesus and Peter is inaudible to the other disciples (415). But where does this leave Judas? If he did *not* hear the exchange, there is room to pity him as being unwittingly poisoned by the demonic bread that compels him to betray Jesus—yet his terrible task is still ultimately in the service of his Lord for the salvation of humanity. If Judas *did* hear the exchange, then his acceptance of the sop could be interpreted as a *knowing* acceptance of the awful role Jesus needs him to play, similar to what is described in the *Gnostic Gospel of Judas* and represented in many of the modern retellings of this story. This makes his action even more heroic: a willing act of self-sacrifice that prefigures Christ's.

In this overview of the four Gospels, I have attempted to adumbrate Judas's trajectory of growing wickedness. Yet the contradictions between the Gospels and the narrative gaps within each version make it impossible to come away with a coherent picture of the twelfth disciple. Thus even in the New Testament, there are many Judases. And despite the attempts of the Church fathers to "harmonize" the details, the differences and the ambiguity of Judas's motivation provided a fertile breeding ground for medieval

authors increasingly interested in the interior life of the individual. When we think about the startling proliferation of weird legends, stories, poems, paintings and songs written about a character who itself may have been conceived as a narrative function based on a mistranslation, what comes to mind is, of course, the dragon-like, vomiting *Errour* from Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* whose "filthie parbreake" is full of "bookes and papers" which the poet, in an epic simile, compares to the disconcerting fecundity of the Nile whose mud spontaneously generates "Ten thousand kindes of creatures.../...of his fruitful seed;" (1.1.20-21).

Because of his radical ambiguity, Judas is appealing as a springboard into explorations of subjectivity as the discussion he prompts can be taken in so many didactic directions: from the evils of avarice to the dangers of despair. As Richard Axton suggests in his discussion of Judas in Middle English literature, the disciple was uniquely balanced between "misfortune and wickedness" and medieval minds were drawn to the "small space for his free will" (197). In Jewish philosophy, the term for the range of free will that an individual can exercise is known as the *nekudat bechira*: this literally translates as the "tiny point" of free will and it exists on a moving continuum, differently positioned for every person. In the case of Judas, it seems that the smallest of points of an only presumed consciousness has generated the greatest and most varied of commentary.

The Golden Boys: Two Judases in the *Legenda aurea*

The best known commentary on Judas in the medieval period appears in a thirteenth-century anthology on saints' lives compiled by Dominican friar Jacobus de

Voragine and known as the *Legenda aurea.* This was a reworking of the anonymous eleventh century *Historia Apocrypha* and Voragine compiled it as a manual for use by Dominican preachers (Leydon 55). William Caxton, who translated it in 1483, described its title as fitting "For in lyke wyse as gold is most noble above al other metalles, in lyke wyse is thys legende holden moost noble above al other werkys" (ctd in Reames 11), but perhaps the title is more accurate as a description of the *Legenda's* publishing history, which was both golden and legendary: there are over 800 extant manuscripts of the Latin version and by the end of the thirteenth century, vernacular versions appear in every language in Europe. According to Paull Baum, whose exhaustive study on the versions of the medieval legend of Judas Iscariot is still the most cited and authoritative, all of these circulating versions are taken "more or less directly from the *Legenda Aurea"* (Baum 526). Caxton's version alone underwent nine editions between 1483 and 1527 (Reames 4). And though the *Legenda* understandably crashed and burned in the sixteenth century, the legend of Judas in particular enjoyed a post-Reformation afterlife in Britain with various versions of this legend being printed as late as 1828 (Baum 571). Given the importance of the *Legenda* as a kind of "cultural institution" in the medieval period (Reames 3), some basic questions come to mind. As Thomas Renna reasonably asks in his article on Jews in the *Golden Legend*, what are Jews even doing in the lives of the saints? (137). Furthermore, from whence was the impulse to create a "backstory" for Judas and then why adapt the pagan story of Oedipus to furnish it?

As I explored in my first chapter, the position of the Jews in Europe began to deteriorate early in the twelfth century. Though the relative weighting of the key events

are subject to scholarly debate, the frequently cited changes to the social and economic order that help to account for the deterioration include: the Crusades[51]; the rise of urban merchant class and the consequent weakening of the feudal order; the necessity for credit and the concentration of Jews, excluded from guilds and local production, in moneylending; and the Fourth Lateran Council's attempt to circle the wagons around an imagined society based on a Christian orthodoxy it sought to define and police. Additionally, the twelfth century sees the introduction of what Gavin Langmuir terms the "chimerical stereotype" whereby Jews become " imaginary monsters" (306). Adopting a psycho-analytic lens, Langmuir argues that the Jews were particularly useful as they enabled the airing of repressed psychic and religious anxieties: thus through them "repressed fantasies about crucifixion and cannibalism, repressed doubts about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and doubts about G-d's goodness and the bubonic bacillus that invaded people's bodies" could be safely expressed (306). Though, as I have argued, monstrous Jews are hardly new, we might say that the tradition that we traced to Papias is usefully re-activated. Not coincidentally, the twelfth century also saw the appearance of the first blood libel accusation, with the story of William of Norwich in 1144 and the related fantasy of host desecration following in its wake.

In a chapter on the representation of the Jews in narratives of the Passion, Thomas Bestul identifies the twelfth century as the point in time when the role of the Jews in the story of the Crucifixion began to change: Jews are increasingly seen as the "mockers, the

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[51]As Peter the Venerable (d. 1156) so practically pointed out, why trouble yourself journeying to a distant crusade when Jews, "vile blasphemers and far worse than the Saracens....[are] right in our midst?" (ctd in Cohen, "Christian Theology and Anti-Jewish Violence" 49).

torturers, and finally the murderers of Christ" (70). While earlier traditions had attributed Christ's death to a safely generalized "wickedness of all mankind," this responsibility is narrowed to the Jews while the scope of the narrative gets expanded with the addition of many more moving details. Bestul sees this change as related to the rise in affective piety and its emphasis on the humanity of Christ (71). This manifests itself in a focus on Christ's infancy and an often morbid fixation on the manner of his death. In "The Tortures of the Body of Christ," Langmuir dates the rise of affective piety earlier: from the first millennium when salvation became a "more personal and less a cosmic drama" (288). The more literal approach to the physical body of Christ extends to embrace the consecrated wafer—now the *corpus Christi*. Langmuir raises the issue of the psychological comfort provided by incarnation: despite the triumph of Christianity in Europe, there is the thorny issue of the continued suffering in Christendom. How can we account for the persistence of evil? The new emphasis on Christ's physical suffering becomes a way of responding to that theological conundrum: suffering itself provides the Christian a way of emulating Christ, engendering His empathetic response and establishing a "mode of communion with G-d" (289).

While affective piety may provide greater comfort to Christians, unfortunately, as Bestul points out, a byproduct of its celebration of physical suffering is the more intense focus that is now brought to bear on the "perpetrators of the torments," the Jews. Just as affective piety brings the Christian to love her G-d more intensely, it also causes her to hate, with a more visceral passion, those she sees as His eternal enemies. This tension pours forth particularly in the mystical writing of Margery Kempe whose rapturous tears

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for Christ's passion quickly lead to an unsparing condemnation of "Þe cruel Iewys" (192) whom she envisions as solely responsible for the crucifixion. Her description of the Jews sadistically driving the nails through His hands and tormenting "hys precyows body" is served with equal amounts of pathos and hatred. Her powerful identification with the suffering of Jesus engenders one of her remarkable eruptions in Church: "Þan þe forseyd creatur thowt þat sche cryid owt of þe Iewys & seyd, 'Ʒe cursyd Iewys, why sle ʒe my Lord Ihesu Crist? Sle me raþar & late hym gon.'" This desire to exchange places with Jesus is typical of one who often sees herself as a latter-day Christ. Margery writes as an eye-witness to the Passion and her account is primarily a visual one. As Anthony Bale points out, the reporting of speech is replaced by an ekphrastic rendering of images of Christ's torture by the Jews ("Christian Anti-Semitism" 35). Just as speech is subordinated to sight, the *Book of Margery Kempe* privileges the "non-textual over conventional textuality" (33): like the *Golden Legend,* much is drawn from extra-biblical sources. This is not surprising in view of the centrality of affect to the Passion, where theology and ideas can be effectively eclipsed by feeling (29). Though the *Book of Margery Kempe* is an extreme example of affective Christianity in the way it dramatizes and personalizes religious devotion, it is useful to see its commonality with other works that emphasize the vulnerable, the visual and the visceral and do this through an often grotesque representation of the Jews.

Christ's vulnerability is also foregrounded through the new emphasis on real presence. Now Christ can be readily accessed in the form of the Host: an object that could be seen and touched, doubted and desecrated. As both Rubin and Langmuir point

out, in the stories of early Middle Ages, Jews express skepticism about the host, put it to a test, witness the ensuing miracle, and convert. By the thirteenth century, the tales become more sinister: Jews procure hosts and cruelly and knowingly subject them to torture. It is no longer about doubt: rather the Jew now "believes he is attacking Christ" (Langmuir "The Tortures of the Body of Christ," 300).

Given the changed situation of actual Jews in the twelfth century, the altered role of fictional Jews in the Passion narrative, and the tales of host desecration, it is therefore not surprising that Jews appear in the lives of the saints. What is intriguing is whether the invention of a childhood for Judas that is detailed in the *Legenda aurea* might not be a way of simultaneously humanizing Judas and accounting for his actions: in some ways working *against* the clear demonization we see in the Passion narratives.

Voragine's tale of Judas's childhood is a curious blend of the New Testament's description of his inherent wickedness with details from the story of Oedipus. The Oedipus tale was known in the Middle Ages through the *Thebaid* of Statius (Baum 609). Scholars see the conflation of Judas and Oedipus as beginning as early as the third century, in Origen's *Contra Celsus*. In this work, the theologian sought to defend Christianity from Celsus's charge that Jesus deliberately led his disciples astray and to prove that Judas *did* have free will. Origen uses Oedipus as an example in order to "disentangle prophecy from causality": neither Jesus's prophecy nor the oracle are responsible for the "subsequent impiety and wickedness of Oedipus and Judas (Gubar 143). In *Incest in the Medieval Imagination,* Elizabeth Archibald describes how incest stories begin to circulate in written texts from about the twelfth century, when they are

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"put to didactic use" (105). Archibald argues that the Church enlisted incest as a way of strengthening two of its own recent initiatives: a precise, legal definition of marriage was enabled by the exclusion of incestuous relationships; and, incest tales emphasized the importance of contrition, repentance and confession. Thus, such stories served to illustrate that even the most heinous of behaviours could be forgiven through G-d's grace or the sincere repentance of the sinner (106). Though the intentions were didactic, the means might be construed as racy: as Baum primly points out, incest stories are also "the result of an unclean imagination taking delight in repulsive situations" (588). But typically, after titillating the audience with the depiction of transgressive mother-son incest, the twelfth century narratives concluded with a penitential religious conversion (Archibald 106); this presumably served to expiate both prurient readers and incestuous characters alike. In its depiction of the despairing suicide that blends the accounts found in Matthew and Luke, the Judas of the *Legenda* does not conform to type.

The numerous allusions to Jewish Scriptures in the *Legenda* illustrate how this tale was adapted for a Christian audience: Judas is simply a biblically inflected Oedipus. Thus rather than being warned by a pagan oracle as is King Laius, Judas's mother, Ciborea, dreams she has conceived a "son so evil that he would be the downfall of our race" (Voragine 172). While baby Oedipus has his ankles pierced and then is exposed to die on a mountainside, Judas's parents recoil from outright murder and instead, in a seemingly more "Jewish" gesture, they place him in "a little basket well pitched, and to leave him to the mercy of the waves of the sea" (172). But the allusion feels like mere window dressing, as Moses was placed in a basket in order to *save* his life, while the

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intent here is clearly to dispose of Baby Judas. Like Moses, the floating Judas is rescued

by royalty, here the childless queen of an island called *Scariot,* who pretends that she has

given birth to him and raises him as the prince. But conflict comes soon to the kingdom:

the queen is blessed with a true-born son and, once he is grown, Judas "when at play,

ofttimes beat and insulted the royal child" much to the Queen's vexation (172). A

motivation for his aggression is not provided: at this stage, Judas did not know he was not

the true heir; presumably we are to see this as an early indication of Judas's inherently

wicked nature. When the Queen reveals the truth, her grave deception going unpunished,

Judas slays his erstwhile brother and flees to Jerusalem where he is immediately

welcomed into the court of Pontius Pilate. Curiously, the episode seems to draw from the

story of Joseph: the stranger who finds grace in the eyes of both Potiphar and Pharoah,

though Voragine hastens to assure us that this was because Judas and Pilate were "birds

of a feather" (173).

The echo of the righteous Joseph is one of the ways the Oedipal Judas of the

Golden Legend runs counter to the hardening portrait seen over the course of the Gospels,

for the narrative often hinges on Judas's innate charm: the childless queen sees that he is

"fair" before taking him; when he runs away to Jerusalem, he "pleases" Pilate so much

that he is placed in charge of his court. Finally, when he comes as a penitent to Jesus after

committing both patricide and incest, Jesus favours him from among the disciples to be

his "purse-bearer" (173). Yet, in keeping with his scriptural source, Voragine is

simultaneously at pains to emphasize Judas's inherent evil. This results in a narrative

sometimes at odds with itself—this is not surprising given the hybrid nature of a tale

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which must reconcile a redemptive medieval incest story with Judas's dark denouement

in the Gospels.[52] Derek Brewer, who pronounces the story an "artistic failure" (62) due to

the protagonist's lack of self-awareness and the narrative's abandonment of the mother,

argues that Saints' legends are close kin to folktale and romance. As such, they are highly

implausible, the interest being located in the "pattern" rather than in "causality" (59). He

helpfully refers to the evolving meaning of the word "legend": originally denoting "that

which should be read" but later coming to mean an "improbable story in the past" (59).

Perhaps this is one of the reasons for Voragine's startling disclaimer, stated after the

penitent Judas has sought pardon from Jesus: "Should we put faith in this strange story?

Let the reader decide: but I, for one, deem it more worthy of being rejected" (173).

Furthermore, though the Oedipal analogy was originally deployed to establish that Judas

had free-will, as Gubar maintains, not surprisingly, it has the opposite effect, creating an

impression that, like Oedipus, Judas is "ensnared in an inexorable script...about which he

could do nothing" (143).

Further lessening Judas's guilt in the *Golden Legend*, is the greatly expanded role

of Pontius Pilate, here the motivator of Judas's patricide because of his longing for

Ruben's forbidden fruit, and the one responsible for Judas's inadvertent incest when he

bestows Ciborea upon him in marriage. These apocryphal details certainly contrast with

the Gospels, which increasingly sought to exonerate Pilate. Friedrich Ohly accounts for

Pilate's greater agency by explaining that the vita Judas was influenced by the older vita

of Pontius Pilate and the two were often found in the same manuscripts (16). The

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[52]Ohly points to the twelfth century German legend of Gregorius, who also commits
incest, but repents and eventually becomes Pope as providing the prime example of the
"saintly sinner" in opposition to Judas's "damned sinner" (31).

combination of a puppeteering Pilate and an Oedipal destiny results in a Judas who seems

to be cursed at every turn. And, despite his lack of free will and his two attempts to seek

forgiveness, the medieval writers of the vita of Judas conclude, following Jerome and

Augustine,[53] that the suicidal Judas is finally punished for his failure to seek G-d's mercy:

Judas becomes the prime example of the sin of *wanhope.* His manner of death detailed in

the *Golden Legend* follows Jerome's harmonized version which blends the accounts

found in Matthew and Acts: thus Judas hangs himself *and* "bursts asunder" (174). Rather

than harmonizing the matter of the thirty pieces of silver, Voragine, once again

undermining the veracity of the tale that he tells, presents us with two options: either each

piece was worth ten pence, thus making up the three hundred pence value of the

ointment, or, more interestingly, Judas "was accustomed to take the tenth part of all

monies that were entrusted to his care" (174) and thus the silver he casts down in the

Temple represents his share of the costly ointment. The dual suggestion of deliberate

accounting and religious tithing make the Medieval Judas appear less greedy than the

Satanic thief we saw in John. Finally, the kiss of Judas, which occurs only in Matthew

and Mark, is alluded to in the explanation for Judas's exploding entrails: they could not

be vomited from the mouth that had "touched the glorious face of Christ" (174). Might it

also be necessary to preserve the Jewish mouth, following the Augustinian tradition, in

order for it to continue testifying to the truth of Christianity? Judas is said to have died

"mid-air...between earth and Heaven" and the very indeterminacy of the liminal space to

which he is consigned seems appropriate for a figure who will continue to be conscripted

[53]In *City of G-d*, Augustine explains that Judas's suicide "heightened rather than expiated
that crime of dastardly betrayal—because by despairing of G-d's mercy he abandoned
himself to an impenitent remorse" (46).

for a variety of purposes. His first appearance in the *Legenda* gives us a scapegoat with

an uncertain history, buffeted about by fate and other people, almost "more sinned

against than sinning" and finally, his attempted repentance dismissed, proclaimed a

symbol of *wanhope*. Like the fragment of Judas in the Townley *Suspendio Judae*, he

needs to be kept hanging around.

The second Judas in the *Golden Legend* stands in an antithetical relation to the

first: rather than the paradigmatic betrayer of Christ, the second Jew becomes a paradigm

for the faithful Christian, ready to defend the truth of the Cross with his life. Like the

medieval Judas, the *Inventio Crucis* is an ancient tale that is significantly reworked, but

rather than appending a backstory to the account in the Gospels, here the original version

is revised to create a starring role for a Jew: Judas Cyriacus, the Jew who is compelled by

Helena, the mother of Constantine, to locate the True Cross and who subsequently

embraces Christianity and dies as a martyr. Amnon Linder, in his discussion of the Myth

of Constantine, argues that along with giving birth to Christian Europe, Constantine's

conversion ushers in the fantasy of a "totally integrated Christian society" (1021). Linder

accounts for the rewriting of the myth to include Jews by pointing to Church

historiography which traditionally accords an important role to the Jews in the

"unfolding" of the Divine plan (1023). Along with the active role that Judas plays in the

revised myth, I would suggest that the Jew serves as testamentary witness and repository

of a secret and powerful oral tradition.

Though there are two other versions of the story of the True Cross's discovery, the

Judas version, which develops in the first half of the fifth century, is the most influential

and the only version recognized in the West (Renna 138). Like the Oedipal Judas, the

Judas/Cyriacus legend becomes popularized through its inclusion in the *Legenda aurea.*

And just as traitorous Judas is seen as representative of all of Jewry, so is, paradoxically,

his doppelganger seen as the prototypical convert. But it takes the Devil to make the

connection between them explicit: "O Judas, what hast thou done? Thou hast acted quite

differently from my Judas. At my behest he betrayed Christ, and thou, against my wishes

hast revealed His Cross" (Voragine 274).

Judas's eventual metamorphosis into a Christian martyr is only achieved after

great suffering. When Helena, mother of Constantine, summons the learned Jews of

Jerusalem, Judas alone immediately intuits the reason: she seeks the Cross and somehow

she is certain that the Jews possess the secret of its location. Judas reveals to his fellow

Jews that his father Simon had imparted two frightening truths to him on his deathbed:

that he will be tortured if he fails to reveal the whereabouts of the Cross, and that this will

bring about "the end of the kingdom of the Jews" (273). This revelation is further

sanctified because it is presented as part of an "oral tradition" which had been imparted

by his grandsire Zacheus.[54] In the brief sketch of Christian history that follows, the Jews

readily admit responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ, an act to which the righteous

Zacheus had not agreed, and Judas is admonished "never to blaspheme against Jesus or

his disciples" (273). When (Saint) Helena demands the Jews reveal the location of the

Cross, threatening otherwise to cast them all in the fire, in a neat reversal, *this* Judas is the

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[54]Zacchaeus is the name of the wealthy publican of small stature who climbs a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus in Luke (19:1-10). Subsequently, he repents and gives his money to the poor. A fitting name for a Jew who similarly recognizes and testifies to the Truth of Christianity.

one betrayed by his fellow Jews to the queen. Yet he feigns ignorance, reasonably

pointing out that the crucifixion took place two hundred years before his birth. Unmoved

by this argument, the righteous queen has Judas summarily thrown into a dry well to be

starved. When he emerges compliant a week later, drawn by a "delightful aroma of

spices" (274), he is able to locate the Cross under a temple of Venus. "Overcome with

astonishment" (274) he can now proclaim the Truth of Christianity.

The pit image explicitly links this Judas to the biblical Joseph, an avatar for

Christ, and this connection is made stronger by the tortures he later suffers in the defence

of the Cross, at the hands of Julius the Apostate. In keeping with his new identity, Judas

is given a new name: Cyriacus ("of the L-rd") and he is appointed bishop of Jerusalem.

During his tortures, Cyriacus is variously subjected to amputation, having molten lead

poured down his throat, burning coals, a pit filled with "venomous reptiles" and baptism

in a cauldron of boiling oil. His death is finally achieved by the comparatively

unimaginative means of a simple sword. These tortures link Judas to both the body of

Christ and the Host and thus, the perceived targets of Jewish assault are now smoothly

incorporated into the Jewish convert. Given contemporary anxieties evinced by

Christians about the efficacy of Jewish conversion, the second Judas is an ideal convert:

for his initial stubborn resistance to the Truth is properly channelled into a courageous

and inspiring martyrdom. Renna concludes his analysis of Jews in the *Legenda aurea* by

pointing out that the integration of the Jew into the figure of the Christian saint does run

counter to the "increased polemic" against the Jews in the thirteenth century. Yet he sees

the Christian Judas as a lesson primarily directed at Christians to inspire them to greater

piety (145). Renna speculates that Jacobus may indeed have thought of Jews as disposed to conversion—perhaps even seeing this as an eschatological necessity (144). But as this etiological tale about the Cross features the torture of Jews to confirm Christian belief, it also signals, in a disturbing way, that Christianity's theological objection to the continued existence of Judaism might be resolved by the "vigorous intervention of the State" (Borgehammar 162). Though Judas lives to die a Christian martyr, as is so often the case with didactic tales of Jewish conversion, this is an instance of "incorporation through annihilation": the Jew becomes a Christian, but does not marry or engender progeny to become a part of the homogeneous Christian community: he will testify to Christianity's truth and then conveniently disappear.

In addition to the fantasy of the ideal Jewish convert, this tale has embedded within it a story of an alternative oral tradition. When Helena summons the learned Jews of the land, it is because she is certain that they know the truth about the location of the True Cross. Though this truth has been transmitted exclusively through Judas's family, there is a suggestion that they, like the historical Jews, were actual witnesses, thereby conferring an authoritative ring to this alternative history. Nearness of kin is enlisted to underscore just how close the witness is to the events in question: Judas's father Simon identifies Saint Stephen, stoned by the Jews for believing in Christ, as his uncle. Though Jacobus expresses his doubts on whether the father of Judas could have been alive at the time of the Passion, which took place almost three hundred years before, the narrative bears out the truth of Helena's conviction: the Jews, at least some of them, are aware of

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the Truth of Christianity. The only reason for their secrecy is an understandable desire to preserve their religion, however misguided.

The presence of an alternative oral tradition in the revised version of the discovery of the True Cross may reflect that in the thirteenth century, the Church finally began to notice the Talmud, or Oral tradition of the Jews. Unlike the Hebrew Bible, which was successfully appropriated by the Christian community, the Talmud was too vast, esoteric and legalistic to be contained and Christianized. Like the legend I have just discussed, this historical event concerning the Talmud involves a Jew who converts to Christianity. As Jeremy Cohen recounts in *The Friar and the Jews*, in 1236 a Nicholas Donin of La Rochelle presented a list of charges against the Talmud to Pope Gregory IX (60). The Pope responded by instructing the kings and prelates of Europe to confiscate the Talmud. His objections, in addition to the statements offensive to Christianity, demonstrate the Christian desire to freeze (and thereby contain) Judaism as a static religion based exclusively on the Scriptures:

> [The Jews] are not content with the Old Law which G-d gave to Moses in writing: they even ignore it completely, and affirm that G-d gave another Law which is called "Talmud," that is "teaching," handed down to Moses orally. Falsely they allege that it was implanted in their minds and, unwritten, was there preserved until certain men came, whom they call "Sages" and "Scribes" men who...reduced it to writing, and the volume of this by far exceeds the text of the Bible. (Grayzel 240-1)

This notion of the Talmud's much greater length in relation to the Bible is reprised by Innocent IV: "It is a big book among them, exceeding in size the text of the Bible" (cited in Cohen 67). After inquisitorial interrogations and a disputation between Donin and a Parisian Rabbi, the Talmud was found guilty and condemned to burn at the stake. In 1242 over twenty wagons brought ten to twelve thousand volumes to the Place de Grève in Paris where they were burned (63). Though Christians remained deeply suspicious of the Talmud, as this Judas legend illustrates, there was nevertheless a fantasy of invoking its authority to testify to the truth of Christian tales.

The tale of two Judases in the *Legenda aurea* provides a powerful example of how Jews are conscripted for very different ends, even within the same text. Judas Iscariot acquires a sympathetic ambiguity as a charming rogue and failed penitent buffeted by Fate and left hanging as a stern example for the dangers of *wanhope.* Judas Cyriacus, after being parachuted into the *Inventio Crucis* story, becomes a model Christian who dies after testifying to the truth and power of the Cross. Though he is initially compelled through torture, once Judas becomes Christian he is unaffected by fear or pain. Throughout his tortures by Julian the Apostate, Judas is unscathed and unchanged: like the Christian fantasy of the unchanging biblical Jew. This tale reveals a double fantasy: of the Jew reified into a permanent witness to the truth of Christianity, and of a Judaism endowed with an alternative oral tradition: not the sprawling, argumentative, and dangerous dynamic of a far-reaching and intra-generational Talmudic conversation, but a contained and incontrovertible truth passed simply from father to son.

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<u>The Same Old Song: The Ballad of Judas</u>

Trinity College, Cambridge, B. 14. 39, written in the thirteenth century by a scribe believed to be Norman, has the distinction of containing the oldest surviving ballad in Middle English. Francis James Child, whose *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* was published in 1882, was the first to recognize "Judas" as a ballad. Kenneth Sisam, who edited the poem for Oxford, identifies it as the unique example before 1400 of "the swift and dramatic movement, the sudden transitions, and the restrained expression, characteristic of the ballad style" (162). Yet one editor of ballads argues that despite its ballad-like qualities, there is no evidence that "Judas" grew and circulated as part of an oral tradition, or that it was even sung. Thus, it may have existed simply a "literary" piece with ballad qualities (MacEdward 108). As Gwendolyn Morgan points out, it is surprising that despite the proliferation of religious stories and saints' lives in the medieval period, fewer than a dozen ballads on religious subjects survive (11). "Judas's" uniqueness is further underscored by the manuscript which contains it: According to the descriptive catalogue by M. R. James, the manuscript contains theological works in Latin, English and French (439). "Judas" is surrounded by homilies, sermons and meditations on the Passion—works of gravitas removed from the often amoral world of popular balladry. Paull Franklin Baum observes that the language of the ballad does not suggest that it is older than the manuscript: however, this does not prevent the story itself from being much older (182). Yet whatever its age, much of the story contained within this brief ballad is quite unique: On Maundy Thursday, Jesus gives Judas "thirty plates of silver he can bear on his back" and sends him to purchase food. Jesus predicts Judas

might meet some of his "cunesmen" (*kinsmen*) in the street (6). He immediately

encounters a woman, his "soster," described as "þe swikele (*false*) wimon" (7). The truth

of this epithet is quickly made apparent: she tells Judas he ought to be stoned for

believing in a "false prophete"(9) and, after convincing him to put his head in her lap and

sleep, she steals his money and disappears. When he awakes and discovers the missing

silver, Judas tears his hair in grief. When Pilate approaches him to sell Jesus, Judas

refuses, unless it is for the original plate entrusted to him by Jesus. The ballad shifts to

Jesus and his apostles. He tells them he is "bought and sold for our food." It ends with

Jesus predicting His betrayal by Peter.

As Thomas Hill reveals in his discussion of the ballad, "soster" is a middle English

term for a "priest's concubine" (7), and therefore the ballad master provides yet another

motive for Judas's betrayal of Jesus: lust. What Hill does not mention is that the ballad's

use of the seductive *soster* might be alluding to the biblical Judah who was similarly

distracted from a journey by lust when his widowed daughter-in-law Tamar disguises

herself as a prostitute in order to bear his child (Genesis 38:15). The allusion becomes

even more plausible when we consider that the twins born of this incestuous union were

the ancestors of King David and, according to Christian sources, of Jesus himself. Like

the biblical story of Judah and Tamar, Providential ends determine the narrative. When

Judas is crazed with grief, Pilate, identified as "þe riche Ieu" (18) makes his offers. Judas

is perversely insistent that he will only sell Him for the "þritti platen" he was entrusted

with by Jesus, even refusing Pilate's offer of gold. Hill accounts for Judas's insistence by

referring to the legendary history of the Holy Rood Tree. According to this tradition, the

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tree that was destined to be made into the Cross originated in the Garden of Eden. Subsequently, King David placed silver ornamental circles around it as it grew (7). When the tree was cut down, these ornaments were used to pay Judas for his betrayal. Thus it is *these* holy relics that Judas needed to recover, as though he is blindly determined to play the role set out for him by Jesus. Absent from this ballad is any motivation connected to greed: Judas betrays his lord only in order to fulfill His will. When Christ proclaims "Ic am iboust ant isold today for our mete" (26), he is not only foretelling the ritual of the Mass, but creating an explicit connection between the food the apostles are about to eat and His own imminent sacrifice. Thus Judas is compelled through the "logic of preordained events" (Schueler 844).

Hill's explanation resolves two curious details: why Judas is instructed to carry the silver on his back, and why he refuses any other recompense. In response to Christ's announcement that he is "bought and sold for our food," Judas lamely defends himself with an outright lie, claiming he was never in a place where evil was spoken about Jesus. Then Peter, the favourite disciple, launches into a moment of deliciously ironic *braggadocio*, bravely declaring he will fight for Jesus though Pilate come "wid ten hundred cnistes" (*knights*) (30). This elicits only Jesus's sober prediction that he will forsake Him thrice "ar pe coc him crowe"(*ere the cock crows*) (33). And so it ends. Judas effectively disappears from the ballad once the spotlight has shifted to Peter. This immediately raises a basic question: is this ballad complete or are we dealing with a fragment?

In terms of the ballad's originality, Baum searches far and wide for analogues, citing Child's observation that in a nineteenth century Wendish folksong, Judas, after setting out to purchase food at Christ's bidding, loses the thirty pieces of silver at gambling and then sells his Master in order to replace them. Following Matthew, this Judas hangs himself out of remorse (183). The other analogue Baum cites is a fragment from the Coptic *Gospels of the Twelve*, considered among the oldest apocrypha, possibly anterior to Luke (185). Here Judas is led astray by his avaricious wife who puts him up to the deed of selling his Lord in return for great riches. The fragment ends in mid-sentence after the sale (186). While the folksong shares the detail of the food purchase with our ballad, as Baum observes, in the Coptic fragment the wife figure, like the sister, serves to "shift the burden of guilt from Judas himself to a woman" (186). Baum concludes his essay by conceding the "inherent improbability" of establishing a relationship between such historically and geographically disparate texts (189). But his very audacious stretching across continents and centuries to find analogues testifies to just how original this ballad is in the whole "Matter of Judas" corpus.

While Baum believes the ballad to be a fragment (184), Donald Schueler, a more recent reader, does not. Schueler makes a compelling case for the ballad as a riddle that the listeners (or readers) are invited to solve for themselves (841). On the puzzling issue of the shift to Peter at the end of the poem, Schueler argues that this constitutes a "highly original variation" (842) that leads him to identify its thematic leitmotif as betrayal: its anticipation and fulfillment with Judas and then its renewed anticipation with Peter. Therefore, the shift away from Judas to Peter at the end serves to relativize Judas's guilt

and thereby to suggest the "universality of human guilt that brought Christ to the Cross" (842). Unlike the Judas frequently represented as a demonic and abject traitor, Schueler sees the vulnerable and frightened Judas as "kinsman to us all." Thus Judas's more sympathetic rendering serves to implicate (rather than exonerate) the ballad's audience—perhaps more in keeping with the other sententious works found in the manuscript. Judas is both relativized and universalized as Schueler links the ballad's image of the sleeping Judas to the sleeping apostles of the New Testament, and extends this metaphorically to "the sleeping soul in all of us" (843).

Judas tearing his hair "þat al it lauede a blode" (*that he was washed in blood*) (16) is arguably the poem's most powerful image. It is a moment far-removed from the scatology or grotesque we normally associate with Judas. Even his sexual stumble in the poem is rendered sympathetically and, due to its resemblance to the story of Judah and Tamar, it situates Judas's mistake within a biblical tradition of the Divinely ordained trespass.[55] Discussions about the ballad genre frequently cite the ballad's focus on *action*: first and foremost, a ballad must tell a story. MacEdward and Morgan both identify the lack of motive as a hallmark of medieval ballads, Morgan referring to this quality as their "impersonal stance" (3). Furthermore, both point out that ballads tend to pass over the initial exposition of the plot and enter at the "fifth act" with the moment of crisis (3). While we saw in Kermode's reading of the New Testament that function begot character, which begot more plot and more complex motivation in a cycle of endless elaboration,

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[55] This incident also recalls the biblical story of Samson and Delilah. Prior to cutting Samson's hair, Delilah "made him sleep upon her knees" (Judges 17:19). I thank Professor David Goldstein for pointing this out to me.

we seem to have in medieval ballads a reverse movement where details are stripped away and what remains is a character caught in a dramatic moment.

Both Hill and Schueler point out the Eucharistic overtones of Judas' sale of Christ. By having Judas use the money to buy the food for the Last Supper, the ballad supplements the biblical account. Thus, Jesus's invitation: "Take ye, this is my body" (Mark 24.21), becomes literalized by the sale. This makes "Judas" atypical of the ballad genre, for rather than ignoring motivation in favour of action, here the action is at the *service* of motivation—furnishing it for the ballad's biblical source and consequently encouraging its auditors/readers to further examine their *own* actions and motivations.

Yet this focus on plot elides the ballad's representation of the Jewish characters. If Judas shrinks to a narrative function compelled to retrieve the thirty pieces of silver to fulfill a scriptural imperative, then what has happened to the notion of his *nekuda bechira,* that small space for free will so interesting to medieval writers? Although the plots are quite different, "Judas" shares with the *Legenda aurea* the dilution of Judas's guilt. As we saw in the latter, Judas is rendered less guilty by the Oedipal frame and by the reprehensible actions of Pilate and the Scariot Queen. Yet Voragine includes enough descriptive detail to suggest that Judas still possesses an inherent wickedness. Conversely, in this ballad, if we accept that the biblical script requires his betrayal in the matter of the thirty pieces, Judas can only be faulted for his pathetic dissimulation to Jesus. Otherwise, he staunchly defends his Lord against his sister, "þe swikele wimon." Has *she* become the repository of the Judas-guilt? The use of the definite pronoun, as Baum points out, suggests that she is a "person with a well-known history" (188).

Certainly, her behaviour is that of a temptress. "The" evil woman is, of course, suggestive of the first temptress in the Bible. In Hebrew, Eve is described as Adam's *ezer kenegdo,* usually translated as "helpmate." The literal translation of this term is "help who opposes him," with midrashic material homiletically commenting that if a man is worthy, his wife opposes him to help him grow spiritually; however, if he is unworthy, their innate opposition will cause them to clash. It is interesting that here the woman's first words are stated to oppose Judas: "Iudas, pou were wrpe me stende þe wid ston,/For þe false prophete þat tou bileuest upon" (*Judas you deserve that men stoned you with stones,/Because of the false prophet you believe in)* (9-10). By castigating Judas for his belief in Jesus, she seems to align herself with the "riche Ieu" Pilatus. Thus the two characters serve to absorb the "Jewish" guilt deflected from Judas, who appears more like a suffering Everyman figure here. When the sister calls Jesus a "false prophete" (10) and in the repeated line speaks of Judas being "stoned," it seems to echo a polemical anti-Christian text that circulated in the Medieval period: The *Sepher Toledot Yeshu.*

Lovers in a Dangerous Text: *The Sepher Toledot Yeshu.*

    "Yeshu" is a contraction of "Yehoshua," the Hebrew name for Jesus. Thus this title translates as "the book of the beginnings of Jesus." As Ora Limor explains, *Toledot Yeshu* is a Jewish counter-history that reinterprets the facts related in the New Testament (200). While Judas is the ultimate betrayer in the Christian story, in the Jewish version, Judas is the savior of the Jewish people because he defeats Yeshu and exposes him as an imposter. Thus, this is an instance of Jews writing back: the Christian narrative is adopted, but

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inverted to discredit it. Judas, as in the New Testament, represents the Jews as a whole, but here he is the hero (219). As there are several versions of the narrative from a variety of manuscripts, its most recent editors and translators, Michael Meerson and Peter Schäfer, refer to it as a "folk narrative" shaped by centuries of "untamed creativity" (18). Recent scholarship on this textual tradition has been greatly enabled by Meerson and Schäfer's *Toledot Yeshu: The Life Story of Jesus,* which provides both transcriptions and translations of the manuscripts. The earliest fragments are written in Aramaic and were found in the Genizah of a seventh-century synagogue in Cairo, Egypt (Goldstein 147). Voltaire and Luther both wrote about it; Luther translating it into German in 1566 and Voltaire, who claims it to be a first-century text, declaring it "le plus ancien écrit Juif, qui nous ait été transmis contre notre religion" (ctd in Baring-Gould 68). The first reference to it as a *written* composition is found in Agobard, the bishop of Lyon (ca 769-840 CE) (Meerson 3). In the middle ages, the story is translated into Latin and the various translations are revealing in terms of what they tell us about Jewish-Christian relations (Karras 496). While there is no canonical version, the best known in the Christian world is the thirteenth-century Latin translation by the Dominican monk, Raymond Martini, who was appointed to examine Hebrew books in order to censor their offensive passages (Meerson 10). His results were published as the *Pugio fidei* ("Dagger of Faith"). Ironically, what began as censorship resulted in increased proliferation.

In the topsy-turvy world of this anti-gospel, Jesus is portrayed as an illegitimate upstart and false prophet. The chaste Miriam (Mary), betrothed to Yohanan, is deceived by the lustful Joseph Pandera who pretends to be Yohanan and forces himself upon her.

Miriam becomes pregnant and the son she bears, though brilliant, shows himself to be disrespectful of the Jewish authorities from an early age. Suspicious, the rabbis inquire about Yeshu's lineage and discover the truth, which Miriam confirms. Yeshu, ashamed, flees to the Upper Galilee. Yeshu seems motivated to clear his name. He does so by acquiring supernatural powers by stealing the ineffable name of G-d from the Temple. Soon he begins to defend the accusations about his birth and proclaim himself the Messiah. When as a result of the miracles he performs, he heals the lame and revives the dead, he begins to gather followers—even garnering the support of Queen Helene (known in history as Salome Alexandra) who marvels at the miracles. But the Rabbis see him as a sorcerer and danger to the peace. They enlist the help of a righteous man named Rabbi Yehuda ish Bartota (a.k.a "Judas Iscariot") who is told to learn the secret name in order to combat him. The climactic moment of the tale has Yeshu flying into the air, with Judas in hot pursuit. What ensues is a mid-air struggle à la *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, in which the pitted adversaries are locked in a lovers' embrace:

> The world was amazed how they were flying like eagles until Yehudah embraced
> him and soared (with him) in the sky. Still neither of them was able to defeat the
> other, because they (were trying) to cast (each other) to the ground with the help
> of the Ineffable Name. (Meerson 174)

Judas finally triumphs when he "spoiled his dealing and urinated on Yeshu and he was polluted" (174). This strange moment is based on the Latin translation of the Hebrew *qilqel ma'saw 'imo,* which means "corrupted his behavior with him." Thus, some medieval translators, such as Thomas Ebendorfer (b. 1388), read this as cohabitation. By

spilling his seed on Yeshu, Judas renders him impure and powerless, and this results in their Icarian tumble to earth. According to Ruth Mazo Karras, the sexual detail in Ebendoefer could have been introduced by either an anti-Jewish or Jewish imagination (508). Though this begins as a Jewish counter-history to refute the Gospels, it is ultimately deployed by the Christians who copied the manuscripts to illustrate Jewish blasphemy. Thus the Christians responded to the Jewish counter-text with their own counter-polemic. At the end of *Sepher Toledot Yeshu*, after Yeshu is killed, either by stoning or hanging or both (Meerson 92), it describes the confusion and strife among Jews due to the faction who persist in believing that Yeshu was the messiah. The sages choose one sage, Eliyahu, to separate the erring Jews from the rest of the community by pretending to be Yeshu's messenger. With the blessings of the Sages, he helps them to become their own community. This man is called "Paulus" by the Christians and *Toledot Yeshu* credits him with ending the quarrels (Meerson 182). Thus the Jews don't alter the narrative: they reinterpret it in a way to suggest Jewish agency.

To return to the Ballad of Judas, this is certainly a lot of apocrypha to be borne by one *swikele wimon.* But the erotic overtones of the legend resonate with the ballad's possible suggestion that Judas is torn between two lovers. And perhaps the notion of Judas and Jesus as lovers, often suggested in the homoerotic representations of the kiss, provides another plausible motive for Judas's response to the loss of silver entrusted to him by Jesus. As Judas insists, he will only sell his Lord for " þe pritti platen þat He me bitaiste" (22), as though the particular coins entrusted to him by Jesus bear the emotional weight of a love token. What is of particular interest to me is how an anti-Christian tract

and a Medieval Christian ballad, share an assumption that Jesus and Judas, for better or for worse, are inexorably intertwined.

The discussion of The Ballad of Judas would be incomplete without some comment on its most resonant lines: "He drou hymselve bi þe top, þat al it lauede a blode / Þe Iewes out of Iurselem awenden he were wode"[56] (17-18). In an article about medieval madness, Laura Jose argues that medieval writers, though they are men writing about other men, imagined the brain as being similar to the womb (153). The womb, like the brain, is a "mysterious inner space" and both organs are deemed highly "impressionable." The connection is further strengthened by the long-standing identification of thought with conception; as thoughts are the "offspring"of the mind (155), a mad brain produces monstrous thoughts, like the mental "scorpions" that torment Macbeth. Jose concludes that the female body "denotes vulnerability" and the language that is used to describe it "is employed as a conduit for men's fears about their own bodies," (160). Given the conflation of mind and womb, Judas's head, bathed in blood, is suggestive of menstruation, a phenomenon attributed to Jewish men in the medieval period. But perhaps in addition to the familiar topos of the feminized Jewish male, the image serves to situate in Judas a more general anxiety about male vulnerability.

The Ballad of Judas depicts a powerful Johannine Jesus who calmly foresees all, and a vulnerable Judas whose betrayal is relativized due to the treachery of the *swikele wimon* and the Jewish Pilatus. By excluding Christ's Passion and instead choosing for his "dramatic moment" (Leach 3) Judas's anguished discovery of the missing silver and his

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[56]"He tore his hair so that he was washed in blood./The Jews of Jerusalem thought he was mad." Translation by Thomas D. Hill.

crazed determination to replace it, the ballad-writer has effectively redirected the humanity and suffering associated with affective piety from Jesus to his nemesis and lover, Judas. This Passion belongs to Judas.

Playing Jews: Judas and the Jews in the Corpus Christi plays

In Shakespeare's *Coriolanus,* Menenius Agrippa attempts to subdue the hungry plebeians with the fable of the belly and its vision of an organic body politic. Yet his ploy, in defense of the patrician's prerogative to be the "good belly," is swiftly undermined. For the Rome of the play is hopelessly divided: even the external threat of the warring Volsces is insufficient to repair the destructive divisions among the Romans themselves. Menenius's speech is further undermined by the challenge from the first citizen who astutely recognizes that the "sink o' the body" (1.1.121) should not be in a position to restrain the more productive operations of "the kingly crown'd head, the vigilant eye,/ [or] The counsellor heart" (1.1.114). The feast of Corpus Christi is also about the body: the indivisible body of Christ through which Christians are united, but also in a secular sense, the "body" as the "pre-eminent symbol" for conceptualizing society as a whole (James 6). As with Menenius's fable, the metaphor bespeaks both "social wholeness and social differentiation" (4). While all good Christians joined in the Corpus Christi procession, there was a "carefully ordered precedence" made by the various guilds, the municipal officials and the clergy (5). Topping this hierarchy and corresponding to Shakespeare's patricians are the priests, those solely empowered to perform transubstantiation and then enjoined to carefully guard the spiritual food that is its

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miraculous by-product: the consecrated hosts, the true body of Christ, that only they were permitted to consume freely. It is not surprising that the Church emphasized the centrality of the Eucharist as it was the only relic which doctrinally endorsed sacerdotal power (Beckwith, "Ritual, Church and Theatre" 67).

Recent scholarship on the Corpus Christi plays can be divided into two broad categories: historical work that analyzes the social and economic context for the plays' production, and the more "literary" analyses of the plays' dramatic effects. Of the former, the starting off point, to which I have already referred, is Mervyn James' "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town" (1983). His essay establishes that the myth of a united social body was actually being projected by a deeply divided society (8); for James, the tension existed between the crafts themselves. Later historical work builds on James' approach by studying the various sites of societal conflict. In "Making the World in York and the York Cycle" (1994), Sarah Beckwith reads the York plays from a socio-economic perspective, relocating the tension to between the guilds and the merchants, who were in control of the city government and who sought to protect their hegemony over the market. For Beckwith, the plays' strong emphasis on manufacture reflects their "artisanal ideology" (265). Thus the guilds' economic disadvantage was translated into a theatrical victory. Margaret Aziza Pappano (2002) examines Judas in the York cycle as a way of illuminating the conflict between the master craftsmen and the journeymen and apprentices who worked for them. Pappano sees Judas as a "bad servant [or] uppity worker" who attempts to trade on his own behalf and not according to the best interests of the community (340). These studies are central to our understanding of how

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these plays both reflect and determine the "shape and function of the medieval town" (Beckwith, "Making the World" 254).

Much of the recent work on the dramatic effect of the Corpus Christi plays centers on their violence. Scholars seek to resolve the apparent disconnect between the didactic religious purpose of the dramas and the often over-the-top horrors they depict. For John Spalding Gatton, the violence enhanced the aesthetic success of the dramas as a whole, even while it also "sanctioned...voyeurism, sadism, and anti-Semitism, all in the name of Christian courage and love" (79). In "Mixed Feelings about the Violence in the Corpus Christi plays," Richard L. Homan argues that the graphic tortures of the York Crucifixion serve a theological purpose: just as Christ's incompetent and foolish torturers are depicted as tragically blind, so too the audience was enjoined to "wake up" and not be distracted by their labour from pressing spiritual truths (94). Greg Walker (2005) also sees the violence and humour of the plays as serving their theological ends. Walker's analysis focuses on a careful reading of the bodily movements of the actors: while the soldiers are busily engaged in their "carnivalesque" mockery of Christ, the actor playing him is dignified and still, providing a powerful contrast (374). Thus, Walker deems the plays' "overt theatricality"--both their humour and their violence, to be in service of their theological ends.

A very different approach is taken by Jody Enders. In *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty* (1999), Enders rejects this soothing and rationalized approach to medieval theatrical violence to expose its linguistic and ideological foundations (10). Basing her argument on the classical rhetorical legacy that torture was part of the legal quest for

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truth, Enders concludes that the truth of the plays was enhanced by the scenes of torture that "coerced" their audiences into accepting them (3,4). Enders extends her argument to include the contemporary West as also implicated in the "linguistic and performative perpetuation of violence" (233). Not only does her work challenge periodization by identifying this as a representational continuity, but it also illustrates how relevant medieval studies can be in enabling our understanding of contemporary problems.

My own contribution is somewhat of a hybrid of these two approaches. Through the lens of both the Jews and Judas within the Corpus Christi plays, I explore the plays' violence which I situate within the history of Eucharistic controversies, the need to *see* the Passion and the related Blood libel accusations. Jews, due to their entrenched spiritual blindness which prevented them from accepting Christ, might be said to embody the problematic Eucharistic "remainder." Unable to be absorbed into the mythic wholeness of Christ's body, they are the recalcitrant matter that is finally forged into the *scrinaria* on which Jewish stories can be composed for Christian spiritual edification.

The Corpus Christi plays were, during their hegemony in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, central to English communal life. The cycle plays thus constitute a powerful challenge to notions of periodization, for though they tend to be categorized as "medieval," they remained the most important form of public drama until the 1570s (Cooper 13). The Feast of Corpus Christi, which began in the mid-thirteenth century, was a way of both promulgating the recently enshrined doctrine of transubstantiation and literalizing the vision, at least on the level of the parish or town, of the totally integrated Christian society that we saw on a continental scale with the Myth of Constantine. The

cycle plays were an outgrowth of the *tableaux vivants* that accompanied the celebratory

Eucharistic procession and which included both ecclesiastical and civic participation

(Rubin 272). In their vast sweep from Adam to the Resurrection, they provided a

triumphant Christian *telos* to indoctrinate, inspire and entertain their audience. Like the

revised *Inventio Crusis* legend, Jews in general and, Judas in particular, play a significant

role in the myth's corroboration and elaboration. As Jeremy Cohen and others have

pointed out, the Feast of Corpus Christi also " defined and accentuated the distinction

between Catholic and heretic...and between Christian and Jew" particularly as it was the

Jews who had "rejected and slain the G-d of the Eucharist himself" (*Christ Killers* 107).

The Wakefield *Hanging of Judas* is an incomplete soliloquy that largely recycles

the Oedipal backstory of the *Legenda aurea,* featuring a Judas who bemoans his triple

betrayal of mother, father and master. In his recounting his mother Sibaria's prophetic

dream, he describes her horrifying vision of his fetal self as "A loathly lump of fleshly

sin" (Rose l.14). This image, with its emphasis on base corporeality, is richly suggestive

of a central theological conundrum that troubled Catholics from the time that the mystery

of the sacrament was decreed and subsequently provided comic fodder for their Reformer

antagonists: namely the threat posed to eucharistic theology by the "recalcitrant and

ineradicable" nature of matter (Greenblatt 11). As central to the doctrine is the integrity of

Christ's glorious body within the consecrated host, what then is the status of fragments?

Then what if these crumbs are subsequently eaten by mice? Would Christ reside amidst

the intestinal contents of a rodent? Or what about the putrefaction of consecrated wafers?

Even in the prescribed ritual, hosts must pass through the human digestive tract, resulting

in a secondary transformation: of the sacred into the abject. One might say that this topic

was debated with a Talmudic relish for detail. As Stephen Greenblatt argues, while the

literature of the late Medieval and Early Modern periods was written in the "shadow" of

these Eucharistic controversies, their significance for literature "lies less in the problem

of the sign than in... *the problem of the remainder*" (8). In the heresy trials in Norwich in

1428, a Margery Baxter was accused of Lollardy by another woman, Agnes Bethom, who

testified that Margery had uttered the following Eucharistic heresy:

> You believe wrongly, since if every such sacrament were god and Christ's real
>
> body, then gods would be infinite in number, because a thousand priests and more
>
> confect a thousand such gods every day and then eat them, and once eaten emit
>
> them from their back side in filthy and stinking pieces. (Rubin 328)

This testimony reveals that, more than the wafer, this doctrine was simply a hard

one to swallow whole. Though uttering such statements had mortal consequences, it is

clear that many non-theologians were thinking them—perhaps including the accusing

Bethom herself. But the focus on Eucharistic orthodoxy was understandable as continued

"priestly privilege" depended on it (327). The specific issue concerning fragments was

resolved by distinguishing between *substance* and *accident*: Thus while Christ's bodily

integrity was maintained in the host as a whole (its *substance*), breakage and "undignified

digestion" were explained as affecting only the *accidents* (Rubin 25). *Substance* denotes

what is essential and permanent while *accident* is associated with mutability as well as

the sense of something that is unforeseen. Its Latin source is *accidere* meaning *"to befall"*

or "to occur." Yet despite this distinction and the myriad regulations that arose

governing their baking, preservation and disposal, hosts needed to be carefully guarded. Like the Jewish bonds in the *archae*, hosts were kept locked in a Pyx. But these protective measures were designed less to protect them from errant mice than from a more insidious threat: that of "abuse and ridicule" (38).

In his exploration of the role of Jews in the mystery plays, Stephen Spector argues that Judas and the Jews actually part ways here: while the Jews are concerned with safeguarding the Old Law and destroying Jesus, Judas is preoccupied with money. Unlike his co-religionists, he is not "fixed in disbelief" (337) and the plays often depict his failed bid at repentance in a poignant fashion. Conversely, with their entrenched refusal to recognize the Messiah whose miracles transpire before their very eyes, the Jews might be likened to the "loathly lump of fleshly sin." We might think of the Jews in the mystery plays as being a response to *actual* Jews who, through their obstinate refusal to accept Christianity, were the first threatening *accident* that had to somehow be accounted for theologically. While the sacrament of the Eucharist envisions complete incorporation and results in a united body of believers, the Jews, simply by virtue of their continued historical presence, embody "the problem of the remainder." But the Jewish *accident* gives birth to varied interpretive possibilities: the bifurcation that we see in the Corpus Christi plays between Judas and the Jews capitalizes on the ambiguity inherent in the New Testament portrayal of Judas resulting in a "two-pronged" representation of what Christians should reject.

As part of his analysis, Spector reviews the psycho-analytic theory of anti-Semitism. First suggested by Freud, it posits that the anti-Semite projects onto the Jew

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qualities or ideas that he disdains, possesses or finds threatening (329; 330). Spector

argues that within the English mystery plays, this involves a very specific accusation: the

Jew is seen by the medieval playwrights as "unassimilable" because he is "entrapped in

reason and thus incapable of accepting Truth on *faith*" (330). Curiously, as Spector points

out, this is quite similar to the conclusion that Sartre reaches in his analysis of twentieth-

century French anti-Semitism, where the Jew's "putative rationality" is transformed "into

a vice" (330). Thus whether the Jews are explicitly labelled "Judeus" as in the N-Town

and Chester cycles, "Miles" as in York or "Tortores" as in Wakefield, and though their

speech and allusions place them in fifteenth-century England, they share a dogged

"Jewish" preoccupation with the preservation of what, to the Medieval Christian, is

risibly anachronistic and irrelevant. This includes such theological touchstones as "our

laws"(Wakefield 22/119) and "oure tempill" (York 27/87) and "oure dere Sabbott day"

(York 34/23). Thus Spector delimits the representation to a very specific and relevant

vice: that of an "entrenched disbelief based on blind adherence to the reasonable and the

natural" (332). This spiritual blindness also precludes the Jews from being transformed

by miracles—even when they take place right before their eyes. Like recalcitrant matter,

they remain unchanged.

I would like to extend Spector's idea by exploring a scene in the York cycle's *The

Agony and the Betrayal* when the Jews are literally blinded by Christ's light. Here the

playwright skillfully blends the Gospel accounts so that a Johannine Jesus smoothly

accepts Judas's kiss as though he himself has scripted the moment: "Full hartely Judas,

haue it even here,/ For with þis kissing is mans sone be-trayed" (28/248-9). While in

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John, Jesus fells the soldiers who come to arrest him with the power of his word, his declaration "I am he" sending them tumbling backward (18:6), here the miracle is a *visual* one, Jesus exuding a powerful light which temporarily blinds the soldiers with its brilliance. The scriptural source for this might be Acts 9:3, where Saul of Tarsus is temporarily blinded by a heavenly light on the road to Damascus, his sight returning to him only upon his baptism. The playwright emphasizes the miracle of this vision with the repetition of "light" and "siȝt." And, as if to underscore the testamentary role of the Jews, the *Miles* are joined by several speakers labelled *Judeus.* In the confusion that ensues, one of the Jews is moved to say: "þis leme it lemed so light,/ I saugh neuer such a siȝt,/ Me meruayles what it may mene" (263-5). Jesus treats the moment as a kind of game, several times playfully calling out his whereabouts to the stumbling soldiers: "Beholdis all hedirward, loo here, I am hee" (257-8). The scene then segues to yet another wonder: after Peter cuts off Malchus's ear, Jesus commands him to "...putte vppe þi swerde/ Full goodely agayne" (280-1), surely the inspiration for Othello's consummately authoritative, "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (1.2.59), and then miraculously heals the severed ear.[57] But despite these miracles, by the end of the scene, it is back to the business of the arrest with both soldiers and Jews displaying that they are entirely unaffected by the *meruayles* they just witnessed.

The playwright's inclusions are significant: the light and the healed ear are visual miracles and, as Suzannah Biernoff demonstrates in *Sight and Embodiment,* from the thirteenth century, the visual experience of the sacred became central to belief. Biernoff

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[57]In the New Testament, the healing only occurs in Luke. In the other gospels, the ear is cut off, but there is no miraculous healing. John is the one to name him "Malchus."

theorizes that sight is privileged as it "invites participation" and it is conceived as "a mutual engagement or interpenetration" (133, 134). This was certainly the case inside the church, as Leah Sinanoglou argues in "The Christ Child as Sacrifice," *seeing* the elevation of the host during Mass became, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a "cult of fanatical proportions" (498). As the laity were not required to receive communion more than once a year, *seeing* the elevation of the host became its substitute, and it was held that the sight of the Sacrament conferred great benefits, both spiritual and physical, upon the believer, Biernoff terming this phenomenon "ocular communion" (134). But what was actually seen? Because there was no visible change in the host, there was a desire for concrete evidence. Sometimes a Christian's faith in the doctrine of Real Presence supplied the absent vision: the "need to see" was so strong that it engendered the oft-reported miracle of the Eucharist changing into a small boy who was slain, dismembered and eaten before the assembled congregation. Sinanoglou explains how Christ appears in the host as a child, despite the Passion having involved an adult Jesus. This can be traced to the association between the infant Jesus and his place of birth: Bethlehem (*Bais Lechem,* meaning *house of bread*) segueing neatly into Christ as the "true bread" (494). This resulted in a conflation of Incarnation and Passion; a "fusion of the Babe of Bethlehem and the sacramental Victim of the Mass" (491). Understandably, the vision of the ritually slaughtered and cannibalized child is usually greeted with horror, purportedly causing terrified Jews to convert just to avoid the sight in the future, yet Sinanoglou describes how this miracle was also deemed a "delight" and a "reward to the faithful" (492).

In *Wonderful Blood*, Caroline Walker Bynum points out the changes to the stories of host miracles over the Middle Ages and how they reflect a growing obsession with blood (6). Though blood was not associated at the outset with the crucifixion, Bynum argues that "blood piety" becomes increasingly central to notions of G-d's presence in Northern Europe of the middle ages (7). Thus in the host miracle tales of the thirteenth century, the figure of Jesus appears and disappears in the wafer, while by the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the vision is one of "tortured flesh and blood" (6). In a particularly savoury example, she reports that Christ appeared to Colette of Corbie (d. 1447) "as chopped meat on a platter" (4). In a mysterious movement that seems reminiscent of the ancient Jewish rituals of purification and defilement, Bynum describes how at the "heart of blood piety" lies the notion of "violation or desecration": blood becomes the "sign of a desecration that makes holy" and through that process, it "sets apart or consecrates" (16). This topsy-turvy movement of consecration through violation might be a way of conceptualizing how the preoccupations with visual experience, blood piety and child sacrifice all converged and were projected back onto the Jews in the blood libel accusations of the Middle Ages.

The blood libel accusations are expressed in three related myths: that Jews ritually crucify young Christian boys as a way of insulting Christ; that Jews engage in ritual cannibalism and that Jews desecrate the consecrated host. Famously, the very first recorded accusation of blood libel occurs in England with William of Norwich (d. 1144). As Gavin Langmuir chronicles in his comprehensive treatment, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," this was an instance of the concerted efforts of one man to

create an elaborate myth around the death of a twelve-year-old boy whose body had been discovered in a wood outside Norwich without initially giving rise to any suspicions that he had been crucified. Monmouth, a monk, arrived in Norwich after 1146 and created an entirely circumstantial case against the Jews based on hearsay evidence and a dream. Monmouth went on to devote his life to the myth, writing the seven-volume hagiography, "The Life and Passion of Saint William the Martyr of Norwich," between 1149 and 1173, and serving as the sacristan of William's shrine (13). As Langmuir describes, the most dramatic testimony Monmouth acquires is from a monk and apostate Jew named Theobald who recounts an incredible tale that the Jews of Spain met yearly to arrange an annual sacrifice of a Christian whose blood is shed (22, 23). Theobald's tale includes a global conspiracy prefiguring *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion:* he describes how lots were cast in Spain to determine which country would host the "annual sacrifice prescribed by their fathers" (22). This was followed by lots cast in the chosen country to select which town would perform the ritual; this year it had fallen on Norwich. According to Theobald, "all the synagogues in England knew and consented to the act" (23).

The falsity of the lie is staggering: not only was blood ever and always forbidden to Jews, but surely all of this far-ranging Jewish conspiracy would have left some evidence. Langmuir identifies a key discrepancy in the tales: though Theobald refers to "sacrifice" and not "crucifixion," Monmouth presents the details concerning the torture and *crucifixion* of William as the "fundamental and indisputable core of the drama" (14). It is clear that Monmouth did not seek merely to blame the Jews for the unsolved murder, but to create a story that duplicated the Passion. Here was visual evidence of the sacrifice

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of the Christ-child. Though, as Langmuir proposes, Monmouth's primary aim was to "strengthen his own Christian cosmos" rather than "to destroy Jews" (34), and despite much initial skepticism among the natives of Norwich, Monmouth's fable gradually gained adherents as people came to William's shrine seeking cures.

Yet, unhappily for the Jews, the myth of blood libel also gained believers throughout Europe. Responding to the increased accusations, in 1243 Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen organized a synod of Jews who had converted to Christianity to testify on the matter. He found and promulgated the results: there was no evidence that Jews use blood for ritual purposes (Ben-Sasson 776). Similarly, in 1247 Pope Innocent IV was compelled to make a strong statement condemning the accusations: he announced that "Christians charge falsely...that [the Jews] hold a communion rite...with the heart of a human child; and should the cadaver of a dead man happen to be found anywhere, they maliciously lay it to their charge" (776). Yet neither voice was heeded, and, when in July of 1255 the body of eight-year-old Hugh was found in or near a well,[58] Sir John de Lexington extracted a confession from a Jew named Copin with the promise that his life would be spared. The story Copin told, of a broad Jewish complicity in the torture and crucifixion of a young boy, resembled Monmouth's tale of William. Langmuir draws attention to the "all-too-revealing statement" with which Matthew begins Copin's confession: "What the Christians say is true" (478). The "confession" served to corroborate a story that had already been written by Monmouth. The legend of little

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[58]According to Jewish historian Joseph Jacobs whose work was originally published in 1896, Hugh had accidentally fallen into a cesspool on July 31, 1255. The body putrefied and rose to the surface some twenty-six days later, just as a large group of Jews had gathered in Lincoln for a wedding.

Saint Hugh of Lincoln was born. It would live on in song and verse, and place Lincoln on the map as the place where people went to view the Jewish well into which Hugh had been thrown (460). Nineteen Jews were executed as a result of this tale and many more were imprisoned.

This excerpt from Matthew's account reveals how closely the accusation follows the New Testament:

> [The Jews] sent to almost all the cities of England in which there were Jews, and summoned some of their sect from each city to be present at a sacrifice...at Lincoln... in insult of Jesus Christ. For, as they said, they had a boy concealed for the purpose of being crucified; so a great number of them assembled at Lincoln, and then they appointed a Jew... to take the place of Pilate, by whose sentence, and with the concurrence of all, the boy was subjected to various tortures. They scourged him till the blood flowed, they crowned him with thorns, mocked him, and spat upon him...And after tormenting him in divers ways they crucified him, and pierced him to the heart with a spear. (*Historica Major* cited in Jacobs 44)

According to the Burton annals, the Jews were interrogated "in diverse ways," suggesting that torture may have been used (Langmuir 478). In Matthew's account, Copin embellished his tale after the arrival of King Henry III, by claiming that "Nearly all the Jews in England agreed to the death of this boy" and that representatives had arrived from "nearly every English city" (Paris cited in Jacobs 45). This fantasy of Jews gathering from far and wide had its basis in the fact that a large wedding had taken place in Lincoln in August at the time when the body was discovered. Copin's immunity was

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rescinded by the king and he was executed quickly. The rest of the Jews were taken to London where another eighteen were executed "spectacularly" (Langmuir 477).

Though I am primarily interested in this as a Christian fantasy, borne of a need to see bloody *meruayles*, and which required Jews to reprise their Johannine role as Christ killers, there was also a mercenary angle that connects the Lincoln blood libel to the York massacre of 1190. We recall that Henry III had sold "his" Jews to his brother Richard for five thousand marks in 1254. Jacobs concludes, based on his study of the Close Rolls, that a primary reason for Henry's highly unusual intervention in the case, is that the only way he could continue to extract money from the Jews was by "escheat from condemned criminals" (54). Thus his zealous anger at the fate of little Hugh was, at least in part, driven by his desire to claim for his own the debts in the Lincoln *archae* that he had previously had sent to Westminster to be opened and assessed. Henry seized the estates of all the Jews he had slain and then, Jacobs believes, he was well compensated when the rest of the Jews were finally released (55).

This rather lengthy foray into English ritual murder accusations serves to bolster my claim that the stories about William and Hugh served, in part, to strengthen faith in Christian doctrine by providing the longed-for visual experience of a recreated Passion. The evolution of this narrative's authority is apparent in the way it is so quickly accepted in the case of Hugh of Lincoln—the charge was not greeted with skepticism as it had been in Norwich. Blood libels had become culturally entrenched. Returning to Spector, who focuses on Jews as representing "reasoned doubt," he sees the violence of the plays as simply part and parcel of illustrating the misguided Jewish desire to show that Jesus is

powerless. What this does not take into account is the persistent and ritualized nature of the violence in the plays: though the details are not scriptural, they follow a common script that may derive as much from recent blood libel charges as from the New Testament account.

In his exploration of the relationship between religious drama and dogma, Rainer Warning points out how the two often part ways. Focusing on the "unequaled cruelties" staged as part of French and English Medieval Passion plays, Warning observes that these "elaborations" are based on the briefest of allusions in the Gospels and are certainly not theologically warranted (204). For example, if we turn to John's description of what the dramas stage as the tripartite sequence of buffeting, scourging and crucifixion, the account is simple and unadorned: "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the solders plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head...and they smote him with their hands" (19:1-3). The crucifixion itself focuses on Jesus's position between the two thieves rather than on any details of how his execution was carried out. Thus we are told that Jesus is taken to Golgotha "where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (19:18). The biblical account seems to create a tableau of dignified human suffering with the only "stage-business" that of the soldiers subsequently casting lots for Jesus's garments; and this done, as John points out, in the fulfillment of a scriptural verse (24). Contrast this with the gruesome detail found in the York Cycle's *Crucifixio Cristi*, where the Pynners, in a Medieval version of product placement worthy of Apple, terrifyingly lay out the tools of their trade, "Bothe hammeres

and nayles large and lange" (35/30) before embarking on their excruciatingly drawn-out and technically-focused task.

Might it have been the mere sight of the instruments of torture that elicited the ludicrous confession from Copin during his interrogation by John de Lexington? Even Matthew Paris termed Copin's charges against all the Jews "deliramenta" (ravings) (ctd in Jacobs 50). Might he have raved out of fear of his imminent execution? Yet in the plays the horrifying coexists with the comic, as the cruel soldiers are rendered less terrifying for being blind buffoons. Ultimately, the true power lies with Jesus. The soldiers clearly take a professional pride in their work as their tools penetrate "bones and senous" (103), and comment with glee at the prospect of Christ's increased suffering while noisily *kvetching* about their own back pain. This serves to underscore the eloquent silence of the endlessly assaulted body before them. Christ speaks twice in the play, but never in response to the soldiers's taunts: he accepts that it is G-d's will that he be "pyned" (52) [59] and then, following the account in Luke (23:34), he implores his Father to "For-giffis þes men þat dois me pyne" (260).

In the Wakefield *Coliphizacio* (*The Buffeting*), Jesus's silence enrages an apoplectic Caiaphas who is examining him. Abusive words are clearly not enough to slake his anger: "Bot I gif hym a blaw my hart will brist" (191), he tells Annas, and then he proceeds to list all the ways he would like to kill Jesus while Annas tries to soothe him, reminding him he is "a man of holy kyrk" (208). Caiaphas finally agrees to Annas's plan to send Jesus to Pilate, but unable to let Jesus depart unscathed, he determines: "It wold

[59]This word is remarkably rich in this context. The verb means "to torment" while the noun *pynne* refers to a "pin, peg, bolt"--the implements of torture employed by the *Pynners*.

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do me som good/To se knyghtys knok his hoode/With knokys two or thre" (313-15). The

sing-song rhythm and rhymes of this call to torture sounds like a ritual invitation to play:

I *Tortor.* Sir, dred you not now of this cursed wight
  To-day,
  For we shall so rok hym,
  And with buffettys knok hym.

Cayphas. And I red that ye lok hym,
  That he ryn not away; (328-333)

 What ensues is a violent game of "hot cockles" where a blindfolded Jesus is unable to

see who is hitting him. Barry Sanders suggests that in addition to giving the action of the

play a contemporary feel, the game illustrates the fear that the Jews actually have of the

silent and beaten Jesus: thus they "resort to ritualized behaviour" as a way of dealing with

their fear (96). Here Jesus's Divinity is underscored by his steadfast refusal to play the

game.

    Turning to *The Crucifixion* of the N-Town cycle, its greater didacticism is apparent in

both its preachier Christ and in the explicit identification of York's *miles* as *Judeus.* As in

York, there is a lot of vigorous dialogue among the Jews as they struggle to force Christ's

recalcitrant limbs into place: " Pulle out þat arm to þe sore./ þis is short" (62-3). Though

much action is embedded within the dialogue, the detailed stage directions make the

torture of Christ even more explicit: "...*and þer þei xul pullyn hym down and leyn hym on*

þe cros, and aftyr naylyn hym þeron" (p. 326). Marvellously, after driving the nails into

Christ's feet, the stage directions announce that: "*Here xule þei leve of and dawncyn*

abowte þe cros shortly" (p. 327). Thus the Jews, like Hecate's cheerful witches in

Macbeth, leave aside their cruel work in order to enjoy a little dance around Christ. Like

all demons, the Jews certainly have a way of animating the didactic. Sara Beckwith, in reference to *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, accurately observes that Jonathan the Jew "drives the iconoclastic energies of the play" (73). This could apply to the Jews/torturers in the Passion sequence as well.

The violence of the Jews in the Corpus Christi drama is excessive, theologically unfounded and often comic. The ritualized torture of Jesus by the Jews reflects the recent blood libels in England that, as I have suggested, responded to the "need to see" bloody *mervayls*. But I think it is plausible that the violence also reflects another anxiety about the Eucharist. The N-Town *The Last Supper* is the play that is most deliberate in its discussion of the sacrament. As Jesus carefully instructs his disciples: "þis þat shewyth as bred to ȝoure apparens/ Is mad þe very flesche and blod of me,/ To þe weche þat wole be savyd must ȝeve credens" (382-383). When Judas departs to betray Jesus, the Demon pithily remarks: "Thow hast solde þi mayster and etyn hym also!" (27/470). But this reprehensible betrayal is soon followed by Jesus's pronouncement that in memory of his Passion, Christians "xal drynk myn blood with gret devocyon" (484). The proximity of the statements reveals that once one removes the mercenary motive, good Christians are also cannibals. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud discusses anti-Semitism as arising from Christians' unconscious hatred for their own religion that is then projected back onto Judaism. He labels anti-Semites "badly Christened" (117) signaling the ultimate fragility of the Christian identity. Basing himself on Freud, Alan Dundes uses the phrase "projective inversion" to denote the displacement of the guilt of cannibalism inherent in the Eucharist on to the Jews (354). While Jews are forbidden to consume blood,

Christians are enjoined to, and thus the projection of cannibalism back to the Jews, who were accused of using Christian blood in their matzo-making, succeeds in redirecting the guilt. What Dundes does not point out is that what is a *symbolic* act in Christianity is transformed into a *literal* accusation against Judaism that resulted in countless deaths. We might say that the Jews had to die to redeem Christians from their unconscious sins.

But what of Judas? As we have seen, the Jews in general serve a very particular didactic purpose in the mystery plays: they are assigned the "unwanted aspects of the Christian community" (Spector 328). Here they serve to illustrate the dangers of reason (330) and channel anxieties concerning the Eucharist. The Jews as a group are an undifferentiated mass of non-believers. Conversely, Judas appears as more of a free-agent, separate from them and yet continuing to be characterized by the textual contradictions that serve to preserve his enigma. This is borne out by Judas's frequent reference to *others* as Jews: in York's *The Conspiracy,* Judas calls Jesus "þat Jewe" (37/127) and in the Chester cycle, Judas speaks as an outsider when he plots to sell Jesus "to the Jewes" (14/ 293). His outsider status is particularly apparent in the treatment he receives from his fellow Jews in the Wakefield and York versions of *The Conspiracy.* In the former, a polite and deferential Judas is roundly abused by Caiaphas, Annas and Pilate who see him as an extension of the hated Jesus. They threaten to "Set on him buffets sad,/ His master to disgrace" (Rose194-5) much as putting Kent in the stocks was an insult to King Lear. However, once he convinces them of his bone fides as Jesus's betrayer, they greet him as a "welcome ally" (214). In the York version, he continues to be suspected even after his proposed betrayal. This is prefaced by a comic scene with the

porter of Pilate's gate. Here Judas asserts himself with an alliterative flair: "Do open, porter, þe porte of þis prowde place/That I may passe to youre princes" (26/155-6). But he is no match for the superior wit of the Porter who is equal parts hell-gate and borsht-belt as he repeatedly attacks the falsity he claims to see written on Judas's face: "Say bittilbrowed bribour, why blowes þou such boste?/ Full false in thy face in faith can I fynde" (169-70). Once admitted, Cayphas labels him "knave" (208) and his proposal to sell Jesus is greeted with suspicion from the two *Miles* who charge him with "traytoure" and "wikkid man" (263, 264). Though Judas's Jewish identity can seem a little sketchy in the cycle plays, his general lack of acceptance and his unfortunate denouement *do* connect him to a consummately *Jewish* figure of a later era: we might say that Judas has the distinction of being the first *shlemiel.*

In terms of Judas's motivation, the plays all refer to the tale of the ointment which segues, in all but *N-Town*,[60] to Judas's practise of stealing the tenth part, the extra-biblical explanation that we saw in both *The Golden Legend* and "The Ballad of Judas." Thus in York, Judas establishes his motive in his soliloquy: "For of his penys purser was I,/ And what þat me taught was vntill/ The tente parte þat stale I ay still" (136-8). As in the Ballad, Judas is adamant about receiving *exactly* his tenth, telling Pilate: "Sir, thirti pens and plete, no more þan" (229). This explanation continues to trouble by its implausibility, justifying the continued suspicions of his interlocutors. In his seminal *Life of Jesus*, German biblical scholar David Friedrich Strauss points to the original problem with greed

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[60]But even in *N-Town*, money is Judas's motive. As he says in soliloquy: "Mony I wyl non forsake" (27/281). His subsequent exchange with Jews Rewfyn and Leyon is dominated by monetary references, but atypically the "thretty platys of sylver" is proposed by Rewfyn rather than requested by Judas.

as Judas's motivation: as Jesus knows that Judas is a traitor, why choose *him,* of all the

disciples, to be his purse-bearer? Does this suggest a Jesus who drew Judas deliberately

into sin? Secondly, Strauss argues that had covetousness been his motive, then it would

have been much more profitable for Judas not to betray Jesus and to simply continue

stealing his tenth (609). He follows his rejection of covetousness with a strong statement

about the essential unknowableness of Judas's motive: "I only contend that any other

motives are neither stated not anywhere intimated in the Gospels, and that consequently

every hypothesis as their existence is built on the air" (610). Indeed, the story of Judas's

motive seems, like Prospero's vision, to melt "into thin air" in the face of his remorse.

This disconnect is the result of the blending of the different Gospel accounts: we

remember that Judas's remorse *only* occurs in Matthew,[61] where *all* the disciples

complained about the ointment; while in John, the unrepentant Judas is the thief co-opted

by Satan. Though the writers have chosen to include the best dramatic moments of the

New Testament, the result is a character whose trajectory is psychologically inexplicable

and consequently amenable to endless interpretation.

The York cycle's version of *The Remorse of Judas* is the most developed and

richly complex of the cycles' depictions of Judas. It is actually made up of three scenes:

Pilate's ranting about Jesus, Judas's poignant and unsuccessful bid to free him, and the

purchase of the field of blood. Judas's speeches stand out for their powerful rhetorical and

emotional range: he goes from supplicating contrition, to desperate pleas, angry curses

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[61]The biblical account is very brief. Judas repents when he sees that Jesus is condemned
and tells the priests: "I have sinned in that I betrayed the innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4).
He is refused and he hangs himself.

and his final despair. Judas begins in soliloquy, bemoaning his betrayal of Jesus who had

loved and trusted him:

> Þe purse with spense about I bare,
> Þer was none rowed so wele as I.
> Of me he triste, no man mare,
> And I betrayed hym traytourly
> With a false trayne.
> Sakles I solde his blessid body
> Vnto Jues for to be slayne (32/136-142).

Repeatedly, like a latter-day Moses entreating Pharaoh, Judas begs Pilate and Cayphas to

let Jesus "wene on his way" (157). When Judas offers himself as a substitute for Jesus,

"Saue hym sirs—to youre seruise/ I will me bynde to be your man" (218-9), he is echoing

another biblical moment of great sacrifice: Judah's offer to exchange himself for his

beloved brother Benjamin (Genesis 45:33). But despite his passionate and repeated

pleas, Pilate dismisses him as a traitor "worþi to be hanged and drawen" (230). Here it is

Pilate who becomes like the Jews in *The Agony and the Betrayal*, unmoved and

entrenched in his disbelief and therefore unable to see the miraculous transformation of

the man before him.

The Judas scene also includes an intriguing verbal repetition: the word *bloode* is

used six times and *spille* (or its cognates) reappears four times, both within the same two

hundred lines. *Bloode* is used mostly as a metonym for Jesus's life, as in "Thi maistirs

bloode" (243), but once it is ambiguous whether Judas is referring to Jesus or himself.

After one of Pilate's refusals, Judas states: "Allas, þanne am I lorne/ Boþe bone and

bloode (194-5). According to the OED, *spille* between 1300 and 1600 means "to put to death; to slay or kill" (1.a). Yet its modern meaning, "allowing or causing a liquid to pour," is also in place from the fourteenth century (10.a). I think that the repeated and often proximate use of these words adds a Eucharistic dimension to the scene. "Spilling" Jesus's blood takes on a richer meaning that transcends his killing: it suggests his transubstantiation into wine. Thus when Caiphas declares: "We bought hym for he schulde be *spilte"* (247), he unwittingly testifies to the redemptive purpose of Christ's death that is ultimately enabled by an anguished Judas. After angrily throwing down his money and crying for vengeance, Judas determines to end his life: "To *spille* myselffe nowe wille I sped" (309), at the last bewailing the "tristy trewe" whom he betrayed. This "pouring out" of his life links him verbally to Christ, for love of whom he dies. After he exits and Pilate and the priests brazenly cheat Armiger out of his ancestral land with ill-fated thirty pens, the contrast makes it impossible not to see Judas as the play's tragically misunderstood hero. Describing him simply as a symbol of *wanhope* compounds the injustice.

The various Judases we have seen were allowed to develop due to the ambiguities and gaps inherent in the Gospels. Eisegesis created him and the mystery of his motive gave rise to his endless elaboration. While Judas is demonized along with *all* Jews in John, enabling the new Christian community to see itself as distinct, the medieval writers made a more fluid and flexible use of the character. In the texts that I have examined in this chapter, Judas has variously been depicted as an Oedipal scapegoat, a Christian martyr, a crazed lover and a tragic hero. Though the Jews in general were used to explore

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dangerous doubts and strengthen the Christian identity, still very much "under construction" (Lampert 105), Judas enabled *other* explorations as well: primarily the question of free-will and how little of it we seem to have.

Chapter Three: "A World Elsewhere"

Hope and Hebraism: Slouching Towards the Millennium

In his audacious *carpe diem* pitch to his coy lady, Marvell engages in a series of comic hyperboles. Divided by a vast space that presumably reflects their respective attitudes to premarital dalliances, the poet pictures his would-be lover gathering rubies by the Ganges while he stays local to make his complaint by the Humber river. While their "long-love's day" (4) is envisioned as an eternal present, a kind of enervating pastoral bubble, time is simultaneously imagined in terms of vast expanses. Like the eternally frozen young lovers of Keats's urn, Marvell suggests that his pursuit might have gone on forever; thus he enlists an allusion that most readers would understand as denoting the end of Time: "And you should, if you please, refuse/ Till the conversion of the Jews" (9-10). The succeeding images of the speaker's slow-growing "vegetable love" (11) and centuries-long blazons suggest that the reference to Jewish conversion is just the poet's way of saying this lady would go on refusing him for a *really really* long time. However, in his essay on British millenarianism, Christopher Hill rejects this conventional reading, proposing instead a neat parallel between the spatial proximity of the Humber and the perceived temporal proximity of Jewish conversion (270). This reading certainly

capitalizes on the speaker's brazen confidence: clearly, he expects to get lucky sooner rather than later.

As Hill goes on to argue, the conversion of the Jews was seen as a necessary prerequisite for heralding the millennium which would see the destruction of the Antichrist and the establishment of G-d's kingdom on earth (271). These events were variously estimated by biblical scholars and mathematicians to arrive in either between 1650-56 or by 1666, depending on how one dated the rise of the Papal Antichrist. Expressions of earnest millenarianism were not confined to the prodigious writings of ministers and pamphleteers: it becomes a movement ripe for theatrical satire as it does for Jonson at the end of *The Alchemist,* when Sir Epicure Mammon prepares to "mount a turnip-cart and preach the end o' the world, within these two months" (5.5. 81-2). Millenarianism was linked to Jewish readmission because of the belief that some Jews needed to be brought to England in order to convert as a prelude to the Second Coming. This would fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah that the "dispersed of Judah" would gather "from the Four Corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12). Their failure to convert previously was confidently explained as a result of not having hitherto been exposed to the purity of the English Protestant faith (Katz *Jews* 112-3).

Yet this intensified interest in Jews did not begin in the seventeenth century with the hopeful millenarians: there were different stakeholders who entered the fray at various junctures. As Gertrude Himmelfarb points out in her study of philosemitism in England, Hebraic studies as a recognized academic field dates from the reign of Henry VIII who had looked to the Hebrew Bible to legitimize his divorce from Catherine of

Aragon. This was the initial impetus for the growth of serious Hebrew scholarship, resulting in the establishment in 1536, of the Regius Professorships of Hebrew at Oxford and Cambridge (12).

Despite the narrowness of its initial scholarly mandate, Christian Hebraism flourished and had a profound impact on early modern England. It was the Hebraist movement which produced the King James version of the Bible in 1611, a seismic cultural event that, according to Victorian historian John Richard Green, transformed the English into the "people of a book, and that book was the Bible" (ctd in Himmelfarb 13). This translation, more than previous coercive policies to identify post-Reformation Christianity with "Englishness," succeeded in uniting a kingdom through both its "dream of wholeness" (Nicolson 240) and the music of its language that pervaded every church and home. More than any other text, it drew and defined the English "*from every shires ende*."

While the fifty or so translators of the Bible, dubbed "G-d's secretaries" by Adam Nicolson, amalgamated previous translations to produce a universal text, other Hebraists took a particularist approach to Hebrew, believing in its "magical properties" (Katz *Philo-Semitism* 232) and its unique ability to provide a clear and unmediated path to the Divine will. If Hebrew is seen as the original language of Creation, it is a short step to seeing it as the source of *all* knowledge. Abraham Melamed identifies the beginnings of Hebraic Studies as a field to the work of Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522) who was drawn to Kabbalah as a "hidden esoteric tradition" (53). In his *De arte cabbalistica* he boldly asserts that *all* human knowledge originates with the Jews and claims in this work that

"there is nothing in our philosophy that was not developed by the Jews first" (*De arte cabbalistica* 127-131. Ctd in Melamed 52).

The persistence of this view is seen in the literary world with the century that separates More's *Utopia* (1516) *from* Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1624), works that are both filled with Hebrew references. Casting the largest literary shadow over the period before and after Whitehall is John Milton, whose Hebraism is a subject of much scholarly study and debate. Though Ezra Pound had famously accused Milton of "beastly Hebraism" (Brooks 3), his attitude to both Jewish sources and Jews is consistently contradictory. In this way, he is the literary figure who best represents the inherent tensions between Puritan Hebraism, a flexible appropriation of Jewish sources and a radical ambivalence to actual Jews. Neatly summing up this ambivalence, Nicholas von Maltzahn describes Milton as "a point of intersection between philo-Semitism and anti-Semitism" (57). Though Milton showed little interest in unconverted Jews (71), he does display a high regard for the Mosaic law, particularly in his divorce tracts and in the middle books of *Paradise* Lost. As a first time reader of the poem with a basic familiarity with Midrash,[62] I had been struck how much the portrait of Satan in particular had exploited the psychological possibilities of this material which I had assumed would not have been available to Christian readers. For example, when Satan observes Adam and Eve "Imparadis'd in one another's arms" (4.506), he turns aside "For envy" (503). Milton here is making use of a well-known midrash concerning Satan's sexual jealousy, but how was

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[62] *Midrash* derives from "*darash*" meaning "to search". Written with a capital "M," it refers to the process of fleshing out the often stark biblical text with the use of ancient commentaries. When written with a lower case "m," it refers to a single unit of interpretation (Werman 1-2).

he aware of it? In *Milton and Midrash,* Golda Werman maintains that Milton did not read the Jewish midrashic materials in the original, but relied instead on the 1644 Latin translation of the eighth-century rabbinic collection entitled *Pirke de R. Eliezer* (7). But Werman also acknowledges that Milton's use of Jewish exegetical material is hardly unique: beginning with the New Testament, Christian theologians and writers have made use of these stories. As she explains, the early church fathers studied with rabbis who elucidated Bible passages with Midrash; some midrashim were subsequently included in the earliest patristic writings (10). Jeffrey Shoulson, in *Milton and the Rabbis,* concurs with this view, observing that much of this material had already "entered Christian discourse through any number of direct and indirect means" (3). Shoulson questions the approach of Milton scholars who have sought to "polarize" Hebraic or Christian influences. He argues instead that the "fluid interaction" between categories of thought, creates a "dialogic textuality" to Milton's epic (5). This fluidity between Hebrew and Christian ideas recalls Susan Gubar's description of Judas who "incarnates the inseparability of Judaism and Christianity, their scandalous melding" (34).

One of the interesting continuities that my project has revealed is the way that both in the Medieval and Early Modern periods, "Jews continue to be News" despite their absence from England. Some time-travel tales employ the conceit of a character uncannily observing the hologram version of her earlier self obliviously reenacting some part of her past. It is a given that the present self should not confront the past self in order not to interfere with the proper unfolding of history. It is a curious but disturbing coexistence while it lasts. This is somewhat akin to the situation of the Jews during the

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years leading up to the Whitehall conference of December 1655: while England debates their readmission, the imaginary Jews of the past and and the actual Jews of the present finally threaten to converge.

Not surprisingly, the history of philosemitism in England is characterized by ambivalence. According to historian Cecil Roth, Puritanism's enthusiastic return to the Bible, particularly the Jewish Scriptures, *did* result in a more favourable attitude towards the Jews ("History" 149). Similarly, the popular conviction that Jews were to play a role in the millenarian scheme contributed to nurturing philosemitism in England (Katz "English Redemption" 73). However, from the time of the meeting between Dutch rabbi Menasseh ben Israel and Oliver Cromwell in September of 1655 to 1656 and beyond, Jewish readmission was hotly debated among pamphleteers. Arguing most powerfully against readmission was William Prynne whose *A Short Demurrer to the Jewes* resurrected the time-honoured English tales of ritual murder as well as a host of other crimes, such as crucifix trampling and coin clipping, to whip up a frenzy of fear among his fellow Englishmen. In *The Case of the Jewes stated* (1656), an anonymous pamphleteer provided a prurient slant to his objections: not only do Jews use "filthy blasphemous words" in connection with bodily functions, but "their chamber morals are so lascivious written upon their walls, as it is unfit for chaste ears" (ctd in Katz, "English Redemption" 78). Perhaps more disturbingly, some of the supposed philosemites in favour of readmission were still quite distrustful of actual Jews who they perceived as dangerous. Thus Thomas Collier, who wrote *A Brief Answer* (1656), although arguing for readmission, still acknowledged the justice of some of Prynne's claims. He represented

Jews as a threat to the English nation and suggested a policy of "containment" in order to "protect the Christian population" (Jowitt 159).

This chapter will explore some of the literary manifestations of millenarianism-inspired philosemitism in England in the years leading up to readmission in order to show the persistence of ambivalence in Christian attitudes towards Jews. The biblically-inspired dreams of Puritans translated into an optimism about the possibilities of radical change. As Charles Webster explains in *The Great Instauration*, millennial eschatology served as an "inducement to total reformation" (27). But while literal readings of the Bible served as a proof-text for the Puritans' own sense of being G-d's newly chosen, the Bible does not provide a specific program for reform and thus, those who dreamed of social amelioration needed to look elsewhere (19). This helps to explain the connection between Puritan eschatology and both scientific innovation and the often harshly prescriptive societies characteristic of utopian writing. Though Thomas More was certainly no Puritan, I begin with his work as it is the model for Bacon's *New Atlantis.* By placing the history of Portuguese Jewry in conversation with the history of the literary Jew, I present a new reading of More's text. I follow this with Bacon's work as the two texts enable a narrow but illuminating exploration of both change and continuity on either side of the Reformation divide. I track these changes through the lens of Bacon's use of Jewish references and his Jewish character, Joabin. Finally, I compare these texts with Milton's shifting millennial perceptions as they manifest in his earliest prose work, *Of Reformation.* This text, in some ways, takes us back to the contradictory representations

of Judas I discussed in Chapter Two: for in Milton's prose Jews are invoked as models of both emulation and condemnation.

Since More's coinage, *utopia* has become a generic term for all dreams of a better society. Though they may all be unrealizable, there are important distinctions among the various visions. In his study of utopian writing in England, J.C Davis usefully distinguishes utopia from four other visions of ideal life as a way of highlighting utopia's distinctive characteristics. Davis argues that these are all responding to what he identifies as "the collective problem": the seemingly intractable conflict between the exigencies of the common good and the rapacity of individual appetite (19). The best known of these responses is the Arcadian tradition. This is the world of Hesiod's Golden Age, or the biblical Eden. It envisions a world of plenty in which people live harmoniously with nature. But here nature's benevolence is complemented by people's more moderate desires, thus Hesiod's mortals were able to live "in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things...and beloved of the blessed gods" (*Works and Days,* ctd in Davis 22). This is echoed by Milton's description in *Paradise Lost,* where that "loveliest pair," Adam and Eve, sit down in the shade after their "sweet gard'ning labour" and with "wholesome thirst and appetite" fall to the fruits yielded by "compliant boughs" (4. 321-332). Conversely, it is precisely the satisfaction of unbridled physical desires that distinguishes another ideal that was popular in late medieval Europe: this is the folk fantasy of the Land of Cockaygne. This is a decidedly earthy vision of paradise. Like Eden, Cockaygne is a country of endless summer, eternal youth and magical abundance. However, gone is even the pretence of work or the "one, easy command" that so bedevilled our first

parents. The simplistic fantasy was best rendered pictorially in Brueghel's "Luikkerland"

(1567), where framed by a mountainous dumpling and a cake-roofed house, peasants lie

in a satiated sleep or open-mouthed expectation while a roast pig scuttles by with a knife

in its side. A most famous English poetic rendition is the early fourteenth century

"Cokaygne" which begins by situating its this wordly paradise in opposition to the

Eastern Eden: "Fur in see bi west of Spayngne/Is a lond ihote Cokaygne" (1-2). As the

poem subsequently goes on to humorously detail the sexual shenanigans of the monks

and nuns, Cokaygne's location might well serve to introduce the poem's anti-clerical

strain. Its marvels include geese that fly roasted on the spit crying, "Gees al hote, al

hote!" (104).[63] In Cokaygne, the satisfaction of all individual desires is what preempts

conflict. But even though this is a land free of conflict or strife (27), as the quintessential

"poor man's heaven" written at a time of increasing peasant insurrection, it is not without

suggestions of class conflict (Morton 15). Thus, at the end of the poem, we are told that

the path to this land is particularly arduous for the "Lordings gode and hend" (183) who

must do a kind of penance to reach it: "Seue yere in swine is dritte/He mote wade, wol ye

iwitte,/al anon vp to þe chynne" (179-181). Even though this particular heaven is

ultimately to be enjoyed by all, in a satisfying reversal of social hierarchies, the wealthy

will have to wade in the peasants's dung-filled shoes in order to earn it.

      The final two categories of ideal societies that Davis lists are "the perfect moral

commonwealth" and the millennium. The former addresses the collective problem

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[63]These speaking entrees might remind modern readers of the outrageous moment in
Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* when the bovine "Dish of the Day"
introduces himself to Arthur and his friends and helpfully suggests ways they might eat
him before he "nips off to shoot himself." Presumably, would-be "Cockaygnites" did not
respond with the amused revulsion experienced by readers of Adams.

through the perfection of each person and the "personal limitation of appetite" (31). This is fundamentally a conservative approach as society is improved not by the alteration of any of its existing institutions, but by the reformation of every individual. As Davis points out, though most writers of this genre directed their message to the ruling class, such as Erasmus in his *The Education of a Christian Prince*, or Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* in its stated goal to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (Letter to Raleigh 714), this ideal was meant to encompass all strata of society. Davis observes how, despite its conservative nature, the perfect moral commonwealth could potentially spell the end of the political order: for who needs rulers if we are all self-ruled? He cites Luther who had put the question in specifically Christian terms: "If all the world were composed of real Christians...no prince, King, lord or sword would be needed" (ctd in Davis 31). It is interesting how far this vision is from utopia, which requires so much state intervention to achieve the mere appearance of morality.

Millenarianism will receive a longer treatment as this response to the common problem is the most germane to the readmission debates. As mentioned earlier, the vision of millenarianists in early modern England included the return and conversion of Jews. But Jews were also invoked to confer *auctoritas* upon Christian eschatology: Joseph Mede, the first great English millenarian who counted John Milton among his students, included an appendix entitled "The Opinions of the Learned Hebrews concerning the great Day of Judgment" in order to show that his synchronism of the millennium with the Day of Judgment was actually an ancient Jewish belief (Clouse 56). Though the belief in an eventual Messianic age has always been a key tenet of the Jewish creed, not

surprisingly, the intensity of millennial expectation for both Christians and Jews has waxed and waned in response to external political and social circumstances.

For Christians, the primary eschatological texts are the Book of Revelation, usually dated somewhere between 81-96 C.E, and the much older Book of Daniel, to which it is indebted. Daniel famously includes a dream of four beasts which symbolize four successive world powers. The last of which "shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces" (8:23). After this final perniciously destructive kingdom is overthrown, Israel, personified as the "Son of Man," will enjoy an "everlasting dominion" in which the righteous remnant of Israel will be served by "all people, nations and languages" (7:14).

For the Jews living under Roman rule in the first century, as their situation deteriorated, the "Son of Man" became increasingly identified with a superhuman warrior-king who would rescue the nation from its oppressors. The doomed Jewish militancy against the Roman army was stimulated by this phantasy of an eschatological saviour (Cohn 22). After the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 C.E and the final attempted rising of supposed Messiah Simon bar-Kochba in ca 136, the Jews mostly lost their taste for things apocalyptic, [64] and this longing for world empire predicted in Daniel's dream was taken over by early Christians.

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[64]The notable exception is the powerful hope awakened by the Sephardic rabbi, Shabbetai Tzvi, who declared himself the messiah in 1648 and gained a large following of Jews and even some European millenarians. Not only was millennialism in the air, but the Jews in particular, reeling from the large-scale slaughter of the Khmelnytsky pogroms, were ripe for a redeemer. To save his life, Shabbetai Tzvi converted to Islam in the portentous year of 1666. Jews have viewed would-be messiahs with a jaundiced eye ever since.

But Christian millenarianism, useful while the faithful suffered persecution, began to be discredited after the Church achieved supremacy under Constantine. In the third century, Origen replaced millenarian eschatology with the "eschatology of the individual soul" (29). By the fifth century, St. Augustine adopted an allegorical reading of the Book of Revelation. Instead of anticipating *future* salvation in which their lives on earth would be utterly transformed, Christians were instructed that the Millennium had *already* been realized in the Church. Thus Augustinian "amillennialism" held sway as the official doctrine for over a thousand years: until early seventeenth century reformers in England resurrected the literal reading of apocalypse as a way to both make sense of the past, the hegemony of the Catholic Church, and the promised future with the Reformed Church now standing in for Ancient Israel. What is new about post-reformation millennialism is that it reads the biblical texts as literally referring to a future that is as momentous as it is imminent. It engendered a zeitgeist of eager anticipation.

What distinguishes the millenarian vision from the others it is, at least initially, a *deus ex machina* solution. Redemption is handed down from above and does not necessitate the transformation of either individuals or institutions. Millenarianism comes to England by way of the German Calvinist Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638). His key work on eschatology was written in Latin in 1627 and translated into English as *The Beloved City* in 1643. Like the British millennialists who followed him, Alsted saw the conversion of the Jews as a necessary prelude to the establishment of G-d's kingdom. He envisioned a millennium inaugurated by the rule of converted Jews and resurrected martyrs commencing in 1694 (Davis 33). Joseph Mede, considered one of England's

greatest biblical scholars, developed along similar lines. His millennialism was particularly sunny: this was the dawn of a new era and the immanence of Divine redemption was confirmed by the unfolding of secular history. As Ernest Tuveson argues, Mede's achievement was to give the apocalyptic movement a new direction as the "guarantor of secular and religious progress" (76). Though Mede did not advocate taking political action to hasten the coming of the millennium, he was an inspiration to those enthusiasts among the Puritans who subsequently did.

The ideas of Mede were very influential during the 1640s, the decade that also saw the collapse of control over both press and pulpit, and the most momentous event of all, the execution of the king (Davis 33). With such a seismic event shaking the foundations of English society, millenarian hope was suddenly translated into political possibility. The Fifth Monarchy Men were a radical sect that fused millenarian theology and political extremism. Their name, appropriately enough, is derived from the book of Daniel's vision of the four beasts representing the great empires that would reign and then be defeated. The fifth and final monarchy was to be led by G-d and His saints. As their name suggests, these people cast themselves in the role of the saints. Like the disgruntled peasants dreaming of Cockaygne, the Fifth Monarchists did not come from the society's upper echelons: they were instead made up of a restless group of artisans, journeymen and apprentices. But unlike their dreaming forbears, the Saints' vision of social inversion was not limited to an initial penitential period for the rich: rather, there would still be a hierarchy, but just a new one with the saintly at the top. As B.S Capp illustrates in his essay on "Extreme Millenarianism," the favourite Psalm of the Fifth Monarchists was the

one that authorized them to "bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron" (Capp 68). Like all good Protestants, the Saints derived their authority from a careful and literal reading of the Bible. The execution of Charles I was duly interpreted as the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy: the King was the "little horn" (7:8) that emerges from the ten-horned fourth beast. Though they initially supported Cromwell, their biblical vilification is subsequently transferred to him once he adopted a semi-monarchial position. By 1655, Cromwell joined his royal predecessor in being dismissed as just another "little horn." As Cromwell had perceptively remarked about the Fifth Monarchists, "Though they had the tongues of angels, they had cloven feet" (78).

There are two interesting things to note about the Fifth Monarchists in relation to the Jewish question: though they were interested in Jews and saw their return to the land of Israel as a necessary step in the establishment of G-d's kingdom on earth, none of them seem to have been involved in the projected return of the Jews to England (Capp 71). Secondly, when they envisioned how the government in the new millennial society was to work, their model was the Mosaic law of the Jewish scriptures. Thus they would abolish the death penalty for theft and reserve the harsher penalties for the sexual offenses such as adultery. If this sounds far-fetched, Capp points out that the Puritans in the Rump Parliament (1649-1653), actually did pass the death penalty for adultery and blasphemy (75). What is so intriguing in terms of my project is that, separated by more than a century and on either side of the great Reformation divide, the view of the Saints on capital crimes is virtually identical to the one described by More in Part One of *Utopia.*

According to J.C. Davis, Utopia is distinct from the previous imaginings of ideal societies by both its sober appraisal of the central conflict between individual desires and the collective good, and the radical solution it proposes to deal with it. Unlike the perfect moral commonwealth or the arcadian tradition, the utopian solution does not envision great changes to either nature or human nature. Nature will remain "red in tooth and claw" and people will continue to display a similar rapacity. The persistence of social problems for people living in a supposedly ideal society is apparent from the lengthy catalogue of crimes and punishments that More includes in *Utopia.* But, as Davis points out, a utopian society seeks to organize societal institutions in such a way that the effects of the collective problem are "contained" (38). We might view Utopia as an institutionally-engineered perfect moral commonwealth where citizens are fashioned not by education, but by laws that are both pervasive and universal. The result is a system of sameness that sees "tranquility [as the] highest good" (Manuel 76). However, it is precisely the myriad ways in which the citizens of Utopia are controlled, observed and contained that give More's island its distinctly *dystopian* feel.

More's *Utopia* can claim pride of place as the work that defines the field of utopian literature. By presenting his story of "no place" told by a "pedlar of nonsense," More is able to present some difficult truths from a position of relative safety. More wrote the second part first, while on a diplomatic mission in Flanders in 1515. It describes the history and practices of Utopian society. An undoubted influence was More's relationship with Erasmus, who had just completed *The Education of a Christian Prince,* a work that addresses how a virtuous society might be created (Kincaid 10), so we can infer that their

discussions were one impetus behind the writing of *Utopia.* As humanists, More and

Erasmus were part of a movement toward greater critical inquiry that became associated

with "anticlericalism and religious reform" (6). *Utopia* is also indebted to emerging

narratives about the new world by explorers such as Amerigo Vespucci. Book I, written

when More returned to England, introduces the fictional More to Raphael and includes

Raphael's critique of capital punishment for thieves, land enclosure and the evils of

private property. At the close of Book I, objections are raised by Raphael's reasonable

interlocutors to his radical statements about the evils of private property. These objections

seems to grant Raphael permission to say what he wants in Book II as he gives his

lengthy monologue describing the "wonderfully wise and sacred institutions of the

Utopians" (More 37). What ensues is a sometimes uncomfortable portrait of a highly

structured society in which all the people's needs are met, but where their personal

freedom is restricted.

The scholarship on More's *Utopia* is both vast and varied. The broad categories of

disciplines that engage with More's text include: social and political philosophy, history,

ethics, humanism, colonialism, satire, rhetorical theory and science fiction. Given the

range and sheer quantity of the scholarship, one can only make tentative claims about its

current directions. As a possible example, the most recent editions of *Moreana*, the

journal of More studies based on conference proceedings, explore topics such as Thomas

More as theologian (2015), Geography and Utopias (2014) and Tyranny (2013, 2012).

According to George Logan, in his introduction to the Cambridge edition (revised 2002),

the text prompts three fundamental questions: why did More invent a flawed

commonwealth? What is the relationship between the debates in Book I and the description of Utopia in Book II? And, why does More represent his fictional self as disapproving of what Hythloday says? (xii). For Logan, the source of both the interest and the enigma of *Utopia* are the result of More's choice to break from his classical predecessors Plato and Aristotle, whose discussions about ideal commonwealths were framed as arguments, and instead, create a "fictional travelogue." As a fiction, it is inherently less apt to be resolved into "unambiguous meanings" and More's choice is also responsible for the book's defining literary influence (xviii).

In "Discourse in More's *Utopia*: Alibi/Pretext/Postscript," John Freeman analyzes the complex, entangled relationship between Books I and II, arguing that the former serves as a "pretext" and the latter as an "alibi" (289). Employing the three-part New Historicist model of consolidation, subversion and containment, Freeman links the enclosure laws, attacked by Hythloday in Book I, to King Utopus's large-scale enclosure of Utopia. After evicting the native Abraxians, the thinly disguised expropriated peasantry of More's day, Utopus transforms the peninsula into an island (290). For Freeman, Book I, which was composed later, is essential in preventing Book II from reading as an "empty signifier" (291). Through the enclosure of Utopia, the mythical topos is reoriented back into historical contingency (309).

A very different approach is adopted by Logan, who connects the two books through recourse to rhetorical theory, arguing that Hythloday's remarks in Book I belong to the category of deliberative oratory whose central topics are "*honestas*" and "*utilitas*": the moral and the expedient (xxii). This provides the context for what follows in Book II:

a provocative thought experiment about whether a commonwealth can be both moral and expedient (xxiv).

Among the fairly recent studies on *Utopia* that continue to be cited by other scholars are Amy Boesky's *Founding Fictions: Utopias in Early Modern England* (1996) and Dominic Baker-Smith's *More's Utopia* (1991). Boesky emphasizes the connection between the utopian genre and growing English nationalism, while Baker-Smith synthesizes recent scholarship while placing *Utopia* within the context of contemporary European political life. Baker-Smith concludes his study by suggesting that the undecidability of the text transfers the responsibility to the reader: the "sphinx-like ambiguity [of Utopia] compels the reader to shoulder the burden of interpretation" (243).

A recent article that provides an excellent overview of *Utopia* within the context of More's England is Paul Kincaid's "Utopia in Context" (2016). This article, published in a journal for the review of science fiction, persuasively argues that the regimented order that modern readers dislike about Utopia would not have been as undesirable to More, who came of age during a turbulent time of change. Citing the recent violence of the War of the Roses, the threat of Ottoman incursion into Europe, the discovery of new lands and the rapid intellectual changes wrought by Caxton's printing press, Kincaid suggests that what would have made Utopia utopian to More and his contemporaries, was not the lack of cruelty or the sharing of property, but its "consistent and static quality" (16).

My dissertation's contribution to More scholarship is to extend the context of *Utopia* by creating a "thought experiment" of my own: Hythloday is the crucial linchpin to the enigma of More's art. How might our experience of this text be altered if we were

to see this mysterious Portuguese traveller as a Wandering Jew? By making this

somewhat audacious argument, I situate myself among the historically-driven analyses of

More's text and I create a stronger connection between *Utopia* and Bacon's *New Atlantis*.

A comparison of More and Bacon's respective utopias provides a virtual petri-dish

for examining periodization: *Utopia*, written in Latin in 1516 before the future Lord

Chancellor joined the King's council, is a work that reflects the great classical learning of

its Humanist author: its vision of radical social reform is informed by Plato while its

distinctive humour is derived from the second-century sophist, Lucian, whose works

More had translated.[65] *Utopia* is brimming with scholarly matter. This begins with the

opening dialogue between the fictional More and that passionate "peddler of nonsense,"

Raphael Hythloday, who debate the relative merits of the active versus contemplative life.

Raphael's subsequent revelations concerning some of the highly unorthodox practices of

the eminently reasonable Utopians, such as condoning religious tolerance, divorce and

euthanasia, become a way of illustrating just how far natural reason will get you without

the revelatory truths of divine law. *Utopia's* genre is hybrid: it includes dialogue, satire,

imaginary travelogue, "paradoxical encomium" (Leslie 2) and *parerga* in the form of

prefatory letters by living people. This fusion of fact and fancy in a work that contains

both outrageous propositions and devastating criticisms underscores the aptness of John

Ruskin's comment, describing *Utopia* as "perhaps the most really mischievous book ever

written" (Ackroyd 171). But what is the nature of More's mischief? C.S Lewis argues

that *Utopia* is mostly good fun. Concurring with More's sixteenth-century biographer,

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[65]Erasmus's *Moriae Encomium* (1511), its title neatly punning on his friend's name, was
the first work in this tradition.

Nicholas Harpsfield, it as a "iollye invention," less a descendent of the *Republic* than *Gulliver's* antecedent. And despite the serious topics in which it engages, it is simply the "spontaneous overflow of intellectual high spirits...which starts many hares and kills none" (ctd in Adams 219). The thorny issue to be resolved in this reading is how to reconcile the playful audacity (and positions) of *Utopia* with the hair-shirted Lord Chancellor who executed Protestants and lost his head standing his ground. Lewis accounts for the disconnect by suggesting that More's thinking evolved and, of course, the times changed requiring Papists to circle the wagons against the Lutheran foes. This is quite unlike the position of the venerable R.W Chambers who perceived much stern rebuke for contemporary European society beneath the playful surface of More's tale. For Chambers, More was responding to the rising commercialism of his age by creating a highly disciplined society based on the monastic ideals of religion, manual labour, common ownership and intellectual development (ctd in Adams 158). If Utopians are found wanting, it is because they are missing the three specifically Christian Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity (150); thus these heathens's virtues serve as a kind of a *fortiori* rebuke to vice-ridden Christian Europe.

But in addition to looking *back* to Medieval monastic ideals, More's work also looks *forward* in a way that is not unlike post-reformation eschatologists who had replaced the backward-looking Augustinian amillennialism with their literal biblical readings portending a glorious new age. As A. L Morton points out, by the end of the fifteenth century, the sense of the Graeco-Roman *past* as the golden age was shifting to a

vision of an even-more glorious future. This would be achieved by the "exercise of reason" and the adoption by the "princes and statesmen" of the Humanists' views (40).

<u>Funny, You Don't Look Jewish: Raphael Hytholday the Wandering Jew</u>

While it is easy to make a case for the Jewish presence in Bacon's *New Atlantis* given his inclusion of Joabin the Jew as a central character, it is not initially apparent what connection More's work has with England's ongoing preoccupation with Jews, either real or imagined. I will argue that though not explicitly identified as a Jew, the errant Portuguese sailor who introduces the assembled Europeans to Utopia, Raphael Hythloday, functions in several respects in More's text as a *literary* Jew.

But firstly, could he have been an *actual* Jew? And is it appropriate to enquire into the genealogy of a fictional character—even from a work that glides so easily between fact and fiction? In her analysis of the letter to Peter Giles, Eliza McCutcheon describes the strategy succinctly: More "fictionalizes himself as he authenticates his fiction by borrowing from life" (17). Thus life gives credence to fiction through interlocutors like Giles and John Morton who hail from More's own world. But we might apply her observation to other facts in the text. Understandably, More assumes a pose of being humorously dense when it comes to situating Utopia on a map: he admits in the letter to Giles that somehow it didn't occur to [him] to ask ...in what part of the New World Utopia is to be found" (5). Yet with other details, he seems quite deliberate about "authenticating his fiction." One example concerns the travels of Hythloday, who is described by Giles as having accompanied Amerigo Vespucci on "the *last three* of his four voyages" (10).[66] As

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[66]Emphasis mine.

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Dominic Baker-Smith points out, Vespucci's first voyage, purported to have taken place between 1497-8, was already recognized as a hoax by 1515. Thus More took the trouble to disassociate his fictional character from a fictitious expedition (92). My own question arises from Raphael's explicit identification as Portuguese. Might this iconoclastic and sophisticated outsider with the Hebrew name[67] suggest a Portuguese New Christian? A brief history of the years immediately prior to the opening of *Utopia* will provide some context. When the Jews were driven out of Spain in 1492, the largest group crossed into Portugal which was still a relatively safe haven. This did not prove to be the case for very long. As historian Cecil Roth describes in his history of the Marranos, Portugal's ruling monarch, Joao II, initially welcomed the wealthier Jews who could afford the heavy poll tax in exchange for permanent residence. The estimated one hundred thousand Jews who could only afford a smaller tax, were granted permission to remain in Portugal for just eight months, after which the king promised to ship them where they wanted to go. Ultimately, these Jews were shipped against their will to Africa where they mostly perished and the remainder were sold as slaves (55). Though the slavery was revoked by Joao's successor, King Manoel, this young king's tolerance proved to be short-lived. At the insistence of his betrothed, the Spanish Infanta and the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, Portugal had to be free of Jews before she would enter it (56). What ensued conforms to a pattern that was dreadfully familiar for many medieval Jews: An apostate urged Manoel to alter his original plan of banishing all Jews and Muslims from the country in favour of a more pious and practical alternative: he would retain the useful

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[67]*Raphael* is Hebrew for "G-d heals." Perhaps this is a clue to the dystopian nature of *Utopia*: complete societal healing will only be achieved by Divine intervention.

services of the Jews AND save souls if he adopted the following ploy. Thus on March 19th 1497, the beginning of Passover, all the children between four and fourteen were rounded up for forced baptism, the expectation being that parents would finally bow to the inevitable and simply follow their children to the font (57). But this was not what transpired. In their desperation to prevent these conversions, many parents killed their children and themselves. Babies were forcibly removed from their parents to be raised with Christians far from their homes (58). When it came time for the unbaptized Jews to be expelled, once again the rules of the game were altered: the twenty thousand remaining Jews were required to assemble in a central area. But instead of putting them in ships, they were herded into a palace and then deprived of food and water in yet another attempt to force them to convert (59). Many did accept baptism at this point. Others, still defiant, had holy water thrown on them anyways. Thus the King's threatened expulsion was replaced by a massive and unwilling conversion.

Roth points out that Marranos in Portugal were different than those in Spain (60). The Portuguese Jews, whose numbers were in part made up of the Jews who had fled Spanish conversion, were far more resistant to baptism than the Jews who had remained in Spain, and thus, as New Christians, they were more tenacious about maintaining their faith in secret. Many of these Marranos did elect to leave Portugal soon after the forced conversions; they could do so because as Christians, they were now permitted to leave. But their exodus was such a concern that in 1499, Manoel decreed that henceforth New Christians could not emigrate without special license (63). The Marranos were indeed "cursed companions": forcibly assimilated through sham baptisms, they lived as aliens in

a country where the clergy ranted against them to a population who resented their success

and continued to view them with suspicion.

In 1506, the lives of Portuguese Jews took another turn for the worst with an

attack in Lisbon that was reminiscent of the many medieval pogroms set off by perceived

Jewish slights to the Eucharist. The incident was well documented by several chroniclers,

both Jewish and non-Jewish, whose accounts are quite consistent. My summary is based

on Cecil Roth's *History of the Marranos* and François Soyer's analysis of the recently

recovered eyewitness account by chronicler Gaspar Correia. The attack occurred when

there was a power vacuum created by the absence of King Manuel, his court and the

Governor. During a well-attended mass, a crucifix looked particularly luminous and the

crowd declared it a miracle. A skeptical New Christian present very unwisely suggested

that this was simply the refraction of the light (Roth 64). This iconoclasm was speedily

punished by the mob who immediately stabbed him. The mob, further incited by the

friars calling "heresy," proceeded to massacre the New Christians wherever they could be

found. The number of would-be-murderers was swelled by the looters who quickly

loaded their goods unto their ships. The violence lasted for three days despite the effort of

local officials to quell it (Soyer 227). It was estimated that between two and four

thousand were killed (Roth 65). When the riot had already lost momentum, a hated New

Christian tax-collector, Joao Rodriguez Mascarenhas, was deliberately chosen to be

lynched (Soyer 229). Thus, as in the earlier York massacre in England, anti-Semitism was

a pretext for seeking revenge for economic grievances. King Manoel was not pleased by

this threat to royal authority that came to be known as the "Massacre of the New

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Christians." And, in addition to rounding up and summarily hanging hundreds of the instigators, in 1507 he once again restored the right of the New Christians to leave the country. A huge tide of emigration ensued; but this turned out to be but another temporary window for this freedom was restricted once again in 1521. By 1547, the Portuguese Inquisition, based on the Spanish model, was underway; but now it was targeting the descendants of the original forced converts who continued to be known as *conversos* despite having been born and raised as Christians. The illogic and injustice of this national policy--forcing the Jews to convert and then subsequently punishing them for being converts--is reminiscent of Raphael's most memorable accusation that England creates the thieves and then punishes them for stealing (20).

As Jerome Friedman points out in his article on the Spanish pure blood laws, the Iberian New Christians were prominent as merchants and traders and in most instances, after leaving, they were largely able to integrate into local populations where their education and skills were valued by their new communities (10). In his letter to Busleyden, Peter Giles warmly praises Raphael as "a man with more knowledge of nations, peoples and business than even the famous Ulysses" (120). The conversation of Book One is set in Antwerp, one of the important cities where these converts found refuge (9). Perhaps in order to avoid controversy, when seeking refuge in Christian Europe, Iberian New Christians would simply identify themselves as members of the "Portuguese Nation" and these "Portuguese" merchants gained very favourable trading status in Europe (9). It is also interesting that Raphael is described as having "renounced his patrimony" prior to embarking on his travels (10). Might this refer to his heritage as

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well as his inheritance? Coming from Portugal, this would be understandable. For it was just in Spain and Portugal, due to the very large number of converts, that a biological standard was introduced to reassert the differences that forced conversion had largely obliterated. As historians often point out, the backlash against conversos was partly fuelled by jealousy for their economic success. If Raphael *was* a Portuguese New Christian, the land he describes--one without economic disparity where all citizens are subject to a relentless state-controlled homogenization--would certainly have solved his native country's intractable converso problems.

This brief overview of the history of Portugal in the years that preceded the publication of More's *Utopia,* illustrates the frightening uncertainties experienced by a people continuously buffeted between the vicissitudes of royal whim and mob violence. Utopia, even with its severe restrictions on personal liberty, appears paradisal next to Portugal for New Christians.

During the conversation that opens *Utopia,* set in Antwerp in 1515, when Raphael has demonstrated his broad perspective on customs based on his extensive travels, Peter Giles suggests he enter "some king's service" (13). Raphael objects to exchanging the contemplative for the active life primarily because of his belief that effecting change is futile: courts are driven by envy and self-interest and there is resistance to new ideas. He cites the "excuse of reverence for times past" (14) that countries are wont to cling to that results in the "proud, obstinate, ridiculous judgments" he claims to have encountered many times, and once "even" in England. In response to (fictional) More's query, he mentions his visit to England soon after the "lamentable slaughter of the rebels": this

refs to the Battle of Blackheath of June 22, 1497, in which an army of Cornishmen, angered by Henry VII's rapacious taxation, were defeated after marching on London. If fictional Raphael *were* a Jew, he would have had the opportunity to leave Portugal soon after the forced conversions of March, 1497 and make his way to England as a newly-minted Christian. Furthermore, as a Portuguese writing about a "lamentable slaughter" of armed men in 1515, could the memory of the 1506 slaughter of unarmed New Christians in his own country be far from his mind? According to François Soyer, the massacre was well-reported and "sent shockwaves throughout Europe." Accounts of it, some of them by eye-witnesses, exist in Portuguese, Jewish, Spanish and German sources (221). Given the ever-shifting and precarious fate of the Jews in Portugal, it is logical that Raphael, as a New Christian, would be filled with praise for a land where different forms of religion are tolerated and the only ecclesiastical crimes are overly zealous preaching and wanton fighting about religious differences (More 94).

If my theory concerning the hidden ancestry of what is, after all, a fictional character, is epistemologically troubling and worthy of the rebuke that L.C Knight famously dispensed to those who would presume to enquire about the number of Lady Macbeth's children, an alternate way of finding a Jewish bridge over the Reformation divide is to see Raphael Hythloday as functioning as a *literary* rather than actual Jew. We have seen that fictional Jews have served a contradictory range of theological or literary purposes: biblical models to be emulated, both crucifiers and enablers of Christ, dangerous threats to Christendom, eschatologically essential testifiers to the truth of Christian doctrine and perennial outsiders whose difference helps to define Christianity or

Englishness. The fictional character of the Wandering Jew serves several of these functions simultaneously.

Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale" provides a memorable example of how this figure can be evoked without being explicitly identified as Jewish. In this tale, the vice-ridden Pardoner delivers a powerful exemplum devoted to the theme of "*Radix malorum est Cupiditas*" (334).[68] His story begins with three sinful rioters who have made a pact to find and slay Death; they meet a poor old man enveloped in a cape, who directs them up a "croked wey" to a grove where he claims to have recently left Death under a tree. There they find a bag of gold which results in the death of all three as their greed causes them to betray one another for its possession. What enhances the mystery of the old man is his own apparent inability to die. As he laments: " Ne Deeth, allas, ne wol nat han my lyf!/Thus walke I, lyk a resteless kaitif" (727-8). Though the old man appears, through his religious references to be a pious Christian, at least one critic, Nelson Sherwin Bushnell (1931), connects him to the figure of the Wandering Jew. Bushnell describes Chaucer's immortal as an "emblem of temperance and sobriety" who serves as the "agent of justice" in the exemplum (458). More's Raphael is "of quite advanced years" (9) and, like Chaucer's old man, his compulsion to travel precludes him from resolving on a tomb, as he aphoristically declares, "The man who has no grave is covered by the sky" (10). I would argue that though neither character is identified as Jewish, they both function as "Wandering Jews," particularly in the way the figure develops from its Medieval English source. Bushnell describes Chaucer's figure, like the Wandering Jew, as possessing "glamorous melancholy"; he is the "divinely appointed spectator of human sin and

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[68]"The love of money is the root of all evil."

suffering" (460). Raphael, in his impassioned criticisms of European injustices, functions

in a similar way. He too serves as an agent of justice, and Utopia itself provides the

exemplum. The two figures are further linked by their identification of money as the

source of all evil.

Like the figure of Judas, the Wandering Jew is a Christian invention that remains

a perennial favourite, haunting the literature, art and music of the Western world. In Italy,

he is known as John Buttadeus (from *batuere*; one who "beats" G-d), in England he is

Joseph Cartaphilus ("dearly beloved") while in Germany, he is called Ahasuerus (the

name of the Persian king in the Purim story). The German version was consolidated with

the printing of an anonymously authored pamphlet in 1602 known as the *Kurtze*

Beschreibung. The publication of this pamphlet was a watershed moment in the

proliferation of the legend throughout Europe. The intense millennial expectations of the

seventeenth-century also served to further fuel its popularity (Maccoby 251). The

Wandering Jew resembles Judas in the way he embodies the fundamental contradictions

that characterize Christian/Jewish relations: he acts simultaneously as both betrayer and

enabler. He originally struck Jesus and yet he is granted immortality in order to testify to

His truth until the Second Coming. Thus he remains poised as a witness to the truth of the

two seismic events of Christianity: the Crucifixion and the Second coming. But the

Wandering Jew is also literally embodied: there were frequent reputed sightings of this

legendary figure throughout Europe: he is the word made flesh. Like Judas, the

Wandering Jew is not found in Jewish sources; this is to be expected in that the figure

comes to serve a distinctly Christian theological need central to all Jewish representation:

to be the living witness to the truth of Christian doctrine. According to George Anderson, the legend originated around the time of the later Crusades and its purpose was the "glorification of G-d through an example of the miraculous nature of his wondrous works" (Anderson 367 "Popular Survivals"). But there are analogues that predate the New Testament: the stories of Adam, Cain, Prometheus and Oedipus also involve patterns of sin, exile and punishment. As Hyam Maccoby observes, all these figures commit crimes which involve the acquisition of knowledge: that even when the story appears to begin with violence (as with Cain and the Wandering Jew), the crime enables a "higher state of awareness" (243). Though Chaucer's old man and Raphael are not identified as having committed any crimes, they are wandering outsiders who possess a privileged knowledge that sets them apart and enables them to pass judgment on the moral failings of others.

Like the story of Judas, the New Testament source for the immortal wanderer involves the conflation of two very different stories: that of the unnamed officer of the high priest who strikes Jesus "with the palm of his hand" (John 18:22), who is subsequently identified as Malchus (he of the severed ear), and Christ's promise made in Matthew that his favourite disciples "shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (16:28). It is likely that the disparate nature of these two sources is why the figure seems simultaneously worthy of condemnation and veneration.

Folklorist Galit Hasan-Rokem sees the Wandering Jew as a kind of communication matrix, creating a "diachronic global village" through his international wanderings as he carries the Christ's redemptive message to all Mankind, a necessary

prelude to the Second Coming (194). She also points out the similarity between his name "Cartophilus" and "Cartophylax": Augustine's term for Jews as "preservers of books for Christianity" (194). Thus the figure serves to authenticate the truth of Christianity and its Jewish biblical heritage as the Jew who had borne witness to it.

In England, the legend receives its form by way of Roger Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* of 1228. This account is also the first reference to the Wandering Jew in extant literature (Anderson 367 "Popular Survivals"). Wendover's account feels almost Chaucerian in its deployment of frames: the story of the Armenian archbishop on pilgrimage to St. Albans is translated by a French-speaking knight. He had been asked about Joseph "a man about whom there was much talk in the world" (Roger 513). Joseph was famous as a living witness: he had spoken to Christ and was still alive. But he was originally known as "Cartaphilus," a Roman porter in Pilate's hall. While Jesus was going out the door to be crucified, Cartaphilus struck him and mockingly asked, "Go quicker, Jesus, go quicker, why do you loiter?" To which Jesus Christ replied, with perhaps uncharacteristic testiness, "I go, but you will wait until I return.'" (513). After Christ's death, he is converted and takes the name Joseph; phoenix-like, he rejuvenates every one hundred years to the age of thirty. Living in Armenia, he is an austere man of "holy conversation" who relates the creed of the apostles "without smiling or levity." He is content with "slight food and clothing" (514). What is remarkable about the early English accounts is that Cartephilus is not identified as Jewish: he is a Roman pagan who becomes a Christian. Nor is he particularly peripatetic, as he resides in Armenia. Thus this figure provides another instance of Frank Kermode's notion of a "function in search

of a character." From the harmonization of two New Testament stories evolves a complex Jewish character who lives to bear witness to Christian truth. And, the relatively insignificant slap the unnamed officer delivers to Jesus in John, becomes transformed into a symbolic deicide when committed by Jew (Maccoby 241). Sometime, between Roger of Wendover's Cartephilus and the German Ahasuerus, the figure becomes a Jewish wanderer. The conflation of Jewishness with wandering was a natural one as Jews were known to have been wandering since the destruction of the Second Temple.

Matthew Paris uses Roger's account in his *Chronica Majora*, but his figure is more deliberately associated with eschatology, given to "reproof and argument...looking to the coming of Christ in fire to judge the world" (Anderson 20). The other interesting addition Matthew makes is the testimony of a soldier who visited Armenia and saw both Cartaphilus and the "*ark* which is still to be found in the mountains of Armenia" (21). While the biblical allusion would serve to further authenticate Cartaphilus by his association with the story of Noah from Genesis, Matthew's addition might also mark the transition towards the figure becoming explicitly Jewish. It also might establish another link to Chaucer's tale: for a detail that Bushnell identifies as original to Chaucer is the old man's reference to his chest "That in [his] chambre longe tyme hath be" (735). He declares that he would willingly exchange this chest for a shroud (736). But could this mysterious chest, which is also an *archa* in Latin, be linked to the Noah's ark seen by the soldier in Matthew's version of the Cartaphilus story? Or, given the centrality of the deadly treasure to which the Old Man directs the *riotoures* in Chaucer's tale, might we connect the Old Man's chest with the historical *archae* that contained the bonds that

ultimately proved to be such a Pandora's box of woes for the Jews in Medieval England? There is actually a strong basis for making these associative leaps due to the rich medieval tradition of punning surrounding the word-concept of *archa.*

In *The Craft of Thought,* Mary Carruthers, describes how the polysemous *archa* is employed in the *pictura* of twelfth-century theologian Hugh of St. Victor. This was not an actual picture, but a mnemonic treatise created as a word-picture. In it, Hugh structures three levels of rectangular boxes: thus it begins with *archa* as chest and then the association is extended by way of a triple pun on *archa* to include Noah's Ark, the ark of the Covenant and the Jerusalem ark (244-45). The purpose of linking the images is to create an associative "treasure-chamber" of biblical images that can be easily retrieved and meditated upon (Zacher 65). This "mental painting" as Carruthers calls it, is "driven by sound-associations, homophones and polysemous words" (244). If we, like Hugh, imagine the *archa* structurally, as an edifice built on association, it is in many ways a pre-fabricated one. Thus *archa* will always take us back to the idea of a safety box in which to store what is precious and subject to loss: valuables such as bonds, people during a flood, biblical history and memory itself.

With its splendid hospitals, prescribed reverence for the elderly and careful shielding of its citizens from acts of violence[69], More's Utopia carefully engineers a perfect moral commonwealth through a combination of strictly enforced laws and institutions. Its system of well-stocked and open warehouses, where all goods are free for the taking, seeks no less than to eliminate the vices of greed and pride entirely. Though

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[69] At a time when public violence is theatricalized, in Utopia even the butchering of meat was done by slaves as "slaughtering our fellow creatures gradually destroys the sense of compassion, the finest sentiment of which our human nature is capable" (55).

no earlier readers have seen Chaucer's Old Man as a source for More's Raphael, I would argue that in his wisdom, wanderings and voice of detached moral authority, they are both drawing from the figure of the Wandering Jew. What links More's figure to the future millennialists is his frequent recourse to the authority of biblical law: in his famous arguments against capital punishment for thieves, Raphael invokes Mosaic law "that punished theft with a fine, not death" (22). But this more merciful approach is tempered by More's retention of capital punishment for sexual crimes such as adultery, once again following the Jewish Bible (81).

Though not explicitly described as wandering, Raphael's fate at the end of *Utopia* is left ambiguous: in Giles' letter to Busleyden, he recounts the contradictory information he has received about their friend: some say he died, while others say he returned to his country briefly before returning to Utopia. His removal from the scene is reminiscent of that of an earlier wandering Jew: Jonathas the Syrian merchant from the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament.* As a sceptical outsider, Jonathas is well-positioned to testify to the truth of transubstantiation after his comically violent attempts to destroy the host. While the unscrupulous Christian merchant Aristorius who assumes the Judas role, by selling the host to Jews (Spector "Time, Space" 190) is finally rehabilitated and repatriated, the New Christians set off immediately after they are christened, Jonathas signalling their penitential journey to nowhere in particular: "Now we will walke by contré and cost/Owr wickyd living for to restore" (964-5). Wandering Jew figures all display an uncompromising moral certainty, often gained as a result of their previous iconoclasm. They play a critical role in the testing of doctrine, sometimes serving as mouthpieces for

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Christian doubt or, like Raphael, using their status as strangers to indict European customs and propose radical alternatives. Yet once their role is complete, they are not absorbed into the community they came to criticize.

The Science of Happiness

The *New Atlantis,* like More's *Utopia,* is a hybrid genre: both utopian fable and voyage tale. Unlike More's emphasis on social legislation, Bacon's sees science as the path to improving the human condition. His story is told from the point of view of a European sailor whose ship, sailing from Peru, flounders in a "wilderness of waters" (Bacon 457). The sailors, lost and bereft of food, turn to G-d and prepare themselves for death. Their deliverance appears the very next day when they spy land and a small boat approaches and they are given a multi-lingual scroll telling them not to land, but inviting them to list their needs. The sailors rejoice when they see that this scroll has a cross on it. Once the Christianity of both parties is established, the Europeans are allowed to land and are initially sequestered in the "Strangers' House." Its governor reveals to them the wondrous account of how the island had become Christian and later explains the island's history and the isolationist policies created by King Solamona nineteen hundred years before. The Europeans remark on the happiness of the Bensalmites and they learn how their material and spiritual needs are met. Though the people of the island are forbidden to leave, every twelve years ships set out from Bensalem to enable the Fellows of Salomon's House to acquire knowledge from the outside world. As the Governor

explains, trade is maintained not for "any commodity of matter; but only for G-d's first creature, which was *Light*" (472). The description of Bensalem is further supplemented by Joabin the Jew, who the custom of the Feast of the Family, emphasizing the chastity of the Bensalmites, which he contrasts with the licentiousness of Europeans. Interruptions are peppered through the narrative: Joabin's explanations are halted when he is "commanded away in haste" (478). This interruption signals the return of one of the Father's of Salomon's House, a ceremonious event the narrator witnesses and for which he provides a detailed description. Finally, the narrator receives an explanation about the powers and activities of Saloman's House by the Father. He is blessed and given permission to publicize this story "for the good of other nations" (488).

Francis Bacon's work has been largely read in what Marina Leslie terms the "future indicative" (8). This is a succinct way of describing the long-standing tendency for critics to see Bacon as an avatar for the subsequent history of scientific progress. Bacon's designation as "father of the scientific method," leads many to associate him beyond his own historical context and into the Enlightenment and beyond. This resulted in readings of the *New Atlantis* whereby Bacon is seen as deploying religion in his writing to undermine Christianity and thereby make way for unfettered scientific progress. Some of these studies even intimate that despite his biblically-drenched prose, Bacon was actually an atheist.[70] According to Stephen McKnight, whose 2006 *The Religious Foundations of Francis Bacon's Thought* begins with a survey of recent scholarship, in the period between 1990 and 2000, of the 35 books and 105 articles

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[70] See, for example: *Peace Among the Willows* by Howard B. White (1968) and Harold Fisch's *Jerusalem and Albion: The Hebraic Factor in Seventeenth-Century Literature* (1964).

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published, many continued to dismiss Bacon's references to religion as "disingenuous" (2). The important shift in the scholarship is the reassessment of the relationship between science and religion in Bacon's work. For McKnight, the *New Atlantis* is "grounded" in Bacon's deeply held religious convictions (11). Like McKnight, Steven Matthews, in his *Theology and Science in the Thought of Francis Bacon* (2008), gives credence to Bacon's frequent biblical references, and sees him as a Christian philosopher whose project for reform is built on theological principles.

While debates about the relationship between religion and science remain central, as a recent publication of interdisciplinary essays on Bacon attests, this often contradictory fable is read from a wide range of analytical perspectives.[71] As editor Bronwen Price explains in her introduction, critical reassessments of the *New Atlantis* locate it more deliberately in reference to Bacon's other work and his immediate historical and cultural context (19). Though this might seem an obvious place for anyone to start, it is unlike the "future indicative" approach that had previously dominated the scholarship.

The secrecy surrounding Salomon's House is a much-remarked feature that seems at odds with Bacon's scientific program; Price's own essay suggests an alternative approach to judging how science is represented in the fable. After remarking upon the fragmented and "unsettlingly" elliptical way we learn about Bensalem, Price points out that the only products of Salomon's House are "discursive": while the narrator is told about the various wonders, he does not actually see any. Thus this paean to science is sorely lacking in empirical evidence (12). Furthermore, the narrator does not interrogate

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[71]*Francis Bacon's New Atlantis:New Interdisciplinary Essays.* Manchester UP, 2002.

or analyze the information he receives. Price does not read this lack of scientific skepticism as a shortcoming, but as an invitation: because of the incomplete disclosure that characterizes the *New Atlantis*, the onus is placed on us to carefully examine the sources of our knowledge as we progress through the fable (14). As Bacon suggests in "Of Studies," reading should not be undertaken to "believe and take for granted" but "to weigh and consider" (439). His fable's epistemological incertitudes require this of its readers.

My own contribution to the Baconian conversation focuses on a specific aspect of Bacon's cultural context: how the English write about Jews during this time of growing millennial expectation. I do so by aligning the two utopian tour guides: More's Hythloday and Bacon's Joabin. Because I argue that More's Hythloday evokes the Wandering Jew and the New Christian, and Joabin is explicitly identified as Jewish, their comparison allows for a more deliberate consideration of how the literary representation of Jews in England alters before and after the Reformation divide. While I concur with recent scholars who see religion as integral to Bacon's project, I find his position vis-a-vis institutions as being ultimately similar to Milton in his later years: although outward behaviours might be legislated, virtue must be cultivated from within. As the fragmentary picture of the House of Salomon suggests, science does have its limits.

New Atlantis was written in English after Bacon's fall from grace and published posthumously in 1627. It is indebted to both Plato and More, but its focus appears to be the redemptive potential of scientific knowledge. For Bacon, the wonders of science provide the solution to the "collective problem," which he terms "the relief of man's

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estate." [72] But as the rescued mariners soon learn, in New Atlantis people are not merely freed from want: the text is quite insistent upon their happiness. As they declare in unison at the Feast of the Family: "Happy are the people of Bensalem" (474). Not only does science provide plentifully for all human needs, but due to the innovative research of Salomon's House, in an encomium to artifice, Nature's bounty is unabashedly improved upon. While poets such as Andrew Marvell associate horticultural innovation with Man's fallen state and regard the "Forbidden mixtures" as giving birth to a "uncertain and adulterate fruit" ("The Mower Against Gardens"), the father of Salomon's house proudly explains that through "grafting and inoculating" the life and produce of the trees are altered by "art greater much than their nature" (290). Whether it is the fruit's ripening season, medicinal qualities, taste, colour or size, on this island of wonders, nature is just an easy hurdle to be leaped over by art. He goes on to list the various scientific advances generated from the fathoms-deep caverns and the high-capped towers, including, of course such marvels as the "engines for multiplying and enforcing winds" (481) and the "houses of deceits of the senses" which manufactures "false apparitions, impostures and illusions" (486).

After learning of the former, most readers infer that the scientists had, like Prospero, manufactured those "great winds from the south" (457) that originally brought the mariners to the island. The latter, of course, makes the reader reappraise the origins of the miraculous pillar of light rising from the sea witnessed by the people of Renfusa, in the story of how Christianity so dramatically and incontestably came to the island a scant

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[72]This phrase is taken from Bacon's work on moral philosophy: *Inquiry Touching Human Nature: Virtue, Philosophy and the Relief of Man's Estate*.

twenty years after the death of Christ. The delight with which *New Atlantis* lists the plethora of technical wizardry has made some critics see Bacon as more magician than scientist. As Harold Fisch puts it, Bacon is "the man of Imagination, whispering his dream into the ear of the scientists" (83). Fisch compares him to Marlowe's Faustus, who ecstatically conjures a vision of unlimited power awaiting the "studious artisan" who can use his art to command "All things that move between the quiet poles" (*Faustus* 1.1.58). As Faust concludes, "A sound magician is a mighty G-d" (1.1.64). Yet how do we reconcile the avowedly irreligious Faustian impulse with the saturation of religious language and biblical allusions that we see in the *New Atlantis?* Throughout the text there is an insistence on the kosher Christian credentials of both mariners and islanders. The mariners are greeted by an islander who bears a scroll, with a cross on it—a source of "great rejoicing" for them (458). "Are ye Christians?" is the first question they are asked before being allowed to land (459). But though the sailors and Bensalemites adopt the external trappings of Christianity, the biblical images are drawn from the Old Testament: *Bensalem* is Hebrew for "son of peace"; the mariners compare their miraculous salvation to that of Jonas (461); the great pillar of light heralding Christianity's arrival alludes to the protective clouds of Exodus (13:21-2); they are saved "from infidelity" by an ark and their founder, King Solamona, is conflated with the biblical King Solomon. The Feast of the Family, the ceremony in celebration of patriarchy, includes the "praises of Adam and Noah and Abraham" (475). Then there is presence of the learned Jewish merchant, Joabin, who testifies to Bensalem's moral superiority and "chastity" (476). After all this emphasis on "living biblically," it is surprising when the narrator is informed that the

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ultimate purpose of Salomon's House is "the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible" (480). These aspirations are quite secular in nature, envisioning God*like* powers perhaps, but they are disconnected from the notion of a perfect moral commonwealth based on piety insisted upon elsewhere in the text.

However, in Bensalem things are never quite what they seem. In his essay on the miracles in *New Atlantis*, Jerry Weinberger finds that while the text appears to celebrate the life afforded by scientific innovation, through his portrait of the "lobotomized" and "creepy" Bensalemites (107), Bacon is suggesting that a technologically-driven life might result in human lives "debased by materialism." While Weinberger is unsparing in criticizing the flatness of Bensalemites, he suspects that *without* the spiritualizing effects of religion, they would be even more Zombie-like (107). Despite all the outward obedience of its citizens, the fable also raises the issue of unruly desire. Weinberger points to the strange practice of "Adam and Eve's pools" whereby a friend provides a naked review of an intended spouse. Though this scheme is simply a modification of More's pre-marital inspections, Weinberger connects the name "Joabin," who explains the custom, to the biblical "Joab" who helped King David dispatch Batsheva's husband Uriah after the king saw the naked Batsheva bathing. Does this suggest that Joabin is morally compromised through his association with David's murdering agent? Or is Joab simply explaining how Bensalemites have managed, as it were, to put the thorny issue of desire to bed? Weinberger proposes that by alluding to this morally troubling biblical tale, Bacon might be indicating that the "human soul is always crooked wood that cannot be

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straightened by technology" (110). Bacon's insistence upon the irrefutable truth of Christianity and his depiction of the sheep-like Bensalemites serve as a warning to what might occur in a prosperous and technologically-driven society. As he declared in "Of Atheism," peace and prosperity are not conducive to belief "for troubles and adversities do more bow men's minds to religion" (372). Furthermore, Bacon sees atheism as depriving people of what elevates our humanity: "for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and, if he be not kin to G-d of his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature" (372). Perhaps the bovine Bensalmites serve as a cautionary tale about the dangers of living in a perfect world.

In addition to their Jewish tour guides, both More and Bacon include an account of the arrival of Christianity to their respective islands. Examining how Bacon reimagines this event helps to crystallize some of the crucial changes in the hundred years between *Utopia* and the *New Atlantis*. In *Utopia,* Christianity unfolds in a gradual fashion. More's argument is that reason will get you to accept Christianity eventually, but it is an evolving process. Hythloday describes how despite practicing different forms of religion, Utopians were particularly drawn to Christianity, in part because the early Church held all things in common (93). Founding father Utopus had originally been able to conquer the island due to internecine squabbling about religion, thus once victorious, he enshrined freedom of religion, reasoning that if one religion *was* true, it would ultimately prevail "by its own natural strength" (95). Other than requiring everyone to believe in the immortality of the soul and the existence of Providence, Utopians remained free to roam within the

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theological marketplace. Interestingly, the one cited example of an overly-zealous proselytizer who is exiled for creating a public disorder is a convert to Christianity (94).

At the end of the tale, after reviewing the reasons for which he rejects Utopian customs as "absurd," fictional More leads Raphael to dinner taking him by the hand (107). As Andrew Weiner notes, this final gesture of kindness might be the most eloquent non-verbal argument demonstrating the limits of a republic based on reason: though Utopia is an improvement on Europe and its abuses, it still lacks the humanity informed by Christian charity (26). Fictional More's benevolence might allude to Divine grace. For Catholics, grace is given through the Church's sacraments and, as Hythloday informs us, the people of Utopia were deprived of receiving five of the seven sacraments because they had no priest. We might see Utopia's need for a Christian completion as analogous to More's views, expressed in his polemical writings, about the Bible: though More sees it as infallible, it constitutes nonetheless an "incomplete record" and the incorporation of its books is an "historically contingent process." This means, for More, that the Church must function as the "guardian of the truth within history," and deal with heresies as they arise, for the Bible alone is insufficient (Decook 113; note 28). Though both More and Bacon are concerned about the dangers that inhere in the proliferation of interpretation, they choose to "seal" the truth in different ways. Their solutions reflect their respective situations on either side of the Reformation divide.

More's optimistic vision of the peaceful coexistence of different religions was only possible in a time of relative religious homogeneity: *Utopia* appeared a year before Luther's theses attacking indulgences (1517). Conversely, Bacon's *New Atlantis* is

published after England's break with Rome and the ensuing decades of bloody religious upheaval. In "A Miracle of Engineering," David Renaker argues that the miracle that Bacon describes had to be a definitive miracle-to-end-all miracles in order for it to preempt all further religious controversies, this being a necessary precursor to the enlightenment (182). The definitive and miraculous revelation also serves to legitimate and authorize Bensalem and situate it within a recognizable biblical tradition.

The story is related by the governor of the House of Strangers at the request of the sailors who ask how the isolated island came to be converted to the faith. On a cloudy night some twenty years after Christ, a great pillar of light topped by an even brighter cross is seen by the people of the city of Renfusa[73] about a mile off shore. The dazzling appearance of these luminous shapes floating amidst the darkness recall Bacon's essay "Of Truth" where he observes that the "mummeries and triumphs of the world" appear "far more stately and daintily" by "candle-lights" (341). Some set off in small boats to observe this miracle more closely. Like the Jews who were forbidden from approaching Mount Sinai at the giving of the Ten commandments, these boats are miraculously halted within sixty yards of the pillar and only one man, significantly a scientist from Salomon's House, is like Moses, permitted to approach, while the rest of the boats and their immobilized occupants observe "as in a theatre" (464). But like Calidor's unsuccessful attempt to breach the circle of the Graces in *The Faerie Queene*, the pillar disappears in an explosion of stars before the wise man reaches it, and what remains in the water is a dry ark of cedar containing "all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments," including the ones that had yet to be written, and a letter from the apostle, St.

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[73]Significantly, this is Greek for "sheeplike."

Bartholomew,[74] authenticating the book and assuring that the recipients were hereby "saved from infidelity" through this ark (465). To ensure there is absolutely no misunderstanding, the Book and Letter are miraculously rendered in all the languages spoken on the island.

Though the pyrotechnic display itself might invite skepticism in light of the illusions Bensalemite scientists can manufacture, the miracle of the books, which includes those which had not even been written, is not one that can be so readily dismissed as scientific smoke and mirrors. As McKnight explains, Bensalem's conversion soon after Christ's ascension portrays it as possessing an idealized Apostolic Christianity: given Bensalem's isolation from Europe, its people have been guided solely by clear biblical text uncorrupted by a millennia of [Catholic] misinterpretation (15). In this regard, Bensalem reflects the theological longing of early Protestants: universal access to the unmediated word of G-d. This indeed is the "Gospel truth." Bacon is situating his bible beyond the vicissitudes of historical contingency. Unlike More, who relies on the Church to address heresies as they arise (DeCook 113; note 28), Bacon takes a preemptive strike by presenting religion as both open and shut: science lends its objectivity to testify that divine revelation is beyond any doubt and then its message is made accessible to all, thus precluding errors of mistranslation; yet as the Bible is deemed in itself complete and ahistorical, there is no need for further argument or elaboration. In a quick one-two punch, it is revealed and sealed.

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[74]As Kimberly Hale points out in her study of Bacon and modern political thought, Bartholomew's miracles all involve altering the weight of objects (81). Does his presence here add to the sense of this miracle having been manufactured? Once again, "Of Truth" is brought to mind with Bacon's pithy observation that "A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure" (341).

Bacon's choice of the ark as the key object that brings salvation is also significant. As we have already established, the ark, or *archa*, simultaneously suggests the miraculously redemptive ark of Noah and the Ark of the Covenant, Judaism's most sacred object that was placed at the heart of Solomon's Temple. By making the ark central to his story of revelation, Bacon clearly establishes that Bensalemites are the direct heirs to Jewish election. While appropriating well-known symbols of providential election such as the ark and the Pillar of Cloud confers upon Bacon's revelation story a biblical authority, his sealing of Bensalem's bible to prevent new interpretations might be another reason for the lack of vitality of its denizens: their dullness seem to reflect the "sutured" quality of their texts.

The Jewish aspects of Bacon's fable are far more deliberately foregrounded than in More's text, both through the myriad Old Testament references and through the character of Joabin. Unlike More's Raphael, whose Jewish credentials, literary or otherwise, must be creatively inferred, Joabin the merchant is explicitly identified as a Jew and, unlike the wandering Raphael, he resides in Bensalem along with other small groups of Jews who are permitted to practise their own religion. Yet, this tolerance is extended for a reason: as the narrator hastens to explain to us, it is possible given that *these* Jews, unlike the *other* kind, do not "hate the name of Christ" and Joabin even acknowledges that "Christ was born of a virgin," though he falls short of conceding His "divine Majesty" (476). Joabin is a proud promoter of Bensalem; in part, as the narrator tells us, because of Jewish traditions that deem its people descendants of Abraham and its laws as originating with Moses. Furthermore there is the Jewish belief that when the

Messiah arrives, the king of Bensalem will sit at his feet in Jerusalem. This vision of

Jewish supremacy is summarily dismissed by the narrator as "Jewish dreams" (476), but

despite their theological impasses, the two get along quite well, the narrator expressing

his admiration for Joabin's wisdom and his great familiarity with Bensalem's laws and

customs. Thus Bacon depicts Joabin as a Christianized Jew who is an integral part of the

new society. He has not been required to convert, but in acknowledging the Virgin birth

and that Jesus was "more than a man" (476), Joabin demonstrates more than a little

theological flexibility. Yet Joabin shares with Raphael, and the Wandering Jew, the status

of a well-travelled and knowledgeable outsider. This lends credence to his testimony,

while giving him the necessary distance to critique European shortcomings with

impunity.

What's in a Name?

This sunny picture of Bacon's Jew becomes complicated when we return to the

vexed issue of his name. In her article on colonialism and Jewishness in the *New Atlantis*,

Claire Jowitt reads Bacon's fable as advice directed to the Stuart monarchy. Bacon had

been disappointed with King James, and Jowitt argues that in its depiction of an

economically self-sufficient and scientifically progressive country, Bensalem is a covert

criticism of James' failures in these areas (139). Jowitt also addresses Bacon's depiction

of his Jewish character. Like Weinberger, Jowitt connects Joabin to the biblical Joab.

Though Joab was David's nephew and captain of his army, as Jowitt reminds us, he

ultimately betrayed his uncle-king through his treasonous attempt to prevent Solomon

from taking the throne (144). In this regard, Joabin's name is one we might associate

with the betrayal of one who should be trusted. Does Bacon's Joabin have a taint of Judas about him? Jowitt sees Bacon's contradictory portrayal of Joabin as a conflation of two opposing strands of Jewish representation: the sinister associations bequeathed by the traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes and the positive qualities reflecting the anticipation by theologians that Jews would help to usher in the millennium (144).

Bacon's portrayal of Joabin is perhaps further complicated by the fact that in 1594 he was involved in the infamous trial of Dr. Rodrigo Lopez. The accusation, that Lopez was planning to poison the Queen, was championed by the Earl of Essex and Bacon was then part of his faction. Bacon attended the trial and wrote "A True Report of the Detestable Treason," arguing that Lopez had been acting on behalf of King Philip of Spain. According to Bacon, because of his "pleasing and appliable behaviour," Lopez was "favoured in court" while his actual allegiances were hidden (ctd in Jowitt 145). Lopez's perfidy is that, like Joab, he was believed to have betrayed the monarch he was meant to serve.

But there is an alternative reading that redeems Bacon's Jew from associations with treachery. In an article on the historical origins of Joabin, Lewis Feuer proposes that a metallurgist by the name of Joachim Gaunse was actually the model for Joabin. Gaunse, who came to England from Bohemia in 1581 to work for the Mines Royal Company, and who accompanied Sir Walter Raleigh to Virginia, was known for both his innovations and his ill-advised public professions of strict monotheism. He was said to have declared, "What needeth the Almighty G-d to have a Son, is He not almighty?" (8). In 1589, while living in Bristol, Gaunse failed to acknowledge Christ as the son of G-d; the matter was

sent to Privy Council where Bacon was a clerk. Feuer proposes that Bacon's creation of this sympathetic Jew is in response to both the persecution of the mining technologist and the regret he later felt for his role in Lopez's trial. As *New Atlantis* was composed after Bacon's fall from grace, Feuer speculates that the former Lord Chancellor might have been regretfully reviewing some of his life's deeds during its composition (19). While as we have seen, other critics understand Joabin's name as a reference to "Joab," Feuer has a different proposal: he reads it as "Ben Job," the son of Job. Job's association with loss and suffering suggests that the good Joabin was born of Bacon's own sorrow. In his essay "Of Adversity," Bacon famously observes: "Prosperity doth best discover vice, but Adversity doth best discover virtue" (349). Following Feuer, we might see Bacon's own adversity as having enabled his discovery of virtue in his refashioned Jew.

Beyond these biographical speculations, Bacon's portrayal of Joabin is quite consistent with his pragmatic approach to religious conflict within the reformed Church. In his 1589 unpublished pamphlet, "An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England," the young Bacon urged for a ceasefire in the growing hostilities between the Church of England and its Puritan critics. He argued that the two sides were not disputing essential matters such as faith or the worship of G-d, but rather they "contend about ceremonies and things indifferent" (2). Bacon criticized both sides, pointing to the greed and abuses of the Bishops as well as the extremism of the Puritans in their opposition to ceremony. By not arguing about doctrine and instead focusing on their common belief in G-d and love for Bensalem, the relationship between Jew and

Christian in his utopia might serve as an *a fortiori* model for the wished-for conciliation between the Protestant disputants of his age.

As Amy Boesky points out in *Founding Fictions,* Bacon's narrative is one of transformation: once quarantined in the Strangers' House,[75] the rescued mariners are transformed into inmates, through the Feast of the Family, a father is transformed into a patriarch and, at the story's end, the narrator is himself transformed into a Merchant of Light (79). And of course, the Jews, whose presence invokes millennial expectations, are transformed into a people who are doctrinally tractable. One of Joabin's key moments is when he describes Bensalem as the "virgin of the world." As Bacon frequently includes images of cherubim and light to suggest knowledge, it is perhaps not surprising that their antithesis, the "Spirit of Fornication," and implicitly linked with ignorance, appears as "a little foul Ethiope" (476). Bensalem's chastity is exemplified by the body of the mother that remains hidden from view during the ceremony of the Feast of the Family. Joabin concludes his encomium to chastity by citing a favourite saying of the Bensalemites: "Whoever is unchaste cannot reverence himself" (477).

This vision of chastity, as a quality that begins with personal integrity but then moves outward to enhance the greater social good, as evidenced by the Tirsan's[76] numerous and reverent offspring, is analogous to Spenser's approach to chastity, which he

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[75]The mariners are informed that the Strangers' House had been maintained despite being empty some thirty-seven years. This is oddly reminiscent of an actual Strangers' House: the Domus Conversarum of the Middle Ages that functioned long after there were converted Jews to inhabit it.

[76]The title conferred upon the Father in the Feast of the Family. The word is Persian for "timid" or "fearful" (Hale 81). This begs the question whether he is G-d fearing or fearful of the state. In "*The New Atlantis:* Francis Bacon's Theological Utopia?" Suzanne Smith makes a convincing case for the Tirsan as a satirical portrait of King James.

terms "the fairest vertue," and which he unfolds and exemplifies through his female knight, Britomart. Both involve the controlling and channeling of what Joabin repeatedly refers to as "concupiscence" in his diatribe against European licentiousness, to engendering honour for both the individual and his or her society. But the idea of chastity can be further enlarged to apply to the nation as a whole: King Solamona's policy of isolation, carefully enforced for nineteen hundred years, made Bensalem, like the unseen mother, both fruitful and chaste as it developed its resources while remaining unknown to any other nation. After the long speech by the Father of Salomon's House listing the island's impressive scientific achievements, the narrator, who had been frozen to attention, like Miranda to Prospero's lengthy history, is given leave to publish their discoveries "for the good of other nations" (488). While this dramatic development, right before the text abruptly ends, certainly suggests that scientific advancement ultimately requires reciprocity, it might also gesture towards Bacon's larger point about the goal of the perfect moral commonwealth and the limitation of science to get you there.

Suzanne Smith, in her article on theology and politics in the *New Atlantis,* sees Bacon as critiquing *both* religion and science. While mastering Nature has little to do with mastering human nature (100), Bacon's depiction of religion also suggests that it is not up to the task of the "raising of human nature" ("Of Atheism" 372). It would seem that powerful institutions alone, even when benevolent and spiritually directed, are insufficient to bring about the perfect moral commonwealth. Instead one must begin, as Joabin explains in his discussion of chastity, with the "reverence of a man's self" (477). The individual's cultivation of this inner virtue is thus a prerequisite for enabling civil

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morality and social harmony. But this moves outward to the broader requirements,

including the piety of the nation's citizens, the absence of religious conflict and the

assurance of their material well-being through the advances wrought by unfettered

scientific experimentation. Only then, once its own perfection has been achieved, can a

nation truly aspire to the millennial ambition of being a light unto the nations.

Millennial Milton: The Interregnum's Eternal Prophet

While *Paradise Lost* assured Milton poetic posterity, his acclaim was

complicated by his political writing. As T.S Eliot wrote, "Of no other poet is it so difficult

to consider the poetry simply as poetry, without our theological and political

dispositions...making an unlawful entry" (ctd in Rumrich 124). This entry could take the

form of a political antipathy that ultimately undermined the appreciation for Milton's

epic. Here are Thomas Yalden's (1670-1736) sad observations "On the Reprinting

Milton's Prose Works with his Poems":

> We own the poet worthy to rehearse
>
> Heaven's lasting triumphs in immortal verse.
>
> But when thy impious, mercenary pen
>
> Insults the best of princes, best of men,
>
> Our admiration turns to just disdain,
>
> And we revoke the fond applause again. (Rumrich 125)

The most striking feature of contemporary Milton scholarship is the attention being given

to Milton's "impious" prose. The 2009 *Oxford Handbook of Milton* features eighteen

essays on Milton's poetry and sixteen on his prose. Editor Nichols McDowell views the rise in interest in Milton's prose as a consequence of the "increasingly fluid relations between literary and historical disciplines" (v). Milton's politics, controversial and penned during a tumultuous time, remain central to the field at large. According to McDowell, the topics which are attracting the most interest in Milton scholarship include: "liberty...republicanism, national identity, and gender relations; theology...heresy, toleration, and biblical interpretation (v).

In "78 Ways of Looking at Milton," Tobias Gregory's 2012 review of *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* and Stephen B. Dobranski's *Milton in Context* (2010), Gregory succinctly summarizes some of the key features of the state of play in Milton studies: scholars no longer doubt that Milton wrote the controversial *De Doctrina Christiana,* and gender discussions have moved beyond the dichotomized "Milton as arch patriarch or protofeminist?" debate to more nuanced explorations (547). The question of whether Milton was a heretic remains an important critical focus, with scholars debating how uncommon Milton's views were in an age where eccentric doctrines abounded. Nigel Smith, in his contribution to *The Oxford Handbook of Milton,* sees *Paradise Lost* as a "heresy machine," but in Miltonic terms: as the poet saw heresy as the "act of choosing by the believer" when confronted by the evidence of what Milton saw as two scriptures: the Bible and the Book of Nature (524).

While scholars generally write about the prose and the poetry separately, historical context is at the center of all Milton criticism, with scholars trying to find continuities in his thought between the prose works and his epic. This more blended

approach has resulted in scholars looking closely at the language of Milton's prose. Nigel

Smith, writing on the anti-episcopal tracts, refers to *Of Reformation* as "a poem in prose"

(161) where the young Milton "makes poetics do the work of theological argument"

(172). In "Intolerance and the Virtues of Sacred Vehemence," Paul Stevens makes use of

Milton's own resonant phrase, *sacred vehemence,* from *Comus,* to describe Milton's often

violent rhetoric, while asking how we are to reconcile Milton's reputation as an "advocate

of toleration" given the violence of his language (243).

My project builds on the recent focus on the language of Milton's prose by

examining Milton's *scrinaria* approach to using Jews and their history in his writing. This

provides an important conclusion to my project as it demonstrates how in a supposedly

philosemitic *zeitgeist*, the representations of Jews are still characterized by a radical

ambivalence.

Two of Milton's earliest poems written in English are his translations of Psalms

114 and 136. His headnote, whether proudly or apologetically, informs the reader that

these "were don by the Author at fifteen yeers old" (*Riverside Milton* 48). His tender

years notwithstanding, some of Milton's life-long preoccupations can be seen in these

two early translations. The subject of both psalms is G-d's dramatic intervention in

history in which He abrogates the laws of nature for His chosen people. In 114, the young

Milton alters the original designation of the Jews simply as "Israel," and describes them

more ornately as the "blest seed of *Terach's* faithfull Son" (l.1). The reference to the

unnamed Abraham neatly emphasizes the patriarch's crucial rejection of the idolatrous

practices of his father, Terach, while perhaps gesturing towards the ultimate supersession

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that will be effected by the messianic Son. This psalm focusses specifically on the miracles surrounding the departure of the Jews from Egypt: the parting of the "troubl'd Sea"(l.7) and the mountains that "skip[ped] like Rams"(l.11) at the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Psalm 136 emphasizes G-d's enduring mercies, beginning with stanzas describing the creation of the world and then devoting six stanzas to the Exodus from Egypt. Milton's poetic embellishments of this psalm serve to accentuate both the power of G-d's intervention and Israel's special election. Where the original refers to G-d simply as the one who "smote Egypt through their firstborn"[77], Milton has Him do so with "his thunder-clasping hand" (l.38). The starkly declarative, "To him Who led His people through the Wilderness" is rendered as "His chosen people he did bless/In the wastfull Wildernes" (l.58-59). What is remarkable about these poems, given all the contradictory positions Milton will assume over the course of his turbulent writing career, is that even at this embryonic stage in his development, Milton is drawn to the biblical Exodus and associated ideas of idolatry, Providence and chosenness. This story will remain a touchstone in his writing, though he will draw upon it in different ways. Thus with a messianic certainty, Milton will confidently lead the English to the "greatest happiness to come" (901) in his first anti-prelatical tract, *Of Reformation* (1641), but then, just months before the Restoration in the *Readie and Easie Way*, he will no longer associate his countrymen with the *good* Jews Divinely singled out for greatness, but rather with those wicked backsliders who wished "to returne back to *Egypt*...because they falsly imagind that they then livd in more plentie and prosperitie" (1148). Though Milton's ideas

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[77]Translations are from from *Book of Psalms (interlinear translation)*. Ed. Menachem Davis. Brooklyn: Mesorah, 2003.

undergo much refashioning after its composition, *Of Reformation* is a particularly fruitful text to study as it is contains so many of the thematic and rhetorical touchstones we see in Milton's later work.

While Milton's anticipation of the millennium persists, like his use of the Exodus story, it changes over time. As we have seen, both More and Bacon envisioned their utopias as isolated and rigidly controlled societies where conflict is preempted by the state through its provision for the needs of its citizens. The institutions are designed to nurture virtue, or at least its appearance, but the various laws are there to keep human nature in check. Conversely, for Milton and his fellow Puritans, utopia is achieved by the reformation of the *individual*, along the lines of the perfect moral commonwealth. As explained earlier in the chapter, following J.C Davis, in this imagining, institutions are largely retained while the focus is squarely on inner reformation. In *Areopagitica*, Milton refers to More and Bacon's works, rejecting them both for their rigidity and their impossibility:

> To sequester out of the world into *Atlantick* and *Eutopian* polities which never can be
> drawn into use, will not mend our condition; but to ordain wisely as in this world of
> evil, in the midd'st wherof God hath plac't us unavoidably... [T]hose unwritt'n...laws
> of vertuous education, religious and civill nurture...[are] the pillars and
> sustainers of every writt'n Statute; (*Areopagitica* 1010)

Thus we see that "statutes" and, by extension the entire state apparatus, are going to be supported and maintained by those who have been educated in a way to promote these unspecified qualities of inner righteousness. We might sum up the difference between the

earlier utopias and Milton's Kingdom of G-d by stating that while More and Bacon are working from "the outside in," Milton is working from "the inside out."And, of course, the other big difference: Milton was actually serious. As Sharon Achinstein puts it, "His fictions are reality-based" (19). In *Milton and the Kingdoms of God,* Michael Fixler describes how for Puritans like Milton, all issues needed to be assessed according to "Christ's interest" (77). As indicators of specifically what, according to Puritanism, Christ's interests are, Fixler cites four "referents," which he maintains are "signposts" in the evolution of Milton's thought. To paraphrase briefly, it begins with the individual's faith in Christ, then moves outward to the community of the faithful, then to the transformation of social institutions through "piety and righteousness*,"* and finally, to the advent of the millennium: the reign of Christ and His saints on earth (77-78). Thus the inner transformation of individuals, enabled by the reformation, will lead to societal perfection, culminating in a *Deus Ex Machina* which establishes an immutable "heaven on earth."

Milton's utopian vision is most confidently argued in *Of Reformation*, his first prose tract published anonymously in 1641. Milton addresses himself to an unnamed "Sir," who appears to be, based on the closing prayers directed to Him, none other than G-d Himself. It would appear that Milton believed himself to have direct access. *Of Reformation* might initially seem like a narrow diatribe about episcopacy, but it includes many of the preoccupations that characterize Milton's later work, including *Paradise Lost*, these include: England's election, the accessibility of Scriptures, the nature of Truth, freedom and bondage and achieving the Kingdom of Christ on earth. Nigel Smith argues

that in this tract, Milton is close to suggesting an absolute separation of Church and State (169), while Marxist critic David Hawkes goes as far as suggesting that Milton "shapes" the notion of reformation into a theoretical justification for revolution (111). The context for Milton's tract is Archbishop Laud's greater emphasis on ceremony in the church and his giving of more power to the prelates (Guibbory, "England" 16). The first book describes how prelacy hinders the spiritual perfection of the people. The second book argues that episcopacy is also bad politically. At this point in time, Milton is quite supportive of the monarchy, but censors the worldly prelates for getting above themselves and "affect[ing] to be kings" (894). Milton prefaces his description of the ideal Christian governance by a memorable definition its opposite: thus "policie" is an art "canker'd in her principles...soyl'd, and slubber'd with aphorisming pedantry" (887). Conversely, good government is the instilling of virtue in a nation:

> To govern well is to train up a Nation in true wisdom and vertue, and that which springs from thence magnanimity, (take heed of that) and that which is our beginning, regeneration, and happiest end, likeness to *God*, which in one word we call *godlines, &* that this is the true florishing of a Land. (887)

Given the rhetorical superiority of the former, one wonders if Milton was not already unknowingly of the Devil's party.

Milton begins by attacking the "overdated Ceremonies" that were revived under Archbishop William Laud as an insidious form of "backsliding" (875). But this can lead to two incorrect paths: one is to "Jewish beggery" and the second is to the "new-vomited Paganism, of sensual Idolatry" (876), which is Milton's rather roundabout term for

Catholicism. But then, soon after, the paths seem to converge, as his description of the rich costumes of Catholic priests are said to have been "fetcht from *Arons* old wardrobe," the Jewish origin invoked to further delegitimate the practise. The conflation of anti-prelatical and anti-Jewish imagery is most succinctly achieved when Milton describes the prelates as "*Spanioliz'd Bishops*" who are as untrustworthy as a "Synagogue of Jesuites" (892).[78] Though the prelates are consistently demonized, the text makes contradictory use of the Jews. For, despite the negative references, Milton declaims his message prophet-like as a Christian Moses with the English as the new elect. He, like many of his age, cites England's deliverance from the Spanish Armada and the Gun Powder plot as proof of special providence (901). And Israel's behaviour is held as good example for the English: when Milton argues that religion should not need to conform to a given political system, he cites with approval the "ancient Republick of the Jews" who maintained one priestly system despite the many changes to their civil estate (888). He refers to the "good kings of Juda" (897) and the "wise K Salomon" (891).

These biblical allusions are to be expected as Israel's biblical history was so often read as the source text for understanding contemporary events. But there is also, more surprisingly, a reference to learned contemporary Jews: In his argument about the importance of studying scriptures, he speaks scornfully of the textually ignorant "that pretend to be great Rabbies" (887). This shifting of positions is also reflected in the improvisational way Milton inscribes the prelates. While the core narrative is how the exodus from Egypt prefigures the deliverance of the reformed church from Roman

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[78] "Spanioliz'd" humorously evokes Spanish by way of "spaniel." Milton has altered the common phrase "Synagogue of Satan" in order to smear the Catholics along with the Jews. (*Riverside Milton* f.n 100, 102. p.892)

Catholicism, the prelates, though consistently criticized, are cast in a variety of roles from biblical Israel. Thus when Milton argues that England's bishops are a national thorn, he compares them to ancient Israel's traditional enemies the "Canaanites and Philistines" (890). In their greed they are simply "Bellies"--but of the ancient Jewish and priestly variety, for under Queen Elizabeth, Milton tells us, they had "found a good Tabernacle" (880). But their material rapacity also evokes another story: that of a sacrilegious king; therefore, the prelates "revell like *Belshazzer*... carous[ing] in *Goblets*, and *vessels of gold* snatcht from *Gods Temple*" (893). Finally, the prelates are leading the English to idolatry. For in taking them to task over the Saturday Sports controversy, Milton likens them to the wicked prophet Balaam who drew the Israelites to the "ribald feasts of *Baal-peor*" (893). In the varied ways in which the prelates are reconfigured within a biblical narrative, the prelates have almost become literary Jews.

Bodies abound in *Of Reformation.* This trope comes to a humorous climax with Milton's use of Menenius's parable of the body. The metaphor of state as body had been introduced earlier in the tract when Milton used the conventional image of the ideal commonwealth as "one huge Christian personage, one mighty growth, and stature of an honest man" (888). The impediment to this envisioned unity are the prelates. Instead of the privileged class being identified with the belly, which has at least some purpose as "the store-house and the shop/Of the whole body" (*Coriolanus* 1.1.132-3), Milton casts the prelates as a "hughe and monstrous Wen little less then the Head it selfe, growing to it by a narrower excrescensy" (891). As Janel Mueller reveals, Milton was not the first to make use of this metaphor to attack the prelates: physician and agitator Alexander

Leighton, in his *Appeal to the Parliament, or Sions Plea against the Prelacie* (1628), and

William Prynne in *Lord Bishops, None of the Lords Bishops* (1640) had also depicted the

bishops as wens (26). Given that both Leighton and Prynne had suffered severe

mutilations to their *own* bodies for earlier writing deemed seditious, it is a tragic irony

that they had enlisted a metaphor where the cure is dismemberment. As Leighton wrote:

"these Bishops be the knobs and wens and popish flesh which beareth down, deformeth

and deadeth the bodie of the Church, that there is no cure...but cutting off" (ctd in

Mueller 26). Prynne had the misfortune to have his ears "cropped" twice and, as an

indication of how hurtful these spectacles were to the anti-Puritan cause, when he and

similarly-mutilated preacher Henry Burton were released from imprisonment in 1640 by

order of the Long Parliament, ten thousand people turned out to escort them from

Charing Cross to the city (Wilding 174).

Milton's version of Menenius's tale "fleshes out" the wen metaphor into a story.

The deluded Wen sees himself as both "ornament and strength" to the Body and therefore

most fit to step into its place should the Body fail (891). His presumption is roundly

attacked by a "learned Philosopher" who pronounces that he is "but a bottle of vitious

and harden'd excrements." Milton's reifying metaphors continue to proliferate as the Wen

attempts to justify himself by telling his own story about the soul: in imagery suggestive

of wealthy Londoners seeking relief from a sweltering summer, the Wen explains how

when the soul needs to leave the head and the "steaming vapours of the lower parts," he

is the one to provide it with a "pure and quiet" place of retreat "remote from soil, and

disturbance." After declaring, "thy folly is as great as thy filth," the Philosopher

dismisses the Wen's argument by pointing out that such excursions are impossible given that "all the faculties of the Soule are confin'd of old to their severall vessels, and *ventricles,* from which they cannot part without dissolution of the whole Body." Even though the Philosopher rejects the Wen's fanciful notion that he serves as a bucolic weekend resort for the spirit, the Philosopher's explanation similarly embodies, and thus confines, the soul by describing it in terms that evoke a physical organ, like the heart or the brain. Soon after the tale, Milton is bemoaning the fact that many English have been forced to flee to the "savage deserts of America" due to the persecution of the Prelates (891). He suggests that if we could but *"see the shape of oure deare Mother England,"* she would appear attired in "mourning weeds, with ashes upon her head." But he introduces the metaphor, somewhat superfluously, by explaining that "Poets are wont to give a personal form to what they please" (892).

Milton's "personal forms" in *Of Reformation* consistently threaten to overwhelm the ideas which they have come to clarify. The implicit irony is that while Milton is engaged in an iconoclastic attack on the idolatry and sensuality associated with worship under the Laudians, given its very rich and reifying imagery, the tract itself exhibits those very qualities. As Ronald Cooley remarks, there is a tension between "Milton the image-maker and Milton the image-breaker" (78).

This tension becomes even more pronounced when Milton discusses Truth. In a line that anticipates the stylistic opposition between Heaven and Hell in *Paradise Lost,* Milton declares that the "essence of Truth is plainnesse, and brightnes; the darknes and crookednesse is our own" (886). Truth, he explains, is the "object" of understanding, "as

the eye to the thing visible." This concrete immediacy seems to fantasize a pre-lapsarian

clarity where there is an unmediated relationship between perception and object: a world

before the Satanic Sign. In this tract, Milton sees Truth as accessible to all: "not only the

wise, and *learned,* but the *simple*, the *poor*, [and] the *babes*" (896). While the Scriptures

themselves "pronounce their own plainnes," the Church Fathers have muddied the

otherwise clear waters with their "knotty Africanisms, pamper'd metafors....[and] crosse-

jingling periods which cannot but disturb." But I would argue that it is Milton's

metaphors that continue to *disturb* and distract us from Truth and its plainness. When he

finishes the first book by arguing for the "absolute sufficiency and supremacy" of

Scriptures, he does so in what reads like an epic simile. Here are the adversaries of

Church reform as they cling to Antiquity and its serpentine paths of interpretation:

> They feare the plain field of the Scriptures, the chase is too hot; they seek the
>
> dark, the bushie, the tangled Forrest...they feel themselvs strook in the transparent
>
> streams of divine Truth, they would plunge, and tumble, and thinke to ly hid in the
>
> foul weeds,and muddy waters, where no plummet can reach the bottome. But let
>
> them beat themselves like Whales, and spend their oyl till they be dradg'd ashoar.
>
> (887)

The adversaries begin, seemingly as foxes fleeing the hunt into the error-filled confusion

of a Spenserian forest. But from the fathoms-deep muddy waters, they undergo an

Ovidian transformation and surface as beached whales. The proliferation of "crooked"

metaphors here threatens to bury Truth itself, which seems rather static and tedious next

to the vibrant violence associated with Milton's adversaries. Unadorned Scripture might

be crystal clear, but Milton is compelled to rhetorically dance about its immutability with "pamper'd metafors" of his own.

Of Prelaticall Episcopacy is a tract about nothing. As Stanley Fish argues, it is about nothing because like *Of Reformation,* it insists on the self-sufficiency of Scripture (41). There is nothing to add, so what is there to say? Fish draws on the Derridean notion of the supplement to "eke" out his reading. "Eking out," like "supplement" are the operative terms here, for, as Fish points out, Milton himself uses these words when he argues that it is impious to even think that the "divine Scripture wanted a *supplement*, and were to be *ekk't* out" (*Of Prelaticall* ctd in Fish, emphasis mine). The supplement is dangerous because "as something added, [it] may come to stand in place of, to overwhelm, that which it is brought in to assist" (41-2). This is certainly what we saw in relation to the metaphors in *Of Reformation.* The conclusion that Derrida reaches is the supplement or what he also terms "writing" is originary and therefore draws attention to the absence of the plenitude it only appears to threaten (43). There is no escaping systems of signification: *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte.*

This theoretical lens is particularly helpful in negotiating the huge shift that takes place in Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.* Originally published in 1643, anonymous and unlicensed, Milton embarks on an audacious and self-contradictory mission: to argue that actually, what the New Testament states quite clearly is not at all what Christ meant. In "A Law in this Matter to Himself," Sharon Achinstein argues that the debate about marriage had much broader implications, in its implied resonances for the conflict surrounding the monarchy: desacralizing divorce meant... desacralizing

kingship" (182). In the revised second edition, Milton addresses himself to Parliament for "the manifest good of Christendom" (931), in order to provide the interpretive supplement. The problem is as follows: while the Jewish Scriptures permit divorce for a variety of reasons, including incompatibility, the Gospel of Matthew (7:19) stipulates that the only grounds are adultery. The discrepancy seems to astound Milton: given the Old Testament's association with harsh and uncompromising legalism, how is it possible that it is more merciful than the New? This outrageous fact engenders some Miltonic spluttering: "O perversnes! That the Law should be made more provident of peacemaking then the Gospel!" (941-2). The catalyst for the tract was, at least in part, Milton's own recent unhappy marriage. But in addition to acknowledging of humanity's fallen nature, Milton opens Book One with the sad observation that the human heart is "evill" (934), his embrace of biblical interpretation also leads to a greater emphasis on what becomes Milton's pre-eminent principle: the primacy of the individual conscience.

While *Of Reformation* posited that anyone could apprehend the clarity of Scriptures, in *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton is now much more circumspect about delineating who is worthy of the interpretive task:

Let the statues of God be turn'd over, be scann'd a new....by men...of eminent spirit and breeding joyn'd with a diffuse and various knowledge of divine and human things; able to ballance and define good and evill, right and wrong...able to shew us the waies of the Lord...with divine insight and benighnity. (933)

One senses that this is a thinly veiled self-portrait reflecting the "intense egotism" that Coleridge so admired in the poet. Milton's target audience is similarly elitist: he seeks "the choisest and the learnedest" (934).

As Fish points out, the necessity for a supplement is announced when Milton explains that one must be a "skillful and laborious gatherer" in order to read Scripture properly as Christ "scatters the heavenly grain of his doctrine like pearle here and there" (54). This image of laborious and human reconstruction of meaning is certainly a far cry from the Scriptures "pronouncing their own plainness" (896) in the earlier tract. It also anticipates one of the powerful images Milton will use in *Areopagitica,* where the "virgin Truth" is likened to Osiris "hewd...into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd...to the four winds" (1018). Milton continues the metaphor: like Isis, our task is to pick up the pieces.

Despite Milton's *volte face* on interpretation, his use of the Jews in *Doctrine* is consistent with the contradictory ways they were employed in *Of Reformation.* He invokes the authority of Moses repeatedly, referring to his "sacred honour and judgment" (933) and the "mercy of this Mosaick Law" (938), but when he chastises those who might disagree with him, they are simply dismissed as "Pharisees." But significantly, Jews do provide Milton with his interpretive solution: for it seems that the harshness of Christ's decree was never intended to curtail *Christian* liberty, but rather it was a response to the abuse of the Mosaic Law by *Jews.* As their "wild exorbitance" required "curbing," Jesus was compelled to "lay a bridle upon bold abuses of those over-weening *Rabbies.*" But this was never intended to apply to "the good man" who is suffering from "uninjoy'd matrimony" (950). The sheer *chutzpah* of this argument is astonishing, but perhaps not

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for Christ's self-appointed press secretary, who communicates His disappointment with the misreading of His words: "our saviour [was] never more griev'd and troubl'd, then to meet with such a peevish madnesse among men against their own freedome" (932).

Arguably, Milton's evolving notion of what constitutes freedom can be linked to his shift on interpretation as he moves from the sunny optimism that all will be well if we simply reform the Church, to his more explicitly interpretive work that sought to liberalize the laws on marriage and publication, to finally, with the failure of the revolution, his realization that liberty is an inner condition unrelated to external circumstances: the "Paradise within" with which his great epic concludes.

Of Reformation is a key text in that Milton's use of metaphorical supplements at a juncture when he perceives Truth and Scripture as clear and all-sufficient, suggests that the supplement—which we might understand as the verbal ingenuity required to "eke out" textual meaning by means of associated images is already and always present. What remains to evaluate is the role of the Jews in his prose. In her discussion of Jews in seventeenth century England, Linda Tredennick reveals how the "Jew within" served as a metaphor for human sinfulness (133). We certainly saw this with Milton's frequent use of Jewish epithets to tarnish his opponents. Tredennick explains that the Jew as metaphor was central to the project of the Reformation as it helped to "destabilize" the existing Christian identity and thus create a space for the formulation of the "true" reformed Christian identity (135). Elaine Glaser's *Judaism Without Jews* argues along similar lines, describing the Jews as "an invaluable polemical resource" during the years dominated by factional divisions and political instability (4). Within the ongoing Christian debates,

Judaism becomes a "rich and versatile tool with which to attack one's opponent" (33). She points out that this was not confined to Puritans: the Roman Catholics and the Conformists also used the idea of Jewishness to demonize their Reformed opponents (33). It seems that all opposing Christians are Jewish in the minds of other Christians—thus Jewishness becomes a kind of "Wandering Sign" as it is attached to a succession of signifiers. Like Fish, Tredennick turns to the concept of the Derridean supplement in her reading of Milton: she sees the figure of Sin, in her disruptive capacity as both allegorical figure and character whose meanings proliferate like those of her literary mother, Spenser's Error's, functioning as a Derridean supplement (138). Tredennick includes Osiris and "the Jew within" as figures who, like Sin, "create the awareness of incompleteness" (146). Although I would agree that the figure of the Jew served an important role in stabilizing (by *de*stabilizing) Christian identity after the Reformation, despite the varied ways Milton deploys Jews and Judaism in his prose, they still fall into two basic patterns: Jews are alternately invoked or reviled. It is only within these categories that meanings are permitted to proliferate.

Jews, he's just not that into you

It is fitting to conclude this study of how Jews figure in the English literary imagination with John Milton as he, perhaps more than any other writer I have discussed, exemplifies a radical ambivalence about Jews. Though the sense of millennial anticipation is evident in both his prose and poetry, where he often adopts the voice of an Old Testament prophet and his writing is peppered with references to Hebrew Scriptures,

when it comes to *actual* Jews, Milton appears rather indifferent. In "Limits of Miltonic Toleration," Don Wolfe discusses Milton's curious silence on the issue of readmission: a topic that was widely debated in the pamphlets in the 1650s. Thus opponents like William Prynne in his "A Short Demurrer to the Jews" (1656) warned citizens about the Jewish proclivities for ritual murder, while philosemites like Roger Williams and Edward Nicholas argued for toleration to be extended towards a suffering people beloved by G-d. Cromwell himself pushed for readmission. And amidst all this, Milton did not weigh in. Wolfe manages to ferret out one early comment from 1949 when Milton was called upon to defend the new republic against the charge of the Belfast Presbytery that in its excessive tolerance, it was "embrac[ing] even Paganisme, and Judaisme" (841). Milton's reply was surely written to assuage their concern: "And yet while we *detest Judaism*, we know ourselves commanded by St. Paul... to respect the Jews and by all means endeavor thir conversion" ("Observations on the Articles of Peace with the Irish Rebels" ctd in Wolfe 841. Italics mine). Wolfe interprets Milton's silence as due to his reluctance to allow Jews freedom of worship in England. Perhaps this is analogous to Milton denying Catholics the freedom to publish in *Areopagitica.* Even a visionary as great as Milton was distracted by the possibilities of the Sign, making frequent use of Jews as rhetorical vehicles, but leaving the signified people at the side of the road.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Given the ambiguity that so often characterizes the depiction of Jews in English literature, it seems appropriate that the history of their readmission to England be similarly imprecise. Despite the high millennial expectations that preceded the Whitehall Conference of December of 1655, the conference itself did not succeed in gaining readmission for the Jews. The petition was spearheaded by Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam (1604-1657), a man driven by messianic views of his own: he believed that the return of the Jews to England would accelerate the coming of the Messianic Age. Like his Christian contemporaries, Menasseh surmised this through a literal reading of the Bible: Deuteronomy's statement that the scattering of the Jewish people was to be "from one end of the earth even to the other" (27.64). The classical name for England in medieval Jewish literature was "the end of the earth" (from the French *Angleterre*), thus by reintroducing Jews to England, it would complete the prophesied dispersion (Roth *Jews in England* 154). Thus this pivotal moment in seventeenth-century English history was driven by biblical narrative.

However, the biblical impetus did occasion some pragmatic responses. According to historian Cecil Roth, Cromwell's consistent support for readmission was not informed by millenarianism, but by his belief that Jewish merchants would enhance English commerce as they had in Hamburg and Amsterdam (158). Menasseh's request included admission of the Jews as ordinary citizens, the permission to build synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, the unrestricted right to trade and the use of a Jewish judiciary to try their own cases (Katz "Philo-Semitism" 202). The conference included clergymen,

merchants and lawyers. The main opposition to readmission came from two quarters: the theologians who saw the public exercise of Judaism in a Christian country as "blasphemous" and merchants who feared that the admission would "enrich foreigners at the expense of the natives" (Roth 163). Some of the millenarians among the English saw readmission as a theological imperative, to preempt Divine vengeance on England for Jewish injuries at their hands. As expressed by Justice William Steele, "[G-d] hath a special eye to them; observing all the unkinde carriage of others towards them" (Katz 215).

Yet Steele's prophet-like admonitions could not compete with the voice of a superior storyteller: William Prynne, whose hastily published book, *A Short Demurrer to the Jewes Long discontinued Remitter into England,* was distributed to all the delegates in time for the last session. Prynne was able to sway his audience by enlisting the powerfully entrenched myth of ritual murder in the medieval tales of William of Norwich and Hugh of Lincoln. According to Katz, Prynne's book was a key factor in the ultimate failure of the conference to reach a conclusion (221). Thus, we might say the fate of the Jews was once again determined by narrative.

Though full emancipation did not arrive for Jews in England until the nineteenth century, after the Restoration there was increased tolerance for a Jewish presence and Jews began to settle in England despite a legal status that remained "undefined and ambiguous" (Endelman 27). Katz describes the disagreement and its resolution with an apt metaphor: "Once Cromwell and Charles II realized that the Jews as a nation could

never be admitted through the front door, they were anxious to go around the back themselves and let them in through the entrance reserved for tradesmen" (244).

The literary representation of Jews in England during the medieval and early modern periods is of particular interest because of Jewish absence. Though actual Jews fared worse on the continent and in the Iberian peninsula, England has the dubious honour of being the country that originated the blood libel and whose poets and playwrights kept literary anti-Semitism alive. Given the enduring and global influence of English works such as *The Merchant of Venice* or, its literary descendant, Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist,* the impact of literary representation is not a concern limited to literary scholars alone. And, though scholars might be able to unearth more nuanced readings of such texts, we must never lose sight of their actual negative reverberations within culture at large.

But what of the literature produced in England after Jews had returned? Anthony Julius describes how it is possible to struggle *against* an inherited literary tradition, and he identifies novels such as Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington* (1817) and Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819) as examples of counter texts that seek to make amends, by reversing the typical tropes and making anti-Semitism itself a subject for literary inquiry (198). And then there is the work that Julius terms "counter-canonic" where the writer has transcended mere redress (208). He identifies George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) as the first such work, as it takes the readers inside the complexities of Jewish life through the journey of its eponymous hero: an Englishman who discovers that he is a Jew. Instead of assimilation through conversion, due to her painstaking research, Eliot writes a

novel that is, in part, an extended exploration of Jews and Judaism. Though Eliot's novel

will never have the cultural currency of *The Merchant of Venice*, scholars and teachers

might consider its formidable historical erudition and detailed knowledge of its subject as

providing a lofty model for conducting literary analysis. A very different approach is

taken by James Joyce in *Ulysses*. Here the nominally Jewish Leopold Bloom is

distinguished by both his essential ignorance of Judaism and the pastiche-like quality of

his character: the plurality of the literary allusions attached to him make Bloom read like

a hypertext. A "Jewish" stereotype becomes impossible given the absence of a stable

subject. As Julius explains, unlike George Eliot, Joyce does not attempt to dispel

misconceptions about Jews, but rather to "stage" these received ideas, to "draw out their

comic value and to set them on collision courses with each other" (231). But just as the

course of true love never did run smooth, unfortunately, the appearance of these

powerfully counter-canonic texts did not signal the end of literary anti-Semitism.

  While other scholars have pointed out the contradictory nature of Jewish

representation in English literature, through the use of an epithet and a metonym, the

scrinaria and the *archa,* I have attempted to locate Jews simultaneously within the

literary imagination and historical events. While applying deep historical context to richly

enigmatic texts can yield new perspectives, such as my revisionist readings of *The

Merchant of Venice* and Thomas More's *Utopia,* as Anthony Bale reflects at the end of his

The Jew in the Medieval Book, the legacy of medieval fantasies about absent Jews is that,

in continental Europe and in the post-medieval period, "reality became fused and

confused with fiction" (168). Thus we cannot lose sight of the enduring power of the pernicious fictions about Jews that form a large part of their literary representation.

By thinking of Jews as the *scrinaria* for Christians and approaching the topic trans-historically, I was open to a greater range of representations: in addition to the familiar fictions of Jews as Christ killers and Host desecrators, the writing desk, as an object on which we compose, helped to see to what extent the process of writing Jews involved an ongoing negotiation between received truths, experienced doubts and nuanced explorations. As I argued in my second chapter, these were put in creative tension in the evolution of the character of Judas when the figure, despite a clear path of increasing vilification in the Gospels, is transformed, in some medieval texts, into a suffering, feminized, *shlemiel.* So while medieval Jews are enlisted to support shaky beliefs and to reenact the Passion, they are *also* used to explore more universal subjects such as free will. Judas's indeterminacy, born of his patchwork New Testament origins, is a character of shifting identities who evokes contradictory narratives. In these ways, he seems almost to anticipate Joyce's Bloom. But neither the benign medieval Judas nor the revised Judas of the *Gnostic Gospel of Judas* will ever succeed in completely removing the aura of *foetor Judaicus* that identifies him as the Jewish traitor.

By breaking away as much as possible from periodization in order to find the resonances between the medieval and early modern texts, continuities in Jewish representation became more apparent and less surprising. Instead of finding a clear trajectory of increasingly benign Jewish representations as I moved forward in history, what I found instead was a persistent ambivalence. Bacon's Jew, a wise and respected

commentator, can be a part of Bensalem *because* he is a Christianized Jew who accepts Christian tenets, such as the Virgin birth, that were the previous site of much conflict between Christians and Jews. This enables him to retain the outsider status that confers authority, while no longer posing a theological challenge. The residual beliefs that he might tenaciously retain that threaten to disrupt the Christian narrative are dismissed as "Jewish dreams." Milton, a poet shaped by Hebraic studies and the writer closest to the readmission debates, demonstrates an uncanny capacity to circle back and deploy a fluid, improvisational approach, alternately invoking or reviling Jews as needed. Jews never seem to transcend their status as an effective polemical resource.

At the end of his lengthy and scholarly study of the history of anti-Semitism in England, Anthony Julius sounds rather fed-up:

> I have been engaged in the explication of nonsense--pernicious nonsense, at that. Has there been any merit in the exercise? I hope so; I have committed a great deal of time to it. There is some value in studying anti-Semitism, if only as an instance of how ideas become effective forces in history. And while nonsense is just nonsense, the academic study of nonsense can be scholarship. But in such a case, to study is to immerse oneself in muck. (588)

Reading about pogroms, ritual murder accusations, forced conversions and expulsions is rather "mucky." But finding alternative representations of Jews, that seem to transcend the conventions, particularly where you least expect to find them, gives one hope that the proliferation of protean literary Jews will someday displace the "pernicious nonsense" (588). Until then, a historical approach to contextualizing the place of the Jew within

English literature will enable the confidence to declare, like Chaucer's dreamer, "I wot myself best how y stonde" in relation to England's often troubling, baffling, intriguing and enduring representations of its absent Jews.

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