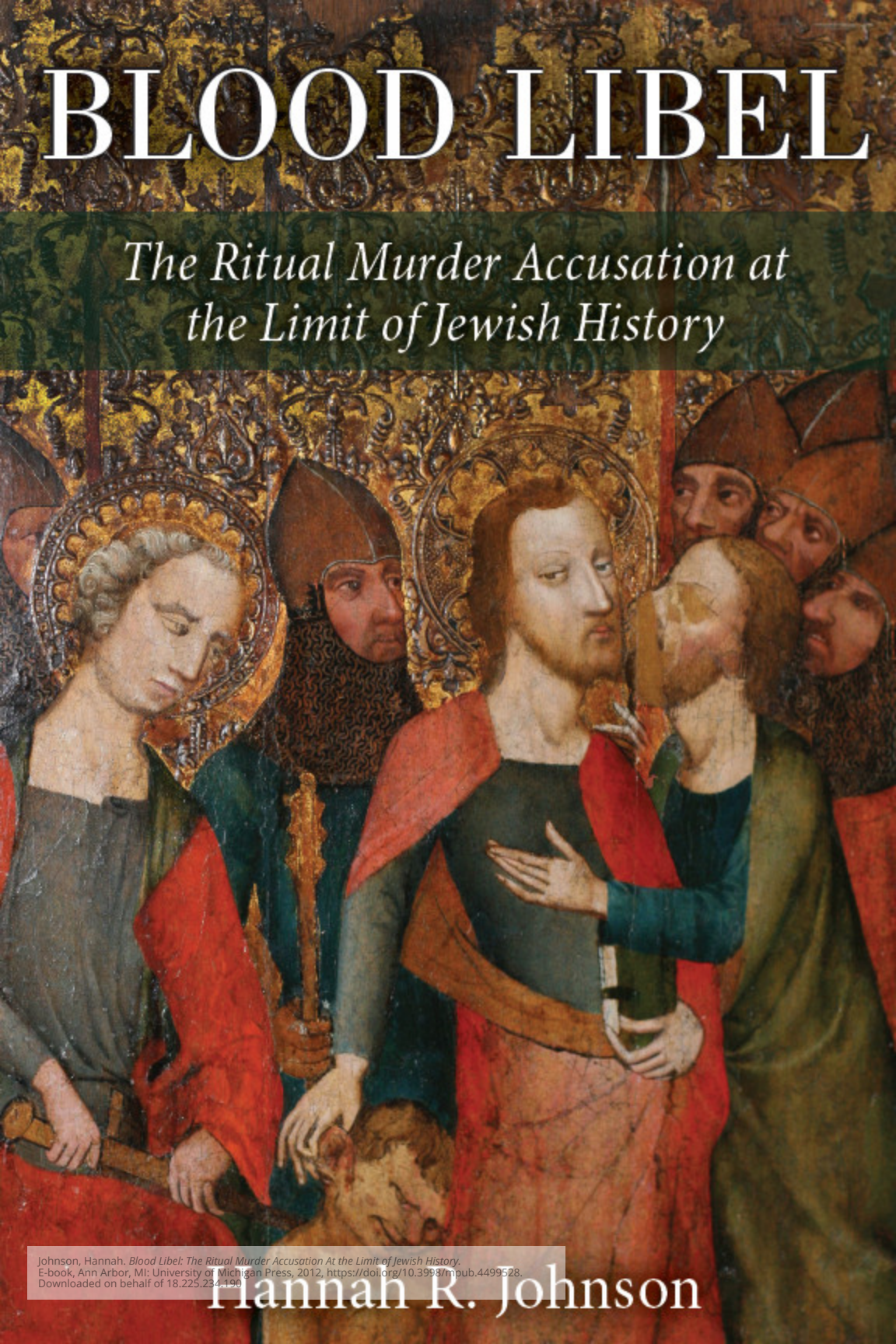
BLOOD LIBEL

The Ritual Murder Accusation at the Limit of Jewish History



Hannah R. Johnson

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For Lynna, who talked to me like a writer,
& for my mother, Patricia, who abides

Contents

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Note: The following abbreviations are used throughout—*GA* = Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself; HRA* = Gavin Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism; TDA* = Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism.*

INTRODUCTION

The Ethical Dimensions of Historical Interpretation: The Blood Libel as Limit Case

THE STORY BEGINS with the discovery of a child's body. Most commonly it is a boy, though occasionally it could be more than one child, or a girl. The body might be discovered in a sewer drainage ditch, perhaps in a wood. The setting is generally a medieval town. The child is a Christian and he is young. He could be two years old or twelve. He might have been missing for days, or just overnight. But the body's discovery is only the beginning. What happens afterward hinges on religious hostility and the misunderstandings it has often fed between Christian and Jewish communities. The Jews are accused of murdering the boy for obscure ritual purposes, and what begins as dark rumor might end in anti-Jewish violence, or perhaps a judicial inquiry involving the possibility of torture and execution. The many endings of this story, and the precise details of its escalation, vary over the course of the European Middle Ages, but its beginning becomes stereotyped in a script that plays out many times, extending beyond the medieval period to be revived as needed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Once taken up for propaganda purposes by Hitler's Nazi regime, the notorious claim that Jews murder children has even now been reanimated in antisemitic discourse in the Muslim world.[1]

The ritual murder story is a critical ingredient in a specific genre of malicious myths about Jews, generally described by the phrase *blood libel.* A

broad array of claims fall under this rubric, which describes the medieval belief that Jews needed Christian blood, for ritual purposes such as baking matzah for Passover, or else to satisfy some strange medicoreligious need, like healing the circumcision cut. The accusation of ritual murder is also tied to the fear that Jews engaged in acts of symbolic vengeance or spite against the Christian religion, often involving re-enactment of the crucifixion on the body of a child.[2] Though untrue, these lurid stories were both a product and source of Christian hostility and suspicion toward Jews. But the tale of a murdered child holds a special place in this mythology. Though I sometimes use the more general term *blood libel* here, I rely on the language of the ritual murder accusation, legend, or libel, because it describes the specific element of the libel I am examining, and because the term directs attention to the vexed question of murder, and the claim that Jewish tradition in some way sanctions or encourages murderous behavior.[3] It is the question of murder, and the historical status of such alleged crimes, that is often at stake in arguments about specific historical accusations. The blood libel has frequently been debunked by scholars as antithetical to the Jewish tradition, which abhors both blood and human sacrifice, yet there have nevertheless always been interpreters who preferred to believe it was true, generally for insidious political reasons.[4]

This book is about recent scholars' efforts to account for an explosive accusation and its implications for understanding the dynamics of persecution in Western history. I argue that some understandable ethical questions are central to this project, including concerns about responsibility, repetition, and the possibility of adequate explanation. The ritual murder legend occupies a tiny corner of historiography, yet it operates like an overloaded circuit, a high-friction relay point in efforts to account for the difficult course of Jewish-Christian history, the violence of the Holocaust, and even modern Israeli politics. If these sound like big stakes, that is because they are. This phenomenon of medieval history, in other words, reaches far beyond the Middle Ages. A curious legend has become a point of contact for intertwined questions of methodology and ethics that concern the discipline of history as a whole. It is the project of this book to articulate how ethics shapes methodological decisions in the study of the accusation, and how questions about methodology, in turn, pose ethical problems of interpretation and understanding. These intertwined considerations also resonate with continued ideological implications in the present.

Three of the four main chapters of this book discuss the famous case of William of Norwich and recent historians' arguments about its origins and

place in the history of anti-Jewish libels. This boy's untimely death and modest postmortem fame occupy a central place in scholarship on the legend of ritual murder, in part because the surviving Latin account represents one of the earliest and best-documented accusations in medieval Europe. Another exemplar in recent arguments is the much later case of Simon of Trent in 1475, discussed in the final chapter. The relative wealth of documentation produced in relation to these cases has made them sites of interest for scholars, even if the evidence is limited to a single text in William's case, and involves testimony extracted via torture in Simon's. Much of my interest in the Norwich story stems from its symbolic dimensions in scholarship, where its status as the possible *first* example of the accusation in Western history exists in relation to a largely unspoken "end" point of antisemitic persecution: the Holocaust of the mid-twentieth century, whose shadow looms over efforts to understand medieval Jewish-Christian history. It is in part a concern for ends, I suggest, that lends such urgency to arguments about the origin of this story of murder, conspiracy, and anti-Christian fanaticism directed against medieval Jewish communities.

I take up two historiographical problems where the ritual murder legend is concerned: the problem of assigning responsibility for the accusation and its consequences, and the related question of the proper limits of interpretation. Both are fundamentally ethical as well as methodological issues and are implicated in questions of ideology. Thanks to biased sources, competing religious views of reality, and a volatile history of appropriation of the story of ritual murder for political ends, determinations about "what actually happened" in a given case of the accusation are more than usually elusive. Though we may be confident, based on even a cursory knowledge of Jewish tradition, that Jewish communities did not engage in conspiracies to murder Christian children, this conclusion still does not answer the vexed question of what did happen in a particular instance.[5] This indeterminacy, a basic inability to determine precisely how historical events that lay behind the accusations unfolded, has contributed to speculation and anxiety, as well as competing desires to exonerate historical Jewish communities, or declare them collectively guilty. The push and pull of polemical arguments about the historical status of the accusation is part of what I describe in the first chapter as the "juridical" or legalistic context in which discussion of the legend has traditionally taken place.[6] One of my arguments is that scholars' claims about how we should understand the lived reality in which such charges emerged are inextricably linked to their ethical evaluation of the relations between Jewish and Christian commu-

nities, and the forms of anti-Jewish violence that often marked those relations. These claims, in turn, exist in difficult dialogue with the cultural concerns of the historian's own moment.

While arguments about the ritual murder accusation have always revolved around questions of guilt and innocence, I examine recent theories that in one way or another revisit and disturb such questions. The historian Gavin Langmuir discerns a universal psychology of irrational antisemitism over the course of Western history that is rendered pointedly visible in the legend of ritual murder. He confirms a common understanding of Christian responsibility for Jewish suffering in the wake of historical accusations but also redefines the historical reality at stake in the process, in terms that may carry their own challenging political implications. Israel Yuval is one of a number of recent historians who open up the complex realities of a shared Jewish and Christian social space in ways that demand a reevaluation of the question of responsibility. Yuval imagines medieval Jewish-Christian relations in general, and the emergence of the ritual murder accusation in particular, in terms of a structure of mutual implication in the historical dynamic he analyzes. Ariel Toaff has broken a long-standing taboo by appearing to suggest that at least a few accusations of ritual murder might have had some basis in fact. Toaff's suggestive and often evasive claims about historical reality however highlight questions of ideological bias and psychological processes of transference that are perennial features of discussion of the libel.

My goal in this book is not to provide a review of every important contribution to scholarship on the ritual murder accusation, but to examine some recent arguments in order to: (1) offer a window onto the intellectual and ethical stakes of recent methodological shifts visible in medieval Jewish studies; (2) write the story of recent historiography on the ritual murder accusation as an intellectual history that articulates how scholarship in this field maintains an indirect but meaningful dialogue with cultural debates; and (3) analyze how historians cope with the limit where historical knowledge meets historical uncertainty in discussion of the blood libel. This is a project of cultural criticism as well as historiographical analysis, and aims at the reexamination of one of the most vexed questions in Jewish-Christian history. At the same time, I want to emphasize that contemporary arguments about the nature of historical reality exist on a continuum that includes medieval as well as modern texts: I open my discussion with an analysis of Thomas of Monmouth's account of the death and afterlife of William of Norwich. This case haunts the scholars whose work I analyze

here, and has become a kind of fulcrum around which this book develops. Even when the death of little William is forced to cede its place as the first accusation to some earlier death, his case is a point of inevitable return for those who want to understand how the specter of child murder has become an enduring, dubious legacy of medieval Jewish-Christian relations.

Ethics

I have been speaking of ethics, and the time has come to clarify what I mean by this term in the context of this study. Ethics is a notoriously slippery concept, one that runs the gamut from practical guidelines for behavior to principles of self-evaluation to questions of justice and judgment. Bearing in mind Geoffrey Galt Harpham's wonderful axiom that "Ethics does not solve problems, it structures them," I would like to articulate how the historian's ethics works to structure complex problems of meaning, interpretation, and method.[7] When speaking of ethics, I refer not to the scholar's statements about his personal ethics, nor to his standing among a community of professionals, but to the principles that guide his praxis as a professional historian. I highlight assumptions and convictions about issues like the role of the historian in making judgments about the meaning of events. Historians' working assumptions might be conscious or unconscious—certainly they are often unarticulated—but guiding ethical presuppositions are visible in the claims and arguments of historiography. Every historian, from this perspective, operates out of a specific ethics, but analyzing the historian's work in these terms is not as simple as isolating a code of professional mores that all historians share, since there will be many variations on such themes, and a general code often cannot account for individual differences in practice, particularly if these concern controversial cases or new methods. My argument focuses on the role that a largely implicit ethical framework plays in the work of historians who study the ritual murder accusation, and the ways ethics might be said to shape the project of historical interpretation in this fraught sphere. Each of the historians whose work I examine here represents a different ethics at work, from the project of moralization visible in the writing of Gavin Langmuir, to the turn to contingency and implication visible in the work of Israel Yuval, to the ethical equivocations of the scholar Ariel Toaff.

Though in the following chapters I draw on the ethical theory of Judith Butler and Gillian Rose, here I would like to clarify the critical relation be-

tween morality and ethics that will guide my analysis throughout. I rely on Paul Ricoeur's distinction between the ethical aim and the moral norm. By means of this division, he explains the differences between ethics and morality, as well as their complex interdependence: it is the difference, he writes, between "that which *is considered to be good* and that which *imposes itself as obligatory.* It is, therefore, by convention that I reserve the term 'ethics' for the *aim* of an accomplished life and the term 'morality' for the articulation of this aim in *norms* characterized at once by the claim to universality and by an effect of constraint."[8] Ethics is defined by an open-ended and affirmative effort to aim at the "good life," which, for Ricoeur, is lived "with and for others, in just institutions" (*Oneself as Another,* 172). But if ethics is concerned with ultimate ends and larger goals, dwelling on issues like justice or reciprocity in relationships, it is in the realm of the moral norm that such concerns take on the force of prescriptions, prohibitions, and laws. If ethics concerns itself with defining the good, the moral norm is about preserving and policing its boundaries. This is because morality must contend with the reality of evil and violence in human relations. "In each case," Ricoeur reminds us, "morality replies to violence. And if the commandment cannot do otherwise than to take the form of a prohibition, this is precisely because of evil: to all the figures of evil responds the *no* of morality" (*Oneself as Another,* 221). If ethics is the space of deliberation, we might say, then morality is the space of decision and judgment.

But this is not a matter of declaring that freewheeling ethics is "good" while the imperatives of morality are "bad," as Ricoeur makes clear repeatedly.[9] The ethical aim, he writes, must "pass through the sieve of the norm" in order to be articulated in practical action (*Oneself as Another,* 170). The process of deliberation must ultimately yield to a moment of decision. At the same time, moral imperatives sometimes lead to impasses, in which competing norms contradict one another. At this point only recourse to the ethical aim can resolve dilemmas. In this context, Ricoeur discusses the conflict between the claims of family and politics in *Antigone,* as a way of arguing for recourse to the ethical aim when the conflict of norms becomes unbearable. Such conflicts, he observes, "lead us back from morality to ethics, but to an ethics enriched by the passage through the norm and exercising moral judgment in a given situation" (*Oneself as Another,* 203). Where the moral norm attempts to universalize, the ethical sphere takes account of singular situations that resist or disrupt the universalizing impulse of morality. It is this tempered judgment that yields practical wisdom. Once again, however, Ricoeur emphasizes the dialectic between

ethics and morality, rather than an eclipse of the moral: "this manner of referring morality back to ethics is not to be taken to mean that the morality of obligation has been disavowed," he writes (*Oneself as Another,* 240). Instead, the obligations of morality must be in continuous conversation with the aims of ethics.

Ricoeur's distinctions help me articulate where scholars fall on a moral-ethical continuum, but I also argue that recent studies of the ritual murder libel offer a window onto a larger ethical paradigm shift within medieval Jewish studies that is best described in terms of what philosopher Gillian Rose has called "the broken middle" of philosophical and ethical thought. For Rose, as for Ricoeur, we are always negotiating the claims of norms and the claims of ideals, but she is resolute in critiquing thinkers who would give pride of place to the ideal in preference to the messy realm of the actual and of laws.[10] Her vision is uncompromising, but not a counsel of despair. Rather than abandon our efforts to build a better and more just society because we may never attain a state of perfection, Rose insists we strive to acknowledge our own implication in the structures of violence that underpin the political order and still work toward a greater possibility for justice—not in the realm of the ideal, but in the space of this world. Furthermore, we must do so impersonally, without privileging ourselves as either victims or transcendent political actors. Pursuing this goal may also require revising cherished narratives of communal memory.

Rose's pragmatic ethics calls to mind the real political stakes of apparently abstract ethical debates. Ethical theory offers us a helpful framework for analyzing the ideological stakes of historiographical arguments about the ritual murder accusation. I argue that the discourse of ethics mediates the claims of method and the claims of ideology in recent historiography. When we understand how ethical deliberation is bound up in the negotiation of methodological decisions *and* the ideological embeddedness of historiography, we can better analyze both the methodological and cultural consequences of the historian's work. As I will argue throughout, no historian escapes the influence of ideology. However, the claims of the present must not dominate his work of interpretation, or his arguments become the tool of ideology, rather than existing in productive tension with it. This is a *qualitative* distinction, relying on an informed analysis of historiography that takes questions of methodology seriously while recognizing that historical arguments can have implications for the present.

In the context of debates about the meaning of the ritual murder accusation, the competing ethical priorities at stake revolve around the question

of historical responsibility, often described in terms of guilt or innocence, and what it means to determine and ascribe responsibility for historical actions. The major questions might be mapped this way: Is it part of the historian's task to assign blame to historical actors or groups, particularly when assigning blame has potential political consequences in the present? If there are other languages than the language of blame for thinking about historical responsibility, then how would they address the concern for historical justice? These questions speak to the classical tension between the moral and ethical spheres. Blame only has meaning under a certain version of responsibility, and it concerns how answerable we are, as nations, cultures, or religious groups, for past sins committed in our name. Blame is only meaningful if we can be understood to make demands or reparations, as victims or aggressors, whether in the realm of public opinion or legal act. In the context of Jewish history, this issue comes home with particular force when it comes to the memory of the Holocaust, which has become a prominent fixture in a cultural work of reparation that features Jewish suffering at its center.[11] In historiographical terms, to take a position on whether to assign blame is also to take a position on the extent and limits of corporate responsibility, and in some cases (as in Israel Yuval's work), it is to ask whether this model of historical responsibility continues to makes sense. It may be that the limits of a historicism concerned with blame also precisely trace the limits of a politics of reparations and essential identity. It is in just this commingling of ethical concerns and ideological consequences that historiographical debates about the ritual murder accusation continue to unfold. And here ethical theory can inform the larger ideological context in which historiography is written, while still constituting an identifiable discourse of its own. Debates about responsibility continue to have larger consequences, without losing their particularity as ethical questions. While the scope of ethical debates might be delimited, however, the entanglement of ideological concerns in historiography is far more diffuse and difficult to pin down. This is an issue I approach by considering the idea of the limit event.

Limit Events

What I am calling a *limit case* or *limit event* is a point in historical thinking where questions of cultural meaning and scholarly method surface in tight relation to one another, challenging conceptual boundaries of historical thought. These events call for clarification even as they resist satisfactory

explanation. I have already indicated the entanglement of modern studies of the blood libel and cultural memory of the Holocaust. Both subjects operate as limit events in scholarly discourse, though it may seem strange or even disrespectful to bring these two examples into such close proximity to one another. After all, the Holocaust comprises a series of extreme, traumatic events that occurred on a massive scale. In such a context it may be difficult to see medieval accusations of ritual murder as anything but a series of minor oppressions. But what brings these two cases together is the sense that something fundamental eludes our understanding about each one. We might even express this as an inverse relation: the Holocaust is attended by a mass of documentation, yet its motivating mechanisms remain elusive. Ritual murder accusations are so sparsely documented that the most basic historical reconstruction becomes an epistemological challenge. Yet each historical phenomenon is a site where ethical concerns become entangled with interpretation, where historians' psychological and political investments are rendered provocatively visible, and finally, where limits—of interpretation, representation, and meaning—are always being negotiated against a background of cultural debate.

Scholars who write about the blood libel are no less aware than their counterparts in Holocaust studies of shadow discourses of antisemitism that haunt their work. But this relation is culturally as well as conceptually overdetermined. The Holocaust represents the most prominent example of a limit case, one that is wedded to claims about the impossibility of representing such a massive moral violation. This widespread understanding of a paradigmatic example may predispose us to view earlier cases of anti-Jewish persecution in the same light, and even encourage the retroactive recruitment of earlier disasters to this narrative pattern.[12] Yet the idea of the limit event demands that we recognize how conceptual and methodological questions are entangled with cultural memory in just this way. Shared cultural paradigms for making sense of historical events may be described as ideological in the broadest sense, but they cannot simply be expunged from historical writing.[13] Instead I argue that this entanglement of cultural and interpretive concerns must be acknowledged and analyzed as part of the process of producing historical meaning.

These problems of interpretation, conceptualization, and meaning may also apply to cases outside the paradigm of Jewish history. Simone Gigliotti has recently discussed the applicability of the limit event to a new context: the forced removals of mixed-race children of Aboriginal descent from their families in Australia between 1910 and 1970. She summarizes

the state of conversation by referring to the Holocaust as the paradigm of the limit case.

> I use the phrase "limit event" based on my acquaintance with it in discussions of the Holocaust's representation in post-war scholarly debates as, variously: the manifestation of the potential barbarism of modernity, as an extreme event of such uniqueness and incomparability that renders it incomprehensible to "those who were not there," and of contested representational possibility in historical discourse, literary and visual culture, and in testimonial narratives.[14]

Gigliotti highlights three specific characteristics of the limit event as it appears in academic debates about the Holocaust: the limit event surpasses or challenges moral limits (evoking barbarism); it inhibits the historicist impulse to draw comparisons by virtue of its unusual, even incomparable, status; finally, the limit event is always contested at the level of representation. I would also emphasize the indissociability of ethical questions from conceptual ones: understanding the enormity of a crime that entails the murder of millions of victims taxes the imagination, but never in an ethically neutral way. Though far fewer victims are involved, these questions—about moral limits, comparison, and representation—are also relevant to the study of the blood libel. The specific ethical questions that attend discussion of this story turn on the issue of historical responsibility and are framed in terms that have broader cultural and ideological implications as well as ethical ones.

Saul Friedlander has discussed the limit event in terms of a surplus or excess that frustrates understanding. In his introduction to Gerald Fleming's book *Hitler and the Final Solution,* Friedlander remarks,

> If one admits that the Jewish problem was at the center, was the very essence of the system, many [studies of the Final Solution] lose their coherence, and historiography is confronted with an anomaly that defies the normal interpretive categories. . . . We know in detail what occurred, we know the sequence of events and their probable interaction, but the profound dynamics of the phenomenon escapes [*sic*] us.[15]

The antisemitism of the Nazi regime—characterized by an obsession with "the Jewish question"—is a central category that defines the Holocaust, yet it remains elusive. The subject as a whole defies normal interpretive categories, despite our knowledge of basic facts. I have already suggested how the ritual murder accusation operates in these terms. The central category

of the "reality" surrounding the accusation remains an elusive—and inflammatory—central question for scholars who work on the topic. Normal interpretive categories that apply to historical events are compromised or transformed when the central "event" in question is a product of fantasy, community suspicion, and evanescent "social knowledge."[16] Hayden White describes what I am calling the limit case as the "modernist event," and the Holocaust is still for him the paradigmatic example. What Friedlander understands as an excess is for White a resistance: he points to "the anomalous nature of modernist events—their resistance to inherited categories and conventions for assigning meanings to events" and "the difficulty felt by present generations of arriving at some agreement as to their meaning."[17] This sense of an excess or remainder, of an elusive center that defies and yet demands resolution, is central to the limit case.

This sense of irresolvability is complicated by the historian's psychological relation to his material. Dominick LaCapra argues that as a traumatic limit point the Holocaust raises intractable problems of transference for historians. Transference, as LaCapra has defined the term over the course of his career, is a product of the historian's deep relation to his subject. "By 'transference,'" he writes,

> I mean primarily one's implication in the other or the object of study with the tendency to repeat in one's own discourse or practice tendencies active in, or projected into, the other or object. For example, one may have a ritualistic, phobic response to ritual, may replicate a scapegoat mechanism in an analysis of scapegoating, may repeat Nazi terminology in an analysis of Nazism, or may manifest fanaticism in a critique of religion.[18]

While transference may be a problem for historians working on any historical question, it is arguably easier to mask where less fraught subjects are concerned. A recognizable process of transference not only marks the limit case but is part of what defines it. "Transference," LaCapra insists, "is inevitable to the extent that an issue is not dead, provokes an emotional and evaluative response, and entails the meeting of history with memory."[19] These criteria—the "live" issue that provokes both emotion and analysis, and dovetails messily with the demands of history and memory—are further markers of the limit event as I am conceptualizing it here. Transference and the related concept of identification are visible in studies of the blood libel, where, until recently, many scholars engaged in a more or less explicit project of exonerating historical Jewish communities from false ac-

cusations, a project often understood to have real consequences in the historian's own moment. If transference is fundamentally an act of displacement, then for historians who study the ritual murder accusation, this is a displacement between the cultural and political debates of the historian's own moment and his views of the past, creating sometimes uncomfortable sites of exchange and reflection.

These questions come together in a specific debate over Hayden White's work that is useful for articulating how historiography on the ritual murder accusation unfolds within larger ideological and disciplinary contexts. White is associated with postmodern critiques of historiography that address questions such as the transparency of historical reality, the elusiveness of objectivity, and particularly how the historian's work of shaping a narrative affects our perception of evidence by introducing it into a new, narrative context. In debates about historiography that took place in the United States between the late 1970s and early 1990s, White was portrayed as either the prime representative of an unwelcome assault on the discipline of history or a key figure in a necessary reevaluation of disciplinary assumptions, depending on the author's perspective.[20] He is particularly well known for his theory of emplotment, which underlines the structural similarity between historiographical narratives and certain literary genres, such as tragedy, comedy, farce, or satire. White argued that historians narrativize history according to such generic modes depending on their interpretation of evidence, and rival interpretations might be narrativized in different ways, without necessarily being untrue to the evidence in question.[21]

While White's claims have often shocked historians, however, serious controversy erupted when his arguments came up against the Holocaust as limit case. After he addressed the historiographical status of the Holocaust directly in "The Politics of Historical Interpretation," this essay became a flashpoint in a major volume on the difficulties of representing the Holocaust, Saul Friedlander's *Probing the Limits of Representation.* I return to this debate now for two reasons: (1) White's career is representative of the problems of negotiating historical relativism and ideology in scholarship, and (2) this particular debate over his work gestures toward a conceptual middle ground that historiography is still struggling to navigate. In the original essay, some of White's rhetorical questions capture the challenge (and the danger) his views were understood to represent for traditional historiography. Channeling the voices of his critics, White paraphrases some of their concerns:

> Do you mean to say that the occurrence and nature of the Holocaust is only a matter of opinion and that one can write its history in whatever way one pleases? Do you imply that any account of that event is as valid as any other account so long as it meets certain formal requirements of discursive practices and that one has no responsibility to the victims to tell the truth about the indignities and cruelties they suffered? Are there not certain historical events that tolerate none of that mere cleverness that allows criminals or their admirers to feign accounts of their crimes that effectively relieve them of their guilt or responsibility or even, in the worst instances, allows them to maintain that the crimes they committed never happened?[22]

In his follow-up essay, White's answers to these questions appear to be no, no, and yes.[23] For White and his critics, what is at stake is the problem of adjudicating among competing narrativizations of historical events. All parties to the debate understand that some historical accounts are motivated by ideological concerns, and that authors with extremist political objectives can and do capitalize on historical uncertainties to make radical claims. The problem remains how to determine protocols for distinguishing between competing accounts in an ideologically inflected world.

White's name is often taken to be synonymous with a thoroughgoing relativism in historical interpretation. Critics have suggested that his analysis reduces history to "mere interpretation" rather than knowledge. Dominick LaCapra has argued that White's work sometimes moves toward a "radical constructivism" that reduces historical reconstruction to an act of imagination on the part of the historian, who may do with evidence what he will.[24] White himself has repeatedly acknowledged his relativism, while denying that it extends as far as critics claim. Of his position, he writes,

> Historical relativism, as I understand it, has to do only with the idea that, in historical research at least, the truth-value and authoritativeness of a given representation of a given domain of the past must be assessed in terms of its relation to the cultural context and social conditions obtaining at the time of its production and with respect to the perspective from which the inquiry was launched. . . . The relation between facts and events is always open to negotiation and reconceptualization, not because the events change with time, but because we change our ways of conceptualizing them.[25]

He stresses that historical knowledge is always knowledge produced within a specific historical moment, a situated context that includes ideological influences. Yet while historical understanding is always a process of approximation that is conceptually changing, knowledge remains possible. Writing of his own work, he insists,

> This characterization of historical discourse does not imply that past events, persons, institutions, and processes never really existed. It does not imply that we cannot have more or less precise information about these past entities. And it does not imply that we cannot transform this information into knowledge by the application of various methods developed by the different disciplines comprising the "science" of an age or culture. (*Figural Realism,* 2)

There are such things as historical realities, in other words, and they may be indirectly accessed via surviving historical evidence. But knowledge about such realities, in addition to being mediated by documents, monuments, and other survivals from the past, only becomes knowledge once it has become part of a specific kind of discourse. This discourse is created and shaped by the historian in his capacity as interpreter. Like other complex texts that advance claims about the world, including literature, the historian's discourse "always means more than it literally says, says something other than what it seems to mean, and reveals something about the world only at the cost of concealing something else" (*Figural Realism,* 7). One consequence of this claim is the recognition that analyzing the historian's conclusions requires examining his unspoken assumptions and situatedness in a specific historical context, as well as his arguments.[26]

While the historian's account is inevitably shaped by the act of narrativization, however, White argues that the historian must always be responsible to the evidence, or he is not a historian. In fact, the refusal to be responsible to evidence and a determination to ignore the demands of rational argumentation in debates with other interpreters are the chief characteristics of fascist views of history as White defines them early in his career. In *Metahistory,* he writes that authoritarian ideological perspectives like those of the Apocalypticist, Reactionary, or Fascist are not "cognitively responsible," because they "are not regarded as being responsible to criticism launched from other positions, to 'data' in general, or to control by the logical criteria of consistency and coherence" (23). When a particular set of ideological concerns dominate a historical account to the detriment of the claims of evidence, responsibility to criticism, or consistency, then a

historical account has lost its legitimacy. Debates about White's work have revolved around the dangers of relativism, yet White condemns the kind of arbitrary reading that would allow ideologues to distort or falsify the historical record, even as his larger concern is with analyzing how many different *non*-arbitrary accounts are possible in the historian's encounter with evidence. Between evidence (which White often takes as a given) and meaning lies the interpretive work of the historian, and here, White argues, it is possible to emplot the same events in a few equally plausible ways that are faithful (that is, responsible) to the evidence. A particular piece of the historical record might be emplotted as comedy, tragedy, farce, or satire, depending on the historian's interpretation of the meaning of such events. However, for White the Holocaust—and presumably other "modernist events"—constitute exceptions to this rule.

White's claims have often caused consternation among his fellow historians, I would argue, not only because he draws attention to structures of narrativization they might prefer to discount but also because he refuses the consolation of a positivist directive for adjudicating among competing interpretations of events. Though he believes in the possibility of distinguishing between better and worse accounts, or between responsible and irresponsible ones, these exist on a continuum rather than being separated by an unbridgeable gulf between history and nonhistory. This is perhaps most clear when he writes about the role of ideology in historiography. In the essay that excited so much controversy, White seems to be suggesting that, since historical events might be emplotted in several ways, and since any emplotment has an inexpungeable ideological component, then one way to assess competing narratives might be by considering their "effectiveness"—their direct effect on community memory and contemporary politics. Because White directly compared Holocaust denial, Zionist historiography, and Palestinian narratives about the past as examples of such effective histories, he appeared to many readers to level any distinction between them. In his critique of White, Carlo Ginzburg is unequivocal about what he sees as the poisonous implications of this series of comparisons: "We can conclude that if Faurisson's narrative [of Holocaust denial] were ever to prove *effective,* it would be regarded by White as true as well."[27]

White's critics are concerned about the specter of fascism and the fear that White's vision of history may be insufficiently condemnatory in relation to it. However, most seem to overlook or minimize one of White's larger claims. While he suggests that both fascism and Zionism are points on a continuum of what he calls a "visionary politics," he also distinguishes

between them in terms that emphasize a critical *qualitative* difference. Zionism represents an interpretation of history that leaves the substance of events intact, by maintaining a sense of what he previously called cognitive responsibility to historical evidence. However, the fascist orientation of Holocaust denial maintains no such sense of obligation to the evidence: Holocaust denial is a lie.[28] In other words, while ideology is inescapable for both modes of historical writing, one mode maintains a meaningful relationship with the evidence, even if its conclusions might be critiqued, while the purely ideological reading is disingenuous in its handling of evidence. This is more than a distinction of the moment generated by White's fears of political fallout: as we have seen, he consistently defends responsibility to evidence as an ethicomethodological imperative. Without fidelity to the evidence, we do not have history. What is instructive about this debate for thinking about scholarship on the ritual murder accusation is that the set of distinctions at work—between cognitive responsibility and falsehood, on the one hand, and questions of evidence and meaning on the other—are the same categories operative in debates about the medieval libel.

However, the role of interpretation is further complicated by the slippery status of facts and events themselves in relation to the ritual murder accusation. As Martin Jay points out in his response, White's model presumes that certain basic facts or data are stable, and that it is our interpretations of them that change.[29] Yet when it comes to accusations of blood libel, stable facts are thin on the ground. The sources are limited, and biased. The "reality" of the event itself is at the heart of discussion. In this complex historiographical scene, determining what "responsibility to the evidence" should look like is part of the very problem at stake. This has been nowhere more clearly illustrated than in recent debates about Ariel Toaff's controversial book on the Trent trial for ritual murder in 1475, *Pasque di sangue,* discussed here in the final chapter. In the fierce debates that followed the book's release, major questions concerned the status of the evidence itself, and what one might legitimately deduce from testimony extracted by torture.

While I cannot hope, in the space of a few brief pages, to resolve the crisis over relativism that has bedeviled modern historiography, I would like to suggest that even in relation to such a difficult case as the legend of ritual murder, it is possible to make determinations about what it means to be cognitively responsible in White's terms. This involves relying on historiographical standards of reasonable inference, cautious use of hostile sources, and a judicious distinction between probability and possibility,

fact and hypothesis. In his response to White, Martin Jay has recourse to a Habermasian notion of communicative rationality, by which arguments are secured and claims validated within a community prepared to evaluate them. In this context, he writes,

> by raising discursive claims for truth and rightness, anyone who enters a critical discussion tacitly presupposes the power of the better argument rather than coercion or authority as the ground for conviction. The criterion of effectiveness is thus not merely winning assent by any means possible, but rather winning it by redeeming validity claims through procedures that satisfy conditions of rationality. ("Of Plots," 106)

Furthermore, while such rational standards may vary between communities, they simply do not vary enough to make fair-minded negotiations over meaning impossible. Even if we reject the appeal to a specieswide notion of rationality, Jay writes, the idea of communicative rationality suggests that "there exist discursive communities, sharing standards and procedures of communicative rationality, that are more inclusive than the communities from which their members come" (106). Robert Eaglestone offers a helpful distillation of these ideas when he writes that a "reasonable historian" is one who may be "reasoned with," and insists that those who fail to meet this requirement, along with disciplinary norms—particularly norms concerning the use of evidence—are not practicing history.[30]

Certainly there are those who reject such criteria—and the standards of cognitive responsibility that go with them. The specter of Holocaust denial has made this more than usually apparent in recent decades.[31] Yet that does not mean that reasonable debates about the historical meaning of events cannot take place. This may not amount to a method, if *method* is taken to mean having a clear rule to decide every ambiguous case—but it is a consistent and coherent *praxis,* one that negotiates the limitations of a positivism that does not pause to consider what is taken for granted in the formation of knowledge on the one hand, and a mode of arbitrary, even nihilistic reading exemplified by fascist historiography on the other. What Martin Jay underscores is a basic faith in the power of the better argument to win the day. Certainly this may be compromised in situations where censorship or authoritarian politics are operative, but no one can entirely guard against such eventualities, including professional historians.

Rather than continue to revisit the extreme poles of positivism and radical relativism in debates about historical interpretation, it is more productive to embrace the praxis Jay describes, recognizing that while facts may

not be any more transparent than historical reality in the consideration of a limit event like the ritual murder accusation, these questions can nevertheless be negotiated under the rubric of responsibility or fidelity to evidence, carefully grounded interpretation, and the negotiation of meaning among a community of professionals trained in thinking through such questions. This is surely what it means to be cognitively responsible, and we must learn to stand this middle ground, however difficult of definition it may be, if we are not to be bullied by the specter of authoritarian exploitations of history. This is true at the general level of historiographical method, but it is also necessary for negotiating the cultural politics that haunt the study of the ritual murder accusation. If the history of debate about White's work has been instructive at all, it has alerted us to the ways cultural politics impact determinations of meaning. White suggests that while ideology may be inescapable, it must also be held in productive tension with evidence and the claims of methodology. I argue that the maintenance of this balance of interests is part of the work that the discourse of ethics does in recent historiography on the ritual murder accusation. And when a historian fails to maintain this balance between method and ideology, it is in the sphere of the ethical that this becomes most readily apparent, as my argument about Ariel Toaff's controversial work suggests.

Jews and Christians Together

Recent work in medieval Jewish-Christian history is engaged in a reevaluation of older historical models that recognizes another difficult middle space—the space delineated and shared by two religious cultures in conflict. The curious complementarity, often negative, of the Jewish and Christian cultures of medieval Europe has emerged as a major preoccupation in scholarship and constitutes what I have referred to as an *ethicomethodological paradigm shift*. This transdisciplinary project concerns specialists in medieval literature as well as history and points to a symbiosis between specialists that is particularly relevant for this project. While historians are interested in the effects of cultural discourses on medieval mentalities, social formations, and politics, literary scholars historicize particular representations within their cultural contexts and specific circumstances of production. These shared investments speak to the complexity of the cultural framework under discussion. The challenge, for both historians and literature specialists, is how to think seriously about the relations between communities when any such thinking has to be done through ex-

tremely problematic screens of textual representation and symbolism. This goes beyond arguments about how *any* historical document refracts the assumptions of its historical moment, to address the effects of systematic cultural bias, violent stereotypes, and direct or indirect responses to the challenges represented by a rival religious group. This book is situated at this juncture, where the interests of historians and literary specialists meet, and asks questions about methodological issues of concern for both in understanding the dynamics of Jewish-Christian relations.

In *The Spectral Jew,* Steven Kruger reminds us that "the Jews we encounter in medieval Christian texts . . . are constructions that do not correspond in any easy way to the lived experiences of Jews, or even of the Christians who elaborated and made use of these constructions."[32] Kruger thus enters into a long-standing conversation about the complex representations of the Jew in medieval Christian culture. Scholars have emphasized the difficult status of anti-Jewish stereotypes and hostile stories, which respond to an identifiable historical group yet cannot be taken as straightforward representations of actual Jews or Judaism. The rich vein of terminology used to discuss this interpretive problem, ranging from Jeremy Cohen's "hermeneutical Jew" to "virtual" or "paper" Jews (not to mention Kruger's own category of spectrality) conveys the persistent association of the Jew with fantasy and symbol.[33] However, Kruger captures something of the special difficulty these symbols represent when he writes that "the lack of a clear correspondence between fantasy constructions of Jews and lived experience does not mean that these constructions do not themselves constitute a crucial part of lived experience," since these images "'*were* living realities for the medieval Christian' . . . experienced as much and as importantly *through* the constructions of fantasy and ideology as in any more purely experiential realm" (*Spectral Jew,* xx–xxi). I understand Kruger to mean that because such images played a complex role in mediating Christian perceptions of contemporary Jews, and led to demonstrable effects in the social and political realms, even fantasy images impinge upon historical reality in meaningful ways.

Paradoxically, stereotypes about a marginal group inhabiting a Christian-dominated culture are also central to the construction of Christian identity. Lisa Lampert criticizes what she calls the "restricted economy of particularism" that encourages us to see Christian representations of Jewish identity as complex depictions of otherness, while taking Christian identity for granted. "Christian identity," she writes, "is neither static nor fixed. Christian authors created complex and sometimes contradictory no-

tions of Christian identity through strategic use of, opposition to, and identification with representations of Jews that are shaped through Christian self-definition."[34] Lampert also highlights how images of Jews work in tandem with representations of women, offering one example of how a culture's different categories of otherness depend on one another as well as definitions of the hegemonic culture. Anthony Bale also underscores how definitions of Christian identity are fundamentally shaped by Christian ideas about Jews when he writes that in the texts he examines, "the Jew is often a crucial, sometimes fundamental, reference point for the doctrine and interpretation of the greater ('non-Jewish') text."[35] The centrality of an apparently marginal image, he writes, suggests that we should "no longer consider artefacts which discuss Judaism as separate from the Christian Middle Ages, but as integral to our understanding of this religious and cultural *milieu*" (*Jew in the Medieval Book,* 5).

The recognition that representations of Jews and Judaism are in some sense central to Christian culture has been accompanied by a renewed interest in the interactions between religious groups, and the open and covert ways they responded to one another. This has involved resituating Judaism's relationship to Christianity, and also recognizing Jewish culture as permeable to outside influence. In *Blood and Belief,* historian David Biale examines how "Jews and Christians engaged in a common discourse around blood, even as they disagreed, often violently, about it."[36] He argues that in considering the blood libel, for instance,

> it is not sufficient to look only at how Christians imagined the Jewish consumption of Christian blood; we must also consider how Jews may have projected their own fears and desires upon the host culture. The Jewish polemical response to the blood libel will tell us a great deal about how a minority protects its identity by sanctifying its own blood rituals. (*Blood and Belief,* 3)[37]

Biale situates his argument within a particular model of culture. He writes that "Jews' ideas about blood developed in creative interaction with their cultural surroundings. As a minority people, the Jews have always defined their culture in a complex process of accommodation with and resistance to the majority cultures among which they lived" (*Blood and Belief,* 7).[38] He thus neatly summarizes the historical picture outlined in a number of recent works by both historians and literary critics who attempt to stage what he calls a "dialogue" between Jewish and Christian cultural artifacts that illuminates the process of cultural influence and exchange. Jonathan

Elukin, David Malkiel, Anthony Bale, and Miri Rubin are just a few scholars who have pursued some of the different threads of this story.[39] The historian Norman Golb extends this argument from the cultural sphere to the realm of lived experience with his work on patterns of Jewish life and settlement in medieval Normandy. Drawing on a combination of archaeological evidence and documents, he argues that Jews were much more broadly dispersed among the Christian population, and had settled in Normandy much earlier, than previous scholars assumed. These Jews lived in small towns as well as cities, surrounded by Christian neighbors, and were "long-established settlers—part of the warp and woof, that is, of the province's social and demographic reality."[40] The picture that emerges is of a Jewish culture at home in a Christian-dominated world—not strangers, but neighbors. This does not imply that Jews and Christians in medieval Normandy lived without conflict, but does require that we reexamine well-worn assumptions about medieval Jewish life among Christians.

These studies also work to uncover the specificity of medieval Jewish cultural experience. Implicitly and explicitly, recent scholars have resisted the transhistorical, "longest hatred" perspective that privileges the broad trajectory of a generic antisemitism and an equally monolithic community of victims over the contingencies and particularities of experience in different periods and locales.[41] David Nirenberg's *Communities of Violence* is often cited as a watershed moment in this conversation. Nirenberg insists on attending to the specific contexts in which violent rhetoric against outgroups is exploited, and asks how the instrumental use of this rhetoric can change with contingent circumstances, even if the symbols and expressions remain stable over time.

> We need no longer insist on continuities of meaning in claims about minorities wherever we find continuities in form, since we can see how the meanings of existing forms are altered by the work that they are asked to do, and by the uses to which they are put. This means that we can be more critical than we have previously been about attempts to link medieval and modern mentalities, medieval ritual murder accusations and modern genocide.[42]

Scholars such as Elliott Horowitz and Christoph Cluse have responded to this call by reexamining specific moments of conflict between Jews and Christians for which accounts from both communities survive in an effort to work backward from local legends to isolate the limited conflicts between individuals or groups that stand behind particular stories.[43] In *Sanc-*

tifying the Name of God: Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories of the First Crusade, Jeremy Cohen tackles questions of local meaning and contingency from a different perspective, emphasizing how Jews who survived the crusader attacks on Jewish communities along the Rhine in 1096 struggled with the aftermath of those events and produced accounts of Jewish martyrdom that reflected survivors' feelings of guilt as well as their grief. Though his work has sometimes met with controversy, he insists on recognizing that the Hebrew accounts of those events are products of a specific cultural moment and are shaped by the felt need to memorialize victims as well as narrate their deaths.[44]

Art historian Marc Michael Epstein takes a polemical position in relation to scholarship in his field, writing that earlier studies analyzed medieval Jewish art primarily in terms of its relationship to earlier Jewish traditions of iconography *or* its allegedly derivative position relative to Christian art.

> These two directions in contemporary research . . . have worked in concert to negate the category of medieval Jewish art. . . . We are forced to imagine these patrons and their artists either as ignorant transcribers of an ancient iconographic tradition, or as slavish imitators of their contemporaries with nothing new, nothing uniquely medieval, and certainly nothing distinctively Jewish to contribute. The phrase "medieval Jewish art" becomes an oxymoron: neither particularly medieval nor particularly Jewish.[45]

Like many of his counterparts in the discipline of history, Epstein seeks to recover the distinctive qualities of medieval Jewish life in Europe, distinguishing this era from a monolithic picture of the Jewish cultural tradition. But he also emphasizes the context of constant interaction between Jews and their Christian neighbors. In their relations with the Christian majority, Epstein argues, medieval Jews were capable of subversively *adapting,* as well as *adopting,* Christian strategies of representation.[46] Epstein's work is thus part of a broad reexamination of medieval Jewish-Christian relations that emphasizes cultural exchange and influence as well as structures of power and victimization.

This far from comprehensive overview of recent work on medieval Jewish-Christian relations highlights the interdependence of historical and literary critical approaches. We might once have assumed that the analysis of textual representations was largely the province of the literary critic, while historical changes and continuities were the province of the historian. But

where medieval Jewish-Christian relations are concerned, this neat distinction between separate spheres is troubled again and again. Literary critics must be attentive to the historical "facts on the ground," while historians must account for the influence of stereotypes, literary traditions, and cultural habits of mind. Both are notably concerned with the realm of culture and the study of mentalities, which encourages continuity and collaboration between fields often perceived to be separated by a methodological gulf. If I have particularly emphasized the continuities, this is in part a response to that perceived divide, and the divisiveness it has sometimes generated between literature specialists trained in English departments, like myself, and colleagues in history.

My work emerges from a broad tradition of cultural criticism and intellectual history that is the province of literary critics as well as historians, but studies of historiography tend to make historians nervous, perhaps particularly when theoretical models are invoked. It is safe to say that historians trust method more than theory. But I hope historians will recognize that this project is just as concerned with method as it is with analyzing the cultural currents that impact historiography. I also see method itself as a form of theory, since methodological guidelines operate as a framework for making sense of evidence, and form another metacritical apparatus for thinking about the work historians do. Close attention to methodological conventions and norms is vital for evaluating recent arguments about the ritual murder libel. My focus on three historians who have made a major impact on recent historiography is revealing in this regard. The works of Gavin Langmir, Israel Yuval, and Ariel Toaff are instructive, not only because of their claims about an explosive medieval legend but also because their works have important ramifications for the wider field of medieval studies. All three offer theories that have the potential to reshape our understanding of medieval Jewish-Christian relations and speak to the framework for historical thinking itself. Two of them in particular, Gavin Langmuir and Israel Yuval, are explicitly engaged in projects that aim to reevaluate a very long history of intergroup conflict. These are high stakes for all scholars interested in Jewish-Christian life in medieval Europe.

Ethics, ideology, and deliberations about evidence and method come together in the juridical discourse that has traditionally framed discussion of the ritual murder accusation. My analysis of recent historiography begins by returning to a pivotal early example of the story in Thomas of Monmouth's *Life and Miracles of William of Norwich.* Thanks to Thomas's pre-

occupation with refuting skeptics in his twelfth-century monastery, his unusually detailed narrative offers a vital perspective from which to observe the push and pull of polemical arguments about guilt and innocence in relation to an early accusation of ritual murder. I resurrect the voices of doubters from the margins of Thomas's account in order to demonstrate how long-standing debates about historical responsibility, standards of evidence, and the evaluation of testimony have been part of the historiography of the ritual murder accusation from its earliest appearance in the high Middle Ages. I also show that the problem of indeterminacy is so fundamental to the charge of ritual murder that even an advocate of Jewish guilt as determined as Thomas of Monmouth was unable to evade it.

The juridical structures of argument and strident claims of guilt visible in medieval accounts have also shaped the terms of debate up to the present, and form the deep history of the cultural discourse about ritual murder. One noteworthy moment in this trajectory is the period just before World War II, when the blood libel took on renewed political significance. During these decades, questions of Jewish guilt and innocence became public debates, and trials for both ritual murder (presumed to be a real crime) and libel suits for false accusations of ritual murder dictated the terms of discussion for a broad audience. I highlight how this legalistic framing of the conversation not only reifies ideological divisions but also operates as a coded conversation about the status of Jews and Judaism in Western culture. Contemporary culture is more explicitly preoccupied with the historical status of the Holocaust and Jewish suffering than with the questions of Christian identity that so preoccupied Thomas of Monmouth. Nevertheless, discussions about the ritual murder accusation have continued to employ juridical distinctions that became fully formulated in the Middle Ages.

Between Thomas of Monmouth's account of a twelfth-century ritual murder accusation and the work of the late twentieth-century historian of antisemitism Gavin Langmuir, there is a cultural as well as historical divide. While part of Langmuir's historiographical task is to rebut the very claims Thomas did so much to canonize, the modern historian nevertheless shares with his medieval counterpart a preoccupation with assigning blame and determining guilt. For Langmuir, this guilt lies with the historical forces of persecution, and his moralization of history is also an explicit project of judgment. In some respects, Langmuir may seem like an improbable choice for such a discussion—because he hails from a background of Christian religious skepticism rather than the Jewish tradition,

it might seem as if his investment in a communal memory of Jewish historical suffering would be minimal. Yet I read Langmuir's work as a culmination of a moralizing narrative that has exceeded the bounds of a specific communal tradition to become part of the common patrimony of the post-Holocaust West. Certainly his work—represented by a mammoth effort of historiographical analysis in *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* and *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*—was preceded by notable exemplars of the "lachrymose" tradition of Jewish history famously criticized by Salo Baron. But Langmuir articulates what is surely the most fully developed version of a historiography of moralization in relation to the ritual murder accusation. His project is a distillation of a scholarly tradition, on the one hand, and a highly specific articulation of its moral stakes, on the other.

In Langmuir's work, there is a sharp division, not only between Jewish victims and their Christian oppressors but between rational readers of history and the "irrational" minds of historical persecutors. The preservation of this moral division is itself an imperative, informed by the scholar's moralizing ethics, and has substantial methodological consequences. Drawing on Judith Butler's recent work in ethical theory, particularly her critique of Emmanuel Levinas in *Giving an Account of Oneself,* I emphasize the pitfalls of such a comforting moralization of history, which preserves the operation of binaristic modes of thinking and insulates us from any sense of complicity with the historical forces of antisemitism. Langmuir's well-intended effort to pinpoint what he calls the irrational cultural forces behind antisemitism (best represented for him by the accusation of ritual murder itself) may ultimately suggest a politics of inversion and revenge.

If Gavin Langmuir is an exemplar of a moralizing imperative in the historiography of the ritual murder libel, Israel Yuval is probably the best-known representative of an ethical turn toward considerations of contingency and the deep mutuality of hostile relations between medieval Christians and Jews.[47] In *Two Nations in Your Womb,* Yuval opens up new questions about the mutually antagonistic relations between religious communities, and how concrete local situations—including misperceptions of actual Jewish practices—might lead to accusations like ritual murder. This ethics of implication emphasizes that perceptions of reality can be shaped by concrete acts that are understood differently between communities. A gesture of defiance on the part of a Jew faced with the demand to convert might be heroic among fellow Jews but could just as easily be viewed as sinister by his Christian neighbors. It in this light that Yuval understands the Jewish self-martyrdoms of 1096, in which many Jews chose

to kill themselves and their families rather than submit to marauding crusaders. Such real acts, Yuval argues, were not the stuff of fantasy but could very well have contributed to the production of a legend that Jews would kill Christian as well as Jewish children if given a chance. Yuval and other historians associated with the turn to contingency and implication (such as Elliott Horowitz) draw attention to medieval Jewish assertiveness, responses to Christian influence, and even anti-Christian hostility. In the process, these scholars contest the old binaries of antisemite and apologist that have long dictated the terms of what one could and could not say about (medieval) Jewish-Christian relations.

Yuval is part of a broader paradigm shift in medieval Jewish studies, and his specific ethical aims are tied to a deep concern with deadlocks in historical relations between communities that can become self-perpetuating dysfunctions. If Langmuir's ethics runs the risk of merely inverting and perpetuating ancient binaries of persecutor and victim, Yuval's retiring ethics of implication takes its own risk—the risk of appearing to take an indefinite position on the question of historical responsibility, or, worse, excusing persecutors for acts of violence. I argue that Yuval is not interested in either excusing persecutors or blaming victims, and that this critique misses something fundamental about the ethical project of his historiography. Reading Yuval in tandem with the philosopher and ethicist Gillian Rose, I point to the ways he refrains from judgment in pursuit of a more broadly defined ethical aim. Yuval's work highlights the necessity of a difficult acknowledgment of our implication even in the systems that constrain and victimize us, an implication that demands a painful responsibility of victims as well as persecutors. His work may be read as an exemplum or midrash with contemporary political implications in his home country of Israel, but it offers cold comfort to those who hope for an easy resolution of entangled intergroup conflicts.

Yuval and Ariel Toaff are sometimes described as intellectual fellow travelers—I have heard more than one scholar say that they are guilty of the same sin, namely, blaming historical victims. However, I resist this characterization, which overlooks the very different ethical stakes of both scholars' arguments. Toaff's controversial 2007 book *Pasque di sangue* (*Bloody Passovers*) presents serious difficulties for scholars in the field and has been roundly criticized in both academic and public arenas such as newspapers and websites. I examine the reception of *Pasque di sangue* as a repetition of the traditional juridical discourse that shadows discussion of the ritual murder accusation. The all-or-nothing structures dictating the

conceptual terms of the conversation reduce historiographical argument to determinations of guilt and innocence that in this case extend to the historian himself. But if Toaff's critics speak in a juridical idiom, they have at least one very good reason for doing so: Toaff himself paradoxically exploits the ambiguities of his source material in a way that ultimately revivifies this juridical language of interpretation.

Focusing on the 1475 case of Simon of Trent, Toaff highlights the complex cultural evidence speaking to Jewish (as well as Christian) superstitions and quasi-medicinal beliefs about blood, and exploits traditional religious symbols associated with sacrifice, redemption, and blood. However, particularly in the first edition of his book, the net effect of such readings appears to be an insinuation of Jewish "fundamentalist" guilt in some limited cases of ritual murder. I argue that Toaff's recent work is motivated by a renewed discourse of moralization that holds what he calls "extremist" nationalist-religious Jews responsible for many of the sufferings of Jews past and present. His work is a historical account held hostage to political goals, and it crosses from the realm of standard historiography (where questions of method, ethics, and ideology are intertwined but held in balanced tension) to a problematic realm of innuendo, suggestion, and ideological reading. It is in these terms that *Pasque di sangue* slips past Yuval's ethics of mutual implication into a realm of structural complicity with the historical forces of antisemitism. While each of the chapters represented here attempts to articulate the deep entanglement of ethical, ideological, and methodological concerns, it is in the Toaff case, where cultural politics meet historical indeterminacy, that such questions represent the greatest difficulties for historiography.

In the Middle

Recent scholars have wrestled with a tradition of public polemic that burdens each new argument about the ritual murder story and exacts its own emotional demands. Earlier I described the ritual murder accusation as a high-friction relay point, and I have been suggesting that the historian is ethically invested in his work, and that this work represents a difficult dialogue between the past he studies and the concerns of his moment. This is one way of understanding Dominick LaCapra's argument that historians are always engaged in a transferential relation with their subject, one they must become aware of in order to work through it. As I have worked on this book, I have been asked many times, in many ways, about my own im-

plication in this topic. Occasionally this question has meant, more or less, are you Jewish? More often my interlocutors wondered where I place myself in relation to this material in intellectual, cultural, and religious terms. To paraphrase LaCapra, What is my own transferential relation to these issues of historical interpretation? My work on this project has emphasized the importance of such questions, and it would be disingenuous of me to evade them.

This came home to me with particular force when my work brought me into contact with a member of the local Pittsburgh Jewish community in 2008 and early 2009. Because of a series of unusual scheduling difficulties, "Miri" and I had arranged to meet on a Sunday. It happened to be Easter Sunday, though neither of us registered the relevance of the date as we made our arrangements. Miri reminded me of the day's significance when we met, and apologized for interrupting "my" holiday. For a moment I was taken aback: my holiday? I shook my head. "No," I said. "It's fine. I'm not a Christian." We had had variations on this conversation before, and I always imagined I saw a look of mild perplexity on her face. Sometimes we lingered over tea and cookies, talking about life in Israel or American politics. I told her that I had explored conversion to Judaism, attending a Conservative movement *minyan* (prayer group quorum) off and on for a few years as a graduate student. I was not a Jew, but I was also certain I was not a Christian.

On this Easter Sunday, Miri said, "In Judaism you could never say you weren't a Jew. Even if you were accepted by another religion, you would still be a Jew." I realized that by this logic I would always in some sense be a Christian. It also occurred to me that we were speaking in terms of two very different systems of evaluation. Christianity, as I understand it, is about embracing and endorsing particular beliefs. To refuse the beliefs is to refuse the religion, if not the community. My experience taught me that Judaism takes the question of heritage much more seriously. Self-identification and observance are important, but refusing to be a Jew is not quite the same thing as refusing to be a Christian. In my case, I had considered my personal beliefs carefully, recognized that they were incompatible with the religion in which I was raised, and refused to participate in the sacrament of confirmation as a Catholic teenager. This decision has not been without consequences or hurt family feelings. But I could see that from Miri's perspective, this did not make my past a settled affair and my future an open book—if anything, the claim that I was not a Christian risked making nonsense of my personal history, perhaps erasing it. On that

day, she shrugged philosophically and said in response to this riddle, "Maybe this is why you have the openness to explore other religions."

As the Jewish tradition implicitly recognizes by tracing Jewish ancestry matrilineally, we never quite forget the religion of our mothers. For my own mother, Catholicism has been a comfort in dark times. Nonbelievers often say such things as a sop to sentimentality, but I am grateful to the clergymen who guided my mother through her civil divorce and encouraged her to accept my interest in Judaism as something good for an unsettled spirit. My relation to Judaism is also complex. I am sentimental about the Jewish tradition. I see its greatest qualities and I downplay aspects of the tradition that do not agree with me, such as the time-honored restrictions on the full participation of women in religious ceremonies. I was able to answer the needs of my conscience by attending an egalitarian *minyan,* in which women participated alongside men, while traditional Hebrew prayers and melodies were preserved. However, I have still not converted. I am not a Christian or a Jew, but a hybrid inhabiting the uneasy space between religions. Like the historians whose work I study, my subject position and attention to cultural currents—including those surrounding religious identity and conversion—will inevitably have personal implications. My views of both Judaism and Christianity are cathected, in LaCapra's terms, in ways that may escape my full awareness.

To take one example, even I am bemused by the apparently serendipitous way my interest in ethical theory has come to focus on the contributions of two women, Judith Butler and Gillian Rose, whose relationships to their own Jewish tradition are marked by ambivalence.[48] They are also critics of Emmanuel Levinas, preeminent philosopher of both Judaism and otherness, and a potent symbol for a post-Holocaust ethics. Though there are many differences between my experience and theirs, it may be that I share with them a certain liminal subject position, as well as an interest in asking what may seem like impertinent questions. In debates about the ritual murder accusation, participants' confessional identities have often been understood as critical to their understanding (or lack of understanding, as the case may be) of the issues at stake. In this context, my position is anomalous. I occupy a place in the middle that is similar to the ethical space I describe as emergent in recent historiography on Jewish-Christian relations. In ethical terms, we always begin in the middle—in the midst of social life, historical processes, and evolving identities. Negotiating this middle space requires generosity and pragmatism. I hope I have managed to offer some measure of both.

CHAPTER 1

Thomas of Monmouth and the Juridical Discourse of Ritual Murder

NEAR THE END of his account of the life and miracles of William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth records a case of blasphemy punished. Thomas tells us that a certain man named Walter, a fellow monk in the Norwich priory, made a habit of disparaging "the holiness and miracles" of little William.[1] Though repeatedly warned to stop mocking the saint, Walter never listened. Finally, after being visited in a dream by William and soundly beaten by the saint for his sin, he awoke in terror and "felt the smart of severe pains all over him," the blows just as real as if he had borne them while awake.[2] The import of this account as "a sort of general warning to all" is clear to Thomas, William's *secretarius:* "It is the height of rashness to attack the saints of God thus boldly with abusive words, since we so plainly see them glorified by many and great miracles by the Lord Himself."[3] These remarks, which appear near the end of William's hagiography, carry an important subtext. In the early to mid-1150s, as Thomas was most likely composing William's *Vita,* Norwich Cathedral was still a new foundation, just over sixty years old, and had no patron saint.[4] This was a problem that would have been remedied if William's cult had been more widely accepted, but by Thomas's own testimony, it appears that the boy was nearly forgotten in Norwich before Thomas's arrival, probably sometime around 1150 (*TDA,* 216). What is more, "Blessed William" is the subject of controversy within the priory, and Thomas's claims for his holiness—that he is "plainly" glorified by God—are not universally accepted by those around him.

Thomas of Monmouth's most enduring claim is that at Easter time in 1144, the Jewish community of Norwich kidnapped a young boy named William, kept him hidden for a short time in one of their houses, and then crucified him in imitation of Christ.[5] William's body was discovered in the woods outside the town, and he was eventually recovered and buried in the monks' cemetery next to the cathedral, but only after a sequence of hurried burials and reburials in the unconsecrated ground of Thorpe Wood, his original resting place. The monk Thomas arrived at the priory a few years after the boy's death, conducted his own investigation, and managed to have William moved into the monks' cemetery, then the chapter house, and later the cathedral itself, calling him a martyr for Christ. As author of William's *Vita,* Thomas presents his case for William's sanctity as the logical outcome of careful inquiry, but it is built upon a foundation of circumstantial evidence that was not lost on his contemporaries. The blasphemer Walter appears in the seventh and final book recording William's life and miracles, but he is only one of a number of skeptics who are featured in the course of Thomas's narrative, and their motivating resistance directly influences the grounds of his claims about the dead boy and shapes the course of his work. In his account of the skeptic Walter's conversion, Thomas highlights the nature of the other monk's transgressions against the saint: he mocked William's holiness and miracles. William's *sanctitas* and *miraculi* are the very topics Thomas says are disputed by his antagonists within the priory, the same qualities that are supposed to confirm the child's status as a martyr. In addition to expressing such doubts, Thomas points out a third problem with his opponents—"their habit of corrupting others."[6]

The problem of doubt is so fundamental to the *Vita* that Thomas's narrative can be read as a contest between the intellectual skepticism of Christian monks and what Thomas describes as "simplicity," and this contest is at least as important, from Thomas's point of view, as the more obvious competition in the text between Jewish unbelief and Christian faith.[7] In Book I, the forces of skepticism are represented by the Jews of Norwich who, Thomas alleges, kill William in mockery of the Christian faith. But from Book II onward, the rhetoric of skepticism within the *Vita* is produced by Christian reason and is represented as the questioning of Christian monks. Thomas's efforts to persuade and convince, his rhetoric, are efforts of highly evolved stylization, developed in response to sophisticated objections among his contemporaries that can be partially reconstructed—if only partially—from his arguments against them. There is very little we can say we know about the circumstances Thomas describes in twelfth-

century Norwich based on his account alone, but we can reconstruct what a reasoned twelfth-century critique of the ritual murder accusation might have looked like in contemporary terms. Paradoxically, in the absence of a secure ground of reference for the events depicted in Thomas's work, his partisan rhetoric may constitute the text's only stable location of meaning. I am less interested in the fact of rhetorical manipulation (something previous analyses have taken for granted anyway) than the methods used to anchor such manipulations, methods that reveal as much as they erase about the arguments exchanged between Thomas and his contemporary critics. Thomas recasts opposition as blasphemy, links doubting Christians with unbelieving Jews, and encourages us to forget any distance between the paired terms. He also establishes a fundamental precedent for discussions about the ritual murder accusation that has persisted down to the present. Thomas articulates the terms of what I call the juridical discourse surrounding the charge of ritual murder, a discourse that insists on adjudicating claims of guilt and innocence, crime and libel. In Thomas's text, we see this rhetoric taking shape from an unaccustomed perspective, since his greatest struggle is with the skepticism of his fellow Christian monks.

Juridical Discourse and the Struggle with Doubt

Previous analyses of William's *Vita* have largely ignored Thomas's tactical rhetorical effects in their search for the origins of the ritual murder accusation in Europe.[8] In their drive to answer this question, scholars do not often pause to consider that Thomas's fictional "embellishments" may extend beyond accusing the Norwich Jews of William's murder to his representations of certain figures within the priory or accounts of his own activities.[9] Gavin Langmuir criticizes the naïveté of analyses that once sought to use Thomas's account to determine "what really happened" in Norwich circa 1144. Yet in many respects, he and other scholars make use of the narrative in much the same way, extrapolating from it what Thomas "really did" in his work of investigation and reporting.[10] While the narrative probably does reflect critical aspects of the investigation from Thomas's point of view, and Langmuir does an admirable job of analyzing the occulted rhetoric of Thomas's work, it remains true that scholars have been insufficiently attentive to the rhetorical character of the work itself. In our rush to examine his anti-Jewish means, modern readers often forget to attend to Thomas's limited, and even mundane, ends. And we have followed Thomas in consistently undervaluing the argumentative force of his critics

in pursuit of Thomas himself—his motives, his influences, his successes or failures. It is tempting to identify a kind of critical amnesia at work in such a consistent devaluation—an amnesia that suggests our focus on the origins of antisemitism may have encouraged us to overlook potential contexts of resistance. By calling attention to what Thomas has covered over, I pick up the threads of a counternarrative just visible in the rhetorical warp and weft of his text. Within this forgotten counternarrative, the seeds of a modern dialogue between the forces of anti-Jewish persecution and resistance to anti-Jewish myths are already visible.

Thomas works hard to shore up a case that relies on circumstantial evidence. The monks who wash William's body prior to its reburial in the priory cemetery rightly interpret the ambiguous signs before them, according to Thomas: "They perceived certain and manifest indications of martyrdom in him."[11] *Certa et manifesta* is a conceptual pairing that appears over and over again in Thomas's narrative—he emphasizes the certainty of his knowledge repeatedly, and in diverse ways. He speaks of "most certain and manifest signs," which often follow in the wake of his work of "enquiring very diligently" into events.[12] Each of his witnesses, he claims, reports what he or she knows to be true—*pro certo cognoverat* (I.30)—so that Thomas can claim he reports such accounts only after "hearing it from their lips and knowing it to be certainly true" himself.[13] Like Thomas, his witnesses investigate, ask questions, and draw conclusions in the hope of obtaining certain knowledge, of knowing about past events *pro certo.* And a few of these witnesses, Thomas insists, know of events through the evidence of their own eyes. Thomas's text enacts a few dramas of seeing and then being cut off from sight at the very threshold of certainty. This motif takes on striking theatricality when Thomas recounts, years later, what a Christian servant inside the Jew's house is alleged to have seen.

> Through the chink of the door [she] managed to see the boy fastened to a post. She could not see it with both eyes, but she did manage to see it with one. And when she had seen it, with horror at the sight she shut that one eye and they [the Jews] shut the door.[14]

Such dramatic moments of eyewitnessing stop just short of the actual sight of William's *passio,* but Thomas musters all of his rhetorical skill to bring his narrative as close to certainty as possible using circumstantial evidence.

Thomas's emphasis on what is certain and manifest presents a deliberate contrast with the uncertainty and confusion of his opponents in the text, both Jewish and Christian. He reports several conversations among

the Norwich Jews—none of which he claims to have witnessed, but probably still accounted as "true" parts of his narrative, in keeping with the common medieval practice of assigning imagined speeches to historical figures on the basis of what seemed "suitable" to their character type.[15] It is a form of licit (though limited) stylization that reveals a great deal regarding Thomas's beliefs about Jews. Following William's death, Thomas asserts, the Norwich Jews met to decide what to do with his body and "were in doubt and quite uncertain what they should do."[16] Their momentary confusion as they are left "in doubt" echoes Thomas's remarks about those Christians who are doubtful of his story, while the language he invokes here—*nihil . . . pro certo*—reverses his own formula for his certain knowledge of events and witnesses. Thomas claims that the Jews present at the meeting discuss various options for the body's disposal, but since nothing can be decided, further discussion is put off until the next day. At that time, still "quite undecided what they should do,"[17] the Jews appeal to one of their *auctoritates,* who gives an imagined speech highlighting their anxiety, timidity, and the uncertainty of their living situation. This drama of fear, uncertainty, and the appeal to an authority is acted out several times, as when the Jews of Norwich are called before the ecclesiastical synod at which they have been accused of William's murder and appeal to the sheriff for protection (I.47–48).

Everyone associated with the Jews in Thomas's narrative is ruled by uncertainty. The identity of the messenger sent to entice William away from his home is ambiguous: Thomas tells us, "I am not sure whether he was a Christian or a Jew."[18] The Christian servant who tells Thomas that she worked in the house where William was killed is morally unmoored by the events she claims to have witnessed, "hesitating whether she should make the disclosure or keep silence, [until] at last her fear of revealing the matter prevailed"—prevailed, that is, until Thomas persuaded her to talk to him much later.[19] Thomas also portrays his opponents within the priory as being uncertain, and their confusion parallels that of the Jewish unbelievers in his story. The fruits of reliance on human reason instead of the "simplicity" Thomas advocates are disorientation, uncertain knowledge, and a multiplicity of conflicting voices. Thomas even dramatizes the conversion of his alleged informant, the Jew from Cambridge called Theobald, in these terms. Thomas says that Theobald was quick to recognize the significance of William's miracles; becoming afraid, just as his Jewish confreres do in other parts of the narrative, Theobald, simply by consulting his conscience, is led to certain knowledge of Christianity and converts

(II.94). Thomas's claim here is a powerful rhetorical blow against his Christian skeptics, since he suggests that a Jew can perceive the truth of William's merits simply by consulting his conscience, whereas Thomas's coreligionists are unable to do the same.

In his characterizations of both Jews and skeptical Christians, Thomas frequently returns to the idea of *malevolentia*—spite, ill will.[20] His Christian adversaries are not motivated by a desire for the truth or certain knowledge, he suggests, but are guilty of a willful ingratitude that clouds their perception: "Thankless for heaven's gifts, they try, so far as they can or dare, under the garb of religion to make little or nothing of divine mysteries, or, at least, to turn them to ridicule."[21] Though his fellow monks are dedicated to God, Thomas implies that under the sharp knives of their intellects, always "ready and eager to find fault," the holy is annulled (*adnullare*), diminished (*imminuere*), or perverted (*depravare*).[22] Instead of creating faithful knowledge, they undermine what others believe they already know. When Thomas portrays his own arguments as "spiritual claims of reasoning,"[23] he is implicitly criticizing his Christian critics' reliance on human reason, which was closely identified with the emerging scholastic practices of the contemporary schools. His opponents are unable to "see" the truths of the faith properly because they are incapable of using "the reason of faith." This is William of St. Thierry's polemical formulation for a properly Christianized use of human reason.[24] While his opponents are "hard of heart and slow to believe," and insult William's miracles, Thomas views his own claims from a lofty position of certainty: "As for us, in very truth, we reverence as a saint him whom in deed we *know* to be a saint."[25] It is from this secure height that Thomas claims he is ministering to those poor souls who fluctuate in uncertainty.

Not only are his opponents uncertain of the truth and changeable in their opinions; they cannot even agree on an alternative version of events, according to Thomas. He moves from the arguments of the first (*primis*) group of doubters, on to others (*alios*), who make their own arguments, to a third class (*terciis;* II.87–88). Rhetorically, he distinguishes between what may be parts of the same argument in this way, responding to the remarks of those who think a pauper boy unlikely to be a saint, answering those who object that there is no evidence William exhibited special virtue during his life, and finally making a long and complex series of counterarguments in response to those "who are uncertain by whom and why [William] was made an end of."[26] All of these objections are complementary, and speak to William's disputed status as a martyr for Christ. But by

presenting them in this way, moving from the arguments of some, to others, and then on to still "others," Thomas multiplies his opponents and implies they are divided, a set of cacophonous voices barking at him from the margins of the text, and "doing all they can to stop the spread of [William's] renown and persecute him by making light of him."[27] He attempts to shift the burden of proof from himself, as advocate of the would-be saint, to those who doubt William's sanctity, a neat trick in a period when the determination of sanctity is becoming increasingly vested in the upper echelons of the church hierarchy.

In characterizing his opponents this way, Thomas surreptitiously enters into contemporary intellectual debates about the balance between reason and faith in a proper understanding of the world. He suggests that his detractors, like contemporary products of the Paris schools, have reversed the proper order of things by subordinating faith to reason and demanding rational proofs for matters that are the proper province of faith. One of the ironies of Thomas's text is that even as he appears to ally himself with contemporary critics of scholasticism, he highlights some of the dangers of innovation such men feared. Thomas invokes the simplicity of faithful belief in the service of a novelty—his narrative of ritual murder—unsupported by Christian tradition.[28] Thomas acknowledges the unprecedented character of his narrative, asserting that "some indulgence ought to be allowed for this novel attempt," and even suggests that this novelty may have entertainment value for his readers, since he hopes "that I may tempt those who wish for something new to read."[29] Thomas knows very well that the claim of novelty is a potentially damning characterization in ordinary medieval discourse, though he seems to feel that his spiritual purpose overrides such considerations.[30] He adduces the importance of faith in constituting Christian ways of knowing, but his account is not sanctioned by Christian authority. Of course it must be said that Thomas never accuses his opponents of being imprisoned by scholastic reason. He addresses a critic as a detractor ("obtrectator"; I.5), says that his foes are envious and full of malice, and represents their criticisms as unworthy. And yet the objections he attributes to his opponents can be read, I suggest, as the skeptical arguments of medieval intellectuals.[31]

Nevertheless, it is important to avoid casting this conflict in black and white, as a case of progressive intellectuals pitted against a religious reactionary. Thomas's opponents are skeptical of his account, but not because they doubt the occurrence of miracles or the suspect status of unbelievers. Instead, they appear to doubt William's status as a martyr on specific

grounds and openly question Thomas's reliability as reporter of events. While we cannot assume that Thomas represents his critics fairly, it is likely that he brings forward most of their objections in his efforts to answer them. In Book II, he provides a roll call of arguments against William's sanctity and accusations against himself, accusations he proceeds to refute. The first of these critiques is that "It is very presumptuous to maintain so confidently that which the church universal does not accept and to account that holy which is not holy," a clear objection to William's status as a saint or martyr.[32] Thomas also defends his claims against accusations of novelty when he says, "Now let no one withhold his attention from these things that I assert, because they are matters not usual in his own time."[33]

Thomas speaks repeatedly of those who "mocked at the miracles when they were made public, and said that they were fictitious," and may reveal more than he intends when he says, "let no man think I am interpolating or passing off for true that which is untrue; let no man call me an inventor of trifles or falsehoods."[34] Thomas says that some of his critics even "pretend that [William's supporters] are mad," while another objection is that "we are entirely uncertain and doubtful by whom and why, and how he was killed . . . [whether] in punishment by Jews or anyone else."[35] This diversity of complaints covers the whole spectrum of Thomas's claims, from the manner of William's death to the character of Thomas himself. While it is impossible to say precisely how this rhetoric of doubt was justified since Thomas does not represent these claims in any great detail, we can reconstruct from these remarks some basis for a set of coherent objections to the ritual murder accusation in twelfth-century terms.

This reconstruction must begin by bringing to notice what Thomas encourages us to forget. He engages in a systematic redefinition of key terms like *martyr* and *cause* over the course of his debates with critics, even as he elides or erases the significance of these changes. When Thomas's opponents accuse him of "accounting that holy which is not holy" (II.59), their criticism appears to consist of two parts: William is not venerated by the church, and (as both a consequence and a complement of this claim) his sanctity is not certain but is in dispute. On both counts, Thomas subtly reworks the terms of the debate. On the first count, the accusation that, because William's cult is not more generally known, Thomas is "presumptuous" to call him a saint, he is quick to stage the conflict as a matter of the local versus the global.

> And to say the truth, saving only the glorious Virgin mother of God and John the Baptist and the Apostles, of few of the saints can it be said that the knowledge of them is spread over all the earth whereon the religion of the Christian name prevails.[36]

He goes on to invoke the names of other prominent English saints to reinforce his claim, asking, "Is it the fact that the famous name of the most blessed King and Martyr Eadmund or of the glorious Confessor Cuthbert, renowned in every part of England, is equally well known among the people of Greece or Palestine?"[37] Thomas suggests that the criticism is a slight against a local English saint whose renown, like that of most northern saints, has simply not traveled throughout the Christian world.[38]

We should question the adequacy of this rebuttal. The majority of regional saints achieve notoriety because they have a popular following that emerges (or, perhaps less kindly, *appears* to emerge) spontaneously.[39] At the very least, clerical encouragement of a cult usually develops alongside some degree of popular devotion. When Thomas's contemporaries complain that he is wrong "to account that holy which is not holy," they may have been drawing attention to the fact that he is reverse-engineering a cult for William, first by having his remains translated to a more public place, then by seeking out miraculous accounts from those around him. Thomas himself acknowledges the general lack of popular interest in William's case when he says, "Assuredly by this miracle the memory of the blessed martyr William revived, for it had gradually been waning, yea in the hearts of almost all it had almost entirely died out."[40] And his contemporaries cannot have failed to notice that William's first miracles are reported among the priory's extended *familia*—monks and their relations, priory servants, and benefactors—in other words, the people who would be most easily influenced by Thomas's stories.

The second and more fundamental objection regarding William's status is the matter of his "martyrdom," which Thomas tries to establish by arguing that William is one of those who have suffered on behalf of the Christian faith. As both Thomas and his critics know, the question of William's sanctity rises and falls on his status as a martyr for Christ, and Thomas's opponents remind him more than once, "it is not the pain but the cause that makes the martyr."[41] William, they maintain, displayed no special sanctity during his life, when he was only "a poor neglected little fellow."[42] Furthermore, "who could confidently believe that this lad courted death for Christ's sake, or bore it patiently for Christ's sake when it was inflicted

upon him?"[43] In advancing this objection, they point to an obvious weakness of Thomas's account, in which William appears to suffer all manner of indignities without any sign of resistance or presentiment. A logical literary model for Thomas's account would be the narratives of early Christian martyrs so popular in Anglo-Saxon England, many of which were being rewritten in the twelfth century, around the same time Thomas produced his text. In these narratives, the unbelieving persecutor and his Christian victim often engage in a religious debate over the martyr's body, while the martyr resists in both body and spirit.[44] In William's *Vita,* there are no debates in which the saint taunts, ridicules, or converts his tormentors.[45] Thomas sidesteps this convention entirely—in fact his victim is even incapable of speaking because Thomas claims that a "teseillun" ("teazle"; I.20) is used to gag him during his sufferings. Thomas's opponents may have been dissatisfied with this missing element of the martyrological story—or rather the absence of any sign of William's knowing acceptance of his own sacrifice. Certainly their remarks, as reported by Thomas, point to the importance they placed on the victim's intentionality in determining the martyr's status—that he "courted death" and "bore it patiently for Christ's sake." Thomas's skeptical opponents understand the "cause" (*causa*) of martyrdom as the martyr's religious cause, his spiritual vocation: the martyr must die *for* something in order for his death to exhibit his virtues.

In Thomas's account, William appears to suffer without deliberate intentionality at all, and Thomas's constant references to his "simplicity" and "innocence" in fact encourage the view that he may be incapable of achieving the martyr's knowing intentionality. Thomas responds to this obvious difficulty by redefining the term *martyr*—he formulates a different definition of the term both literally and figuratively, by redefining the requirements for martyrdom and by making an argument by analogy for the "truth" of William's death as an *imitatio Christi.* In addition, he consciously situates William's story within a particular genre, aligning it with the traditions of saintly *inventio,* about the finding or discovery of a saint's remains.[46] But in the course of defending himself against doubters in his narrative, Thomas inadvertently signals what most disturbs him about the case, and it has less to do with William's status as a martyr than the apparent injustice of an untimely death. Relinquishing for a single key moment his claim that Jews killed the boy in an act of theologically motivated spite, Thomas tells us that "by the certain marks of his wounds, *whoever may have inflicted them,* he is proved as it were by sure arguments to have in-

deed been slain."[47] He also remarks, "Let the matter *have happened as it may,* we hold it for certain that after being handled in the cruellest manner he was slain at last."[48]

Thomas needs the Jews to play the role of the bad pagans in this martyrological narrative, but even without them, he suggests, the cruelty and injustice of this death render it a kind of special martyrdom. These slips of rhetoric, in which Thomas implies that William's death is singular regardless of *how* it happened, suggest that the death itself carries a transcendental value for him. André Vauchez reviews a number of medieval cults inspired by the death of a person under tragic circumstances, including a woman killed by her husband, travelers murdered far from home, and even a dog who faithfully served his master.[49] He includes William as one of these individuals, a case like the others in which "pity provokes piety" (Vauchez, *Sainthood,* 151). Vauchez goes on to remark, "The large number of popular 'martyrs' we encounter in the Middle Ages suggests that the word encompassed very different realities," and proposes that the clergy may occasionally have borrowed religious language to dress up a narrative whose specific Christian content "seemed to them to be dubious" (*Sainthood,* 152). Of course in William's case, there is no popular following whose accounts must be revised—it is Thomas himself who structures the narrative and engenders wider interest in the cult at a time when it had been all but forgotten.

But in order for his narrative to withstand the scrutiny of his peers, Thomas understands that he must introduce suitable Christian content to his story and not rely on the pity it inspires alone. By using the word *causa* in a subtly different way than his opponents, Thomas recasts his argument as an answer to theirs. He tells us, "Assuredly we have seen the marks of the sufferings on the holy William's body, but it is plain that the cause of those sufferings was Christ, in scorn of whom he was condemned and slain."[50] The "cause" of William's death was Christ because his death was a reenactment of the original model, according to Thomas. The "cause" here is a literal one, and has almost nothing to do with William's active adoption of the "cause" of Christ, the criterion put forward for martyrdom by Thomas's opponents. Thomas's argument is largely implicit: if Christ died having received certain wounds, and one of his believers received these wounds also, then that believer must be holy, not precisely as Christ was, but in a similar manner.[51] From Thomas's point of view, this argument trumps his opponents' discourse of doubt because of its symbolic power. William's suffering, its powerful clustering of signs as an imitation crucifixion, signals to Thomas not only the reality of an authentic martyr-

dom but the highest or ultimate "cause" of his religious worldview.[52] The sense of Thomas's deliberate deployment of this meaning of *causa* is reinforced by his use of the word elsewhere in the narrative, where *causa* appears in its primary sense of advocacy.[53] Instead of the intentionality of the martyr himself, Thomas emphasizes the intentionality of his persecutors, who allegedly reenact a crucial event from Christian history. Indeed, Thomas suggests that this work of reenactment is their "cause," taken up out of a desire for revenge: he claims that Jews must scorn Christ in this way "so they might avenge their sufferings on him; inasmuch as it was because of Christ's death that they had been shut out of their own country."[54]

It is clear to Thomas (if not to everyone else) that the only group capable of redeploying the signs of crucifixion in this way are Jews, irrevocably separated from the Christian community and yet implicated in its foundation. Thomas imagines one of the accused speaking to other Jews following William's death: "It will not seem probable that Christians would have wished to do this kind of thing to a Christian, or Jews to do it to a Jew."[55] With remarks like these, Thomas anticipates much later historiography of Jewish-Christian relations by pointing to the divided character of the two communities, who may share physical spaces but are understood to act and think on behalf of entirely different causes. The suggestion that these two communities are at ideological war with one another points to what Thomas sees as the allegorical aptness of his theory: the Jews of Norwich are supposed to persecute William as a kind of literal reenactment, making him a *memento* of another crucifixion they also regard as the death of one who was simply a man. By refiguring William's death as a martyrdom, Thomas hopes to show a new triumph of Christian understanding over alleged Jewish literalism that parallels the way the two communities interpret the Crucifixion: the Jews of Norwich supposedly kill a boy, but Thomas resurrects a saint, someone more than human, from his remains, just as the Jews believe Christ died a man, while Christians proclaim that he is the son of God.

Medieval Politics of Knowledge

Like many later writers who take up the historical accusation of ritual murder, Thomas understands his debate with critics as a struggle to be won on evidentiary grounds. In his use of legalistic language, Thomas also inaugurates what has become a familiar juridical discourse surrounding the ritual murder accusation, in which responsibility—framed as guilt—becomes

the subject of debate. Saintly *inventiones* and catalogs of miracles are supposed to be true relations about the past, and Thomas signals his commitment to the truth-telling function of his narrative at every turn. He has followed all of the evidentiary procedures of the period self-consciously, and his text resounds with the signs of his investigations, moving beyond the commonly accepted phrases about "men who were to be believed," to the insistent refrain, "All which I, Thomas, a monk of Norwich, after hearing it from their lips and knowing it to be certainly true, have been careful to hand down in writing."[56] At one point he remarks of his method that he did not record some of the many miracles performed at William's tomb because "we were not able to arrive at any certainty about the facts. Those, however, we resolved to insert in the present book which we were fully assured of, either by what we saw or what we heard."[57] This rhetorical ploy is not unique to Thomas, and signals both the fullness of the saint's miracles and his own discrimination and discernment in reporting them. Most important, Thomas highlights his reliance on eyewitness testimony to substantiate his claims, always his own or someone else's who communicates directly to him. He is seldom more than a few degress removed from the miraculous events he reports. From Thomas's perspective, the evidence is transparent, and doubt is unreasonable. The signs of holiness were shown by miracles, these miracles were witnessed by many, they were made public, and they were written down.

In both history and hagiography, the reliability of witnesses, and the extent to which their testimonies could be trusted, in either the mundane or the sacred realms, was an important topic of medieval concern.[58] Differentiating the miraculous from the wondrous, *miraculi* from *mirabilia,* was an important epistemological issue with spiritual ramifications, and often this came down to the issue of reliable testimony. Caroline Walker Bynum has suggested that between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, there was increasing scope for naturalistic explanations for unusual phenomena, but acknowledges, following Vauchez, that

> there was not in fact a sharp enough sense of what the regularities of nature were to allow for testing individual miracles as *contra* or *supra* the ordinary course of things. Hence the authenticating of saints tended to fall back on testing the character—the veracity and dependability—of witnesses.[59]

Medieval historians were concerned with evaluating the truth of miraculous reports, and both Nancy Partner and Monika Otter draw attention to the

efforts of certain twelfth-century English historians (notably William of Newburgh) to analyze such accounts on the basis of available testimony.[60] Partner summarizes this state of affairs when she writes that "in the twelfth century the evaluation of testimony rather than laws of probability was central to the problem of authenticating prodigies" (Partner, 116–17).

Medieval people also understood that it would be possible for a witness to report something sincerely without always being correct. This is one reason why a witness's credibility was so often emphasized. But this consideration only makes Thomas's reports of his critics' remarks all the more damning: he is not just accused of "getting it wrong" but of deliberately "interpolating or passing off for true that which is untrue," of being "an inventor of trifles or falsehoods" (II.74). And while Thomas's efforts to substantiate his claims with tropes of eyewitnessing and careful procedure are fairly common methods of authentication, Monika Otter is one of a long line of critics to suggest that Thomas "is virtually obsessed with clues and corroborating detail" (41)—in other words, he has the look of someone who is protesting too much. I have already mentioned the novelty of this case and suggested that Thomas's account of William's "martyrdom" was out of keeping with the kind of narrative expected for a martyr during this period. It is also possible that Thomas's account, because it is modern, is being held to a higher standard of evidence and testimony by his peers. This idea goes hand in hand with the novelty of the narrative: there is no sense of tradition here to reinforce the status of Thomas's claims.

In addition to his elaborate evidentiary apparatus, Thomas attempts to fall back on one of the few other "authorities" available to him, the authority of common report. Thomas suggests at several points that "everybody knows" about the ritual murder accusation already, or, if they are unaware of the specifics, they already "know" that Jews are capable of doing something very much like it.[61] By suggesting that such activities are an open secret, Thomas tries to play down the novelty of his own narrative.[62] Of course "testimony" of this kind is not considered as reliable as eyewitness testimony from credible individuals, something Thomas acknowledges with his innuendoes about the behavior of William's mother when she learns of his death.

> And so, assuming everything to be certain which she suspected and asserting it to be a fact, as though it had actually been seen—she went through the streets and open places and, carried along by her motherly distress, she kept calling upon everybody with dreadful screams.[63]

Thomas appears to be insensible to the similarities between this behavior and his own, but it may also be true that he is trying to distinguish his "diligent" investigations from the simple credence of individuals like William's mother or the other citizens of Norwich who repeat common knowledge to one another. Thomas argues that "everybody knows" about ritual murder already, yet it is difficult to evaluate the truth-value of a claim whose rhetorical function in his narrative is so pronounced. The fact that William's cult never became very popular seems to militate against the idea that everyone knew about the accusation—and believed it—before Thomas arrived. What is insidious about Thomas's account, of course, is the effect to which it contributes. Thomas is accused of manufacturing fictions, but he contributes to a process of canonization, in which novel claims gain authority with repetition—tellings and retellings eventually create new cults, and periodic outbreaks of violence.

Medieval critics' doubts about Thomas's credibility as a reporter of events reinforce modern commentators' basic agreement that he is an unreliable narrator. Benedicta Ward calls Thomas "a sly and secret manipulator of events" (69), while Langmuir remarks that "The *Life* tells us what he wanted to believe happened, but not necessarily what really did happen" (*TDA,* 218). Many a historian would dismiss these remarks as modern psychologizing, but they are assessments drawn from the rhetoric of Thomas's text, a rhetoric that reveals more than it means to and implicates its author in a web of contemporary controversy that hardly paints him in a positive light. It seems likely that Thomas also pushed his rhetoric too far by contemporary standards. His peers would have had a subtle sense of how to evaluate "proper" embellishments from improper, appropriate innovation on a textual model from inappropriate *fabula.* This finely tuned sense of discrimination is not something easily recovered now. We understand true and untrue in definitive terms, and we understand the canons of relativism, but the complex negotiations, reciprocal confirmations, and overlap of genres involved in advancing medieval truth claims are another animal altogether. One of the things Thomas reveals is that his critics among the Norwich monks broadly agreed with modern assessments of his unreliability, although their reasons for doing so were different from ours.

It is easy to forget that only Books I and II of the *Vita* focus on Thomas's argument for William's sanctity, while Books III through VII are premised on a kind of forgetting of the originary crime, allowing it to recede into the background as miraculous cures for toothaches and fluxes, paralyzed limbs and painful swellings come to the fore. This is where

Thomas records the miracles William is supposed to have performed, and this is the project of establishment and consolidation he sought to complete with his narrative—Books I and II are the toll, the tax he had to pay to his critics in order to move on to these miraculous accounts. In the end, Thomas merely requires the Jews, as former martyrologists needed bad pagans, in order to do his work. For Thomas, the real meaning of William's death lies in his own mundane accounts of the miraculous, and how these reassert the coherence of his community and his place in that community.[64] In their drive to locate some glimmer of insight into historical events beneath Thomas's rhetoric, scholars have forgotten his critics and his modest aims as William's advocate. An unpleasant truth obscured by this act of forgetting is the possibility that beneath the rhetoric may lie only more rhetoric, with little secure ground of historical reference to offer outside the bounds of Thomas's confidence in his version of events. He reminds us of his own role in the text by his constant, obtrusive presence, and instead of composing a narrative that allows us to forget his work of persuasion, he announces his partisanship through his defensive tone. But if we attend to that rhetoric carefully, we can just hear, at the very margin of our historical perception, the contrary voices of Thomas's twelfth-century critics. It is at this margin between memory and erasure that we can also detect the beginnings of what has become a perennial feature of the discourse surrounding ritual murder, namely, its juridical character.

Juridical Judgments: Anatomy of a Discourse

Thomas's rhetoric of legalistic struggle, used to verify what he sees as the self-evident question of Jewish guilt in the Norwich case, is a prominent feature of discussion of the ritual murder accusation that persists up to the present, though this juridical discourse arguably reached its peak in public debates about the ritual murder libel before World War II. In the traditional framework of the discourse, one must choose: either the accusation is false, and Jews have been unjustly persecuted, or it contains some element of truth, however marginal, and the question of responsibility must be reimagined, or transformed. The stakes of this argument have always been ethically significant. As one early modern writer put it, "Either the Jews are slaughtering Christian children most cruelly, or the Christians are slaughtering innocent Jews most shamefully, which a Christian . . . should not do."[65] What is more, many commentators and interpreters, from Thomas of Monmouth down to the present, believed that the result of

their inquiry would be a definitive answer, one that would determine once and for all not only the question of guilt in a particular case but the status of the accusation itself—as truth or fantasy, crime or libel. In the terms of the juridical discourse, it almost goes without saying that the implications of a guilty verdict are imagined in collective terms. Furthermore, as I will argue below, when it comes to arguments about historical ritual murder accusations, this dangerous question of the "reality" behind the legend has become superimposed on questions of historical responsibility. To take a position on "what actually happened" is at the same time to take an ethical position on the question of historical blame, the assignment of responsibility, and the ultimate meaning of such events. This close association between the status of the blood accusation in historical reality and determinations about historical guilt has meant that invoking one necessarily means invoking the other. Traditionally, the claim that there is some "reality" to the legend, however tenuous, has been taken to imply a de facto assumption of generalized Jewish guilt.

For a variety of reasons, contemporary scholarship has deliberately moved away from wrangling over the question of what "reality" might lie behind a particular accusation of ritual murder. First, the blood accusation has been debunked numerous times—in fact this is a perennial feature of discussion, in keeping with the juridical framework itself. Second, arguments that sought to exonerate historical Jews inevitably appeared to suggest that there might be some reality to the accusation they were refuting. Finally, open debates with marginal antisemitic advocates of the ritual murder accusation appeared unseemly (to say the least) in the wake of the Holocaust. But one thread of my argument in this book is that even when modern scholars have tried to frame their analyses in terms other than the juridical, they have still struggled with this shadow discourse and the structures it employs. Often this takes place at a deeper level than that of simple riposte; as we will see, the historian of antisemitism Gavin Langmuir simply rules such debates about the accusation's "reality" taboo and their implications dangerous, while Israel Yuval does not deign to acknowledge them explicitly. Others, like Ronnie Po-chia Hsia and Helmut Smith, have subtly pushed aside such uncomfortable questions in order to emphasize how the ritual murder accusation functions according to a social script, with prescribed roles, expected styles of evidence, and predictable conclusions.[66] Yet the traditional context of debate lingers, and where it is operative, the juridical discourse typically avoids discussion of the problem of indeterminacy that perpetuates debate about the libel. If

medieval accusations are short on evidence in general, modern accusations of ritual murder are no less lacking when it comes to unbiased or disinterested testimony. The constant interference between evidence, bias, and interpretation is a key characteristic of the ritual murder accusation, and this curious suspension is one aspect of its status as a limit case, though it is often discussed in terms that imply a final answer is not only desirable, but imminent.

The modern juridical discourse about the blood libel divides along a stark continuum of guilt and innocence that is absolute, collective, and usually decided in advance. If, in Thomas of Monmouth's text, we must work to reconstruct the claims of those skeptics who doubted his account, in a modern context, it is the insidious antisemitic claim of guilt that lurks in the subtext of mainstream historiographical studies. Henri Desportes's 1889 book, *Mystère du Sang Chez les Juifs de Tous les Temps,* offers a paradigmatic example of the juridical discourse at work on the side of an overt and explicit antisemitism. "This work establishes and develops a serious accusation against modern Jews," Desportes writes, introducing the legalistic language of the charge.[67] This juridical orientation only becomes more explicit as the work proceeds.

> We sustain and will prove that from the dispersion of the Jewish people until now, in every century and *quite recently* in our own, in nearly every country of the East and West, the Jews have been found guilty more than once of having murdered Christian children at the time of their Passover celebrations; these murders are committed in hatred of Christ and his believers; they have not been the deeds of isolated men blinded by superstition, but they are national and lawful crimes, observed and practiced by all the Jewish people, at any time when it seems possible to commit them without risk.[68]

The charge is specific, and its claim is collective, transhistorical, and encompassing. The terms recall those of Thomas of Monmouth himself. According to this logic, even one guilty verdict suggests some truth to every charge. The traditional quality of this rhetoric, and its stability over time, are evident in the more or less direct continuity between Desportes's language and that visible in the later Nazi publication *Der Stürmer.*

> The suspicion under which the Jews are held is murder. They are charged with enticing Gentile children and Gentile adults, butchering them and draining their blood. They are charged with mixing this blood into their masses [*sic*] (unleaven [*sic*] bread) and using it to prac-

> tice superstitious magic. They are charged with torturing their victims, especially the children; and during this torture they shout threats, curses, and cast spells against the Gentiles. This systematic murder has a special name. It is called *Ritual Murder.*[69]

The claim of ritual murder functions to support a whole congeries of other accusations against Jews—of clubbish group loyalty, superstition, hostility to Christians, and deceptive conspiracies. The legalistic language—being "charged" and "held under suspicion," the accusation that must be "clearly proved"—is language that would fit seamlessly into Thomas of Monmouth's text. Barnet Hartston remarks on the presumption of guilt understood to lie behind such rhetoric, referring to the dramatic nineteenth-century trials for ritual murder that preoccupied residents of the early German Empire: "For anti-Semites, these trials had two possible outcomes. Either the charge of ritual murder would once and for all be legally substantiated with a conviction, or the German justice system would once again succumb to Jewish influence. Thus, in each case, not only the guilt or innocence of the accused was put at issue, but also the guilt or innocence of all Jews" (Hartston, 134–35).

Such a provocative language of accusation calls for an answer. In the highly charged debates about the "Jewish question" in Europe during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, the public discourse of antisemitism stimulated responses from both Jews and Christians offended by this language of collective guilt and the methods of accusers. This is also a pivotal moment when ritual murder became an issue for the courts: Hartston writes that there were more than 120 publicized ritual murder accusations between 1870 and 1900 (Hartston, 129, n. 2). Several of those that went to trial became famous and were closely watched by the German-speaking public. But a new element was also visible in this paradigm. In the wake of these accusations came a number of prominent libel trials, in which concerned groups and individual Jewish activists sued newspaper editors and others who made strong claims about ritual murder as a requirement of Jewish religious practice, often securing their arguments with deceptive readings and translations of the Talmud. Using the language of libel to counter the language of accusation reconfirms the juridical discourse itself. Those who lodged libel cases hoped to establish Jewish innocence once and for all, just as their opponents hoped for some final proof of guilt.

These trials often featured dueling "expert witnesses" who provided tes-

timony on the nature of the Talmud and specific features of Jewish practice and religious law. The Christian Hebraist and theologian Hermann Strack was a prominent figure in several court cases. As a Christian with substantial knowledge of both the Hebrew language and Jewish religious texts, and a scholar with no political antisemitic affiliations, he could be looked upon as a neutral witness by most trial participants. Strack was also a theologian involved in missionizing efforts to Jews, so there were limits to his validation of the Jewish religion.[70] Just a few years after Desportes's book appeared, Strack published his own systematic refutation of the blood libel legend, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*.[71] In later editions of the work, published on the cusp of the twentieth century, Strack offers a series of increasingly detailed prefaces that indicate something of the combative atmosphere in which he worked: he writes that antisemitic opponents misrepresented his conclusions and accused him of falsifying information or being in the employ of mysterious Jewish patrons.[72] Strack remained undaunted, and his work on the ritual murder accusation offers a powerful example of a direct response to the juridical discourse of antisemitism, offered in the same idiom and on the same terms as his opponents.

The antisemites of Strack's day engaged in case-by-case compilations of examples that were supposed to "prove" that ritual murder existed as a historical fact, and Strack responded in kind with a legalistic, case-by-case refutation. A whole tribe of false servants, desperate unwed mothers, abusive parents, and victims of robbery, rape, and accidental death are invoked in Strack's account to explain how Jews became scapegoats for specific deaths. His methods are rational, juridical, and systematic. He insists that the burden of proof rests with accusers, not the accused. In one case, Strack argues from medical records that a body was probably carried from the scene of the crime and only dumped after rigor mortis set in, thus rationally explaining the odd disposition of the corpse (*Jew and Human Sacrifice,* 228–33). Discussing the 1475 case of Simon of Trent, Strack points out the contradictions within the documentary records of the investigation and reprints excerpts of the interrogations to demonstrate how techniques of torture encouraged the accused to supply the answers desired by biased judges (*Jew and Human Sacrifice,* 193–200).

Strack's efforts at rebuttal echo and invert the antisemite's juridical discourse of guilt by proclaiming Jewish innocence instead. In addition to his reevaluation of the records of specific cases, Strack summons the testimony of the Bible and *halakhah* (Jewish religious law), effectively calling upon authoritative precedents that refute the charge of ritual murder. These ar-

guments repeat what have long been familiar themes in the effort to rebut such charges: Jewish tradition abhors blood in any form, forbidding the consumption even of animal blood, and from its earliest emergence as a distinctive religious culture has condemned human sacrifice (*Jew and Human Sacrifice,* 123–54).[73] Strack also appeals to a tradition of common legal testimony, privileging hostile witnesses—namely, Jewish converts to Christianity—who nevertheless insist on the falsity of such accusations. In addition, he employs the testimonial form of the oath as evidence (something his opponents do as well). He cites Menasseh ben Israel's famous oath declaring the falsity of the legend of ritual murder, delivered in the course of ben Israel's efforts to secure the readmission of Jews to England in the seventeenth century. Never one to be satisfied with a minimum number of examples, Strack publishes several other nearly identical oaths. The words of one Jewish convert to Christianity are entirely unambiguous.

> Although there is indeed a general slander against the Jews, that they follow after Christian children, and when they have got hold of them, stab them horribly, extract the blood from them, using it with certain ceremonies as a remedy . . . I am able, as a born Jew (who without boasting, know well all their customs, having myself practised, or at any rate seen with my eyes, most of them) to asseverate by God, that the whole time I was connected with Judaism, I never heard among them of such dealings with Christian children, much less that they had ever had Christian blood or had ever used it in the aforesaid manner.[74]

The Jewish convert, fulfilling his traditional role as knowledgeable insider, is the expert witness who swears in favor of the defendant—the entire Jewish people. Using the testimony of converts could, of course, cut both ways, since converts are often implicated in accusations of ritual murder. Thomas of Monmouth's recourse to the testimony of the convert-monk Theobald is just one example. Historically this juridical formula has been more than metaphorical, since oaths, testimony, and the evaluation of evidence are common features of trials for ritual murder, as well as the historiography surrounding it. The case that originally prompted Cecil Roth to publish Cardinal Ganganelli's eighteenth-century refutation of the blood libel was the 1911 Beilis case in Russia, in which a brick factory superintendent, Mendel Beilis, was put on trial for the murder of a thirteen-year-old boy.[75] It is salient to remind ourselves that the struggle over the status of ritual murder has not been limited to words alone. At the same time, the meaning of the accusation extends beyond or beneath the surface claims

advanced by its advocates. It is also "about" the status of Jews and Judaism, and it has functioned as a venue for debates about modernity and cultural change. This was true even in the twelfth century, though Thomas of Monmouth's "modern" moment was quite different from our own.

This is nowhere more obvious than in the most recent example of the public life of this juridical discourse in Western culture at large: the struggle over Holocaust denial. This self-proclaimed "revisionist" movement came to notice in the late 1970s and early 1980s in France and led to the publication of Pierre Vidal-Naquet's *Assassins of Memory*.[76] However it was the lawsuit against the scholar Deborah Lipstadt by the prominent Holocaust denier David Irving in 2000 that brought widespread public attention to the latest generation of juridical antisemites. In a fascinating reversal of the nineteenth-century paradigm, in which Jews sued antisemitic antagonists for libel, Irving sued Lipstadt because she had referred to him as a Holocaust denier in her 1997 book, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*.[77] Irving waited to file suit until Lipstadt's book was published in Britain, where the burden is on the accused to prove that his or her claims are substantially true, and cannot therefore qualify as libel. This is a much higher standard than that required in many other countries, including the United States.[78] Despite Irving's efforts to put the Holocaust itself on trial in the libel case, Lipstadt's arguments were borne out by the London court that declared Irving was, in fact, a Holocaust denier. The language of the final judgment is unambiguous and damning.

> The charges which I have found to be substantially true include the charges that Irving has for his own ideological reasons persistently and deliberately misrepresented and manipulated historical evidence; that for the same reasons he has portrayed Hitler in an unwarrantedly favourable light, principally in relation to his attitude towards and responsibility for the treatment of the Jews; that he is an active Holocaust denier; that he is anti-semitic and racist and that he associates with right wing extremists who promote neo-Nazism.[79]

This verdict, much more than some of the equivocal outcomes of the nineteenth-century trials for libel, points to the limits of a juridical discourse from a scholarly point of view. Irving was definitively judged a bad historian and an antisemite, yet Holocaust denial remains a viable pursuit for some individuals, with Irving as their martyr for free speech.

While the Lipstadt case did not deal with the ritual murder legend, it is

a clear example of the juridical discourse of antisemitism at work in another cultural quarter. Holocaust denial websites traffic in a diverse array of antisemitic materials, from antizionist diatribes that indict the entire Jewish people, to claims that Jews run the world banking or media outlets. Deniers have also adopted the cause and topos of ritual murder, all in the name of prosecuting a claim of eternal and collective Jewish guilt. The prominent lawyer and scholar Anthony Julius (who also represented Lipstadt in the libel case) has synthesized the major libels taken up by this juridical antisemitism under three headings: the blood libel, the conspiracy libel, and the economic libel. He summarizes them succinctly.

> The blood libel supposes that Jews entertain homicidal intentions towards non-Jews, and that Jewish law underwrites these intentions; the conspiracy libel supposes that Jews act as one, in pursuit of goals inimical to the interests of non-Jews; the economic libel supposes that Jews, who are self-interested, acquisitive and unproductive by nature, financially exploit non-Jews. The libels share the premise that Jews hate or despise non-Jews. Of the three libels, the blood libel is the master one.[80]

The categories of this guilt may vary, but the basic thesis never does. Holocaust denial relies upon a slightly altered but familiar allegation about a nefarious Jewish desire to dupe or take advantage of the non-Jewish world; here the claim is that Jews have invented or exaggerated the realities of the Holocaust for their own benefit.

We may seem to have strayed quite far from the topic of the medieval accusation of ritual murder, yet this embedded juridical discourse of guilt and innocence is deeply imbricated in debates about blood libel and extends back beyond the start of the Middle Ages. In fact, it is first instantiated as a reality of Western culture with the long-standing Christian argument that ancient Jews conspired to kill Christ, the murder that stands behind and surpasses all others from a Christian point of view.[81] But the discourse of adjudication I have been describing is not only long-standing; it is also a rhetorical trap whose terms are set by the claims of antisemitism itself. This is something opponents have long recognized. To argue against the juridical terms of the discourse set by antisemites and insist on Jewish innocence is to participate in the structure of attributed guilt by reversing its terms: Jews are innocent rather than guilty of the charges leveled at them. In publications and statements, Lipstadt herself has repeatedly insisted that the reality of the Holocaust is a monumental historical fact that should not require defense because it cannot legitimately be disputed.

There is simply no foundation to claims that the Holocaust did not happen. On her refusal to debate deniers publicly, Lipstadt writes:

> We cannot debate them [the deniers] for two reasons, one strategic and the other tactical. As we have repeatedly seen, the deniers long to be considered the "other" side. Engaging them in discussion makes them exactly that. Second, they are contemptuous of the very tools that shape any honest debate: truth and reason. Debating them would be like trying to nail a glob of jelly to the wall. (*Denying,* 221)

This is a clear response to the problem the discourse itself represents—when it becomes a matter of choosing "sides" that are understood to correspond to truth positions, then even historiographical fantasies assume a kind of epistemological reality. But to ignore the claims of the discourse is to risk appropriation by it. As of this writing, medieval historians Israel Yuval, Elliott Horowitz, and Ariel Toaff are grouped together on at least one prominent polemical website, where they are presented as unwitting champions of antisemitic causes.[82] Scholars are well aware of this shadow discourse of juridical antisemitism even when it is not explicitly mentioned.

It is worth pointing to the curious status of these debates as largely public affairs that cross into the supposedly hermetic environment of scholarship. Strack, for example, was a recognized scholar, but one of his major opponents in contemporary libel trials was August Rohling, a curious hybrid of scholarly ambition and intellectual mediocrity who became notorious for his best-selling pamphlet *The Talmud Jew.*[83] Rohling's text was a hot seller, reprinted many times, while Rohling himself became a scholarly authority cited by antisemitic political agitators. Eventually Rohling was disgraced after he withdrew from a libel suit following accusations that he relied on flawed translations of Hebrew texts (Hartston, 190–204).[84] The sphere of debate surrounding the ritual murder accusation has often been populated by a range of pseudoscholars and willful mistranslators, as well as antisemitic agitators who hide behind the work of self-declared experts as a way of claiming authority for their own agendas. While the space of the scholar's study has sometimes become a site of legalistic deliberation, often the broader public sphere of debate has also become bound up in scholarly projects. Gavin Langmuir is an excellent guide to the foibles and difficulties of the project of rebuttal, and he regards the juridical discourse surrounding the ritual murder accusation with deep suspicion and unease. Despite the juridical tones of his own work on antisemitism (discussed in the following chapter), Langmuir appears to share with Lipstadt a strong

sense of the futility of adopting an explicit posture of rebuttal. His suspicion is evident in his essay "Historiographic Crucifixion," in which he discusses the historiographical search for what "really happened" in Norwich circa 1144, a project he describes as peculiarly susceptible to the seductions of "wishful thinking" (*TDA,* 296–97). Langmuir describes how many modern scholars and writers have been preoccupied with the question of Jewish culpability and often seem to operate on the assumption that medieval Jews must have been guilty of *something,* if not ritual murder. Langmuir documents how this question of Jewish culpability has been invested with partisan overtones, whether a particular investigator hopes to convict or exonerate historical Jewish communities. He also suggests that ungrounded speculations about an ultimately irrecoverable historical event are often carried out in bad faith and may lead to dangerous outcomes.

The category of strange speculations includes the bizarre theories of M. D. Anderson, a British art historian who wrote several works about medieval woodcarving and images. In 1967, she published a book arguing that the Jews of Norwich had indeed killed William, but not from any ritual or religious motive. Instead, fearing a pogrom as a result of hostilities aroused by their recent celebration of Purim, they brought him in for "questioning," and eventually killed him when the situation escalated beyond their ability to keep it quiet.[85] This strange, if ingenious, solution required that Anderson accept certain aspects of Thomas of Monmouth's text at face value while skeptically reinterpreting others according to her own entirely unsubstantiated paradigm. Langmuir also reports the conjectures of a medical pathologist, William D. Sharpe, who read Thomas's secondhand descriptions of the state of William's body literally (and rather naively) to produce a theory that William was killed by a "sexual deviate" who also happened to be "a morbidly anti-Christian Jewish fanatic" (*TDA,* 295). We might be tempted to dismiss claims like those of Anderson and Sharpe as amateur mistakes, drawing on techniques easily avoided by sober professional historians, but Langmuir insists that we recognize "the extent to which both Anderson and Sharpe's conjectures were not deviations from, but the consequence of, prior historiography" (*TDA,* 295), which was always ambivalent on the question of Jewish culpability.

Some, like the nineteenth-century scholar M. R. James, rejected the idea of a corporate Jewish conspiracy but held open the possibility of a Jewish murderer. Interpreters, James writes, must "take into account the possibilities of what a mad hatred of a dominant system, or a reversion to half-forgotten practices of a darker age, might effect in the case of an ig-

norant Jew seven centuries back" (*Life and Miracles,* lxxix). After alluding to a "darker age" of (presumably) Jewish history, James invokes the Jew-cum-monk who acted as Thomas's informant, Theobald: "Can we be sure that there were not at Norwich Jews as bad as he, who could give effect to such a fancy? Is it beyond the bounds of possibility that he did the deed himself?" (*Life and Miracles,* lxxix). This strange preoccupation with (exceptional) Jewish culprits is especially striking in William Thomas Walsh's 1930 book, *Isabella of Spain,* in which the author's sympathies are so clearly with those who accused Jews of religious crimes that he often seems to be an advocate for the prosecution. Referring to a Spanish accusation of ritual murder in the late fifteenth century, Walsh writes:

> Let it be said at once that there is no evidence that murder or any other iniquity has ever been part of any official ceremony of the Jewish religion. . . . It does not follow by any means, however, that Jewish individuals or groups never committed bloody and disgusting crimes, even crimes motivated by hatred of Christ and of the Catholic Church; . . . With all possible sympathy for the innocent Jews who have suffered from monstrous slanders, one must admit that acts committed by Jews sometimes furnished the original provocation.[86]

As Langmuir understands very well, the theory of the exceptional Jewish crime works rhetorically to implicate Jews as a group. Walsh's prose reinforces this: "However this may be, and granting that innumerable lies were circulated about the Jews, it is a great mistake to assume their complete innocence of all the crimes attributed to them" (439).

Langmuir acknowledges the polarity of this tradition of legalistic speculation, which sought determinations of innocence as well as guilt. "Wishful thinking," he writes, "could work both ways," affecting those who sought to exonerate Jews from unjust accusations as well as those who assumed some kind of direct reality behind the claim of murder (*TDA,* 290). Langmuir describes two well-known efforts by early Jewish scholars to rebut the accusation at Norwich, including Cecil Roth's argument about how raucous Purim festivities might have been misunderstood by Christians as aggressive symbolic demonstrations against Christian belief. In a forerunner to theories like those of Israel Yuval and Elliott Horowitz, Roth suggested that perhaps Christians were suspicious of practices like the traditional hanging of an image of Haman during Purim, so that the idea of Jews murdering a Christian boy seemed plausible to them.[87] Another influential theory, originally advanced by Joseph Jacobs, was that William

of Norwich was accidentally buried alive after suffering an epileptic seizure, his disinterment therefore resulting in some unusual phenomena. Jacobs fixed on the idea that the report of earth rising up from the grave as William was disinterred from his original burial site in the woods around Norwich was accurate, even if many other elements of the story were unreliable.[88] Langmuir is deeply suspicious of all of these rationalizing gestures, which from his point of view come dangerously close to suggesting some realistic basis for the ritual murder accusation, whether it is rooted in murder or misunderstanding.

What may disturb Langmuir most, however, is the problem of indeterminacy that undergirds but also finally calls such arguments into question. Barnet Hartston's analysis of public debates about the "Jewish Question" in the early German Empire underscores this problem clearly: no matter how many Jews are acquitted of ritual murder, or how many libel trials end in convictions of those who make false claims about Jewish religious practices or the contents of the Talmud, the question can never be resolved by a simple court decision, and historiographical argument has been no more successful in laying debates to rest.[89] The juridical discourse of debate also reveals the simple truth that ritual murder accusations are always "about" more than they appear to be. The libel is a kind of cul-de-sac of historical thought, where evidence is ambiguous, and interests often dominate interpretation. We must be aware of what the accusation stands for, and how it comes to function as a political tool in different environments, if we are to understand the entanglement of these issues.

Part of the work of the libel is to hash out the symbolic significance of Jews and Judaism in Western culture, and this process has always seemed to entail a confrontation with modernity, however it is defined in the moment of debate. For Thomas of Monmouth, the Jews may have represented the newfangled forms of Norman governance; certainly they were for him strangers, foreigners whose place in the reconfigured city of Norwich represented a confluence of changes in twelfth-century culture.[90] For the political antisemites of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jews were once again understood to represent the modern forces most feared by agitators. These forces included new government and banking initiatives, and the sweeping changes of modernity and industry, and were further epitomized by the movement known as Emancipation, by which Jews became enfranchised members of the broader population. Hartston describes these fears in terms of an amalgamated master concept: the "Jewish-liberal-'Manchesterites,'" who were feared to be destroying

Europe from within (Hartston, 2). Pierre-André Taguieff writes that despite many changes in the definition of modernity, a new antisemitism has emerged that relies on a similarly loaded master concept, rooted in fears of conspiracy and the betrayal of contemporary values—this new amalgam, he writes, is "Israelis-Zionists-Jews." This concept, which represents a curious nexus of leftist and traditionally right-wing themes, is as deceptive as the old label, and covers just as many fears, now of rampant power, globalization, and the dark forces of unstoppable colonialist capitalism. "For all these producers of ideological discourse," Taguieff writes, "the amalgam 'Israelis-Zionists-Jews' operates as a representation of the absolute enemy, worthy of absolute hatred."[91]

But the association between Jews and modernity is an ambivalent one. That symbolic entity, "the Jews," may often be invoked as a way of debating larger forces of cultural change, but Jews and Judaism are just as often called upon in the name of tradition, ethnic authenticity, and stable identity. This is an ambivalence that, as the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman writes, is long-standing in Western discourse. Bauman adopts the term *allosemitism* to describe how Jews and Judaism are charged topics even before any discussion begins. Allosemitism, according to Bauman, "refers to the practice of setting Jews apart as people radically different from all the others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them and special treatment in all or most social intercourse."[92] Bauman advocates this new term because it captures for him the essence of a particular position that precedes either philo- or antisemitism.

> "Allosemitism" is essentially non-committal. . . . it does not unambiguously determine either hatred or love of Jews, but contains the seeds of both, and assures that whichever of the two appears, is intense and extreme. The original non-commitment (that is, the fact that allosemitism is, perhaps must be, already in place for anti- or philosemitism to be conceivable) makes allosemitism a radically *ambivalent* attitude. ("Allosemitism," 143)

This ambivalence suggests why debates about Jews and Judaism quickly take on larger resonances: as a charged symbolic presence in Western culture, "the Jew" becomes a proxy for other tensions—between change and tradition, global and local politics, and even competing epistemological regimes—that the surrounding culture is struggling to encompass. The genealogy of the juridical discourse surrounding the blood libel concretizes this ambivalence in a particularly striking way: one's choices are quickly

delimited to guilt or innocence, antisemite or Jew. There is no room for grey areas or interpretive uncertainties.

Recent work on the history of the ritual murder accusation reflects these familiar juridical currents, even when it does not directly engage them. Even for scholars who want to move away from the limited terms of a courtroom-style verdict, the shadow of this discourse continues to influence the manner in which historical responsibility is discussed and imagined. Joshua Trachtenberg's poignant question, composed just after the end of World War II, still captures something of the difficulty of this enterprise, and the stakes of the work of interpretation. "How is it," Trachtenberg asks, "that men believe of the Jews what common sense would forbid them to believe of anyone else?"[93] It is a question that Thomas of Monmouth could not have conceived. For the historian Gavin Langmuir, whose work crystallizes many of the themes of twentieth-century historiography on Jewish-Christian relations, the answer must be sought in the realm of the irrational, and evaluated in an ultimately juridical language of moralization.

CHAPTER 2

Moralization and Method in Gavin Langmuir's History of Antisemitism

IN THE MIDST of his tendentious account of William's death and afterlife, Thomas of Monmouth composes an imaginary speech for the Jews who are accused of the crime and pictures them deliberating among themselves about the consequences of discovery.

> Our people will be utterly driven out [*funditus exterminabitur*] from all parts of England . . . we, our wives and our little ones will be given over as a prey to the barbarians, we shall be delivered up to death, we shall be exterminated [*dabimur in exterminium*].[1]

Further on in Thomas's narrative, he reports the words of an ecclesiastical synod that is alleged to have announced, "unless [the Jews] at once came to purge themselves [of the accusation against them] they must understand that without doubt they would be exterminated."[2] Though the Norwich Jews do not appear to have been attacked, Thomas later remarks, "the rod of heaven in a brief space of time exterminated or scattered them all [*exterminaverit sive disperserit*]."[3]

Some of the unsettling effect of these words is a product of translation: the first definition of *exterminare* is "to drive out or away, expel," while the third, a late Latin evolution, is "to abolish, extirpate, destroy."[4] The Victorian translators Jessopp and James modulate between these meanings, moving easily from "driven out from all parts of England" to the blunt force of "exterminated," depending on the context of the passage. I am not sure we can settle the problem of which definition a learned high medieval

audience heard or understood most readily in this word, nor is it clear what force the idea of "extermination" would have carried for that audience. But the ambiguity of the verb seems to confirm the ease with which human groups can move from the idea of expulsion—driving out or away—to murder.[5] In other words, the etymological history of extermination already suggests a narrative we have come to recognize as familiar, a narrative of how Jews become increasingly *exterminabilis* (able to be destroyed, or perishable) as history approaches the twentieth century.

For anyone inclined to interpret Thomas's text as an early forecast of a gathering storm, his account offers the illusion of speaking back: it is as if this twelfth-century text is not only important for its testimony to the historical phenomenon of anti-Jewish hostility but prescient as well. However this historical narrative, while familiar, is also oversimplified, since conditions of medieval Jewish life could vary widely in different European locales and across the span of the Middle Ages.[6] Nevertheless, this teleological reading is frequently repeated in post-Holocaust histories that portray medieval anti-Judaism as an explicit anticipation of modern forms.[7] It is because of the real history of violent sentiment—which has obviously had more than etymological consequences—that Thomas's efforts at verisimilitude cut close to the bone in passages like these. The Jews he accuses of murder worry over their *parvuli,* their little ones; they occupy hired houses and live in the expectation they may be forced out at any moment (I.24). The speeches Thomas creates for them are obvious rhetorical fictions, in keeping with medieval conventions of historical writing, and yet their fear seems startling and real. It is as if for a fleeting moment, a trace of realism has escaped the confines of Thomas's caricature of the Jews of Norwich. And yet, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Thomas had his own reasons for emphasizing Jewish fear and powerlessness—for him such reactions were proof of divine displeasure with the Jews.

Whatever Thomas's intentions, the problem of Jewish extermination raised by his text remains one of the most potent ethical challenges faced by the modern historiography of medieval anti-Jewish violence. For some scholars, Thomas of Monmouth's account of his single-minded investigation into William's death has served as a mooring point for explaining the emergence of the ritual murder accusation. For the historian Gavin Langmuir, this text takes the form of an originary narrative.

> Thomas of Monmouth was an influential figure in the formation of Western culture. He did not alter the course of battles, politics, or the

> economy. He solved no philosophical or theological problems. . . . Yet . . . he created a myth that affected Western mentality from the twelfth to the twentieth century and caused, directly or indirectly, far more deaths than William's murderer could ever have dreamt of committing. (*TDA,* 234–35)

This statement presents us with themes that are problematic from the perspective of the early twenty-first century. "Western mentality" is apparently a unified and describable phenomenon from the twelfth century to the twentieth; a simple teleology leading inevitably from medieval acts of violence to the Holocaust is presumed, taken as a matter of common knowledge. And in Langmuir's rhetoric we can see a desire to assign moral responsibility to particular historical persecutors of Jews, and not just to some anonymous group, but to one in particular, Thomas of Monmouth, who becomes the perverse prime mover behind centuries of cruelty.

Many elements of this general historiographical narrative have been observed already, from Baron's famous critique of the "lachrymose conception" of Jewish history (cited with the regularity of a proverb), to David Nirenberg's salvo, in his book *Communities of Violence,* against *longue durée* perspectives that privilege broad questions of psychology over specific local circumstances and strategies.[8] Recent scholarship on Jewish history in medieval Europe, and of Jewish-Christian relations in particular, has complicated both the methodological picture and the historical narrative Langmuir presents here. Scholarship by Jeremy Cohen, David Biale, Elliott Horowitz, and Israel Yuval, among others, has enlarged and challenged this stark picture of a one-dimensional model of conflict between an intolerant Christian community and its passive Jewish victims. As we make a conscious effort to rethink teleological narratives that presume a straightforward completion of medieval persecutions in the Holocaust, it may seem like an odd moment to return to Langmuir's work and ask about its ethical commitments. Some of the answers may even seem obvious. Langmuir is a post-Holocaust scholar searching for answers about the origins of a defining event of modernity; his work represents a common approach to specific historical problems of continuity and repetition. How can we explain the recurrent persecution of Jews in Western history if we do not have recourse to some idea of the endurance or continuity of that persecution? If Langmuir's answer reflects his position as a North American scholar influenced by the currents of collective memory that have focused such attention on the Holocaust since the late 1970s, why should we be surprised?

Yet this felt sense of a scholarship that needs no explanation, of a moment in intellectual history whose pursuit of specific goals seems practically self-evident, suggests precisely why it is necessary to revisit what remains an influential cultural narrative for understanding medieval Jewish history, and the historical unfolding of Jewish-Christian relations in particular. If ethics structures problems rather than solves them, in other words, it is critical to ask how Langmuir's structuring of the problem of ritual murder has functioned in this scholarly history. In my introduction, I suggested that one way of understanding Langmuir's work is to acknowledge that it occupies a position along an existing moral-ethical continuum. At one end lie moralizing determinations of historical responsibility that tend to equate responsibility with blame, and seek judgments (implicitly or explicitly) about events. At the other is an ethics of contingency and mutual implication that emphasizes the interconnectedness of historical communities and seeks to understand intergroup conflicts while drawing back from judgment. The terms of Langmuir's project are both moral and juridical, and they are expressed in familiar terms: he writes with the victims in mind, and his work is concerned with both exonerating and remembering those Jews who feared being "turned over as prey to the barbarians." Langmuir's scholarship represents a culmination of psychohistorical analysis that emphasizes the importance of psychological processes like identification and projection, and seeks to understand their operation within history. In medieval studies, the idea of a "persecuting society" has become a kind of shorthand for such approaches, while there are obvious parallels between this framework and arguments about modern "perpetrator history," a similarity I address below. If this comparison seems to muddy historical distinctions, that is no accident: the effort to understand the persecuting mind is often shadowed by uncertainty about how universal or transhistorical such mental processes might be.[9]

In Langmuir's studies of specific cases of the ritual murder accusation, his evaluations focus on the question of historical responsibility and reinforce a clearly defined border between irrational persecutors and their victims. What I want to trace here is the operation of an interpretive system that assigns responsibility for the origins of antisemitic beliefs, even as it distances us from any sense of complicity with the irrational minds of persecutors. Langmuir has done as much as any scholar writing on this topic to define the space of historical uncertainty surrounding the ritual murder accusation as a specifically moral space. He insists upon the unreality, the essential falsehood, of the legend and implies that to probe these irrational

historical forces too deeply is to risk moral compromise. In this ethical economy, the idea of responsibility is clearly associated with assigning blame and making determinations of guilt and innocence in the historical record. While this moralization of history is understandable, however, if taken as a refusal of self-examination, it carries political dangers of its own. As Judith Butler reminds us, in her trenchant rereading of Levinas, there is a risk that we merely reverse the poles of a conceptual system built on exclusion, and designate a new other, in the form of the perpetrator, without fully understanding the forces that lead to persecution.

Some readers may be tempted to interpret my assessment of Langmuir's work as a disagreement with his moral desire to speak out against persecution. That is not the case. Langmuir is not somehow wrong to worry about questions of historical responsibility and justice; indeed, as my references to public conversations about the Holocaust suggest, his work touches on some of the most fundamental historical and ethical questions of our time. I also write as someone profoundly influenced by Langmuir's theories in my early professional training. In a real sense, he has shaped my own understanding of the questions at stake. I am not claiming that we should not be morally outraged by persecution, nor that we should stop trying to understand its causes. What I am suggesting is that we also have an obligation to understand what other kinds of cultural work are involved in our efforts at explanation, what other purposes—ethical, political, and methodological—might be served by a moralization of history.

Naming and Blaming the Irrational Self

Gavin Langmuir is best known for two far-reaching volumes of work published in 1990, a book of new and collected essays, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (*TDA*), and a reevaluation of the historical evolution of anti-Jewish prejudice called *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (*HRA*). Together these works run to nearly 800 published pages and represent an ambitious effort to address questions such as the difference between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, the nature of religion and religiosity, and the psychosocial origins of persecution.[10] In disciplinary terms, Langmuir's scholarship appears as a condensation of a post-Holocaust tradition of historiography as moral analysis. He is an heir of historians like Norman Cohn and Joshua Trachtenberg, who understood antisemitism as an inherently psychosocial phenomenon bound up in Christians' neurotic needs.[11] Other figures, like R. I. Moore, author of *The Formation of a Per-*

secuting Society, and Lester K. Little, who wrote *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe,* also tended to interpret medieval anti-Judaism, among other forms of minority persecution, as essentially the outcome of psychological resentments and anxieties among a medieval Christian majority.[12] But if Langmuir's work represents a distillation of such ideas, it is also a powerful theorization of this global, psychosocial model of historical interpretation and ought to be understood as an ambitious philosophy of history as well as an extended piece of historical analysis.

I understand Langmuir to be a theorist as well as a historian, though this might sound surprising, given his staunch adherence to a kind of logical positivism he labels "rational empiricism." His treatment of others interested in theorizing historiography, such as Hayden White and Michel Foucault, might be described as skittish, since he occasionally invokes their work in passing but does not engage it, even when some of his conclusions echo theirs. Yet I do not want to lose sight of the fact that rational empiricism is itself a theoretical model and operates just as other modes of theory do, by offering a framework for interpretation that provides a meaningful set of guidelines for making sense of evidence. Langmuir himself makes a straightforward argument for the necessity of using some theoretical framework for understanding the past. He argues that explaining a historical figure's actions by recourse to his beliefs is a kind of tautology: it is not enough to know that what a person believed was related to how he acted—we must also try to understand why be believed what he did. Antisemitic belief, therefore, is an inadequate explanation of antisemitism.[13] "Even if we know that someone killed Jews with a sword," he writes, "to explain the action satisfactorily we have not only to describe his beliefs about Jews but also to explain why he believed what he did about Jews. And it would have to be an explanation that satisfies us, whether we are Jews or non-Jews" (*HRA,* 52). Langmuir's theoretical enterprise hangs on the principle that reconstructing proclaimed beliefs is not enough. A satisfactory interpretation of historical events will also offer an explanatory paradigm that stands outside yet still addresses the world of historical actors themselves.[14]

But if Langmuir is a theorist, his work also has the value of a kind of Cartesian thought experiment. Though he is relatively innocent of theory in its more recent formulations, he has set himself the task of reexamining first principles, tackling problems like: What is religion? What is objective knowledge? What is antisemitism, and what motivates it? These are high philosophical stakes by any definition, and putting the problem of anti-

semitism alongside questions about the nature of religion and objective knowledge demonstrates that for him this is an issue of major importance for the Western tradition. In Langmuir's work, questions about antisemitism are also related to broader issues, like the nature of historical and other differences, and how we understand other minds.[15] Antisemitism may "stand for" these more general issues, but it is also a key question itself, a kind of metaphysical problem that must be addressed, and for which there is a moral demand for redress. Yet if antisemitism is a moral problem, it nevertheless remains one that cannot be resolved; in Langmuir's analysis the antisemitic mind is invoked as a forbidden space, one we cannot enter without risk of complicity. While it is obviously true that we cannot enter the minds of historical actors, I argue that Langmuir's moralizing ethics demands that we also *must not* enter that space sympathetically. What I am calling a moralizing ethics is the process by which Langmuir makes moral judgments about historical actors, consigning their actions to the realm of a choice, made against reason, to gratify an immoral desire. Yet because antisemitism is rooted in what Langmuir describes as universal psychological processes, it may also be a phenomenon in which we are all implicated. For Langmuir, this paradox functions as a kind of repressed knowledge.[16]

Langmuir defines rational empirical thought as "the kind of thinking, whether primitive and pretheoretical or highly developed, that has enabled human beings to develop tools and demonstrate their efficacy by results in principle observable and repeatable by anyone else" (*HRA,* 46). As Robert Stacey remarks in his review of Langmuir's work, "Rational empiricism is thus simultaneously the fundamental structure for human consciousness . . . and the essential investigative method by which human action must be understood" (96). With rational empiricism, Langmuir searches for solid ground for what he hopes will be an objective history, but he also registers the distant influence of poststructuralism's antifoundationalist critiques, which echo just behind his justification of his project.

> Of course, to believe that rational and empirical thinking is necessary to reduce error in historical research and inform moral and political decisions is not something that can be decided by rational methods. It seems an act of faith or moral decision; and when emphasized, it resembles a religious commitment. . . . But the use of rational empirical thinking is not an act of faith or moral decision in the usual sense. It is something we can no more abandon than our trust in our bodily processes, for it is a universal human characteristic. (*HRA,* 45–46)

Langmuir acknowledges the bugbear of relativism lurking in the shadows but insists upon the universalism of certain mental processes as the key to an objective explanation of antisemitism.[17] Human beings, regardless of their place in time or cultural context, are capable of rational empirical thought, whether this is pretheoretical or self-conscious. The potential for rational thought—and its opposite, irrationalism—thus becomes the foundation for a transhistorical theory that seeks to account for the continuity of antisemitism in Western history. At the same time, because Langmuir views temporality as unified by a few shared human characteristics, he is able to rescue the Middle Ages as both point of origin and usable past for thinking about modern phenomena like the Holocaust. Langmuir argues that medieval hatred of Jews is tied to modern forms of antisemitism—particularly Nazi antisemitism—by its irrationalism. The Nazis, he argues, were not merely the heirs of a Western tradition of antisemitism but also the followers of a "religion" defined in secular terms, which encouraged the spread and acceptance of irrational antisemitic ideas.[18]

While rational empirical thought may be a universal potential of the mind, it is the distinctive status of the irrational that most clearly characterizes antisemitism in Langmuir's framework. He argues that the difference between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, regardless of when or where they occur, is that anti-Judaism is a dislike of Jews based on a rational assessment of characteristics that either a few members or the whole group actually possess, such as their unbelief in the Christian messiah, for instance. Antisemitism, however, is an irrational reaction to Jews based on imagined characteristics they do not possess, such as horns growing out of their heads. Often such beliefs are the product of irrational projection—a Christian who cannot believe that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist, for example, might project his disbelief onto Jews, who he imagines will steal the consecrated host and test or punish it in various ways.[19] Langmuir describes irrationalism as a failure of the mind's rational capacities, which can be reinforced by authority figures, such as leaders of the church, or aggravated by rapid social change. He argues that "by the late Middle Ages, in order to dispel doubts about their religion and themselves, many Christians were suppressing their capacity for rational empirical thought and irrationally attributing to the realities they denoted as 'Jews' unobservable characteristics" (*HRA,* 302). According to Langmuir, this irrational suppression can be cured by the application of rational empirical thought itself: "None, save the com-

pletely nonrational, suppress their rational empirical capacities completely, for to do so would entail rapid extinction. Indeed, it is that continuing, if restricted, confidence in rational empirical thinking that may make it possible to overcome irrationality" (*HRA,* 257).[20]

Langmuir's distinction between rational and irrational thought is mediated by a third category, that of nonrational thought, which encompasses both the complex of ideas and perceptions we have about the world that constitute our identity, and those ideas we cannot prove by rational thought but still believe because they operate in accordance with our other knowledge about the world. Thought about divinities, for example, falls in this category of nonrational belief for Langmuir, since claims about such beings are an important part of how many people structure their existences, yet they cannot be established empirically. "There is no necessary conflict" between rational and nonrational thought in such a case, he writes, "because many of the relations that nonrational thinking establishes between experiences and symbols are of a type that cannot presently be, or can never be, invalidated or validated by rational empirical thought" (*HRA,* 152). Thus we can believe in divinities and accept scientific claims without conflict.[21] The tissue of associations that binds together symbols, experiences, and rational empirical thought is a medium of being. Langmuir writes, "It is our understanding of what we cannot express as knowledge" (*HRA,* 154–55).[22] However, while rational and nonrational thought often do not conflict, a problem emerges when rational knowledge—about the nature of bread and wine, for instance—clashes with nonrational beliefs such as those about the bread and wine as a symbol for the body and blood of Christ. When people are confronted with two contradictory claims on their beliefs, or when they mistake a symbol for an empirical reality, irrationality is sometimes, though not always, the result.

What is often overlooked in summaries and critiques of Langmuir's work is the thesis of misrecognition that lies behind it. When Christians accept irrational beliefs about Jews, when they are influenced by those beliefs in their actions toward Jews, they are mistaking a symbol for a reality. For example, Langmuir writes that the "clearest example of the problems that can arise when expressions of religiosity are mistaken for empirical propositions is provided by the history of the Eucharist" (*HRA,* 249). In the well-known New Testament passage when Christ proclaims that the bread and wine before him are his body and blood, Langmuir remarks, "his manifestly nonrational utterance was identical in form with a rational empirical proposition" (*HRA,* 250). This evoked no conflict as long as his

followers understood the gesture and its reenactment in terms of symbol or metaphor. "But when some of [Christ's] followers understood his utterance both as a command and as a proposition about a change in the physical reality of the bread and wine themselves, they confused metaphor with empirical proposition and introduced a latent conflict between their nonrational and rational thinking about bread and wine" (*HRA,* 250). The conflict introduced by this confusion is central to Langmuir's definition of historical (as well as present) reality: what is real is also empirical, verifiable, rational. The internal conflicts that produce irrationality are defined primarily by their deferral or refusal of the real.

Langmuir's argument about the misrecognition of symbols extends to Jews, who take on an unreal reality as dangerous, concrete exemplifications of doubt and anti-Christian forces of malevolence. The empirical reality of an individual Jew is understandable primarily as a symbol, "Jew."[23] For Langmuir, the ability to discern the difference between these two orders of thought, between empirical reality and metaphor, is also a moral divide that separates rational from irrational belief, and that offers a scale of judgment for evaluating the actions of historical figures. In *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism,* Langmuir defines "chimerical" fantasies about Jews primarily in these terms: "chimerical assertions present fantasies, figments of the imagination, monsters that, although dressed syntactically in the clothes of real humans, have never been seen and are projections of mental processes unconnected with the real people of the outgroup. Chimerical assertions have no 'kernel of truth'" (*TDA,* 334). This unreality has morally abhorrent consequences, and Langmuir suggests that recognizing the illusory quality of such fantasies will allow us to disperse them. This becomes clear, for example, as he describes the emergence of the well-poisoning charge of the later Middle Ages, when Jews were accused of spreading the plague by contaminating water sources. Referring to the flagellants who traveled from town to town, punishing themselves and eventually attacking Jews as well as some local priests, Langmuir writes that "even though their travels should have made them more aware than most that Jews were dying of the plague like Christians," they were unable to exercise their rational capacity to infer obvious conclusions from such observations and "acted desperately to restore their self-confidence by extirpating Jews" (*HRA,* 302). This case seems to offer a straightforward example of Langmuir's criteria of rational and irrational potential in operation. The flagellants were in a position to see the evidence that disproved their belief in Jewish guilt, but they clung to their irrational conviction nonetheless.

Langmuir's language indicates clearly that a moral judgment of their behavior is called for: experience "should have made them more aware than most," and since they refused to recognize what they should have been able to see, these anonymous Christians are therefore blameworthy for their actions. There is an ironic repetition of the very medieval rhetoric Langmuir criticizes here. Medieval Christians castigated Jews for their willful "blindness" and unreasonable refusal to recognize the Christian messiah; Langmuir's antisemitic innovators refuse to recognize the demands of reason.

In *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism,* Langmuir groups his studies of the ritual murder legend under the heading "Irrational Fantasies." Here, we do not have to search for the ethical substructures of his interpretation, since these are open and explicit. The best known of these essays, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," subjects Thomas's narrative to a close and suspicious rereading and reconstructs the process of his investigation from his written account. Langmuir points to the circumstantial nature of the evidence, the second- and sometimes thirdhand accounts on which Thomas's claims are based, and the obvious benefits for the monastery, and Thomas himself, if William is accepted as a saint. Langmuir is unambiguous about the end point of his search for explanation, writing that Thomas of Monmouth's text is "our most direct evidence for the first medieval accusation that Jews were guilty of ritual murder, a myth that spread, caused the death of many Jews in different localities, and influenced Luther and Hitler among others" (*TDA,* 210). Langmuir even goes so far as to equate medieval and modern accusations, speaking of a "medieval and modern myth" (*TDA,* 211). But if one desired effect of his work is an understanding of the Holocaust, the more immediate goal is to assign responsibility (framed as blame) for creation of the myth of ritual murder.

The emphasis on responsibility is not new. However, Langmuir self-consciously shifts the question away from the murky terrain of the "Who done it?" that was the focus for early interpreters who sought to understand "what actually happened" in Norwich in 1144. Langmuir sees this as a red herring taken up by scholars who mistakenly framed their questions in the same terms as medieval accounts that were preoccupied by the desire to locate a murderer and, more to the point, establish Jewish guilt. Instead of "Who did it?" Langmuir asks "Who propagated it?" What emerges is a reassuring narrative of historical culpability, in which the perverse creativity of a willful individual answers the question of origins for us. Langmuir says that "we may feel reasonably sure that the fantasy that

Jews ritually murdered Christians by crucifixion was created and contributed to Western culture by Thomas of Monmouth about 1150" (*TDA,* 232). It is not difficult to detect just beneath the surface of this argument an ethical story of its purpose: if we cannot answer the question of who killed William, we can still hope to know who is responsible for the murders of all those Jews who will be killed as a result of his story.

Langmuir's moral project is concerned with explanation, but for him the task of explanation should not be equated with understanding. Langmuir suggests that we may explain the thoughts of historical persecutors, but it is in the realm of irrational conviction that historical actors are judged culpable for their actions, and it is precisely here that understanding falls short. As I indicated above, the result is a paradox: historical agents are blamed for an irrational process that may not be entirely within their control. And if it is a universal human tendency, then the potential for irrationality may implicate us all in the dynamics of persecution. Langmuir's structure of blame is reinforced by his determined recourse to the realm of self-delusion, rather than prosaic questions of politics or even personal self-interest, in the search for explanation. Why emphasize self-deceit over self-interest? The answer may lie in the question of definition itself: for Langmuir, beliefs and rationalizations can be susceptible to delusion and irrationality, but while self-interest may involve moral turpitude, it is also manifestly rational. Emphasizing the irrational quality of antisemitic beliefs is one way Langmuir protects the category of the rational from complicity after the fact with antisemitism.[24]

In examining the 1255 ritual murder case of Hugh of Lincoln, which resulted in the judicial murder of nineteen Jews, for example, Langmuir highlights the role of Sir John of Lexington, a knight in royal service and part-time keeper of the Seal, whose family connections in the neighborhood of Lincoln are detailed by Langmuir at some length. Counting brothers and cousins among the local clerical elite, Langmuir makes a persuasive case that the Lexingtons have local politics all sewn up.[25] When John of Lexington arrives to investigate the ritual murder accusation, therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that he might have an incentive to solidify the case for a local saint whose shrine would certainly bring financial benefits to Lincoln Cathedral and his brother Henry, the cathedral's new bishop. Langmuir provides evidence for making such an argument, yet he only briefly acknowledges the pull of family interests. Instead, he pursues an explanation that privileges belief, and specifically irrational belief. "A strong case can be made that John did not believe the

confession [of the Jew Copin] but sought to bolster the reputation of the new saint in his brother's cathedral," he writes, but "by the same token" John of Lexington "must have wanted to believe the fantasy, to overcome his doubts [about the guilt of the accused Jews] if only he could find some confirmation" (*TDA,* 261). Such an interpretation requires a surprising level of historiographical speculation, but for Langmuir irrational investment is the only way to explain what he regards as a manifestly illogical conclusion of guilt. A little later, Langmuir says that perhaps "initially [John of Lexington] wanted no more than a confirming confession but was . . . forced to rationalize his deed, and ended by believing the story himself" (*TDA,* 262). We are left to conclude that self-delusion may trump even self-interest as a psychological force at work in antisemitic beliefs. At the very least, Langmuir suggests that irrational belief may be as influential as the self-serving rationality associated with the pursuit of status and monetary rewards.

Yet this focus on irrational belief, a process that may not be within the conscious control of the believer, paradoxically bolsters Langmuir's case for blame. John of Lexington is still culpable for producing the first trial for ritual murder in England, not just because he chose to act cynically for the benefit of his well-connected relations, but because he ended by *believing* the accusation and promoting it. He is responsible because he should have known better, in Langmuir's terms, but chose not to examine his beliefs rationally. Langmuir makes this clear when he writes that John of Lexington

> was a learned man whose horizon was European, and he had had considerable judicial experience. Yet he supported an accusation that was practically unsupported by evidence. . . . John conducted the investigation himself and must have known better than anyone how flimsy the evidence was, and how strangely the accusation resembled the legends of Norwich and Gloucester. (*TDA,* 261)

In other words, this sophisticated and experienced knight should have been able to perceive the falsity of the accusation as easily as any modern observer. While I sympathize with Langmuir's faith in the power of rationality, I question the application of modern standards of reason to medieval actors—a theme taken up by some other readers as well.

Langmuir argues that both Thomas of Monmouth and John of Lexington should have had the ability to recognize a patent falsehood by exercising their powers of self-examination and reason. However they chose in-

stead to believe a lie. The assignment of responsibility in Langmuir's work revolves around the idea that these antisemitic innovators should have known better, but chose not to. I employ this formulation deliberately, because it captures the morally prescriptive character of Langmuir's evaluation. Historical figures like Thomas of Monmouth and John of Lexington are not only subjects of investigation, they are also subject to censure—they have been found guilty of a moral failing, in this case, a failure of self-examination and rational thought as well as basic fairness. If rational and irrational thought are always potentials within the human condition, then a choice between them is always available as well. Langmuir's emphasis on the choice between these potentials is how he handles the paradox of a blameworthy irrationalism, which may arise from conditions that are unconscious, unquestioned, or culturally sanctioned. In Langmuir's work, this decision is analogous to a choice between good and bad action—it is a moral choice.

Other scholars have raised questions about Langmuir's interpretive model here. Robert Stacey and Anna Sapir Abulafia have both asked in different ways whether it is appropriate to argue that medieval persecutors *should have known* better when it is not clear that they *could have known* better, at least not in Langmuir's terms. Stacey and Sapir Abulafia suggest that medieval definitions of the rational differed from our own without being any less internally consistent. They argue that even among the clerical elite, it is not clear that accusations of Jewish violence would have violated medieval expectations of rational argument.[26] By what evidence were medieval Christians supposed to see the transparent falsity of the accusation, particularly since, as Langmuir remarks, "they knew that Jews had different religious beliefs and practices, but they had little knowledge of what Jews actually believed and what their religious practices were—save that they had been told that they were old, useless, and bad"? (*HRA,* 298). Critics of Langmuir's work have taken up this question in different ways. Of the host desecration charge, Marc Saperstein asks, somewhat glibly, "Can we be sure that every Jew thought of the consecrated host as nothing more than a cookie? Could any historian swear as an expert witness in a court of law that no Jew ever came into possession of a consecrated wafer and acted toward it with contempt, perhaps in order to demonstrate the absurdity of the Christian belief?"[27] Robert Stacey argues, in relation to the 1255 ritual murder case in Lincoln, that by thirteenth-century standards, there were even good "rational empiricist" reasons to believe the accusation.

> We moderns, of course, do not regard miracles as probative; we do not trust confessions, especially when extracted by torture . . . and our American legal system does not regard a series of previous charges as being in any way relevant to determining the truth of a new charge. The thirteenth century, however, took the opposite view on all three counts, and in each case the position taken was fully in keeping with the best rational empirical knowledge of the day. ("History, Religion, and Medieval Antisemitism," 99)[28]

Whose standards of rationality and falsehood finally matter in this determination? How does our negotiation of the problem of blame shift if we acknowledge that the original audiences for such accusations might have had "reasonable" grounds for believing them, despite their falsity?

Langmuir acknowledges this problem and again casts the issue in the form of a misrecognition, though now the terms are more epistemological than symbolic. A claim of ritual murder might seem plausible to an audience, Langmuir suggests, because "it may be hard to distinguish between the statement as an assertion and the statement as a hypothesis. Since the crime could have been committed by Jews, that could be an acceptable hypothesis to investigate; yet if their guilt is asserted with complete conviction without any investigation, it is a chimerical assertion" (*TDA,* 337). You shall know them, it seems, by their works. Those who generalize from claims about specific events to argue for the guilt of the whole group, or presume guilt in advance, demonstrate the operations of irrationality at work. But when this irrationalism stems from mistaking a hypothesis for a fact, the work of drawing distinctions between rational and irrational thought, or between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, begins to look less straightforward than Langmuir suggests. Though medieval people were not modern rational empiricists, they were capable of acting consistently within a historical model of rationality while still giving credence to accusations like ritual murder. However, the issue at stake is only partly historiographical. In fact, Langmuir's arguments recall an unmistakable Judeo-Christian tradition. Clear determinations of guilt are made, and the evil of antisemitism is described as the result of a choice, against reason, to gratify an emotional desire. Irrational thinking is a potential that, when activated, becomes the ill-gotten knowledge of persecution, a parallel to the biblical fall from innocence. In Langmuir's work, this knowledge operates as a danger we must become aware of without accidentally partaking of it.

This moral barrier is in turn meant to serve laudable preventative ends—Langmuir suggests again and again that if we learn to recognize the processes of irrationality then we can learn to prevent them, and so say "never again" with some confidence.

Exemplary Evils

What may be less obvious than the prophylactic intention behind Langmuir's work, however, is its fundamentally defensive structure. Langmuir's theory works to prevent the exploitation of inflammatory accusations by overt antisemites. He does this, first of all, by insistently linking what is real with what is rational, and describing what is unreal as irrational or fantastical. The boundary between the real and the unreal rules the consideration of historical indeterminacy off-limits, and narrows the space available for historical speculation, a conceptual space often exploited by antisemites. This pattern is evident, for example, in Langmuir's distinction between anti-Judaism and antisemitism. The much-discussed massacres of Jewish communities in 1096 by soldiers massing for the First Crusade are finally anti-Jewish rather than antisemitic, according to Langmuir, and the motives of the persecutors are comprehensible as the result of a process of rational thought. The crusaders "killed Jews because they were Jews," he writes, "because Jews were people in the midst of Christendom who stubbornly rejected the nonrational beliefs of Christianity and persisted in adhering to their Judaic religion to the point of martyrdom" (*HRA,* 293). One might hope to reason with or bribe crusaders, something Jews did successfully with many passing recruits. One cannot reason with a persecutor caught up in delusions.[29] Beyond the boundary of hostile—yet still rational—decisions lies an irrational realm we can describe, but never fully understand. Later medieval massacres of Jews, Langmuir argues,

> were triggered, not by a summons to crusade and the attendant accusation of deicide, but by the new irrational accusations of conspiratorial ritual crucifixion, ritual cannibalism, host desecration, and well-poisoning. Someone would accuse the Jews of one of these crimes, and the accusation would inspire mobs to roam from town to town killing Jews for a crime no one had ever seen them commit. . . . [Those who died] were the defenseless victims of their killers' delusions. (*HRA,* 305)[30]

This specter of mass violence takes some of its terrifying aspect from what seems to be the ultimate insufficiency of explanation. Langmuir reinforces

the status of the irrational as something that cannot be encompassed by rational thought—it is a fury, a feeling, a force impossible to understand. The boundary between explicable bad conduct and irrational violence is a boundary meant to reinforce the difference between upstanding rationalists and the worst historical agents they study. I use this comparative term advisedly. Langmuir's analysis implies—even if he does not say so outright—that irrational violence is more inexplicable than violence premised on a "realistic" conflict of interests, though he considers all violence deplorable.

Langmuir's discussion of ritual murder reinforces his division between the rational, real realm of interaction that includes moral as well as immoral potential, and the irrational, fantastical realm of persecution, with its great potential for immoral acts. In "Toward a Definition of Antisemitism," reprinted in the eponymous book, Langmuir writes that the "clearest example" of a chimerical accusation against Jews is ritual murder.

> Had ritual murder occurred, that conduct would have been so corporeal that it could have been directly observed. But not only do we have no satisfactory evidence that Jews ever—to say nothing of a habit—committed ritual murder; a careful examination of the evidence makes it apparent that those who initiated the accusation had never observed that conduct themselves. (*TDA,* 334)

The accusation is therefore chimerical (Langmuir's preferred term), since it concerns actions that are "unobserved and unobservable" (*TDA,* 336). In *History, Religion, and Antisemitism,* he reiterates the central point: "Shortly after 1096, some individuals began to attribute to Jews characteristics that neither they nor any others had observed" (*HRA,* 298). Again, Langmuir describes ritual murder as the primary example of an irrational thought process at work. "The falsity of the fantasy should be apparent," he writes, "although many have believed it right down to the twentieth century" (*HRA,* 299). Though Langmuir is right about the falsity of the legend, what he subtly elides here is the volatile question of historical indeterminacy.

Debates about the "reality" of the ritual murder accusation have been a perennial feature of discussion about it, and Langmuir's insistence on the falsity of the charge is an implicit response to prior attempts to rehabilitate it. While it may seem obvious to anyone with a cursory knowledge of Jewish tradition and the difficulties of Jewish life in medieval Europe that Jews would hardly be likely to engage in corporate plots of ritual murder, there is still an obvious gap between what has "never been observed" to take place and what the historian can reconstruct of the events leading up to an

accusation. This question of what "actually happened" in a given case is closely related to another historically explosive issue: the sometimes open and sometimes implicit struggle over the question of guilt, more specifically, the guilt or innocence of that artificially invoked entity, "the Jews." This gap between event and reconstruction, between claims of guilt and determinations of innocence, has traditionally been exploited by antisemitic interpreters and is hedged about with a genuine sense of danger in Langmuir's work. He wants to rule out serious consideration of the accusation as a historical fact and describes such consideration as the sign of complicity with historical persecutors.

Langmuir returns to the sheer improbability of the accusation in order to suggest that the question of Jewish guilt or innocence is an unproductive, indeed taboo, area of inquiry. In "Historiographic Crucifixion," he writes:

> It is empirically possible that one of the alleged victims of ritual murder was killed by a Jew but so improbable compared with other probabilities as not to deserve mention. Yet it was this carefully preserved loophole that enabled [certain scholars] to engage in wishful thinking and conjecture what happened in one case—the case that initiated the long series of generalized accusations of ritual murder." (*TDA,* 296–97)

What Langmuir describes as a "loophole" is the space of interpretive uncertainty, and it marks the uncomfortable juncture where historiography meets politics. Langmuir responds to this risky indeterminacy by foreclosing it, and insisting on a moral, and fundamentally memorial, determination regarding the guilt of persecutors and the innocence of their victims. The language of the loophole describes the impossibility of positive knowledge where ritual murder accusations are concerned, in the sense that we can never know what "actually happened" in a given case, thanks to the filters of bias, suggestive rhetoric, and predetermined conclusions that surround the surviving historical testimony. On an epistemological level, the problem is irreducible. There is not now, nor will there ever be, some magical instrument for determining what actually happened in Norwich in 1144, or in many other examples of the ritual murder accusation.

On an ethical level, this indeterminacy has had unpredictable consequences, as the question of what we know or cannot know shades almost inevitably into the question of who is responsible, and for what. The loophole is also the space of an alibi, which allows those who would like to excuse Christians for the persecution of Jews, or worse yet, to continue to demonize Jews, to find some purchase for their arguments. I would like to

suggest that Langmuir resolves both the epistemological and ethical problems by mapping them onto one another. Refusing to inquire into the issue of historical indeterminacy is one way of foreclosing the possibility of antisemitic exploitation. I am not implying that we should reopen the question of whether Jews engaged in conspiracies to kill Christian children. My point is larger: it is not Langmuir's claim that is in question but his defensiveness, and his determination to decide the issue in advance, to rule certain areas of inquiry as dangerous and off-limits. We can agree that the blood libel is a historiographical fantasy and still ask what is at stake in such strong moral prohibitions within a tradition of historiography that appeals to notions of objectivity and disinterestedness. What is at risk in this language of danger? What is secured by patrolling the boundary line between licit and illicit questions?

In the course of Ariel Toaff's controversial argument, in *Pasque di sangue,* about the alleged use of human blood among a small group of Jewish "fundamentalists" during the Middle Ages, he invokes Langmuir as a primary example of a scholar for whom the question of the "reality" of the blood libel was decided, as he put it, "a priori."[31] The moral boundary Langmuir traces around the ritual murder accusation is, according to Toaff, past due for a test. It was precisely by using the language of taboo that Toaff framed his book and later defended it against criticisms.[32] Yet what Langmuir is protecting, with his fence around the question of the accusation's illusory "reality," is more than some outmoded propriety, as Toaff suggests. Instead Langmuir understands—correctly, as the reception of Toaff's work indicates—that approaching the problem of methodological indeterminacy is intertwined with a troubling ethical indeterminacy. In my introduction, I referred to Hayden White's argument that historical relativism has its limit in cognitive responsibility to the evidence. Without such responsibility, we do not have history. Yet in a case where the evidence itself is veined with contradictions, bias, and fantasy, the standard of "cognitive responsibility" becomes difficult to define. And in a space of speculative historical reconstruction, ideological interests can all the more easily steer interpretation. Langmuir suggests that to speculate improvidently about a sensitive historical issue like the ritual murder accusation is to court moral compromise: within the horizon of the loophole, the investigator risks undermining his own status as an ethical observer. Entering the space of a "chimerical fantasy," in other words, puts us in danger of being taken over by it, becoming the tool of a powerful cultural narrative we cannot control.

The sense of a danger that has not yet passed away lies behind Langmuir's vehement insistence on the obvious falsehood of the legend, and his criticism of those who fail to rebut it adequately.[33] That this project is fraught with anxiety is easy to see. Robert Stacey telegraphs this in his review: "No sane individual will today fail to recognize that this charge [ritual murder] is entirely chimerical. It has no kernel of truth about it; I trust it will be obvious that I am not attempting to revive it" ("History, Religion, and Medieval Antisemitism," 99). The taboo object always threatens to escape historiographical control, and no rhetorical fence seems quite strong enough to contain it. Langmuir himself worries over those who have "believed [the accusation] right down to the twentieth century" (*HRA,* 299). This ghost, the shadow of a belief so powerful that it has assembled mobs to roam the streets, hangs over every discussion of the ritual murder accusation, and has shaped the terms of conversation.

Langmuir acknowledges the problem of exploitation in terms of responsibility, figured as blame, when he writes:

> The possibility that William [of Norwich] had been martyrized [*sic*] by Jews, at least by some Jews, whether sane, mad, or bad, remained open, a loophole that encouraged conjectures to that effect. . . . And if that was the case, then Jews, not Christians, were primarily responsible for the ritual murder accusation that would haunt them through the centuries. (*TDA,* 296)

Here, Langmuir seems to substantiate the idea that one accusation stands in for others. He is well aware that earlier hypotheses of "exceptional" Jewish culprits have often led to dubioius insinuations of collective guilt (a theme that reappears in public discussion of the Toaff affair, discussed below). One might ask how one guilty Jew, regardless of his mental state, could possibly carry this kind of responsibility. But rather than contest the logic that slips easily from one murder to collective blame, Langmuir appears to underwrite it. If any Jew at any time were guilty, according to this reasoning, then all Jews would be considered guilty and "responsible" for the blood accusation that "would haunt them through the centuries."[34] Langmuir deals in questions of collective guilt or innocence himself.[35] By doing so he effectively agrees to play on the same terrain as antisemitic invective, always just offstage in his analysis, that argues for an eternal and collective Jewish guilt. Langmuir's structure of blame ironically replays and inverts an antisemitic structure of guilt and innuendo.

The Limits of Moralization

Despite my critiques, I want to emphasize both the value of Langmuir's inquiry and its important place in contemporary intellectual thought. Though he is working within a historiographical tradition that tends to foreground determinations of blame, Langmuir also meditates on larger questions about the meaning and trajectory of Western history in light of twentieth-century atrocities. He is ultimately asking a familiar and vitally important question, one that reverberates through post-Holocaust thought: What is Western civilization, that such things could happen here? Langmuir's moralization is concerned with the realm of the prohibition as Ricoeur describes it. This is the "no" that signals clear boundaries and directives about what we must not do, and the complicities we must avoid. This is both the strength of Langmuir's analysis, in terms of its arbitration of meaning, and its weakness, in terms of the limits of understanding it makes possible. Langmuir's moralization of the past may involve false reassurances—that irrational beliefs can be neatly cordoned off from the operations of right reason; that the line dividing persecutors and victims forms two neat "camps" that do not mingle or confuse categories; and that if we are consistently rational, we will not fall prey to psychological mechanisms of hatred. I would suggest that, in addition to Langmuir's valuable concern with basic historical justice, his conclusions entail ethical challenges to which we must also attend. One risk of this historiographical moralization is that we will have the satisfaction of assigning blame without the penalty of self-examination. As Judith Butler argues in *Giving an Account of Oneself,* this is a risk with political as well as ethical consequences, and speaks to the historian's vision of responsibility, not only at the level of evaluating historical events but in terms of imagining the implications of history for the present and future.

What I offer by way of closing is less a critique of Langmuir's work than an active contextualization, one that seeks to understand his position on a familiar continuum between the poles of moralization and contingency, morality and ethics. Moralization offers us a sense of justice and judgment, the satisfaction of rendering final verdicts and delivering just deserts. Ethics is more open-ended, less concerned with judgment than understanding the contingencies that influence human action. The tension between morality and ethics, as I am using these terms here, is a classic philosophical problem, a dialectic that is never fully satisfied. Pure judgment appears to shut out the serious consideration of extenuating circum-

stances, even to become an unforgiving fundamentalism. Pure understanding appears to foreclose any meaningful sense of justice at all. Neither approach can be considered a final answer. Between these two terms ethical debates about the proper historical understanding of the ritual murder accusation have recently coalesced. Langmuir's work represents a venerable view of Jewish-Christian relations in which moralization is prominent. Recent arguments like those of Israel Yuval and Elliott Horowitz occupy a position closer to the ethical, as Ricoeur has defined it: these historians are less preoccupied with the question of blame than with understanding the circumstances that contribute not only to violent acts of persecution but to the misunderstandings between religious communities that feed them.

But this continuum—often a friction—between moralization and ethics is not new to contemporary intellectual history, particularly where studies of Jewish history are concerned. Langmuir's preoccupation with diagnosing the forms of persecution recalls debates from the 1990s about understanding the ordinary perpetrators of the Final Solution and is linked to American memorialization of the Holocaust, particularly its Jewish victims. This cultural preoccupation, sometimes referred to as the "Americanization" of the Holocaust, has appeared both obvious and puzzling, prompting scholars to ask why events that occurred so far from American shores should have become part of a national tradition.[36] Langmuir, who grew up in Canada but spent most of his working life in the United States, was certainly familiar with these trends, though I do not want to imply that they simply determined his conclusions. Jeffrey Alexander has written about the larger "cultural matrix" in which memory is negotiated, in terms that emphasize the broad and various sociological factors at work. His account emphasizes a transformation in American memory of the Holocaust between the immediate postwar period, when it was described as a representative example of the many atrocities committed by the Nazis, to the post-1960s era, when the centrality of Jewish persecution was emphasized and the word *holocaust* itself emerged as an accepted term to describe it.[37] Alexander describes the earlier framework as a "progressive" narrative, in that it sought to "redeem" the Holocaust by building a better world in its aftermath, while the later narrative is tragic, because it emphasizes the helplessness of sufferers and the universal dimensions of the ethical violation committed by the Nazis ("Social Construction," 15–45). For Alexander, the emphasis on the global moral lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust is a positive outcome of its universalization, and he is not inclined to

agree with those who see this process as a form of trivialization ("Social Construction," 60–61).

Within this broad schema of cultural change, Langmuir occupies an interesting position. As a Canadian soldier who fought the Nazis and nearly died of wounds sustained on the battlefield, he belonged to that generation of fighting men who returned home determined to build a society that would be a monument to the progressive ideal Alexander describes, a bulwark against future outrages. But as the husband of a Holocaust survivor, Langmuir knew the costs of the war from the perspective of victims as well as combatants.[38] His project, described in terms of a thirty-year calling in his memorial tributes, had a deeply personal dimension.[39] This may account for the strident tone of some of his arguments, and especially his desire for an absolute rebuttal of antisemitic claims. At a greater remove, he was also a close observer of the major changes in academic and cultural life beginning in the 1970s, and so intimately familiar with the cultural shifts Alexander describes.[40] During this period, he witnessed the formation of Jewish studies departments and programs in the United States, helping to found one himself at Stanford, and he clearly understood that the questions he was asking were central contemporary concerns. It is possible to describe Langmuir's work as occupying a fault line between the progressive and tragic narratives, emphasizing the hope of finally and definitively falsifying antisemitic claims, while stressing the universal moral implications of his theories.

Langmuir's theorization of antisemitism also offers us an unexpected vantage point from which to survey these cultural trends, particularly if we situate him as a partner in the debate over perpetrator history in the early to mid-1990s, just a few years after the publication of his major works. These connections are structural, in the sense that they emerge from a broadly shared contemporary context. However the reading I offer here is suggestive rather than comprehensive—I do not pretend to engage in a thorough survey of this complex field, only to point to a critical moment of structural resonance between Langmuir's work and debates about Holocaust perpetrators that speaks to the larger entanglement of ethics and historiography in the broader culture. In the extended conversation between Saul Friedlander and Dominick LaCapra, for example, a key question is how the historian (or, by extension, his audience) is implicated in the persecuting mentalities he holds at a distance. In discussing "ordinary" perpetrators of the Holocaust, Dominick LaCapra has sketched the concept of a

"negative sublime."[41] This stems in part from the giddy elation (what Friedlander calls *Rausch*) that sometimes accompanied horrific acts of murder during the Holocaust, when the perpetrators' consciousness of having transgressed and survived all ordinary moral limits could lend a carnival atmosphere to acts of violence. Friedlander writes that it is at the point of understanding such moments that we remain "blocked": "The historian can analyze the phenomenon from the 'outside,' but, *in this case, his unease cannot but stem from the noncongruence between intellectual probing and the blocking of intuitive comprehension.*"[42] The elation recalled by some perpetrators as accompanying terrible brutality is something we cannot allow ourselves to understand, even if we recognize its presence intuitively. Friedlander suggests that the historian often recognizes such comprehension as an ill-gotten knowledge, which he must block in order to prevent a sense of complicity or implication in the phenomena he studies.[43] For Langmuir, also, intuitive understanding of the perverse satisfactions of persecution is repressed, and then reframed in terms of the irrational. His argument can be distilled to a kind of syllogism: irrational thought processes lead to the worst kinds of persecutory violence; "we" have chosen not to succumb to irrationalism; ergo, "we" are not implicated in the historical dynamics of persecution.

A significant danger of this argument is that we merely reverse the poles of a conceptual system built on exclusion, and designate a new other—now the evils to be feared are the persecutors of Jews rather than Jews themselves—without fully understanding the forces that lead to persecution. Langmuir's answers may in fact mystify as much as they explain. Persecutors are bad minds with whom we cannot identify; we learn what we should not become from this moral allegory, but not how ordinary people might be implicated in the dangerous knowledge of persecution. Judith Butler frames this problem in stark terms.

> Condemnation becomes the way in which we establish the other as nonrecognizable or jettison some aspect of ourselves that we lodge in the other, whom we then condemn. In this sense, condemnation can work against self-knowledge, inasmuch as it moralizes a self by disavowing commonality with the judged.[44]

Butler's arguments recall the uneasiness of LaCapra and Friedlander in their efforts to account for the "blocking" of intuition in relation to the Holocaust. But she also introduces a new consideration: judgment presumes a relation of power, and power may be abused. We might be

tempted to conclude here, with this salutary reminder of the limits of moralization. Yet the open-ended emphasis on understanding over judgment represented by the sphere of the ethical inspires its own discomfiting questions. Neither the limits of moralization nor the open-endedness of ethical inquiry entirely satisfies the ethicomethodological demands of historical understanding.

In the well-known public debates between Daniel Goldhagen and Christopher Browning about the role of ordinary men in the carnage of the Holocaust, readers were presented with a stark choice that highlights the tension between moralization and contingency.[45] In *Hitler's Willing Executioners,* Goldhagen suggests there was something uniquely German about the "eliminationist antisemitism" that led to the Holocaust.[46] As Jane Caplan describes it, he "shifted the focus away from the bureaucrats and technicians of genocide . . . [and] focuse[d] instead on the killers at the apparently unmediated moment of individual choice, as they faced and destroyed their victims: as Germans slaughtered Jews."[47] The emphasis on choice is hardly incidental: for Goldhagen as for Langmuir, the unmediated choice to murder is what justifies moral judgment. There are few who would disagree with this general principle, though certainly Goldhagen (like Langmuir) was critiqued on other grounds—including the transparency of the choices involved.[48]

Goldhagen's work was frequently compared to Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men.*[49] Browning examines the testimony of men in circumstances similar to those described by Goldhagen, but he emphasizes how the choices of ordinary individuals in police battalions *were* mediated by cultural and individual factors. These men struggled with the command to kill and some found themselves unequal to the task, even refusing the duty outright or finding ways to evade it. If Goldhagen was accused of reductionism, even racism, for his obsessive emphasis on the uniquely *German* character of the Holocaust, critics feared that Browning's account of how ordinary men were transformed into killers risked a leveling relativism, perhaps even encouraging the exoneration of murderers. Browning's response to such critiques insisted on the ethical importance of his enquiry.

> Certainly, the writing of my history . . . requires a rejection of demonization. The men who carried out these massacres, like those who refused or evaded, were human beings. I must recognize that in such a situation I could have been either a killer or an evader—both were human—if I want to understand and explain the behavior of both as best

> I can. This recognition does indeed mean an attempt to empathize. What I do not accept, however, are the old clichés that to explain is to excuse, that to understand is to forgive. Explaining is not excusing; understanding is not forgiving.[50]

Browning invokes understanding as the value driving his inquiry but emphasizes that this effort does not preclude judgment. Yet it is precisely the recognition that "I could have been either a killer or an evader" that disturbs the status quo of moralization, and appears to trouble a final historical verdict. Explaining is not excusing, but a self-knowledge that makes room for the possibility of one's similarity to the ultimate modern perpetrator inspires uneasiness about the task of judging. This is a tension Langmuir works to mitigate by coupling universal moral weakness with an equally universal potential for choice.

Dominick LaCapra has spoken to the difficulty of grappling with this acknowledgment of one's potential for such actions.

> The inability to recognize oneself, at least potentially, in Himmler may derive from insufficient insight into the self—from what may be radically disorienting or even blinding if it is seen. In other words, it may, as Friedlander intimates, be due to repression or even to the denial of the other within oneself. But an awareness or recognition of the other, to the extent it is desirable, in no sense entails affirmation or acceptance. On the contrary, it requires vigilance and the mounting of conscious resistance to deadly tendencies that are fostered but never simply determined by certain historical conditions.[51]

Like Browning, LaCapra insists that understanding the internal capacities that enable men to commit mass murder—capacities we may even share—does not amount to acceptance. But this combined self-awareness and vigilance is difficult to understand as a program of ethical action. When it comes to writing history, such a position can easily look like equivocation.

My purpose here is not to dwell on the details of the Goldhagen controversy but only to remark on the obvious congruence between this affair and key ethical themes present in Langmuir's work and the expanded context of debate undertaken in later chapters. What I am suggesting is that the tension between the moral and the ethical realms is not only perennial but a persistent feature of debates about fraught moments of historical understanding I have termed *limit events.* What is at stake here is the difference between judgment and understanding, between clear moral meaning and the consideration of historical contingencies. The evaluation of con-

tingencies tends to suggest that even the most heinous offenses may entail more ambiguous moral choices than most of us are comfortable considering. In written exchanges between Goldhagen and Browning, and in evaluations of their work, it is clear that questions of responsibility and ethical evaluation are paramount. Empathy is felt to be dangerous where there can be no forgiveness, and such considerations are bound to tax any moral limit. This debate, like the conversation between LaCapra and Friedlander, highlights some fundamental ethical questions for the historical understanding of persecution: How should we respond to the violation of the most basic precepts of human communal life? How should we understand those who commit such violations? And how are we to evaluate the historical figure who is arguably the ultimate "other" in modern thought—the mass killer?

Historiographical debates about the blood libel obviously do not feature mass killers in the modern sense, but as my analysis of Langmuir's work indicates, the specter of pogrom and massacre, as well as a retrospective awareness of modern murderers, haunts this conversation. Recent work by Israel Yuval (discussed in the next chapter) testifies to a shift in the ethicomethodological paradigm of historical studies on Jewish-Christian relations in general, and the ritual murder libel in particular, from the moral to the ethical end of the continuum. This change in perspective works on two levels: at one level of remove, we are asked to reframe our perception of relations between historical communities and to hold back the question of blame in favor of a broader understanding of the dynamics of mutual relation. But we are also implicitly asked to think anew about the ethical implications of this history for the present and future. The "moral" of the story is more ambiguous, fraught with the consideration of contingencies and what I call an ethics of implication. I view Gillian Rose as the preeminent philosophical voice of this ethics, but Judith Butler offers a cogent critique of the structure of a moralizing ethics that allows us to glimpse what is meant by responsibility within an ethics of contingency and implication.[52]

Butler's ethical argument reframes responsibility by revisiting the demands that emerge from our relations with the other—even or especially those relations that are unwilled or forced upon us. Langmuir, and an ethics of moralization more generally, understands responsibility in terms of judgment; for Butler, and for those who want to hold judgment in abeyance in service of understanding, responsibility must be imagined in terms of responsiveness to the other. For Butler, this means remaining eth-

ically responsive even to the other who harms us, and trying to imagine our relations with the other in terms different from those of retaliation or revenge. This responsiveness means, in fact, transforming our sense of intense vulnerability into an ethic of relationality that "provide[s] a way to understand that none of us is fully bounded, utterly separate, but, rather, we are in our skins, given over, in each other's hands, at each other's mercy" (*GA,* 101). It is this emphasis on relationality and the difficulty of ethical relations that brings Butler's ethics into conversation with Gillian Rose's philosophy. Both are concerned with what Rose calls "the broken middle" of ethical (and political) thought discussed in the next chapter: from this vantage, we never begin, in personal, historical, or political terms, from a "clean slate." Our ethical relations always presuppose prior relations, prior failings, a history capable of generating grudges and bias at least as often as goodwill.

Butler approaches these questions in terms of the formation of the subject, and the ways our self-understanding is always produced within the context of "impingements" by others. Impingements are the multitude of ways that others impose on us, with or without intending to, and by imposing on us, forcibly shape and prompt us to "give an account" of ourselves—that is, to produce a narrative of the self that is being continually revised in relation to new impingements. These impingements need not be hostile, but are a cost and consequence of *any* relational life lived among others. This is how Butler can write that our relations with others form a "horizon of choice" that "grounds our responsibility" in conditions we do not choose (*GA,* 101).[53] Part of what this entails is a recognition that every self emerges from a history and a web of relations that he or she does not choose and can never fully account for, but that nevertheless requires a response. Butler argues that this evolution of identity does not result in loss of agency. We are still responsible, but the context of our responsibility is larger: "I cannot think the question of responsibility alone, in isolation from the other. If I do, I have taken myself out of the mode of address (being addressed as well as addressing the other) in which the problem of responsibility first emerges" (*GA,* 84). Our emergence as subjects in a world we do not choose, yet to which we remain vulnerable, is the basis of our ethical relations with others.

Responsibility emerges for Butler from the difficult lessons drawn from the experience of impingement itself. Her argument unfolds in tension with Levinas's meditations on otherness and how the face of the other calls us to responsibility. She takes up the problem of the most difficult

ethical case for Levinas: the status of an other who actively harms and injures us, beyond the unavoidable intrusion or impingement that involves us in a relation with any other. "The other's actions 'address' me," she writes,

> in the sense that those actions belong to an Other who is irreducible, whose "face" makes an ethical demand upon me. We might say, "even the Other who brutalizes me has a face," and that would capture the difficulty of remaining ethically responsive to those who do injury to us. For Levinas, however, the demand is even greater: "precisely the Other who persecutes me has a face." (*GA,* 90)

Paradoxically, this painful relation calls us to responsibility precisely because it is unwilled: it is our feeling of susceptibility, of vulnerability to injury, that enables us to become responsive to the other. Butler reiterates that "our ordinary way of thinking about responsibility is altered in Levinas's formulation" (*GA,* 91). Responsibility cannot be separated from responsiveness or relation.[54] In sympathy with Levinas, she argues that the victim of persecution becomes the bearer of a difficult responsibility. However, she reminds us that within this Levinasian vision,

> *We do not take responsibility for the Other's acts as if we authored those acts.* On the contrary, we affirm the unfreedom at the heart of our relations. I cannot disavow my relation to the Other, regardless of what the Other does, regardless of what I might will. Indeed, responsibility is not a matter of cultivating a will, but of making use of an unwilled susceptibility as a resource for becoming responsive to the Other. Whatever the Other has done, the Other still makes an ethical demand upon me, has a "face" to which I am obligated to respond—meaning that I am, as it were, precluded from revenge by virtue of a relation I never chose. (*GA,* 91)

This is a hard ethical lesson, and speaks to the challenge of negotiating the claims of justice alongside the aims of ethics. Butler acknowledges that remaining responsive to an other who harms us may feel "horrible, impossible" (*GA,* 92), yet she argues that it is the ethically necessary alternative to a revenge that would simply reverse and replicate the structures of violence. A moralization that focuses on judgment alone encourages a politics of revenge. "Responsibility thus arises as a demand upon the persecuted, and its central dilemma is whether or not one may kill in response to persecution" (*GA,* 92). This is where Butler's ethical inquiry intersects most

powerfully with the demands of politics, and calls up her earlier arguments about the ethical violence that often attends judgment. But it is critical to remember that Butler is not advocating an ethical absolute that would force us to say, for example, that a Himmler or a Göring is undeserving of judgment. She agrees that such judgments are certainly called for (*GA,* 45). What concerns her is the possibility that the identities of victim and persecutor can become fixed and essential, regardless of changes in circumstances. Under these conditions, cycles of violence may be perpetuated rather than resolved.

Though Butler is mindful of the reality of historical contingency, both she and Levinas speak the language of philosophy—and with specific consequences. The realm of the primary encounter described by Levinas, in particular, refers to an affective dimension of human experience that recurs over and over again within a single life, without, however, necessarily being isolatable to historically specific moments.[55] Our encounters with others are continuous and repeated. Though Butler is concerned with the realm of social relations, she, too, describes the formation of the self within a dynamic of constant relationality in terms that are primarily philosophical rather than historical.

Indeed, Butler is particularly critical of Levinas when he appears to conflate his broad philosophical claims with specific historical categories of experience. Yet this critique does not entail the disovowal of politics. Rather, it is here, in her critique of Levinas, that the political implications of her own arguments come to the fore. Butler describes how Levinas refers to "the essence of Judaism" as the soul of persecution and describes Judaism as the special bearer of the responsibility emerging from persecution.[56] Butler argues this is problematic.

> If Jews are considered "elect" because they carry a message of universality, and what is "universal" in Levinas's view is the inaugurative structuring of the subject through persecution and ethical demand, then the Jew becomes the model and instance for preontological persecution. The problem, of course, is that "the Jew" is a category that belongs to a culturally constituted ontology . . . so if the Jew maintains an "elective" status in relation to ethical responsiveness, then Levinas fully confuses the preontological and the ontological. (*GA,* 94)

Such a confusion of categories privileges the Jews as a unique class of victims, specific historical victims who nevertheless stand in as universal terms. Butler pursues this train of thought as a way of highlighting the

weaknesses of what I have called an ethics of moralization. If Levinas violates the terms of his own argument, he nevertheless does so in a way that illuminates the real-world politics of historical persecution. There are serious political dangers to the desire for revenge that can follow from a strong version of the ethics of moralization and blame. Mindful of these, Butler remarks,

> It is always possible to say, "Oh, some violence was done to me, and this gives me full permission to act under the sign of 'self-defense.'" Many atrocities are committed under the sign of a "self-defense" that, precisely because it achieves a permanent moral justification for retaliation, knows no end and can have no end. Such a strategy has developed an infinite way to rename its aggression as suffering and so provides an infinite justification for its aggression. (*GA,* 100–101)

Though Butler does not connect these two moments in her argument explicitly, Israel appears to be in the background of this critique of an "infinite justification for aggression."[57] This places her within the same genealogy of intellectual thought as some "postzionist" historians who, I will argue in the next chapter, are preoccupied with questions of Israeli identity that resonate with the issues of ethical relationality Butler raises here.[58] In broader ethical terms, Butler is concerned that the status of victim may become fixed and essential, removed from the specificities of context or change over time.

Butler critiques one end of what I have described as an ethical continuum, highlighting the weaknesses of moralization in favor of an ideal ethical aim. But neither ethical aim nor moral norm has a monopoly on ethical thought—each is always being modified by the other in an ongoing dialectical process. In Butler's account, the challenges of an ethics of contingency are visible as well as its strengths. Butler's arguments are more persuasive when she points to the political dangers of a logic of revenge than when she tries to articulate an affirmative alternative. There is something almost millenarian about the new world she imagines when she asks, "What might it mean to undergo violation, to insist upon *not* resolving grief and staunching vulnerability too quickly through a turn to violence, and to practice, as an experiment in living otherwise, nonviolence in an emphatically nonreciprocal response? What would it mean, in the face of violence, to refuse to return it?" (*GA,* 100). Despite this appeal to what may be an impossible ideal, Butler is pragmatic when she argues for beginning somewhere in the middle, between a new world and a corrupted

relation of violence. She writes, "This is a situation we do not choose. It forms the horizon of choice, and it grounds our responsibility. In this sense, we are not responsible for it, but it creates the conditions under which we assume responsibility. We did not create it, and therefore it is what we must heed" (*GA,* 101). Again, I want to emphasize that Butler does not preclude the necessity of judgment, but wants to insist on our continued relationality with others, and (as Rose argues) an awareness that the circumstances of those relations change and evolve. Israel Yuval's connection to this critique is structural and indirect; he exposes the dysfunctional dynamics of mutual identity formation in medieval Jewish-Christian history, leaving the politics of the present hovering in the background. He emphasizes the conditions that frame choices for historical actors, whether they are victims or persecutors. Yuval also shifts the focus from an explanation that emphasizes responsibility "for" historical events, to one that emphasizes our responsibility "to" an unknown future. The discourse of ethics, in addition to mediating our understanding of the past, also speaks (indirectly) to history's contemporary relevance.

It is here, at this horizon of choice, in what Gillian Rose has described as the broken middle, in the undesired conditions under which we assume responsibility, that we must negotiate the painful problem of coming to terms with the other-as-perpetrator. Judgment is assuredly necessary. To hold judgment permanently in suspension would constitute a moral outrage in itself. This is something Gavin Langmuir understood very well. The demand for judgment is called up even in Thomas of Monmouth's unwitting forecast of "extermination." Yet judgment must be tempered by a recognition of ourselves—or some unwelcome potential within ourselves—in the other. And our condemnation must consist of more than a simple rejection and taking of vengeance upon the perpetrator—even if this is a historiographical vengeance, taken symbolically and after the fact.[59] "Violence," Butler writes, "is neither a just punishment we suffer nor a just revenge for what we suffer" (*GA,* 101).

CHAPTER 3

On Being Implicated: Israel Yuval and the New History of Medieval Jewish-Christian Relations

IN HIS *Life and Miracles of William of Norwich,* the monk Thomas of Monmouth calls up a casual remark he might have heard in the street or marketplace. The Norwich Jews, he writes,

> used to rail at us insolently, saying, "You ought to be very much obliged to us, for we have made a saint and martyr for you. Verily we have done you a great deal of good, and a good which you retort upon us as a crime. Aye! we have done for you what you could not do for yourselves." (II.95)[1]

Thomas's outrage at this provocative behavior cannot hide the impression that this is an irreverent joke, perhaps even a joke told at Thomas's expense, given his struggle to encourage a following for William in Norwich. It is as if we are allowed to glimpse a whole world from two different perspectives at once. The anonymous Jewish interlocutor (likely rendered plural here for effect) tells a pointed joke.[2] Thomas not only fails to find this exchange funny, he sees a menacing principle at work behind it, since the joke exemplifies what he sees as the terrible and terrifying "audacity" of the Jews.

If it is difficult to know how to handle Thomas's wishful thinking about the extermination of Jews in his text, it is equally unclear how we should approach this anecdote about a joking and audacious Jew, a figure who is liable to appear almost as surprising to us as he is to Thomas, if for differ-

ent reasons. Is it really possible to imagine such brash self-confidence surviving amidst a hostile Christian majority? Is this a moment when Thomas tells us something he believes he knows, or a moment when he embellishes for effect? Though this is a minor exchange in Thomas's text, such problems of interpretation carry substantial historiographical effects. If we are to reframe this anecdote as evidence of some actual interaction rather than an act of imaginative spite on Thomas's part, we must necessarily resituate historical relations between Christians and Jews within a dynamic that challenges the neat picture of two communities living alongside yet in virtual isolation from one another. It is possible to understand this account of a joke that misfired as a representative feature in a new historiographical landscape.

The present chapter traces the emergence of an active reimagination of Jewish-Christian relations in the work of Israel Yuval, an exemplar of what I have described as the turn toward contingency and implication in medieval Jewish studies, and a controversial reinterpreter of the blood libel. In contrast to the more traditional ethics of moralization I examined in the previous chapter, Yuval's ethics of implication represents an attempt to set aside the moralizing categories of victim and persecutor in order to ask what it means to be implicated in a historical dynamic, even when one is a victim of persecution. Scholars associated with the broad ethical shift toward considerations of contingency, such as Elliott Horowitz, Jeremy Cohen, and David Malkiel, emphasize medieval Jewish agency and self-determination, drawing attention to the capacity for contestation, ambivalence, hostility, and even violence among the Jewish minority in medieval Europe.[3] Yuval's focus on the question of mutual implication shares this perspective, emphasizing the evolution of interreligious conflicts in a context of contingent change. Such a move is not about blaming victims, still less about exonerating persecutors. This renewed emphasis on Jewish perspectives and Jewish agency, even aggressive agency, is intended to restore a three-dimensional understanding to hostile intergroup relations, which tend to be more complex than the premise of completely divided communities might lead us to believe. This methodological and ethical move has also been accompanied by a perspectival shift in relation to previous scholarship that Elliott Horowitz, in particular, has taken pains to articulate. Scholars associated with the turn to contingency and implication self-consciously move away from a defensive posture toward a sometimes overt resistance to apologetics, from an emphasis on Jewish suffering and the implicit rebuttal of the claims of antisemites, to an emphasis on Jewish

religious ideology and agency. This shift also reorders a political limit capable of speaking to the volatile history of the modern Jewish state.

Israel Yuval's work represents one of the most discussed developments in scholarship on the blood libel in recent memory. He argues that the charge of ritual murder emerged in the aftermath of a series of attacks on Jewish communities in the Rhine Valley by Christian recruits massing for the First Crusade in 1096. Yuval hypothesizes a connection between Christian horror at Jewish acts of martyrdom at this time and the earliest twelfth-century accusations that Jews murdered Christian children in acts of ritual spite. This theory first appeared as a controversial article in the Israeli journal *Zion,* and later became the center of Yuval's book *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,* published in Hebrew in 2000 and released in English in 2006.[4] Despite early controversy, Yuval's work has been influential, and his thinking might be considered broadly representative of a trend in scholarship that emphasizes Jewish-Christian relations as well as divisions.

The inverted structures of Jewish accounts of martyrdom and Christian stories of ritual murder occupy the literal and figurative center of Yuval's book, but his intellectual project is much larger, demonstrating an oppositional process of mutual self-definition at work, in which each group's response to the other generates a network of complementary images that notch together like pieces of a puzzle stretching to the horizon of historical knowledge. Yuval enters the space of epistemological indeterminacy that troubles historical analysis of the ritual murder accusation—what Langmuir refers to as the "loophole" of interpretation—by offering a bold argument about the roots of the libel that relies upon methods of textual hermeneutics. If Langmuir fences off the loophole as a space of taboo and danger, Yuval must make determinations about this space in order to highlight a discomfiting scene of ethical relationality in which Jewish victims, while still remaining targets of persecution, are also figured as actively implicated in the historical processes of which they are a part. This charged ethical reevaluation of the question of responsibility has dramatically affected the reception of Yuval's work and raises questions about its political significance. In considering such issues, I read Yuval's historiography alongside the philosophy of Gillian Rose, a prolific scholar whose political-ethical meditations open up the difficult conceptual terrain on which Yuval reimagines Jewish-Christian relations as well as the ritual murder story. By putting the historian in dialogue with the philosopher, I hope to measure the distance between an argument emphasizing implication in a his-

torical dynamic and one that is complicit with an antisemitic narrative that blames historical Jews for their own persecution. It is at the border of the political that both the strengths and limits of Yuval's interpretive project come into focus.

Ethics and Implication

Gillian Rose was a philosopher preoccupied throughout her brief but notable career by the problems of negotiating ethical implication and structures of identity, concerns shared by Israel Yuval. The relation between the philosopher and the historian I open up here can be summarized this way: if Rose wants to return history to philosophy, then Yuval returns a particular philosophical view to medieval history. Rose's insistence on considering the ethical dilemmas of politics within history offers a sense of the far-reaching revisionism of Yuval's project and a key for deciphering its ethical stakes, while Yuval's work offers us a concrete opportunity to explore the entailments—ethical, methodological, and finally political—of a perspective that privileges the problem of implication over a moralizing need to assign blame. However, I do not intend to imply that Yuval himself makes a claim to this effect. Given his caution in making overarching statements about method and his clear desire to refrain from polemic in his recent work, it seems more likely that he would characterize the questions at stake in methodological, empirical, and traditionally historicist terms. However I am more interested in historiographical *effects* than intentions, and here Yuval's work not only is in sympathy with Rose's but engages in reimagining Jewish-Christian relations in terms that resonate with the open-ended deliberative style of the ethical realm as Ricoeur describes it.

Rose's work is polemical, idiosyncratic, and difficult. Before her untimely death, she was engaged in a far-reaching project to recuperate Hegel's speculative philosophy, read through her own lens.[5] She was also a tart and unstinting critic of poststructuralism, which she saw as quasi-messianic in inspiration, reproducing the binary logic it claims to repudiate.[6] Both of these preoccupations put her out of step with her intellectual contemporaries. As one obituary writer, Arnold Jacob Wolf, writes, "She has no disciples, only friends who mourn her loss."[7] I believe her work may be especially timely now, when even radical gestures seem exhausted within contemporary political and intellectual debates.[8] However I am less concerned with Rose's philosophical quarrels with the great figures of twentieth-century thought than with her unflinching engagement with many of

the same ethical questions critical to my analysis here: How can we understand historical dilemmas of power and victimization? What is the potential for ethical deliberation within but also beyond the demands of praise and blame? How might ethics be implicated in a politics?

If for Judith Butler these questions concern our ethical relationality as individuals and an effort to imagine a politics that short-circuits revenge, Rose frames her inquiry in terms of our relation, as individuals, with the body politic, and the intellectual structures that sustain it. In Rose's oeuvre, she dwells stubbornly in the tension between norm and ideal, rather than resolving our discomfort with a false synthesis. She also refuses to accept a false appeal to a transcendent concept meant to rescue us from our wrestling with difficulty. Instead, we are always negotiating between two sets of demands: between the claims of what is and the vision of what might be, on the one hand, and the competing claims of different norms, on the other.

This conceptual space of evolving but imperfect concession, located somewhere between messianic hope and the compromised work of reason, is what Rose calls "the broken middle." This brokenness is a concept central to her work and emerges (in Hegelian fashion) through metaphors and analogies that speak to its historically shifting, contingent character. Perhaps the clearest of these metaphors is her analogy of three symbolic cities of modern thought: New Jerusalem, the citadel of ethics (particularly the "new ethics" of Levinas), community, and unambivalent identity; Athens, the city of degraded reason, the coercive powers of the state, and identity divided against itself; and the third city, unnamed, where we must necessarily make our dwelling, and, according to Rose, where we are obligated to build our philosophical home.[9] The first two cities are equally mythical, and Rose argues that both the idealism of the New Jerusalem and the failed reason of Athens are tempting but dangerous illusions that encourage us to view ourselves as unimplicated in the exercise of power that secures our position of critique. In contemplating the shining ideal of a New Jerusalem, we can divorce ourselves from responsibility for the lived relations of power in our lives. By emphasizing the failed reason of Athens, we excuse ourselves from mending the world.

In her last book, *Mourning Becomes the Law,* Rose develops this analogy of three cities as one way of illustrating the pervasive binarism of post-Holocaust thought. She insists that we stop opposing Athens to Jerusalem, and make our conceptual home in the unnamed third city somewhere between them. Here she evokes a shadowy fourth city, Auschwitz, often un-

derstood as the ultimate end point of the critical rationality of Athens. Auschwitz, Rose writes, has become the "emblem of contemporaneous Jewish history and now of modernity as such, . . . emerg[ing] from the ruin of theoretical and practical reason to provide the measure for demonic anti-reason" (*Mourning,* 26). In our flight from this city of horrors, Rose charges that modern thought has substituted "the idea of the community, of immediate ethical experience, in the place of the risks of critical rationality" (22). We try to compensate for the failures of reason by escaping to a transcendent ideal of ethical community. But this is as self-defeating as it is self-deceiving, and masks the real and ongoing continuity between the third city of our lived existence and Auschwitz. Rose agrees that we are implicated in the violence of the Holocaust by virtue of our implication in the politics and the systems that produced it. However, unlike Zygmunt Bauman or Giorgio Agamben, whose counsel in the face of the Holocaust can often seem to be one of despair,[10] Rose insists that our project must be to reposit the third city, to mourn what has often seemed unmournable, and begin again. And in beginning, we must work from the premises of the middle rather than those of an idealized and impossible, apolitical community. The politics of implication also have a history, and it is by examining this history, and returning history to philosophy, that our repositings should begin.

Rose describes the architectural historian Robert Jan van Pelt's research, which uncovered German plans to transform Auschwitz into a bustling urban and administrative center, using the same network of railway lines that made it a major concentration camp. She describes the resistance that greeted van Pelt's discoveries, and the fear that Auschwitz's horrific status as a death camp would be in some sense normalized by the revelation of these plans. We ought to resist the temptation to anathematize these designs as something we dare not understand, Rose argues, and instead confront them as the outcome of a long historical process.

> Analysis of this kind, as opposed to the refusal of analysis implicit in the demonising argument, does not see Auschwitz as the end-product and telos of modern rationality. It understands the [Nazi] plans [for developing Auschwitz as a city] as arising out of, and as falling back into, the ambitions and the tensions, the utopianism and the violence, the reason and the muddle, which is the outcome of the struggle between the politics and the anti-politics of the city. This is *the third city*—the city in which we all live and with which we are too familiar. (*Mourning,* 34)

To return even Nazi ambitions to the realm of ordinary contingencies is to recognize that we are implicated in the structures of knowledge and the lines of power that produced the Final Solution, but without the reassurance of being able to reject tainted structures of reason and authority. We *remain* implicated even as critics of these operations of power by virtue of our continued participation in "the reason and the muddle" of the systemic brokenness of the middle. At the same time, Nazism and its corollary horrors represent only one possible outcome of the work of the middle. There was nothing inevitable about their appearance. Though we might like to escape recognition of our structural implication in this history we did not choose, this is precisely what Rose will not allow us to do.

Some open-ended ethical imperatives are bound up in this political as well as intellectual argument. One imperative is a relentless self-examination that emphasizes our inevitable implication—and sometimes complicity—in the violence of the political order in which we live. Another is the hard work of imagining politics in the universal interest. Rose is unapologetic about her desire to reclaim the universal, though she agrees with poststructuralism's insight that this universal is always in some sense an arbitrary imposition. For Rose, this means that the universal must be constantly revised as it comes up against its own limitations and failures, but need not for this reason be jettisoned. This is part of what is entailed in her view by the risks of political engagement: "For politics does not happen when you act on behalf of your own damaged good, but when you act, *without guarantees,* for the good of all—this is to take *the risk* of the *universal* interest" (*Mourning,* 62). This is true for victims of oppression as well as their oppressors. Rose makes this difficult vision of responsibility explicit when she insists that even those who are oppressed remain historical agents with a stake in the systems that constrain them. She also resists the tendency to assign victims and oppressors permanent and unchanging identities, regardless of changes in power or circumstance. Her view, she argues,

> does not work with the opposition between the agent of imperial domination and the oppressed other. It points out that "the other" is also an agent, enraged and invested; while the idea of the monolithic, imperialist agent amounts to the consolidation and reification of power, the dilemma of which is thereby disowned. . . . [Instead, this perspective] understands all agents *in power and out of it* to face the dilemma of asserting their moral will solely to guard their particular interests. (*Mourning,* 62)

We are never relieved of our responsibility to consider the play of interests and investments—our own as well as others'—in the politics of the broken middle. This is not to equate victimizers with their victims but to insist that all parties have a stake in the systems that constrain them. Rose also acknowledges that a politics predicated on the idea that some agents have a right to assert their particular interests while others do not will always face a redoubled dilemma when the poles of power are shifted or reversed. This is a significant moment where Butler's analysis comes together with Rose's—both draw attention to the polarities that structure modern responses to victimization.

Such arguments face a difficult test case in Jewish history, particularly after the Holocaust. Rose is not shy about taking on such questions, and her engagement with the Jewish tradition—and what it represents in modern thought—plays a complex role in her work. On the one hand, she is a consistent critic of those forces within popular culture and philosophy that portray Judaism as "the sublime other of modernity" (e.g., *Mourning,* 26), transforming Jewish culture into a piously celebrated, but still exotic, wisdom tradition. Judaism as "sublime other" then appears as the source of all those features—ethics, community, and a fantasy of decentralized, cooperative authority—felt to be absent from the modern world. Popular representations of what Rose calls "Holocaust piety" cement this fantasy portrait in a particularly insidious way, by encouraging us to sympathize with victims in a mood of righteous (and unimplicated) outrage. But if we sympathize with victims without recognizing our own implication in the systems that oppress them, our sympathy is bound to become benighted and self-congratulatory. For Rose, the primary representative of this tradition within philosophy is Emmanuel Levinas, whose philosophy of alterity, read as ethics, appeals to what Rose calls our "hope of evading the risks [and inevitable failures] of political community" (*Mourning,* 36). Deliberately collapsing Levinas's philosophical work with his reflections on Judaism, two modes of thought she implicitly views as structurally dependent on one another, Rose complains that Levinas's "*Buddhist* Judaism" (*Mourning,* 37) elevates the "other" to a plane of impossible and sanctified idealism, beyond politics.

> Knowledge, power and practical reason are attributed to the model of the autonomous, bounded, separated, individual self, the self within the city. . . . To become ethical, this self is to be devastated, traumatised, unthroned, by the commandment to substitute *the other* for itself. Re-

> sponsibility is defined in this new ethics as "passivity beyond passivity," which is inconceivable and not representable, because it takes place beyond any city—even though Levinas insists that it is social and not sacred. (*Mourning,* 37)

Rose articulates two related problems with this vision of responsibility. The first is that the focus on the autonomous individual self ignores our relationality, at every point, with other people and with social systems. Like Butler, she insists we are never fully "bounded, separated" within the city. Second, Levinas's emphasis on self-sacrifice and substitution short-circuits the difficult work of relationality altogether, and this takes place, she suggests, not in the context of our lived existence within particular political contexts but in an idealized realm far from either complexity or accountability. Rose is not the first critic to complain that Levinas's reflections on alterity do not provide adequate insight for a viable politics.[11] But for Rose, Levinas's views are also symptomatic of a larger social field of representations, in which Judaism stands in as an escape hatch from the contamination of failed reason.[12] She rejects both the artificial idealization of a particular community and the short circuit this alibi creates in the processes of critical reason itself.

Nevertheless, Judaism and Jewish tradition play a crucial role in Rose's thought, and her critique of Levinas indicates the terms of her engagement with Judaism's texts and traditions. She writes that, unlike Levinas's portrayal of a "Buddhist Judaism," "prophetic Judaism stakes itself on transcendent justice that legitimates political activity, and does not place ethics beyond the world of being and politics" (*Mourning,* 38). Jewish ethics is predicated on action in the world. More important, however, Judaism's constant negotiation with its own religious law "rests not on the devastation but on the *growth* of the self in knowledge. Learning in this sense mediates the social and the political: it works precisely by making mistakes, by taking the risk of action, and then by reflecting on its unintended consequences, and then taking the risk, yet again, of further action, and so on" (*Mourning,* 38). Judaism functions in Rose's thought as a tradition that has coped with the dilemmas and conflicting identities of modernity in ways that may be traced historically and debated philosophically. To live as a Jew, especially in a non-Jewish society, is to negotiate competing sets of norms that sometimes contradict one another. It is this space of conflict that Ricoeur describes as the ethical sphere. For Rose, this negotiation of competing claims and identities lies at the heart of modern life, and Jew-

ish history makes this explicit. Jewish tradition thus has special resonance for a philosopher interested in the separation of law and ethics in modern thought, but as *part* of the modern tradition, not as a force that transcends the modern. "Judaism," Rose writes, "in all its different modern forms, is immersed in the difficulties of modernity just as much as the philosophy, the sociology and the architectural history which have invested so much in its other-worldly beatification" (*Mourning,* 38).

For Rose, therefore, Jewish identity, like all identities, is constantly being negotiated in relation to the claims of competing norms and is implicated in larger systems of power and relationality. Identity is not a fixed and permanent essence, but something that is worked out historically, a site of struggle and constant negotiation, in the midst of our relation to a social and political context, but also a history of prior relations, prior models of identity. Rose's arguments thus share a strong affinity with recent theoretical insights—including Butler's—about how identity is fluid rather than fixed. Rose is not looking for a perspective from which to assign blame *or* to consolidate identity, but a point from which to understand how mutual self-positings between communities—accurate or not—lead to identifiable historical effects and changed self-positings. To lose sight of this is to lose sight of the historical particularities of experience and create an artificially fixed identity. In the midst of a trenchant defense of Hegel, Rose maps this ground, and its implications within her own work, succinctly.

> For the separation out of otherness as such is derived from the failure of mutual recognition on the part of two self-consciousnesses who encounter each other and refuse to recognise the other as itself a self-relation: the other is never simply other, but an implicated self-relation. This applies to oneself as other and, equally, to any opposing self-consciousness: my relation to myself is mediated by what I recognise or refuse to recognise in your relation to yourself; while your self-relation depends on what you recognise of my relation to myself. *We are both equally enraged and invested,* and to fix our relation in domination or dependence is unstable and reversible, to fix it as "the world" is to attempt to avoid these reverses. (*Mourning,* 74–75)

It is precisely this embedded mutual implication, and the structure of relations constantly shifting around it, that informs Rose's view of politics—including the politics of identity. Not coincidentally, this emphasis on relationality, and on the ways our relations with others impinge upon and

shape our identities, recalls Judith Butler's critique of Levinas, discussed in the previous chapter.[13] For both writers, it is the process of evolving misrecognition that requires emphasis and is intended to combat a fixed and essential notion of identity, particularly the identity of victim.

Yuval's work offers a concrete example of this philosophical perspective in operation. His historiographical project is built on an analysis of the structures of mutual implication and the shifting misrecognitions that grow out of it. He insists that points of conflict are also points of contact, where Jews and Christians meet on the common ground of shared issues of debate. "Even the harshest and most scathing polemics," he reminds us, "require a common language and shared presuppositions regarding the point of departure of the debate" (*Two Nations,* 27). Though examination of this common language has proven controversial, he writes, "Mutual relations necessarily exist even between the persecutor and the persecuted, and these must be considered" (92). Ashkenazic Jews were not isolated from their neighbors, in Yuval's view, and they were not the quiescent community depicted by Gerson Cohen.[14] Yuval refuses both idealization and apology, but expresses this commitment in typically understated terms: "Even though ethically one cannot compare fantasy and action, the historian is duty-bound to depict the language common to the victim and his persecutor and its ideological background" (59).[15] The historian's "duty" here is to investigate the common language of shared hostility, even if there is a distinct difference in how each community negotiates the space between language and action. We can investigate the claims of ideology, Yuval suggests, without losing sight of the fact that the lines of persecution ran along the lines of power in the Middle Ages, from the dominant Christian majority to the denigrated Jewish minority.

These considerations are not softened by the structure of this historical argument. He underscores how both Jews and Christians are implicated in the dynamic of oppositional identity formation: each group responds to the other and the other's self-identity in an evolving, largely negative relation of deep symmetry and dependence. In *Two Nations,* the argument about Jewish messianic ideology is a critical component of Yuval's picture of ideological parallelism and implication. He writes that prayers for the Lord's vengeance are central to medieval Ashkenazic messianism.[16] In order to cope with their paradoxical status as a chosen people who nevertheless live under a Christian ascendency, he says, "Jews interpreted the harsh political reality as temporary, postponing its resolution until the messianic era" (93). This resolution required an act of vengeance by God, who would

punish all those peoples who had persecuted and killed Jewish martyrs in history, displaying his blood-soaked royal garment (the *porphyrion*) as testimony to the crimes. This belief in the necessity of divine vengeance prior to final redemption is what Yuval calls the ideology of vengeful redemption, and he argues its presence was pronounced in medieval Ashkenazic Jewish communities.[17] He writes, "An idea that was rare and peripheral in the Midrash [an instructive religious storytelling tradition] became a cornerstone of religious thought and action in Ashkenaz. The Ashkenazim not only rescued a muted voice from oblivion but also endowed it with new content" (99). This "new content" transformed the idea of divine vengeance from a legalistic act of justice into a universal event, "one at the very heart of the messianic process" (99). Ashkenazic messianism, in contrast to the model prevalent among Sephardic Jews, did not focus primarily on themes such as the return to Zion or the final conversion of the nations to acknowledge the one true God, but on the vision of a "vengeance [that] alone will facilitate the upheaval of the messianic period, when the kingdom of Edom will be wiped off the face of the earth" (99). Yuval writes that in medieval Ashkenazic exegesis, "Edom" was understood to refer symbolically to the temporal dominion of Rome, and later, Christian culture (e.g., 12).[18]

The centrality of this oppositional view among medieval Ashkenazic Jews, Yuval writes, made itself felt in the incorporation of practices of cursing that infiltrated various forms of Jewish prayer and ritual during the Middle Ages, including not only liturgical poetry called *piyyutim* but also such fundamental prayers as the *Amidah,* with its curse against heretics, the *Aleinu,* which praises God for making Jews unlike other peoples, and certain prayers associated with Yom Kippur and Passover. Yuval also explains the Passover ritual of spilling drops of wine as a gesture toward the hoped-for vengeful redemption.[19] For Yuval, cursing itself is an act of aggression: "The curse was thought to possess harmful magic potency, thus indicating a stark and aggressive messianic act" (*Two Nations,* 130).[20] Yuval's emphasis on the potency of Jewish rhetoric accords well with the role he attributes to texts generally: the word has the power to shape the world in his interpretation. Though the lines of communication remain vague, Yuval also argues that Christians had some intimation of the content of such beliefs: "Jewish aspirations for vengeance profoundly influenced relations between Jews and Christians, particularly in the context of the ritual murder accusations" (134). The near-perfect symmetry of Jewish-Christian relations in Yuval's account, traced over the centuries of the Common Era,

illustrates how the oppositional construction of a community's self-identity can come to be deeply codependent. This is why medieval Christian awareness of Jewish messianism plays such a critical role in Yuval's interpretation; after all, if the ideological motivations of a community's "others" are not known, then the vicious cycle of inverted yet complementary "camps" locked in an impasse begins to fall apart. Asymmetrical knowledge, in which Jews know all about Christian supercessionist ideology, while Christians remain blissfully ignorant of the powerful ideological outlook of their Jewish neighbors, would undermine the picture of evolving, complementary misrecognitions Yuval adumbrates.[21]

This argument about mutual implication reaches its apex, however, in Yuval's claims about the emergence of the ritual murder accusation. Yuval approaches the libel by returning to the familiar problem of origins. However, he takes the question of origins back from the 1144 case in Norwich to 1096, a vital date for Jewish historical memory and the history of Jewish-Christian relations. The crusader attacks in 1096 precipitated a number of unprecedented acts of Jewish martyrdom, in which Jews chose to kill themselves and sometimes their families rather than submit to forced conversion or death at the hands of crusaders. This spectacular display of Jewish martyrological violence left a deep impression on those who witnessed these events as well as those who survived them.[22] Yuval explains the origin of these acts of self-sacrifice in terms of the messianic ideology of vengeful redemption, in which the blood of Jewish martyrs serves to rouse God's wrath to punish their persecutors. "The martyrs are soldiers in the heavenly army who fell in a cosmic war between the heavenly archangel of Edom and that of Jacob," he writes. "Their death was not in vain because, by virtue of their sacrifice, they arouse the wrath of the avenging God and bring deliverance closer" (*Two Nations,* 139). In other words, this radical response to Christian aggression is rooted in something more than a decision, taken in the moment, to pursue a course of resistance, and becomes instead an ideological statement expressing an assertive cultural worldview.[23] Jewish martyrdom is transformed into a visceral activism directed toward God but conceived with vengeance against Christian persecutors in mind. This goes beyond redeeming the voice of the Jewish other in history to recuperate a defiant Jewish ethical agency. From this perspective, Jews are not responsible for the violence against them, but they are understood to be implicated in the historical dynamic. Or, in the parlance of some American community reconciliation programs, Jews may be victims, but they are still agents with a "stake" in the outcome of events, not just passive recipients of injustice.

Here the question of blame is held in abeyance in favor of an emphasis on understanding the deformations, denials, and hostile mirror images that circulate in the struggle for recognition between two communities.[24]

Yuval courts controversy by linking two emotionally charged limit events in Jewish history in this dynamic of mutual implication. The Jewish acts of self-martyrdom in 1096, he writes, are more than coincidentally linked to "the appearance at precisely that time of yet another hostile and distorted Christian interpretation of Jewish martyrology: namely, the accusation of ritual murder" (*Two Nations,* 164). According to Yuval, it was Christians' awareness of Jewish martyrological sacrifices, particularly those involving children, that encouraged them to attribute to Jews a malevolent desire to murder children.

> The behavior of the Jewish martyrs in 1096, and especially the agitation surrounding those acts, was seen as emphasizing the Jews' alleged great fondness for sacrificing children specifically. In the medieval world of reverse exegeses, this served to strengthen the impression that the Jews were particularly cruel to children. In fact, the Jews were cruel to their own children alone, but in Christian public opinion this behavior was taken as proof that Jewish murderousness had one main target: all children. The accusations of ritual murder were therefore a "symmetrical opposite" of Jewish martyrdom. (*Two Nations,* 185)

Yuval calls upon medieval Jewish and Christian accounts emphasizing Christian horror at events in 1096. He also studies the structure of Christian tales of ritual murder and Jewish accounts of family martyrdom, which operate as mirrors (or "symmetrical opposites") of one another. This structure echoes Rose's Hegelian model of the dynamics of an evolving, mutual misrecognition. Though Yuval is clear about the reality of Jewish suffering, this portrait cannot help but complicate the schematic picture of victims and persecutors. Blame may be a settled question, in other words, but the structure of implication emerges as an issue to be puzzled over.

Reading Indeterminacy

Yuval's view of responsibility, and the philosophy of mutual implication it entails, is anchored by a particular strategy of reading. Previous chapters discussed how the historiography of the ritual murder accusation is also a history of negotiating the problem of indeterminacy in historical knowledge. Ritual murder stories have traditionally been subject to competing,

heavily interested interpretations, but it is simpler to discover the interests at play than it is to resolve the problem of indeterminacy. Since questions of responsibility (often imagined in terms of blame) ride on the outcome, discussion of uncertainties in interpretation is understandably fraught, as my discussion of Langmuir indicates. Yuval argues that the link he proposes between Jewish martyrdom and accusations of ritual murder is necessary rather than the result of a methodological decision, and that he was led to it by the internal structures of these stories—that is, by the plain light of evidence. But this interpretation is the result of the historian's ministrations and is a product of his assumptions and reasoning. In this case, Yuval prioritizes the symbolism of these stories as their most meaningful content. He also emphasizes their specific ideological work in the conflict between the two religious groups. The decision to emphasize symbolism and ideology *is* a methodological decision with consequences in the realm of ethical understanding as well as historiography. Here literary strategies seamlessly shade into ideological messages, and the difference between deliberate choices and incidental effects, between conscious borrowing and the overdetermination of meanings is not always clear. In addition, Yuval's use of psychoanalytic language masks (one might say represses) the divide between intentional polemical messages and incidental symbolic effects in the texts he examines. The residues of psychoanalysis signal a blind spot in Yuval's method that is also an indication of his ethicomethodological priorities.

In order to understand what is at stake in this trajectory, we must study its evolution. Yuval appears to discount the potential of overdetermination at work, the possibility that shared symbols and cultural repertoires could contribute to a complementarity between religious communities, even without mutual knowledge or intent. An example from the book will help to illustrate this point. Yuval writes at length about the use of water imagery in both Jewish martyrological accounts of forced baptism and later Christian accusations that Jews allegedly desired to defile or poison water supplies. Water represents renewal or desecration to each group according to their view of particular actions. According to this narrative logic, Judaism's emphasis on the defiling waters of baptism encourages Christians to internalize the association between Jews, water, and contamination. Jews, for example, who chose death by drowning during the terrible events of 1096, either to avoid baptism or to atone for having accepted it, are described in Hebrew chronicle accounts as having chosen a death that was also an act of purification. From a Christian point of view, however, the same actions are defiling and represent not only a rejection of Christian be-

lief but also potentially a literal contamination of the water that receives these unfortunate corpses. Yuval suggests that such divergent interpretations may have encouraged accusations that Jews poisoned wells, sometimes with human remains. "Unlike the Christian baptism, which gives life and allows divine grace to reside in a human being," Yuval writes, "Jewish baptism kills, and its waters are treacherous" (*Two Nations,* 181).

Following an extended supposition about how Jewish and Christian concerns about death by water may be evident in a surviving medieval Hebrew letter discussing the ritual murder trial at Blois in 1171, Yuval remarks:

> In this incident a great deal remains obscure. It is difficult to know whether what we have here is a random chain of motifs or whether this was a common line of interpretation in Christian public opinion: namely, that the murderousness of the Jews—toward their own children, and all the more so toward Christian children—found expression specifically in water. (*Two Nations,* 185)

This candid acknowledgment captures a specific problem of literary reading: What makes the difference between intentional inversions or counternarratives and "a random chain of motifs," and how can we recognize that difference? Yuval's discussion explores a possible link between a Jewish father's opposition to his daughter's marriage ("We would sooner drown her in water [before] she would marry you!") and the ritual murder accusation at Blois (183–85). Both incidents are described in the medieval letter, and Yuval suggests the writer draws a connection between the verbal threat and the "spoiled" reputation of the Blois Jews accused of the ritual murder of a Christian child. The specific case exemplifies the problem of interpretive uncertainty.

> The fact that the Jews were suspected of a murder attempt because of an unfortunate expression reminiscent of drowning in water indicates the Christian memory of Jewish martyrdom that was carried out in the presence of water. Or was it the proximity to the season of Passover/Easter that evoked the association "every son that is born you shall cast into the Nile" (Exod. I:22)? Or do these Jewish images reflect a certain level of internalizing the legal procedure of the ordeal in water? (*Two Nations,* 185)

These questions ("Or was it . . . ? Or do these . . . ?") illustrate the suspension among multiple meanings that haunts this literary reading of the evidence. Overdetermination is often the literary critic's friend, serving to add

depth or complexity to an interpretation even where it does not explicitly reinforce the interpretive argument. But this kind of cultural density of reference is not always the historian's friend, because it interferes with the crucial interpretive machinery devoted to understanding causation: overdetermination effectively gums up the historian's works, underscoring uncertainty rather than knowledge.[25]

What we glimpse here, in addition to the author's considerable dexterity as an interpreter of texts, are the multiple contexts influencing every moment of cultural expression. What makes this more difficult is that the historical texts vital to the discussion of medieval Jewish and Christian mentalities are inextricably bound up in this ambiguous play of representations.[26] The problem of overdetermination is not just limited to one example: it is endemic to Yuval's interpretive system and speaks to the profound difficulty of isolating causes in a historiographical scene marked by two intimately intertwined belief systems—faiths linked not only by history but by shared origins, cultural symbols, and semiotic and linguistic repertoires. Ironically, Yuval's compelling exploration of what these religious cultures *share* may go a long way toward undermining his desire to link the emergence of the ritual murder libel to specific, localized rumors.[27] In attempting to secure a historical explanation on the basis of literary evidence, Yuval runs up against a fundamental problem of indeterminacy. Whereas Langmuir denies this problem by rendering it off-limits, Yuval literally reads over it, acknowledging indeterminacy as a problem, then proceeding confidently with his interpretation.

By exploiting the symbolism of his sources to illuminate mentalities, Yuval follows a well-established contemporary trend in medieval studies that seeks to take seriously medieval texts that "look like history," in Ivan Marcus's memorable phrase.[28] Marcus describes the effort to move beyond a positivistic division of sources into the categories of reliable and unreliable in order to ask what literary-historical narratives can tell us about the cultural history of the moment in which they were written, and how their reflection of historical "reality" constitutes a traceable social reality of its own. While such a method has a recognizable validity within the discipline of history, however, the question of what kinds of inferences may be drawn from it is not settled. Yuval is interested in gleaning insight into medieval mentalities and the ideologies that permeate them. In relation to the Hebrew accounts of acts of martyrdom in 1096, he writes, "We are interested here in understanding the ideology of the text, of the narrator, and of the society he was addressing" (*Two Nations,* 143), and "To comprehend the

ideological underpinnings of this story, we need to examine its literary qualities" (*Two Nations,* 145). He is most concerned with understanding "the religious ideology of those who narrated [these] deeds" (*Two Nations,* 161). Yet there is a significant ambiguity, linked to the problem of overdetermination, between *deliberate* ideological responses and incidental motifs generated by cultural repertoires shared between these rival religious groups.[29]

This problem becomes particularly apparent in Yuval's argument about the ritual murder accusation. Medieval Christians, he writes, not only were inspired to attribute murderous intentions to Jews by the spectacle of dramatic acts of Jewish self-sacrifice, but also understood the broad outlines of the Ashkenazic ideology of vengeful redemption.[30] Yuval's claim about the ritual murder accusation is thus properly divided into two parts; a claim about the emergence of the libel itself, and a related claim about Christian understanding of Jewish messianism that underpinned the willingness to believe it. Yet the clearest piece of evidence Yuval offers for specific Christian knowledge of Jewish ideology is subject to the same uncertainties that haunt other parts of his analysis. He returns, appropriately enough, to Thomas of Monmouth's text, where Thomas offers a rationale for the alleged necessity of William's sacrifice at the hands of the Norwich Jews. Thomas claims to draw upon the knowledge of an informant, the Jewish convert Theobald.

> They [the Jews] must sacrifice a Christian in some part of the world to the Most High God in scorn and contempt of Christ, that so they might avenge their sufferings on Him; inasmuch as it was because of Christ's death that they had been shut out from their own country, and were in exile as slaves in a foreign land. (II.93–94)[31]

Yuval argues that these lines demonstrate Thomas's implicit awareness of a Jewish concept of vengeful redemption: "The motive for the crime is described as being of universal dimensions. The convert quoted here does not speak of ordinary vengeance, but of a religious worldview that sees vengeance against the Gentiles as a necessary condition of the messianic process" (*Two Nations,* 173).

This is as close as Thomas's twelfth-century narrative comes to attesting to Christian awareness of a Jewish messianic theology in the heart of Europe, but Yuval's reading of it is far from secure. There is the circumstantial quality of the evidence to be reckoned with—Yuval brings forward no other clear testimony that Christians knew about this theology and under-

stood its tenets. But there is also the problem of the very density of overlapping cultural symbols Yuval describes so persuasively elsewhere. Is it not possible that Thomas claims Jewish behavior is rooted in vengeance because of his own lifelong Christian theological training, which emphasized the "perfidy" of the Jews and the literalism of Jewish belief?[32] Might he not be extrapolating from any number of negative assumptions about Jewish "nature" and behavior here?[33] There is no shortage of antecedents for stereotypes of Jewish malevolence, and in fact Yuval himself confirms most of the ingredients for an alternative interpretation just a few pages earlier, when he writes, "The view that the Jew is capable of murder because of his hatred of Christianity was certainly not an innovation of the twelfth century. Its sources are found in the Crucifixion story in the Gospels and in Christian legends that were widespread from the sixth century on" (*Two Nations,* 170). Interpretive uncertainty reasserts itself here as a critical point of resistance to the historian's ministrations.

Yuval's struggle with indeterminacy does not directly address the putative "reality" of the ritual murder libel, which he takes for granted as a falsehood, but his wrestling with indeterminacy still has critical bearing on his definition of historical reality in relation to the accusation. It is possible to be persuaded by Yuval's claim that Christian knowledge of Jewish acts of self-sacrifice encouraged the creation of the ritual murder charge without accepting the corollary claim that Christians understood a particular messianic ideology as an ingredient of Jewish resistance to Christianity. Indeed, an obvious question to ask would be: Why, if Christians knew about such a provocative Jewish ideology, did they never mention it explicitly, or turn this knowledge to some more overt polemical purpose? But the more pertinent question is, Why should Yuval insist on this claim when it requires such an added degree of speculation on his part? The answer is explicable in terms of the structure of mutual implication itself: Yuval is most interested in the structures of misrecognition between the two communities, which is given powerful concrete expression by the linking of these two limit events from Jewish history.

Yuval raises the stakes of his argument still further by appearing to deemphasize the concrete effects of these stories of martyrdom and ritual murder. Instead he emphasizes the common purpose of both communities' accounts. "*Libel* is a subjective term," he writes,

> meant to indicate a baseless accusation. But in the eyes of its foolish admirers, it was not a "ritual murder libel" but a "tale of the saints." . . .

> The affinity between the two types of tales is therefore complete, when examined from within, according to the worldview of their believers. In other words, the difference between the chronicle of Rabbi Shlomo ben Shimshon and of Thomas of Monmouth's *The Life of William* may be boiled down to the fact that the former tells of Jewish saints and the latter of a Christian saint. Both stories are designed to exalt their heroes. (*Two Nations,* 189)

He argues that the literary parallels between the two stories show the final results of a process whereby Christian rumors and suspicious talk about identifiable Jewish actions coalesced into a hostile counternarrative that interpreted events from a Christian perspective. The deep mutuality of these stories, their content so intertwined that they become two poles of interpretation, around which the interests of the two communities coalesce, illustrates the problematic of identity in opposition that Yuval is at pains to illuminate. More provocatively, he remarks that "The only difference between the ritual murder libel and martyrdom lies in the question of whom the Jews kill: their own children or those of the Christians" (*Two Nations,* 164). Yet it is untrue that this is the *only* difference between these two stories—one is based on actual events, the other is an explosive legend. One memorializes Jewish deaths, the other effectively contributes to a history of Jewish persecution.[34] Yet for Yuval, these questions must take a backseat to the question of implication (again, to be distinguished from either complicity or blame). He emphasizes that each group is, in Rose's terms, "enraged and invested," possessing an agency that is at once ideological and ethical. The language Yuval uses to describe Jewish martyrdom—blood ritual, blood sacrifice, cult of blood—emphasizes this parallelism between communal narratives in provocative terms.[35]

Yuval's struggles with overdetermination and the uncertainties associated with it are compounded by his passing acknowledgment that such sharing and borrowing as occurred between Jews and Christians "proceeded mainly in the subconscious realms of the culture" (*Two Nations,* 30). Given his pronounced emphasis on the importance of mutual knowledge and each faith's deliberate defiance of its rival, the recourse to "subconscious realms" only raises more questions, which are never fully addressed. In the opening of his book, he writes, "My sole purpose is to reveal fragmented images of repressed and internalized ideas that lie beneath the surface of the official, overt religious ideology, which are not always explicitly expressed" (*Two Nations,* 1). At this point Yuval suggests that inter-

nalization of the rival religion's polemical registers or ritual mores may be unconscious, even "repressed" or unwilled. Later, however, he reminds us that "the field of polemics is far broader than the specific literary genre bearing that name. If we tune our ears to listening to more hidden tones, rustlings of subtle hints intended to counter the claims of 'heretics' will reach our ears" (*Two Nations,* 27). Here Yuval indicates a level of conscious but covert polemic, in which a religious community confounds and confutes the claims of its rival via a structure of deliberate rebuttal and reversal. These two gestures need not be antithetical and could certainly appear within the same broad ideological context. After all, ideology need not be limited to conscious effects and undertakings.

But what is "repressed" and "internalized" and therefore appears as a kind of cultural symptom must be distinguished from questions of deliberate provocation in Yuval's analysis because so much of his argument depends on an idea of historical agency that is defined in terms of *deliberate* and defiant ideological riposte. What is more, Yuval claims that Christians have some awareness of the general tenor of such ideological discourse. As I indicated above, an interpretive scene in which one group possesses asymmetrical knowledge of the other will not necessarily hold this argument together. But because Yuval does not clarify these distinctions between deliberate defiance and internalized ideas, his use of psychoanalytical language has the effect of blurring these categories so that every sign of internalization and reaction becomes legible as further evidence of the profound codependency of each group's evolving identity formation. This recourse to psychoanalytical terminology is never theorized, yet for Yuval, the language of psychoanalysis blurs the boundaries between intended effects and incidental ones in a way that benefits his reading by collapsing the worlds of thought and action: all of the overdetermined symbols and dramatic gestures become part of the same dense web of narratives and counternarratives, attack and riposte. These traces of psychoanalysis mark the point of transference, where the historian's own investments come into play. Yuval replicates the rhetorical patterns of opposition between communities visible in medieval polemics (Jewish and Christian), but his model also more than coincidentally recalls the context in which he lives and works—the embattled world of contemporary Israeli cultural politics, where internal intellectual battles are as fierce, in rhetorical terms, as the external conflict with the Palestinians.

Yuval is aware that he is operating at the limit of what one can acceptably say or speculate about this volatile accusation, though he displays this

awareness in characteristically understated fashion: "Even an utterly wild, imaginary fabrication may have an actual, authentic context" (*Two Nations,* 167), he reminds us, forestalling objections that he is somehow attributing a "reality" to the accusation of ritual murder that it does not possess. Though he stresses that the accusations are falsehoods, he underscores the importance of a hostile interrelation between the two communities that was nevertheless rooted in something observable and real. Motifs of Jewish murderousness and desire for vengeance were "not created out of thin air," he writes. "Those who accused the Jews did not make up everything. The lies had a certain basis in fact, which is why they spread so quickly and took hold so firmly" (*Two Nations,* 182–83). This marks another departure from post-Holocaust scholarship, which has tended to understand the ritual murder libel, like other antisemitic legends, as the product of a broken or defective Christian psychology. Yuval's ethics of implication punctures the theory that ritual murder was an entirely self-generating fantasy, a primary symptom of Christian cultural irrationality. The effect is to insist, not on some "kernel of truth" that would reveal the legend itself to be a historical fact, but a "kernel of misunderstanding" that perpetuates violence between communities. One fact emerges with startling clarity: there has never been a purely disinterested cultural position from which to tell these stories, either at the time of their original circulation or now. More pointedly, Yuval's challenging argument about the intersection of Jewish martyrdom and Christian libel raises questions about the historian's responsibility for his work.

The Intellectual Politics of Implication

Structuring his argument as he does opens the door to charges that Yuval is somehow exonerating persecutors or blaming victims, and contributed to the impassioned tone of some responses that appeared in the follow-up issue of *Zion* after the publication of his initial article. Yuval's efforts to move away from the question of responsibility (figured as blame) in his historical account in favor of analyzing the unhealthy dynamic of co-dependence between historical communities is easily condensed to an unflattering critique of those who suffered. A defender of Yuval's work, the historian Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, argues that such criticisms are misguided and rooted in what he calls a "tribunal" model of history, in which the historian's job is to pronounce on innocence and guilt, and to reinforce a communal sense of identity ("Historisches Bewußtein," 163–67). Yuval

challenges the moralizing view of historical responsibility in a way that seems calculated to arouse discomfort, by demanding that we recognize a more complex relation between persecutors and persecuted, one that seeks to understand a logic behind persecution rather having recourse to an elusive irrationalism.

The specter of ideology and a concern for the politics of the present are never far from sight here. Whether critics invoked the specter of blame or criticized Yuval's conclusions, they were aware of the discomfiting synchronicity between his historical argument and some venerable antisemitic rhetoric. Certainly the claim that medieval northern European Jews may have actively prayed for the destruction of Gentiles is a touchy matter, particularly when accusations of similar behavior have been the stock-in-trade of antisemites for centuries. Johannes Heil, summarizing comments by Rainer Walz, writes that such claims of "deep enmity" are "more than delicate, since 'Jewish enmity' was, and still is today, a central argument in every kind of anti-Jewish polemic" ("Deep Enmity," 269).[36] One implication of such remarks is that Yuval could be playing into the hands of antisemites.[37] Though he has refrained from polemic in his book, Yuval's response to early critiques in *Zion* was impassioned on this score: "Ought we to convert our historical studies into a broadsheet for propaganda because of the distortions of anti-Semites?" he asks. "Shall we destroy our world on account of fools?"[38]

By refusing to participate in the dynamic of judgment and exoneration, Yuval runs the risk of appearing complicit with the historical forces of antisemitism. But to refuse judgment is not, *thereby,* to refuse responsibility. Instead, the emphasis on responsibility "for" historical suffering is translated into an insistence on responsibility "to" an unknown future in which it might be possible to acknowledge and even disrupt such dynamics. *Our* responsibility as ethical witnesses is to acknowledge our stake in such representations, as well as the cultural systems that have made violence possible, and to change what often seem to be inevitable intergroup dynamics of suspicion and hatred. In this sense, we can glimpse a subtle politics at work in Yuval's method that goes beyond a slaying of the father in his revision of previous scholarship and recalls Gillian Rose's philosophical critique. He refuses the traditional models of restitutive identity politics, in which one is implicitly asked to offer sympathy and moral support (in its most literal sense) to historical victims of injustice without questioning one's own historically situated position of judgment. Yet we should not put too optimistic a spin on this ethical orientation. Yuval, like Rose, is both

modest and realistic about the difficulties of this project. His historical account of Jewish-Christian relations spans centuries, from the earliest period of the formation of Christianity to the struggles of medieval religious polemics, and it reinforces the entrenched quality of intergroup dynamics, not their easy dissolution in an ecumenical community.

If Langmuir presents us with a moralization of history in terms of good and bad actors, Yuval's more open-ended exemplum refuses the consolation of an unambiguous lesson.[39] One reading of his work might point out that the idea of intractable, opposing "camps," evenly arrayed in ideological terms yet profoundly unbalanced in terms of power, in which the subordinate group resorts to voluntary martyrdom as a tactic for defending communal ideals and striking out at the powerful enemy, sounds like a reprise of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[40] On this reading, the martyred Jews cede their place in the dynamic to the martyred Palestinians, and Israelis take on the role of oppressors.[41] Other interpretations are also possible. For scholars such as David Malkiel and Elliott Horowitz, this historiographical project is a humanizing one that restores Jewish martyrs to the realm of history and acts as a corrective for Jewish collective memory.[42] This approach can be recuperated in Zionist terms, in keeping with the objective of "normalizing" Jewish history as a national history like any other.[43] From this perspective, Jewish responses to Christian aggression would be normalized as well, by highlighting the necessity for Jewish communities, overwhelmed by the hostility of the culture surrounding them on all sides, to develop resources of ideological aggression and self-defense as a way of surviving in unlikely circumstances. And as my analysis suggests, Yuval's history can also serve as an exemplum or midrash, a story of dysfunctional intergroup dynamics that serves as a cautionary tale for postnational politics writ large.

Each of these narratives represents a particular way of contextualizing Yuval's work as a scholar in Jewish studies, and as an Israeli. While each of these readings might be pursued as the thread of a genealogy, however, I want to emphasize the deliberate open-endedness of Yuval's work, which refrains from explicit politicizing. The effect of this tacit withdrawal from prescription is part of a larger effort to reframe our relationship to explosive issues of historical memory and contemporary ideology. I disagree with critics who accuse Yuval of blaming victims. Unlike Ariel Toaff, whose work I describe in the following chapter as being linked to a structural complicity with modern antisemitism through specific modes of argument and use of evidence, Yuval maintains a productive re-

lationship between ideological considerations—including the specter of antisemitism—and his encounter with evidence. This is what I described earlier as cognitive responsibility in the production of a historical account. The ethical paradigm shift represented by the turn to contingency and implication has political connotations, but methodological standards temper and mediate these overtones. By way of conclusion, I want to triangulate Yuval's work with the contemporary debate over "postzionist" (even "post-postzionist") views of Israeli history, which revise definitions of Israeli identity and question long-standing aspects of the Israeli national narrative. Though I would not want to characterize Yuval, or the other medievalists I have mentioned, as postzionists on the basis of their work alone, they share a critical structural concern with postzionist analyses—namely, an insistence on oppositional, mutual identity formation between groups in conflict.

In my discussion of Gavin Langmuir's work, I offered an active contextualization of his theory of antisemitism emphasizing the American cultural and academic environment in which he lived and worked. Where Yuval is concerned, contextualization requires particular care, since on the Israeli scene even basic terms are sometimes contested, and debates are often marked by caustic controversy. I also want to avoid a deterministic presentation that might seem to imply that a scholar's cultural context wholly accounts for his work. While patterns of influence manifestly matter, it is a difficult task indeed to signal where broad cultural influences leave off and less predictable factors, like personal psychology or idiosyncrasy, begin. My goal is thus not to explain Yuval's work simply by reference to the Israeli cultural milieu but to situate some of its points of reference and clarify a few of its effects in its original moment of production. What follows is an admittedly brief overview of political, disciplinary, and generational factors relevant for thinking about Israeli academic life that is meant to be suggestive rather than conclusive. I hope to highlight how Yuval's historiography represents a structural model of communities in opposition that speaks to politics and intellectual culture *within* Israel as well as the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians.

Yuval works in a cultural and political environment that appears radically polarized and yet oddly familiar from an American point of view. It is possible to chart the steady rise of a neoconservative, hawkish, nationalist cohort in Israel since the 1970s that has sometimes modeled itself explicitly on the American example.[44] There is also an ongoing "culture war" that pits progressivists influenced by Western intellectual developments against

some cultural leaders and scholars who characterize the rise of multiculturalism, individualism, and related trends as corrosive to traditional Israeli values. While conservatives and traditional Israeli leftists fight to retain what they see as the vital Jewish particularity of Israel, many progressivists argue for a fully secular state that is more equitable for women, homosexuals, *Mizrahi* Jews from Arab lands, and Palestinian citizens of Israel.[45] Sociologist Uri Ram, who has embraced the "postzionist" label, ties these developments to larger processes of globalization but argues that the local effects in Israel can be distilled to a fight between a neozionist conservative wing and a postzionist progressive wing arrayed around an embattled center.[46] "This tension had swollen since the 1970s to a 'culture war,'" he writes, "verging at times on civil war between neo-Zionism and post-Zionism, an internal Jewish 'clash of civilizations,' which is arrested only because of the presumed outer Jewish-Muslim clash of civilizations in which Israel is embroiled."[47] Other observers might not embrace the characterization of a suppressed civil war, but certainly the tone of debate is often vitriolic and the stakes are high.

However, this is one site where terminology is particularly vexed. The Labor Zionist consensus in Israel, with its collectivist, state-building ethos, suffered a major defeat in 1977, with the electoral triumph of the right-wing Likud Party. This is a watershed moment often cited as an indicator of the declining power of the Labor Zionist center to hold together shared assumptions of Israeli identity and the Zionist values on which it was predicated. Neozionists, as right-wing religious nationalists are sometimes called, take up the nationalistic heritage of Zionism, while strategically forgetting Zionism's emphasis on secularism and the conflicts over self-definition that have always been part of its history.[48] Neozionists see Jewish religious identity as an integral part of Israeli national identity and prefer a unifying narrative of identification to the consideration of conflicting priorities or minority experiences.[49] While religious nationalists might dispute the neozionist label, however, there is greater consensus about the meaning of that term than about the definition of postzionism. Laurence Silberstein describes the emergence of the postzionist movement, which began in the late 1980s and was prominent in the 1990s, during the same period when Yuval was producing his work on the blood libel.[50] He cautions against oversimplified definitions, warning that "Postzionism, like zionism, is in constant motion" (*Postzionism Debates,* 89). A few of those described by the term dispute its usefulness, while some (like Ram) accept the label but embrace a definition that others

might reject or qualify. However, the common denominator appears to be an attitude of skepticism toward nationalist narratives, along with an interest in revising received definitions of Israeli identity and history. Silberstein writes, "In a general sense, postzionism is a term applied to a current set of critical positions that problematize zionist discourse, and the historical narratives and social and cultural representations that it produced" (*Postzionism Debates,* 2). While critics of postzionist writers often accuse them of questioning Israel's right to exist, Silberstein insists this is not so: postzionists see themselves as patriotic citizens who support the state but want to revise its principles (*Postzionism Debates,* 3).[51] That this battle over cultural terrain is politicized is unlikely to come as a surprise. But it is critical to remember that arguments about the identity and future of Israel are playing out in a state less than a hundred years old, in a context of general militarization, under the pressure of a decades-long conflict with the Palestinians. The presence of that conflict is constantly felt and overseen by a global community of nations with an array of investments in its outcome. With a culture war playing out against the backdrop of an actual military conflict, debates about identity are especially fraught with difficulty.

Postzionism's emergence is often linked to a series of political developments that encouraged disillusionment among Israelis and generated new criticisms of the Labor Zionist status quo from both left and right. The air of triumphalism following the 1967 War, with its substantial expansion of Israeli territory, for instance, was accompanied by feelings of unease, particularly on the left, because of the occupation and the strain of confronting an increasingly hostile Palestinian population. The 1982 invasion of Lebanon is often described as "Israel's Vietnam" and raised acute questions about the prevailing wisdom of military and political elites.[52] Just five years later, the First Palestinian Intifada erupted in 1987, with its violent protests against the occupation. These events only increased the scale and urgency of conversations about Israel's future and the peace process. Another measure of general disillusionment was the growing power of bellicose nationalist rhetoric on the right, whose proponents were impatient with what they saw as the naïveté of peace activists and the corrosive effects of recent social and economic changes, leaching away the distinctive character of the state.

Meanwhile, the right wing benefited from a curious convergence between the interests of Orthodox Jews and neozionist nationalists. Ram writes,

> Both the political status and allegiances of Orthodox Jews have been radically transformed. They gained enormous political influence as a result of the decline of the national ethos, their high rate of fertility, their internal cohesiveness and discipline, and the fact that they became the parliamentary tip of the scale between Left and Right. The discourse of neo-Zionism, wherein Jewish identity is explicitly anchored in religiosity, strongly appeals to them and draws them to the Right. As they became more nationalistic, their national-religious counterparts became more Orthodox, resulting in a union that earned the appellation of "Chardal," the acronym of *charedim-dati'yim-le'umiyim* (Orthodox-religious-national). (*Israeli Nationalism,* 36)

The hardening of divisions between left and right had obvious implications for the peace process, particularly following the announcement of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993, which were always controversial on the right. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination by a religious nationalist just a few years later, in 1995, served as a stark reminder, if any were needed, that Israel was in many ways a country at war with itself. With the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, Oslo was increasingly described as a failure, and by the time of the 2006 elections, Ariel Sharon's breakaway conservative Kadima Party, with its emphasis on security interests, took the highest number of seats of any party represented in the Knesset, confirming the country's slide to the right. Earlier that same year, the Palestinians voted Hamas to power, a group reviled in Israel and the West as a terrorist organization, and contributed to a sense of total opposition between parties in conflict.[53]

This sketch hardly does justice to the complexity of Israeli politics, with its shifting coalitions and sometimes bizarre reversals of fortune.[54] Yet this brief discussion ought to illustrate the vexed context in which postzionist authors carried out their historical revision and cultural critique.[55] Early postzionist writings were histories and sociological studies published in the late 1980s, whose authors were labeled "new historians" and "critical sociologists."[56] Many early works, like those by Benny Morris, Baruch Kimmerling, and Gershon Shafir, reexamined the early history of the Yishuv (the prestate Jewish community in Palestine) and events surrounding Israel's nation-building conflict with the Arab world in 1948.[57] These scholars turned a skeptical eye on the nation's originary narratives and emphasized the centrality of relations with the Palestinians to an emerging Israeli identity. Later authors, including Idith Zertal, Adi Ophir, and Amnon

Raz-Krakotzkin, broadened the parameters of the revisionist project, tackling subjects like the role of the Holocaust in Israeli public life, the Israeli psychology of embattlement, and the portrayal of Israeli history and society in schoolbooks.[58] Recent scholarship has also taken up a renewed interest in diaspora history and criticized the omission of groups like the *Mizrahim* (primarily Jews from Arab lands) and Palestinian Israeli citizens from the broad cultural stream of Israeli life. Opinions differ as to whether or not postzionism, a phenomenon of the 1990s, is still relevant in the retrenched, post-Oslo atmosphere of conflict in the early twenty-first century, but certainly its impact on scholarship is still being negotiated.[59] Assaf Likhovski recently argued that postzionism has given way to a new paradigm he calls "post-post-Zionism," characterized in general by a move from political to cultural history, and a "more complex and empathic" attitude toward its objects of study, including Zionism ("Post-Post-Zionist Historiography," 2).

The question of ideology has obvious relevance here and has been raised explicitly by both advocates and critics of postzionist perspectives. Hostile critics like Efraim Karsh, Yoram Hazony, Shlomo Sharan, Elhanan Yakira, and Yoav Gelber have tended to characterize postzionists as hypocrites, calling out colleagues for allowing the dominant ideology to dictate their conclusions, even as they exploit history as an ideological vehicle, rewriting the past to serve their own political views.[60] However, less polemical critics, such as Anita Shapira, imply that this characterization may go too far. Interestingly, Shapira criticizes what she sees as the moralizing valence of postzionist accounts, borrowing Benny Morris's phrase to the effect that Israel was "born in sin" in its conflict with the Palestinians as an illustration of her point.[61] She critiques the new historians for offering a monolithic portrait of Labor Zionism that was easy to tear down, but also acknowledges that their work takes up, in a more radical way, a process that was already ongoing, as Israeli academics "sought to break free from the ideological ballast representative of the accepted notions regarding the prestate period and the earlier decades of the state, and to describe historical events 'in a nonpartisan way' " ("Strategies," 63). She blames postzionists for reintroducing ideology as a component of historiographical inquiry in this area, writing that, since the advent of the new history, "historians have not been judged by the quality of their work but by the stripe of their politics" ("Strategies," 63). However, her critique appears to rely on a simple opposition between objective histories and biased ones that postzionist scholars would question.

A major division between critics, including Shapira, and most postzionists is on the question of objectivity, especially as discussed in postmodern theoretical debates.[62] Many postzionists insist that ideology always influences a scholar's work, that this influence can be acknowledged, perhaps mitigated, but never eliminated, and that to argue otherwise is disingenuous, naive, or dishonest. From this point of view, postzionists do not simply view their predecessors as ideological, while claiming a neutral position for themselves. Instead, they see earlier scholars as denying or evading the ideological implications of their work, while they are more open about their own positions. While my account privileges debates about historiography, the critical sociologists offer an illuminating perspective on this question. Early in his career, Uri Ram argued for a view of the role of ideology in scholarship, derived from the sociology of knowledge, that emphasizes a compromise between positivist and deconstructivist views of knowledge production. This "historical-interpretive approach," he writes,

> shares with the positivist one the pursuit of "valid" knowledge, but it also shares with the deconstructivist approach the disbelief in an "objective" knowledge. Rather, it maintains that the underlying assumptions, and the criteria of validity, are anchored in broad historical and cultural contexts. . . . This approach views scientific practices as embedded within cultural traditions and social contexts and guided by social and cognitive interests.[63]

Michael Shalev summarizes the matter simply when he writes, "The social biography of researchers has an obvious impact on the questions we ask," and to "deny . . . this self-evident truth" in defense of a "rigid distinction between defenders of science . . . and those who would prostitute it to their political agenda" is a "position so absurd that it cannot be taken seriously."[64] That scholarly work is produced within a discrete social and political context is a given, he insists, but all scholarship must be advanced and defended on the terrain of evidence and argument, not ideology.

For their part, critics acknowledge the impact of "social biography" but see postzionists as scholars caught in the grip of a pernicious postmodernism that renders questions of method moot and threatens the whole enterprise of scholarship itself.[65] Even Shapira, whose tone is often that of the professional grand dame shaking her head over the juvenile excesses of her colleagues, occasionally reinforces the tone of moral panic. "If the decon-

structionist trends followed by some of the 'new historians' gain strength," she writes,

> then it will become clear we are facing a total crisis in all that concerns the human sciences and the domain of history in particular. For if no historical reality exists to be uncovered, if there are no agreed-upon research principles of what is permitted and forbidden . . . if there are no methodological rules, then there can be no common language between historians.[66]

Her statement recalls the fierce debates between historians and literary critics over the value of theory that took place in American universities, particularly in the late 1970s and 1980s, and points to the importance of generational and disciplinary contexts for understanding the furor over Israeli new history. Israeli universities have been slow to embrace some recent developments in Western scholarship, from the use of critical theory to the expansion of methods and subjects in cultural history. Silberstein observes, "Given that these theorists have had a far-reaching impact on American and European scholars for decades, the recentness of this development in Israel is indicative of the great suspicion of current critical theory among Israeli academics" (*Postzionism Debates,* 183).[67] The fact that many scholars producing postzionist historical accounts were trained in non-Israeli universities (often in the United Kingdom or United States) and appeared to bring the virus of critical theory back to Israel with them only increased suspicion. To complicate matters further, many postzionist authors published first in English, or quickly released English translations of their work.[68] This encouraged the view that political goals trumped academic considerations, and that they hoped to influence opinions outside Israel, particularly in America. These questions are more than usually fraught in the Israeli context, not only because of America's political support for Israel but because those English-speaking audiences include Jews who, by virtue of the Israeli Law of Return that guarantees citizenship to any Jew who chooses to emigrate there, may have more than a passing interest in contemporary Israeli politics.[69]

It is difficult to evaluate these dueling claims of ideological bias, particularly where so many variables are at work. As I discussed in my introduction, I am in general agreement with the argument that ideology cannot simply be excised from scholarship, since it forms part of the web of assumptions and experience that form the scholar himself. As Rose would

remind us, we are in the position of negotiating a difficult middle, between the claims of competing norms. It is insufficient to cling to a dated positivism whose blind spots have been persuasively exposed by critical theory. Nor is it satisfactory to embrace a radical relativism of the kind most feared by traditionalists. At its best, the discipline of history, despite forecasts of doom, has not embraced the latter path but capitalizes on the insights of theoretical discourse while maintaining an emphasis on the balance of evidence, reasoned inference, and the researcher's responsibility to the methodological standards of his field.[70] It is when political pressure on arguments is most intense that our obligation in this regard is greatest. But we should not be led astray by the claim that revisions of long-held assumptions about history, even those that are politically motivated, are always somehow more "ideological" than attempts to preserve the status quo. And as several scholars have noted in relation to postzionist scholarship, revision of accepted ideas is an expected and necessary part of generational changes in any field. Beyond the fights about theory and ideology, as Michael Walzer remarks, "it will be their footnotes that ultimately win or lose the game."[71]

My task here, in any case, is neither to defend nor excoriate postzionist scholarship but to consider its relation to what I have described as an ethical paradigm shift in some recent work in medieval Jewish studies, and the work of Israel Yuval, in particular. Though he has described himself as a critical Zionist ("Myth," 16–17), rather than as a postzionist, Yuval's work shares a basic point of contact with postzionist scholarship in its emphasis on deep structures of mutuality and misrecognition in the dynamics of unhealthy intergroup relations. Silberstein highlights this concern as fundamental to postzionist arguments.

> Strongly affected by the strength of the emerging Palestinian nationalism, and experiencing the difficulties of ruling over a resisting population, Israeli intellectuals and academicians slowly came to the realization that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stood at the center of Israeli history and the formation of Israeli society. (*Postzionism Debates,* 91)

Whereas earlier scholarship sought to bracket Israeli history as a self-sustaining, freestanding subject, postzionist scholars insisted that neither Israeli identity nor history developed in a vacuum, but in a context of constant, fraught relations with the Palestinians, and that this relationality was profoundly mutual. Gershon Shafir, an important figure in Silberstein's study, puts the matter explicitly: "It was essentially in the context of this national conflict that both the Jewish and Arab sides assumed their mod-

ern identities."[72] Idith Zertal and Adi Ophir have also emphasized the destructive aspects of a fixed and immutable self-identification as victim that recalls the critiques of Rose and Butler.[73] Given Assaf Likhovski's description of "post-post-Zionism" as a trend emphasizing cultural rather than political history, featuring a "more complex and less moralizing" perspective, and advancing increasingly sophisticated claims about how Arab and Jewish identities mirrored one another in the pre- and early state period, it may make sense to see Yuval's work as edging toward this new category, "the third wave" in recent Israeli historiography ("Post-Post-Zionist Historiography," 13, 2). Though Yuval was accused by critics of being "consciously post-Zionist" in his approach, the political reach of his work is more diffuse and far less pointed than that of postzionist scholars.[74] He addresses a broad picture of historical continuity and patterns of Jewish life that may contain lessons for application in the contemporary Israeli context. If so, however, it is for readers to apply them.

The medieval historian Elliott Horowitz, author of *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence,* whose work is often associated with Yuval's, is more open about the targets of his critique, in both methodological and political terms. However, he is no more eager than Yuval to advance political prescriptions. Horowitz tackles some difficult historiographical terrain, examining various accounts of Jewish violence in history, particularly those associated with the Purim holiday. He argues not only that Jews were historically capable of occasional acts of violence, but also that Christian perceptions of these acts were not always grossly exaggerated or driven only by bias. Horowitz's view of the complementary narratives of two communities in conflict displays a deep structural similarity to Yuval's arguments, and many of Horowitz's claims are derived from a reexamination of incidents for which both medieval Latin and Hebrew records survive, offering the opportunity for cross-checking different perceptions of events. One finishes his book with the sense that if Jews have sometimes fallen short of some ideal image of suffering, this makes them no worse than other groups, particularly the European Christians who maligned and persecuted them.

Unlike Yuval's, however, Horowitz's book begins and ends by evoking the consequences of an unreflective attitude toward violence, offering a critique of Jewish violence that directly implicates contemporary Israeli politics. He recalls the dark rhetoric of Israeli settlers who evoke the biblical foe Amalek in defense of their political views, and refers to Dr. Baruch Goldstein's Purim massacre in 1994 of a group of Muslims praying at the Tomb

of the Patriarchs (*Reckless Rites,* 1–4). There is something at once contentious and sorrowful in Horowitz's evocation of the Book of Esther when he writes, "I feel that there is no longer any excuse for me, as a historian or as a Jew, 'to keep silence at such a time as this'" (*Reckless Rites,* 5).[75] The ethical stakes of this statement are clear and suggest that Horowitz understands his work not only as a corrective to ingrained assumptions about Jewish behavior but as a duty with implications for the present. Horowitz writes candidly about the discomfort his book may arouse, remarking that some readers "may be upset that I am packing so much dirty laundry between the covers of an academic book instead of leaving it to fade on the pages of soon-to-be-forgotten newspapers or consigning it to the dreary darkness of the microfilm room" (*Reckless Rites,* 12). The author of the Book of Esther himself, as Horowitz observes, was not afraid to air "dirty laundry," taking note of the Jews' revenge after the execution of their archenemy Haman as well as their joy. We might also take a lesson from the provocative cover of Horowitz's book, which features a young man in the identifiable street wear of the Orthodox—black hat, dark suit—using a toy AK-47 as a pointer with which to read a Hebrew book, following along with the Torah portion for the day. The context is a Purim celebration, which licenses the carrying of the toy. However nothing could illustrate more plainly the object in sight when Horowitz demystifies the Jewish past and Jewish identity: the target he appears to have in mind is represented not just by a contemporary historiographical point of view but by a contemporary, traditionalist identity that underwrites the politics his work implicitly contests.

Yet in spite of Horowitz's willingness to put unflattering portraits on display, he, like Yuval, pulls back from more explicit political interventions. This demurral from explicit political grandstanding may seem surprising, given the extensive revision of historical memory proposed in *Reckless Rites,* but for historians associated with what I am calling the turn toward contingency and implication, the revision of Jewish historical memory *is* the radical gesture. What is more, while Horowitz's work displays political investments, his conclusions are always tempered by, and answerable to, the specific limits of surviving evidence and methodological practice. In this sense, his work, like Yuval's, clearly has ideological implications but stops short of reducing scholarship to a vehicle for ideology. Instead, these historians' specific political context has become the spur to a reevaluation of evidence that retains what Hayden White calls cognitive responsibility to norms for interpretation and advancing arguments. This is

also a scholarship that hopes to keep judgment in abeyance, that is, to reside in the space of deliberation I have defined, following Ricoeur, as the essence of the ethical. This is an ethics that can inform a politics—as Rose hopes to do—but not direct it. Those are the limits, the demands, and the modesty of an ethics that wants to encompass and acknowledge the reality of contingency and implication.

Epilogue

This desire to refrain from judgment has critical limits. Where lives may be lost or saved, we cannot refrain from judgment indefinitely in considering questions of responsibility. But sometimes hesitation also has its political uses. While Yuval avoids explicit mention of Israeli politics, and Horowitz refrains from offering concrete suggestions for action in the course of his brief critique of the Israeli political scene, I hope to extend their analyses to consider the potential impact of a deliberate move back from the rush to judgment. Consider, for instance, the case of Muhammed al-Dura. By now the timeline of this modern accusation of blood libel has an almost legendary character. On 30 September 2000, on the second day of the Second Intifada, a twelve-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed in the midst of a chaotic confrontation between Israel Defense Forces and Palestinian protesters. The boy, Muhammed al-Dura, appears on film cowering with his father between a wall and a large concrete pipe, or "barrel," as it was called in many reports, while bullets fly around them.[76] There is a disturbance: the camera shakes, the boy and his father are lost in a cloud of dust. When they come into focus again, the boy has collapsed in his father's lap, while the father himself falls back against the wall at an unnatural angle, shaking, his eyes rolled back in his head.

The featured footage—a spare fifty-five seconds—was shown all over the world, with devastating consequences. It became a "modern pietà," the flagship image of the Second Intifada, and was hailed by the Muslim world as the definitive proof, not only of Israeli violence and aggression, but "Jewish" villainy. "In killing this boy the Israelis killed every child in the world," Osama bin Laden said.[77] Postage stamps, streets, and parks were named for al-Dura; the iconic image of his last moments with his father, pinned down behind the concrete barrier, were reproduced in murals, posters, and videos. "Little Muhammed" became the martyr's martyr.[78] Critical to all this was the accusation that the Israelis not only shot al-Dura but did so deliberately, "in cold blood," a phrase used by the Palestinian

cameraman who shot the footage, in his testimony before the Palestinian Center for Human Rights just a few days later.[79]

But this claim, which appears so transparent, was contested early on. Charles Enderlin, a reporter for France 2, the network that broke the story, cut the clip with the shot of the boy slumped over his father's legs, just before the final seconds in which he raised one arm and looked around before lowering it again. Enderlin described this as the boy's "agonie," or death throes, and insisted he cut the film for the sake of propriety. Some critics, however, suggested that the boy was not only very much alive in the final shot—not in his "death throes" at all—but also looking at the camera. Eventually, the burden of evidence seems to have established that, at the very least, the IDF soldiers could not have shot the boy and his father, for the simple reason that, crouched as they were behind the concrete barrier, the al-Duras were out of the soldiers' line of fire.[80] This is what has been called the "minimalist" interpretation of events, and it has become more or less commonly accepted, at least among Western observers. The "maximalist interpretation," on the other hand, calls attention to an unanswered question: if the Israelis did not shoot the al-Duras, then who did? The boy and his father were in the line of fire of Palestinian policemen at the scene that day, as well as those anonymous figures who targeted the Israeli military outpost that afternoon. The "maximalists" are split between two conclusions: either the Palestinians shot the boy, whether by accident or as a propaganda stunt, or the incident itself was an elaborate hoax, in which the Palestinian cameraman participated.[81]

Even without the obvious disadvantages of medieval recordkeeping, and in spite of the presence of film footage of these events, we find ourselves in the uncertain space between knowledge and speculative reasoning. As some commentators pointed out, the logic of blood libel is clearly visible here: a dead boy, malevolent "Jewish" forces, a presumption of guilt reinforced by incriminating circumstantial evidence, and an explosive incident immediately tried in the court of public opinion.[82] In a curious replication of the traditional juridical context of discussion in cases of blood libel, France 2 sued the media analyst Philippe Karsenty when he described the incident as a hoax and the reporting on it as biased. Karsenty eventually overturned the libel conviction based on an examination of the unaired footage.[83] Within this complex debate over representations, there is also the familiar problem of interpretation, figured forth in the word *agonie.* Enderlin said he saw the boy dying. Larry Derfner of the *Jerusalem Post,* who has spoken out against what he calls the conspiracy theory of a

hoax, reports that Enderlin took the trouble to locate a French coroner, who, after viewing the tape, (according to Enderlin) said that the images were "absolutely consistent with the moments just before death."[84] The medievalist Richard Landes and others who call attention to inconsistencies in the footage shot that day argue that at the very least it is misleading to claim that the footage shows the boy's death, and some argue it is not even clear from the footage that he is seriously wounded. Even "death throes" are hardly transparent. As the *Atlantic Monthly* reporter James Fallows writes concerning the uncertainties of the case, "The boy on the film may or may not have been the son of the man who held him. The boy and the man may or may not actually have been shot. If shot, the boy may or may not actually have died. If he died, his killer may or may not have been a member of the Palestinian force, shooting at him directly" (Fallows, 55). The indeterminacy that haunts accusations of deliberate Jewish homicide is as evident in the early twenty-first century as it was in the Middle Ages.

We can also see the familiar elements of mirroring and reversal in this case of a blood accusation.[85] If, for the Muslim world, the al-Dura case is a straightforward example of Israeli brutality and of uniquely "Jewish" cruelty, then for skeptics, it has come to represent a similarly bottomless Palestinian perfidy. Larry Derfner, an outspoken critic of such rhetoric, writes,

> To believe that the boy is still alive and that the father was never shot [one version of the conspiracy narrative] you have to assume that every Palestinian from the highest to the lowest is the biggest liar imaginable and that when Palestinians work together they invent hoaxes and cover-ups of inhuman genius and precision. To believe that the bullets never even hit the al-Duras you have to explain away everything that doesn't fit your theory about the implacably evil nature of Palestinian behavior by saying: Someone's lying or someone's covering up for a lie. ("Get Real")

Derfner is surely aware that this rhetoric is familiar: Jews have been criticized in the same terms for centuries as clannish and malevolent. The master conspiracy trope has also been a consistent theme of anti-Jewish rhetoric and is circulated broadly in the Islamic world today via continued re-publication there of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.[86] Charles Enderlin has said that the al-Dura case is a "prism" in which people see what they want to see.[87] In this overheated atmosphere, we can also witness the dilemma of a certain agnosticism on display. Those who acknowledge the limits of our ability to make firm determinations about events, the propo-

nents of the so-called minimalist interpretation, run the risk of either dealing in banalities or having their work appropriated for the use of a more extreme argument. Those who do not choose sides, in other words, may appear to tell us nothing at all.[88] Yet here, as in so many tactical skirmishes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is precisely the willingness to refrain from judgment, to acknowledge the reality of mutual rage and investment, even to dwell in uncertainty, that is most necessary—perhaps for the length of time required to consider the possibility of peace. Of course this demands an effort that is, precisely, *mutual.* That this possibility seems so distant now is as sure an indication as we could expect to find of the profound difficulty and grief of an ethics of implication.

CHAPTER 4

Beyond Implication: The Ariel Toaff Affair and the Question of Complicity

IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS, I argued that a shift in ethical discourses is visible in recent scholarship on the ritual murder accusation. I suggested that scholars like Gavin Langmuir, Israel Yuval, and Elliott Horowitz can be located on a continuum between moralization and ethical deliberation that is operative, in a larger sense, within the field of medieval Jewish studies, particularly in analysis of pivotal sites of historical interpretation and debate I describe as "limit events." Throughout, my focus has been on the ethical question of responsibility—often figured as blame—that haunts the scholarly conversation about the charge of ritual homicide. This concern is both especially obvious and particularly pressing because of the problem of indeterminacy that is an intractable feature of historical accusations of ritual murder. What I mean by *indeterminacy* is our fundamental inability to achieve more than a speculative sense of what actual events lie behind a particular charge of religiously motivated homicide. Because most of the surviving documents are products of the very culture of Christian suspicion and fantasy that is a critical object of inquiry, it is difficult to disentangle perception from event. This is true, at some level, of any representation of the past, since perception and representation mediate our understanding of historical reality. But the blood libel is a particularly challenging example of this more general problem. This is not only because the issue is an emotional one, touching on questions of communal memory, but also because the question of the specific "reality" un-

derlying accusations has been the focus of polemic, and produced so much violence.

In these particulars, the ritual murder accusation bears all the hallmarks of a limit event—indeterminacy, powerful emotional and political investments, and a contentious competition among interpretations. The matter of the accusation's "reality" has often been reduced to vectors of true or false, guilty or innocent, Christian or Jew. These mutually exclusive terms—and the final determinations that go with them—are the terrain of what I describe as the juridical conversation about blood libel. Traditionally, this legalistic discourse seeks conclusive adjudications about questions of responsibility while ignoring problems of indeterminacy. Scholars often skirt or evade indeterminacy in their efforts to resolve troubling questions about the accusation's origins and effects. Popular debates and the operations of historiography meet on the ground of this juridical discourse. In the public sphere, from nineteenth-century courtrooms to twenty-first-century newspapers, arguments have revolved around the always-hoped-for but ever-receding conceit of a final, irrefutable "proof" of (Jewish) guilt or innocence. What emerges is a contradiction: on the one hand, the problem of indeterminacy can never be neatly resolved by some final conclusion that will lay all uncertainties to rest, despite the pretensions to the contrary of journalists, politicians, demagogues, lawyers, clergymen, and scholars. On the other hand, emphasizing uncertainty has tended to benefit those whose ambition is to "prove" a collective and enduring Jewish guilt, the precise limits of which are vague but far-reaching. For scholarship, this results in a double bind: scholars can either adhere to the artificial discourse of guilt or innocence or else risk being co-opted by an insidious anti-Jewish will to power.

Ethical questions are also critical here. Historians who have written about the legend splice methodological and ethical questions together and read the results as natural and inevitable. My own view is that methodological and ethical deliberations emerge in tandem as concerns within historical writing generally, and that this process is inherent to the work of historiography. But ethical positions are also, in part, complex responses to shared cultural narratives of meaning. The historian's conclusions have consequences, in the intellectual world, certainly, but also sometimes in the public sphere. In the previous chapter, I described how Israel Yuval and Elliott Horowitz have attempted to break from the double bind of either reproducing the oppositions of the juridical discourse or being co-opted by them. They do so by refusing to tailor their histories as defensive or apolo-

getic projects that would guard against misuse in advance. These scholars are pursuing an ethical project emphasizing contingency and implication that strives to acknowledge medieval Jews as active participants in the cultural context that also rendered them victims under certain conditions. Yet both of these historians, in rather traditional fashion, still seek to resolve the question of indeterminacy with firm and confident conclusions about what concrete events and assumptions lay behind specific anti-Jewish accusations, including the ritual murder accusation. Ariel Toaff dramatically challenged this pattern in 2007, when he published *Pasque di sangue: Ebrei d'Europa e omicidi rituali* (*Bloody Passovers: The Jews of Europe and Ritual Murders*).[1] Toaff exploits the problem of indeterminacy without clearly attempting to resolve it. By way of suggestion and innuendo, he manages to weigh historical possibility and probability on the same scale, particularly in the first edition of his book, and initially avoided resolving the provocative questions he raised about a possible "real" basis for at least a few cases of ritual murder.

One consequence of this approach was that Toaff's work quickly came to represent an amplification of the juridicial terms of blood libel itself—the scholarly text became a site of heated debate about guilt and innocence that encompassed Toaff's standing as a man and a scholar. The implications of the debate also touched on sensitive questions of politics in Israel, the country where Toaff has long lived and worked. Because of the critical element of public reception in this case among scholars and nonscholars, I depart from the structure of earlier chapters by focusing primarily on the discussion of Toaff's work in the public sphere and the ways these debates amplify and replay the juridical discourse of earlier arguments about the blood libel. Toaff's work has been roundly critiqued by his colleagues in the field, but just as important as arguments about his methods is the suggestion that his work is complicit with the historical forces of antisemitism. My own view is that, unintentional though the effect may be, Toaff's work moves beyond the interest in implication I traced in the previous chapter to a structure of complicity, and that this is a product of his specific methodological decisions and free play with the problem of indeterminacy itself. Whereas method and ideology exist in productive tension, mediated by the discourse of ethics, in the historiography I have analyzed up to this point, Toaff's work represents a tipping point at which ideology becomes a guiding force capable of trumping disciplinary standards of judicious reading and examination of evidence. This represents a qualitative rather than absolute difference between Toaff's work and that

of other recent scholars. As I have indicated, these historians occupy positions along a continuum in relation to questions of method, ethics, and ideology. Paradoxically, at the furthest edge of speculative historiography about the ritual murder accusation, moralization reappears to challenge the agnosticism of the ethical sphere. Toaff's history moralizes the Jewish past on the model of an internal critique, holding Jewish "fundamentalists," past and present, responsible for the ills of Jewish history.

Pasque di sangue *and the Crisis of Interpretation*

In February 2007, Ariel Toaff released a book with the provocative title *Pasque di sangue* (*Bloody Passovers*), in which he appeared to suggest some basis in reality for premodern accusations of ritual murder. Building on Yuval's work, Toaff emphasizes anti-Christian rhetoric circulating among German-speaking (Ashkenazic) Jews who had relocated to Italy, where they were cultural newcomers even among native Italian Jews, speaking with an accent and preserving their own distinctive ethnic religious customs. According to Toaff, these customs included the use of dried animal (and possibly human) blood for medicinal and ritual purposes. Analyzing the trial records of Jews who were accused in the infamous ritual murder case of Simon of Trent in 1475, Toaff draws a series of provocative conclusions from their confessions, which were extracted by torture. Chiefly he argues that we can discern some realities of popular Jewish ritual practices from this problematic testimony, and he appears to suggest (notably in his first edition) that such practices could even have included actual murders. As I will discuss below, however, the question of just what Toaff actually asserts in the book quickly became part of the controversy surrounding it, and it is the ambiguity and suggestive tone of the argument that ties the work, structurally and epistemologically, to the historical paradigm of the ritual murder accusation itself.

In a review in the *Times Literary Supplement,* scholar David Abulafia summarizes Toaff's project succinctly: "Toaff argues . . . that the story of Simon, and, *pari passu,* other stories of ritual murder around the time of Passover, reflect practices in what he calls an extreme, 'fundamentalist,' group within medieval German Judaism."[2] Even if blood accusations like the case in Trent "reflected" some practices other than homicide, there was more than enough ambiguity in Toaff's characterization of events to alarm many readers of his book. No one was reassured when, as he arrived in Rome for the book's release, he apparently told reporters that some ritual

murders "might have" taken place.[3] This controversial moment of reception articulates the ethical and political limits of discussion about the ritual murder accusation, and points to some contested terrain in writing Jewish history in the twenty-first century. The Toaff affair demonstrates more clearly than any developments I have analyzed so far the indirect mechanisms by which scholarship carries on a conversation with the surrounding culture over critical questions of meaning.

Events surrounding the release of Toaff's book unfolded with extraordinary rapidity. Sergio Luzzatto, a modern Italian historian, published a glowing review of *Pasque di sangue* in the Italian daily *Il Corriere della Sera* on 6 February 2007, just a few days before its release, setting off a firestorm of media commentary. Luzzatto praised Toaff for his "intellectual courage" and characterized the book's claims in provocative terms.[4] On 7 February, a group of Italian rabbis issued a statement condemning Toaff's thesis and concluded unequivocally that "the only blood spilled in these stories was that of so many innocent Jews massacred on account of unjust and infamous accusations."[5] In the media juggernaut that followed, nearly every report mentioned the following details: Toaff's father, Elio Toaff, had been the chief rabbi of Italy and played a major role in facilitating Pope John Paul II's post–Vatican II outreach efforts to the Jewish community in the 1980s, and Toaff worked at a well-known Jewish institution of higher learning in Israel, Bar-Ilan University.[6] On 8 February, the historian Anna Foa published a negative review in *La Repubblica,* and on the same day the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) issued a statement condemning the book.[7] On 12 February, Toaff granted an interview to the Israeli paper *Haaretz,* in which he said, "I will not give up my devotion to the truth and academic freedom even if the world crucifies me."[8] Regarding this outburst, scholar Johannes Heil remarked drily that Toaff hardly displayed "evidence of talent in the high art of carefully thinking through what one is going to say before opening one's mouth" ("A Comment"). Toaff, meanwhile, continued to insist his work was being misrepresented by the media, and by commentators who had not read it.[9] On 13 February, Toaff told reporters his initial statements that some ritual murders "might have taken place" were made in a spirit of "ironic academic provocation," and he had not meant to say that medieval or early modern Jews committed ritual murder.[10] Despite his early show of bravado, by 15 February, newspapers reported that Toaff had asked *Il Mulino* press to halt distribution of his book until he could make revisions.[11] Any profits generated from its sale, he promised, would go to the ADL. After some initial waffling, Toaff's em-

ployer, Bar-Ilan University, said Toaff should "take personal responsibility for his blunder and act to repair the damage."[12] By the end of the month, the controversy had grown to such a pitch that some Israeli Knesset members even called for Toaff's prosecution on the grounds that he had "caused damage to the Jewish People and the Nation of Israel."[13] The Education Committee of the Israeli Knesset formally condemned Toaff's book and said it "did not deserve to be written and published."[14] As some observers remarked, this was astonishing in a country as long accustomed to vigorous public debates about history as contemporary Israel. A few suggested that the real target of the censure was the latest generation of Israeli "new historians," whom Toaff could be made to represent (Cervo, "Il parlamento di Israele").[15]

The academic community was, unusually, not far behind in its response to the book: Robert Bonfil published a scathing editorial about *Pasque di sangue* on 16 February, calling it an insult to scholarship, while Carlo Ginzburg offered a highly critical review in *Il Corriere della Sera* on 23 February.[16] Medievalists were also hard at work online: Johannes Heil, Kenneth Stow, and Richard Landes all posted online commentaries about the book by the end of the month.[17] These responses were almost uniformly negative.[18] Scholars fretted about public reception but were primarily concerned by what they described as egregious methodological errors. Toaff made basic errors of fact; he took evidence obtained by torture at face value; he engaged in feats of speculation but failed to acknowledge the hypothetical scaffolding of his arguments. Heil remarks that Toaff "commits errors that one usually learns to avoid in undergraduate seminars" ("A Comment"), while Stow observes that the book "reads like a bad first year student's term paper, nothing more, and perhaps less" ("A Book Full of Sound and Fury"). Anna Esposito and Diego Quaglioni, both prominent scholars in the field who have edited the Trent trial records, wrote that the result of Toaff's simplistic use of evidence amounted to "a sort of return to an early moment in historiography, to an age preceding the acquisition of 'discretion' or the capacity of discernment, a return to a pre-critical reading of the trial sources."[19] David Abulafia is possibly most damning when he writes, "A historian who finds it so difficult to distinguish truth from fiction . . . is best advised to lay down his pen" ("Libels of Blood," 12). The controversy developed at fantastic speed for an academic debate, underscoring the high stakes of the questions involved and the seriousness with which they were regarded.

The European scholarly world reacted quickly to the book, and it made

headlines in Israel, but *Pasque di sangue* was a media sensation in Italy, where journalists, scholars, and pundits were featured in dozens of articles that sought to evaluate the book—and its author—in the familiar terms of the juridical discourse surrounding the blood libel. Commentators spoke of a "case" or "file" that had been "reopened" by Toaff's book, and the launching of a "new investigation" that had long been considered closed by the scholarly community. In his initial review, Sergio Luzzatto acknowledges that "after the tragedy of the Shoah, it is comprehensible that 'blood libel' has become a taboo" and goes on to praise Toaff for his "unprecedented intellectual courage" in "the re-opening of the complete dossier" ("Quelle Pasque di Sangue").[20] In Italy, in particular, the Toaff affair also became tied up early on with the question of academics' freedom to pursue and publish controversial research, from conversations on professional blogs to debates in newspapers.[21] Particularly after Bar-Ilan called Toaff onto the carpet to account for his book in the middle of February, critics began to refer to his censure by a group of Italian rabbis as an "excommunication,"[22] and supporters argued Toaff was the victim of a "witch-hunt" for making an unpopular argument. In the sometimes sensational tone of Italian journalism, writers compared his work to books burned by the Inquisition and referred to the author's "lynching."[23]

Many of Toaff's supporters argued that his trial in the court of public opinion was unfair (even if many of those opinions were registered by experts in his field), a knee-jerk reaction to the controversy rather than a thoughtful response to his arguments. On the discussion board of the professional organization SISEM (La Società Italiana per la Storia dell'Età Moderna), Aurelio Musi, of the University of Salerno, expressed a sense of alarm that recalled the remarks of journalists and editorialists. The book, he wrote, "has been subject to full-blown ostracism. . . . This was not limited to contesting the method, the use of sources, but has triggered an outright condemnation that involved the government, associations, and institutions in a shameless witch-hunt."[24] An early Toaff defender, Franco Cardini, published a ninety-three-page essay just months after the release of Toaff's book, and its basic concern was to deplore how Toaff had been pilloried in such a sensational way for his arguments.[25]

The fears of journalists, activists, and scholars critical of Toaff were tied to a particular anxiety—that contemporary antisemites would capitalize on his theories as evidence for their own long-standing claims of Jewish perfidy. Dr. Amos Luzzatto, a former president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, told reporters that the book "offers nourishment for

growing anti-Semitism for Jew-haters to say: 'I told you so. I told you so.' "[26] A spokesman for the ADL in Israel, Arieh O'Sullivan, outlined a script for such responses: "Enemies of Israel will seize on this book as a gift. They will argue that because of this 'courageous' Jew with impeccable credentials, the son of the former chief rabbi of Rome and from Bar-Ilan, all the other conspiracy theories will be true" (Frenkel). The German historian Johannes Heil describes his own version of the same predictable response when he remarks, "The script is well known and in its fifth remake not in the least amusing: the prophets of cultural entertainment will announce a new 'Historikerstreit' [historians' debate]. The audience will listen intently to 'the Jew,' 'who should know, after all.' Historians' and other news venues are already racing to present new aspects of this 'scandal'" ("A Comment").

Among these expressions of concern were the voices of those defending the traditional account of Jewish suffering and memorialization. ADL president Abraham Foxman confirmed the conventional historical narrative when he said, "The accusation, like many other conspiracy theories about Jews, was made out of whole cloth and reflected the tendency in Medieval [*sic*] Europe, based on Christian anti-Jewish doctrine, to demonize Jews and blame them for problems in society" (Foxman). It was an easy jump to recalling the Holocaust in this context. An American rabbi, comparing Toaff's work to Yuval's, remarked that in the initial controversy over Yuval's ideas in Israel, "It was as though Yuval had said that the Jews brought the Holocaust on themselves" by linking Jewish self-martyrdom in medieval Europe to the emergence of the blood libel (Sanders). In an editorial piece, the scholar Robert Bonfil invoked the "extermination of the entire Jewish community" in Trent following the early modern ritual murder trial there, implicitly invoking the premodern example as a precursor to twentieth-century events ("Repeating the Blood Libel"). Many of these commentators, like the Israeli Knesset members who called for Toaff's prosecution, conflated the damaging effect on Israel with the effect on the Jewish people: Toaff's reception was always complicated by his status as an Israeli. Many of Toaff's academic critics described his work explicitly in relation to Yuval's and often invoked Horowitz as a similarly minded thinker. Most of these comparisons did not dig very deeply but indicated that these scholars were perceived to share certain methodological tendencies.[27]

It would be reassuring to think all this hubbub was just the result of panic and unwarranted speculation, that the fears of antisemitic instru-

mentalization were at least a little bit hysterical. Unfortunately these fears proved to be well-founded. The script outlined by activists and academics swung into motion like clockwork. An announcement attributed to Michael A. Hoffman, II, who is affiliated with a radical revisionist website, praises Toaff's work in terms that leave no doubt about his larger motives.

> Toaff is the son of the Chief Rabbi of Rome. His credentials are impeccable. I've been waiting for a revelation like this FROM A JUDAIC [*sic*] LIKE TOAFF all of my life! . . . Talk about the Revelation of the Method, here's the grand-daddy of them all, from an academic the Lobby can only term "anti-semitic" with the utmost cynicism and discredit to themselves.[28]

This writer goes on to capitalize on Toaff's change of heart as further evidence of his status as a righteous dissident, remarking, "Originally Toaff was defiant when his book was about to be published in Italian. Within a week of the announcement, however, he was a blubbering wreck, after having received the usual threats to his life and teaching job from the eternally persecuted ones" (Hoffman). Similar references to Jews as the "eternally persecuted ones" ring through other radical websites. Israel Shamir, a pro-Palestinian blogger who describes himself as "a leading Russian Israeli writer," describes the Vatican's recent efforts to achieve interfaith reconciliation with Jews as an appeal to "the new Jewish-friendly narrative of modernity," and just like Hoffman, he speaks of Jewish historical memory in vicious terms.[29] After defending those who historically "punished" Jewish "wrath-seeking monsters," he writes,

> Jews may be more modest and cease carrying their historical wounds on the sleeve [*sic*]: their forefathers thrived despite these terrible doings by some of their coreligionists, while in the Jewish state, sins of some Palestinians are visited upon all of them. We can also dismiss with shudder [*sic*] the whining of Israel's friends when they want us not to see the Jenin Massacre or Qana Massacre for—yes, exactly, this is like the "blood libel," i.e. not a libel at all. ("Bloody Passovers of Dr. Toaff")

This ugly rhetoric emphasizes a fixed opposition to established narratives of Jewish history and frequently confuses political critique of the Israeli state with anti-Jewish invective.

For Toaff's more dubious supporters, the "reality" uncovered by his work is unambiguous: they see his project as the smoking gun that "proves" their claims about Jewish secrets, Jewish nature, and a transhis-

torical and collective Jewish guilt. With the exception of a few ultratraditionalist Catholic websites,[30] these supporters are not concerned with the ancient label of Christ-killers—they are after another quarry, the alleged Jewish cabal they believe is responsible for every modern debacle from the Great Depression to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Scratch the surface of certain websites, and you quickly discover their investments in Holocaust denial and conspiracy theory, the hallmarks of an insidious, radical revisionist agenda. The translators of the first edition of Toaff's book, for example, writing under the pseudonyms Gian Marco Lucchese and Pietro Gianetti, also appear to be affiliated with a newsletter called the *Revisionist Clarion,* whose aims are well-represented by articles like "Gas Chambers, 911, and the Perils of Orthodoxy" and "Genocide Inflation Is the Real Human Rights Threat: Yugoslavia and Rwanda."[31] Lucchese and Gianetti rushed their English version of Toaff's book to online publication, where it remains freely accessible as of this writing.[32] In fact the authors deliver both a taunt and a promise when they say that if they are forced to remove the document from one website, they will simply repost it in another location to keep it readily available to the public.[33] They have also appended a short primer to the document's introduction. His pirate translators are convinced that Toaff maintains, among other things, that "Jews lend money at 40% and seem to do little else" and "Jews resort to poisoning and assassination when thwarted" ("Introduction"). Within this dark subculture, nothing could be more natural than the idea that what a few Jews did or did not do in the fifteenth century somehow reveals a fundamental truth about the behavior of Jews today. If, in the ADL's public statements, it is eternal Jewish suffering that must be remembered, among these polemicists it is eternal Jewish evil that must not be forgotten.

Instrumentalization of such claims in the Arab world is a vague presence in debates over Toaff's work, invoked at a distance and with hesitation. A few academic commentators refer warily to tales of ritual murder promulgated as simple facts in Arabic-language media, but these references are usually tentative and brief.[34] An exception to this rule is the Italian politician Fiamma Nirenstein. She accuses Toaff of making a "vampire" of the Jews and refers to some examples of references to his work in the Arab world. "It is an exceptional tool," she writes, referring to the book. "In the coming decades the fact that even a Jew, a professor with that name, has 'proved' the blood libel will delight all the Ahmadinejads of the world" (F. Nirenstein).[35] She quotes the Lebanese poet Marwan Chamoun, who speaks of the legend as established fact in an interview. Chamoun asks, "Why not use these his-

torical arguments presented to us on a simple plate of gold?" (F. Nirenstein).[36] The easy reference to blood libel in the mainstream Arab world is largely ignored in the West, although those who champion Toaff's book often see themselves as defenders of the beleaguered Palestinian cause. Generally, media coverage of Toaff's book registers an uneasy awareness of its potential political uses that is not fully articulated.[37]

Alongside worries about radical Muslim instrumentalization, a familiar juridical structure of argument is apparent in coverage of the Toaff affair. The binary logic of antisemite and apologist is hard at work in this loose public sphere. Each cadre serves much the same function they have always served in the juridical discussion of ritual murder. What is basically reinforced is the sense of two "camps" locked in permanent opposition to one another. There is a vital, upstanding "us" devoted to guarding historical memory and a true historical record. And there is a vicious "them," devoted to erasure and forgetting, the exploiters of a cynical relativism whose primary purpose is to promote an ugly racialist agenda. However, the conspiracy theorists imagine themselves as the beleaguered, righteous remnant. The debate over proper victim status could not be clearer than in the dueling uses of the phrase *blood libel* itself. For someone like Israel Shamir, the ancient calumny of ritual murder simply reconfirms his view of modern Israeli policy as an extended sacrifice of blood. But for those who worry over the dangers of renewing the charge, Toaff's book is the latest chapter in a tired, familiar formula that ends with the persecution of Jews.

Apologists defend, and polemicists attack; in between there is the abyss of historiographical uncertainty, what Langmuir described as a loophole. Toaff was perhaps naive to think that debates on this subject could sustain an "ironic academic provocation," and if his hope was to achieve the demystifying perspective of the ethics of implication, he accomplished something much more unsettling. Toaff managed to reinforce the terms of an age-old conversation rather than question them, and his provocative statements about what "might have happened," his deliberately open-ended speculations about the relationship between Jewish medicinal and quasimagical practices involving dried blood and the plausibility of the ritual murder accusation for Jews' Christian neighbors, reopened old wounds rather than rescuing a three-dimensional Jewish community for history. Yet the complicated reception of his work offers some indications of the fault lines along which such an ethics of implication must operate, including the narrow distance between acknowledging historical implication in a specific cultural dynamic and becoming complicit with the structural

forces of antisemitism. It is on this difficult ground that I distinguish Toaff's work from that of scholars like Yuval or Horowitz. I began my own examination of Toaff's argument with some expectation that he had been misunderstood. In the event, however, I admit I was shocked by the book—shocked by the author's handling of evidence, by his recourse to a strategy of innuendo and razor-thin argumentation, and by his dismissive responses to critics, which gave short shrift to methodological debates. These are markers of a lack of cognitive responsibility as I have defined it, and together they form a structure of argument that is both familiar and disturbing.

Langmuir's Loophole and the Language of Possibility

The ethical distance between implication and complicity can be measured at the limit of historical interpretation, at the edge of what Langmuir called the "loophole" and what I have referred to as the problem of historical indeterminacy. Whereas Langmuir sought to seal off this problem as a taboo area of discussion, and Yuval writes over it without either denying the problem of uncertainty or deliberating about it, Toaff exploits the problem of indeterminacy both rhetorically and methodologically. He repeats and amplifies the ambiguities and innuendo of the blood libel itself and in the process becomes complicit with the historical forces of antisemitism. I do not claim, nor would I wish to claim, that Toaff is an antisemite (or, if you prefer, a self-hating Jew) any more than I would want to make such a claim about supporters of his work like Sergio Luzzatto and Franco Cardini. Certainly their intentions are far afield from the likes of website promoters who deny the Holocaust and embrace Toaff only out of perverse necessity. Nevertheless, Toaff's book, precisely by exploiting the problem of indeterminacy, replicates the structures of blood libel itself, valuing possibility over probability, innuendo over argument, and the power of suggestive association over reasoned supposition. This rhetorical and methodological posture is symptomatic of the historical structure of complicity. It is a structure of argument that also permeates the rhetoric of his defenders, where it serves to illustrate the pitfalls of a position that insists on the maintenance of a principle regardless of the contingent circumstances of the particular case. This is one sense in which Toaff's work, and the arguments of those who support it, return us to the ground of the moral rather than the ethical. Toaff's supporters prioritize the moral rule above and beyond any contingency: from their perspective, the principle

of academic freedom of inquiry seems to outweigh objections to the book's methods and argumentation.[38]

One of the difficulties with *Pasque di sangue* is that even hypotheses Toaff frames in conditional language—describing what might have or might not have occurred—quickly become concretized in the language of the indicative in the reception of his book.[39] Not only was this true among certain incautious journalists and the curators of antisemitic websites, but it is a phenomenon visible among his early academic supporters, Franco Cardini and Sergio Luzzatto. Luzzatto initially describes *Pasque di sangue* as a "magnificent history book," one that "is far too serious and meritorious to shout out its virtues as if it were being hawked at a market stall" ("Quelle *Pasque di sangue*").[40] There is some irony in the fact that it was Luzzatto's review, published just a few days before the book's release, that initially excited controversy in Italy and appeared to "shout out" the book's virtues in the manner of the market seller he describes.[41] Luzzatto quickly touches on the matter of responsibility, in a way that leaves no doubt about how he believes the Toaff thesis transforms our understanding of historical reality.

> Toaff claims that from approximately 1100 to 1500, in the period between the First Crusade and the twilight of the Middle Ages, some crucifixions of Christian "cherubs"—or perhaps many—were actually performed, thereby giving rise to the retaliations against entire Jewish communities, and to the punitive massacre of men, women and children. Neither in Trent in 1475, nor anywhere else in late medieval Europe were the Jews entirely innocent victims. ("Quelle *Pasque di sangue*")[42]

In case we missed the move from legend to reality, Luzzatto reiterates the main point: "Over a vast, linguistically Germanic, geographical area between the Rhine, Danube, and Adige rivers, a minority of Ashkenazic fundamentalists indeed performed human sacrifices with some frequency" ("Quelle *Pasque di sangue*").[43] The only nod toward the conditional framing of this thesis is the brief reminder that this is what "Toaff claims"—otherwise Luzzatto presents an explosive hypothesis in the straightforward indicative of accepted fact. He even indulges in some imaginative elaboration of his own: "Young blood [was] perfect for vindicating the terrible acts of desperation—the infanticides, the collective suicides—to which the Jews of the German area, too many times, had to submit, because of the hateful practice of forced baptisms, that the progeny of Israel saw imposed

upon them in the name of Jesus Christ" ("Quelle *Pasque di sangue*").[44] Luzzatto displays a generic sympathy for persecuted Jews who might have wished for justice for their wrongs. Yet in this bizarre context, in which Jews of the past are understood to take revenge for historical injustices on the bodies of children, such sympathy can only be a piquant and distant emotion.

After some of the harsh public statements that followed the appearance of his review, Luzzatto managed to respond with an admixture of caution and belligerence. Toaff's book, he now wrote, "asserts that the accusation against Jews of having practiced the murder of Christian children for ritual purposes, was *perhaps not entirely false*."[45] After this moment of cautious acknowledgment that Toaff's historical argument is a hypothesis, Luzzatto quickly goes back on the offensive, condemning what he considers the uninformed response of rabbis who had not yet read the book when they indulged in the "cultural lynching" of its author.

> One can only hope that some voice of solidarity for Toaff rises from the world of professional historians. There is no need to agree with him. It is sufficient to recognize that, for one who studies the past, this is not only a free but also a serious profession. And no cartel of rabbis (nor, in other contexts, a cartel of bishops or imams) can set limits as to what is historically plausible and what is historically aberrant. ("Il Libro Scomunicato")[46]

This statement encapsulates two themes that became major issues in relation to Toaff's reception in Italy: academic freedom of research and what was perceived as Jewish community censorship. When Italy's Jewish community closed ranks and condemned Toaff's book—along with a cadre of well-informed scholars, many of whom are also Jewish—a backlash ensued. For Luzzatto, in particular, the "cartel of rabbis" looms large in the imagination. Portraying Toaff as the outsider beset on all fronts, he later writes,

> Some colleagues at Bar-Ilan have made an attempt to defend him, only to surrender to political considerations of the situation of Israel or the economic pressure of the American diaspora. In the end, Ariel Toaff's abjuration: pulling the book from the Italian market; devolving the copyrights to the Jewish-American organization, the Anti-Defamation League, which, without knowing anything about the content of the book, had already condemned it as ignoble; and Toaff's apologies to the Jews of Israel and around the world.[47]

Troubling themes rumble beneath the surface here: a powerful but shadowy American Jewish lobby apparently dictates policy to Israeli universities, while Toaff's apology to "Jews around the world" suggests something of the stereotype of a clannish transnational community connected above and beyond any national ties. Of course, members of the Knesset also suggested something similar when they accused Toaff of damaging Israel and Jews all over the world.

Luzzatto's argument about the pressures of communal memory is also familiar within the world of Israeli historiography.

> The moral of the whole story can be extracted from an interview which appeared in *La Repubblica* given by Ariel's father, Elio Toaff. The ex-Rabbi, head of the Jewish community in Rome, publicly applauded his son's abjuration [of the book], saluting his return to the fold of consensual thought regarding Jewish history. [This is] a way of thinking that does not even allow the possibility of the Jews having had a common history with other men and women, the "Gentiles": a history of encounters and clashes, of coexistence and intolerance, of respect and hatred. A way of thinking that needs to consider the Jews as if they were beyond space and time: never for good nor bad living actors in history, but always only characters with no flesh and bones, sacrificial lambs, victims, victims, victims. ("La storia divisa")[48]

Luzzatto's complaint might just as easily have been written by one of the many recent Israeli historians who have pushed against such a model of Jewish history and identity. It is a complaint voiced by Toaff himself after the release of the revised edition of his book in 2008 and in the caustic opinion piece, *Ebraismo virtuale,* that he released the same year.[49] Addressing his final remarks to Rabbi Elio Toaff, Ariel's father, Luzzatto writes, "Teacher, are we really sure that the essence of Judaism can be protected with an ethical and scientific interdiction?" ("La storia divisa").[50] In his defense of academic freedom, Luzzatto identifies the desire to preserve the "essence" of a religious tradition as an element of the entire problematic of analyzing Jewish history. He suggests that those who condemn Toaff's book are motivated by such a desire, which they hope to satisfy by maintaining and patrolling a line that it is forbidden to cross. I have already suggested that Gavin Langmuir employs just such an interdiction in articulating the limits of what can and cannot be said about the ritual murder accusation. The Toaff case, with its ringing denunciations by Jewish religious figures and organizations, demonstrates the continuing power of this

appeal to interdiction, what Toaff and Luzzatto both refer to as a "taboo."

In defending Toaff, however, Luzzatto and Franco Cardini not only dismiss any adherence to this moral prohibition, they go much further by directly exploiting the question of indeterminacy. Cardini is emphatic on this point:

> Naturally, [Toaff] does not provide definitive proof of actions that would be truly upsetting: the reality of ritual murder. He limits himself, with limpid prudence and exemplary courage, to observing that definitive proof is lacking for declaring that this was a calumny; absent such proof . . . no one is authorized to deny, *a priori,* the possibility that the investigations carried out by the authorities at the time may be believable, and that we are really faced with a terrible crime.[51]

It appears that while we cannot *prove* the truth of the accusation, we are also not allowed to discount it, and apparently this remains true no matter how many scholars dismiss the libel because of the flimsy evidence in its favor or its improbability. Cardini effectively redescribes what Langmuir terms the "loophole" of historiographical uncertainty by maintaining this open space—apparently skeptical but actually credulous—in which we are called upon to grant some limited credibility to an accusation because it cannot be disproven. What is especially disturbing is the suggestive language cited above, which goes unremarked in Sabina Loriga's excellent review of the scandal. Cardini refers to the "reality of ritual murder" and the possibility that we might really be "faced with a terrible crime." I take Cardini's meaning, in context, to be that since definitive proof is impossible, Toaff is right not to pursue such a goal. Yet taken alongside his other statements, the implications return us to the very problem Cardini wants to hold open: the precise meaning of the "reality" of a ritual killing.

"Well," Cardini continues, "is it really so unhistorical, so entirely lacking in plausibility, to think that in the midst of the thousands of innocent and silent victims, there may have been someone who—more ferocious, more desperate and less resigned than the others—may have conceived and actually carried out some atrocious plan of vengeance?"[52] It is impossible not to recall earlier formulations of this idea by James Parkes and William Thomas Walsh (discussed in the first chapter). Cardini makes room—holds open the door—for the "mad, bad, or insane" Jew who might commit a terrible crime.[53] Luzzatto also exploits this space of uncertainty. In follow-up commentary to his review of Toaff's book, he re-

marks on the "serious debate" among scholars that followed the initial protests over *Pasque di sangue,* then dismisses complaints about Toaff's simplistic handling of confessions obtained by torture as mere "pretexts" to condemn the book. Such a complaint about the author's use of evidence, Luzzatto writes,

> reprehends Toaff for having provided "clues" rather than "proof": almost as if the scholar of crimes committed six centuries ago could case the crime scene with the instruments of a CSI detective, finding the smoking gun in the corner of the room, or better yet, organic trace evidence to submit for DNA testing. . . . Naturally, if an action is confessed under torture, it is not proof that the action is true. Nor is it proof, however, that the action is false. ("La storia divisa")[54]

Once again, no proof may be obtainable to establish the allegation, but no proof will ever be sufficient to dismiss it, either. Luzzatto also voices his own version of the "exceptional Jew" theory: "to exclude a priori that a few Jewish fanatics of the Middle Ages committed such murderous acts, solely for the reason that their confessions to such acts were uttered under torture, is the sort of reasoning that should insult any intelligent person" ("La storia divisa").[55]

Arguments like those of Cardini and Luzzatto follow traditional juridical formulas. They invoke case files, dossiers, and previous scholarly discussions, as well as proofs, evidence, definitive verdicts, and claims of biased juries—in this case, largely juries of scholarly opinion. But what I want to emphasize here is not only the recurrence of this juridical structure but the structural peculiarities of a logic that exploits—deliberately, and as a matter of principle—the space of historical indeterminacy. Langmuir, Yuval, and other interpreters of the ritual murder libel may attempt to foreclose or resolve this space prematurely, but their gestures are part of the standard code of conduct for historians: making determinations about events is, after all, what historians do. It is another project altogether to insist that all solutions to a historiographical problem are equally possible, even probable, because we can never arrive at an unassailable conclusion about them. This is a strategic maneuver, one that is purpose-built for special pleading. Such a rhetorical and logical strategy may have its uses, but it also has significant limits.

The question of possibility versus probability, stressed in many reviews, is one way of reconnoitering such limits, and here the consensus of well-

informed experts who have all read the documentary sources ought to be meaningful. A major difficulty is the insistence that the mere *possibility* of a "mad, bad, or insane" Jew performing an actual ritual murder ought to weigh in the balance in the same way as the incredible improbability of any centuries-long conspiracy among the Jews of the world to commit such ritual crimes. This is not only disingenuous, it virtually repeats the logical structure of traditional Western antisemitism, which claims that the former argument (the existence of a lone erratic perpetrator) actually proves the latter argument (the existence of a sustained and approved Jewish tradition of murder). If the slide from the conditional to the indicative is capable of turning hypotheses into seeming certainties, the exceptional lone perpetrator quickly morphs into a corporate presence in this logic.

Those who argue that academic free speech ought to trump other considerations in the case (including the quality of the argument in question) tend to combine two notable complaints: (1) that historians are the only critics qualified to judge Toaff's work, so that debates about it should take place in an academic, rather than a political or religious, forum, and (2) that the historians who have offered almost uniformly negative reviews have adopted an inappropriate tone—too harsh, too condemnatory, too personal.[56] Unfortunately, this appears to leave a narrow margin for legitimate critique. Such complaints have the effect of framing all scholarly opinions as equally valid—as long as they are politely expressed. But the reduction of debate to a series of opinions is also a serious problem for historiography, since it hits upon a genuine difficulty where historical understanding is concerned. Historical claims are fundamentally based on interpretations, and interpretations are to some degree malleable.[57] Historiographical reasoning is a matter of sometimes fine distinctions, between possible and probable, likely and unlikely, plausible and implausible. Where such distinctions are concerned, particularly when discussing phenomena as riddled with indeterminacy as the ritual murder accusation, the historian's own interests and biases can swamp the claims of evidence. One irony of the Toaff affair is that many of Toaff's defenders dismiss critiques of his work on the grounds that such complaints are "all politics." Yet ethics and method work at cross purposes in *Pasque di sangue.* The claims of evidence get short shrift, while the claims of ideology—expressed in the terms of a specific ethical discourse—dominate the work. The result is a curious moralization where we might be least inclined to expect it. A modern Israeli historian holds Jewish traditionalism responsible for the ills of Jewish history.

Ariel Toaff and the Structure of Complicity

Toaff's original argument—as both critics and supporters understood it—actually combined the claim of limited and particular guilt with the ghost of corporate responsibility concerning the blood libel in a particular way. He appeared to argue that only a "fundamentalist sect" within Judaism might have been involved in such practices, but their occurrence was structurally regulated and incorporated as part of a regular religious ritual.[58] On the one hand, the truth claim was limited to certain "fundamentalist" elements—not all Jews everywhere. On the other hand, the practice was a "rite," not a "myth"—in other words, there was some basis for its practice. Throughout most of the controversy, Toaff insisted he had never claimed that ritual murders actually occurred. Instead, as he wrote in the afterword to the revised edition of his book, he meant to argue that the Jewish rituals of Passover vengeance he had described involved the dried blood of paid and willing donors, who remained "alive and well." The accusation of ritual murder, he now said clearly, "is and remains a calumnious stereotype" (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 364).[59] Furthermore, he wrote,

> Between the dried blood utilized in the ritual which for the most part came from self-interested, unknown "donors"—alive and well, usually from indigent families—and blood collected from presumed ritual murders, there was absolutely no relationship, except in the minds of the judges (and not only those from Trent). (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 365)[60]

The use of blood in Passover wine therefore did not entail murder—"merely" a fanatical hatred carried to extremes with magical practices. In this newly clarified context, it seems that we are to understand Toaff's early remarks to the effect that actual ritual murders "might have" taken place as nothing more than a provocative acknowledgment of indeterminacy. One commentator, Massimo Introvigne, insists that Toaff's revisions constitute a new argument: "Whoever says that Toaff continues to support the same thesis between the first and second edition either did not read the second edition, has not read the first, or failed to compare them" ("Il corvo e la volpe").[61]

The problem of indeterminacy infects the presentation of Toaff's argument and is directly responsible for many of the difficulties that emerged in the reception of his book. A few scholars remarked, for example, on Toaff's ambiguous relation to earlier accusations of ritual murder. On the

one hand, his book is largely a case study based on records from the 1475 trial for ritual murder in Trent, which claimed the lives of more than a dozen Jews. On the other hand, he refers to previous cases without offering many clues about how he understands these in relation to the Trent example. If, as he seems to suggest, only a few "fanatics" engaged in ritual murder—or in blood rituals that might have encouraged the allegation of ritual murder—then which cases have some "real" basis, and which are the products of fantasy? In one important chapter, "Crocifissione e cannibalismo rituale: da Norwich a Fulda" ("Crucifixion and Ritual Cannibalism: From Norwich to Fulda"), Toaff reviews a number of previous historical cases and devotes special attention to the Norwich accusation, because of both its early date and the lengthy surviving account by Thomas of Monmouth. He appears to read this documentation (as he sometimes does when dealing with other sources) as a straightforward record of investigation, citing it as if it were an authoritative and unproblematic report. After paraphrasing Thomas's account of what witnesses later said about William's disappearance, including the servant's claim that she witnessed William's torture through a crack in the door, Toaff writes:

> To divert suspicion, the Jews decided to transport the dead body from the opposite side of the city to Thorpe Wood, which skirted the last houses on the edge of town. During the journey on horseback with the bulky sack, however, they encountered, to their misfortune, a respected and well-to-do local merchant going to church accompanied by a servant. The merchant had no difficulty recognizing what was happening before his very eyes. He would remember it years later, on his deathbed, when he would confess the details to a priest, who later became a valuable informant for the hard-working and indefatigable Thomas of Monmouth. The body of young William was finally hidden by the Jews among the bushes in Thorpe Wood. (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 116)[62]

Toaff does not acknowledge that the speech in which the Jews allegedly "decided to transport the body" is an invention presented to us by Thomas of Monmouth himself and was never something he claimed to have witnessed or to have learned explicitly from an informant. Ironically, Thomas of Monmouth is more honest with his readers than Ariel Toaff, since for Thomas, the invention of speeches for historical characters is a licit convention, while for Toaff, such citation out of context amounts to misleading the modern reader. For a modern scholar to avoid acknowledging the

conventions of historical writing within which Thomas is working, or even to remind us that this information is only provided by Thomas's account, is profoundly problematic, particularly when most of his readership is likely to be unfamiliar with the specific rhetorical qualities of medieval materials. What is more, Thomas himself is presented only as "hard-working and indefatigable," hardly the ambitious monk defending his own interests we have already encountered.

Toaff's treatment of the Norwich material represents a brief and relatively inconsequential moment in *Pasque di sangue,* yet it is representative of other shortcomings in the work. As it stands, Toaff's review of this early accusation of ritual murder, conducted largely in the indicative, sounds like a simple recitation of events, not an acount founded on moments of historiographical contention.[63] Regarding Toaff's discussion of cases before Trent, David Abulafia remarks, "What is disconcerting is how here and elsewhere [Toaff] tells these stories in the past-indicative mood without the usual qualifications one would expect from a historian writing in Italian—a liberal use of the conditional mood, a good sprinkling of subjunctives, some sign of suspension of disbelief" ("Libels of Blood," 12). Abulafia is reviewing the first edition, while I have quoted from the revised edition Toaff released in 2008, yet the problem—with a few nods to hypothetical construction here and there—remains.

Several pages into Toaff's discussion of previous blood accusations, readers encounter a significant indication of how he evaluates earlier charges. He addresses the example of Adam of Bristol, who, he says, was the victim of "a real serial killer" believed to have murdered three other Christian children in one year. Drawing on the Latin account, Toaff writes,

> Subsequently, with the collaboration of his wife and child, [Samuel] would turn to the kidnapping of another child named Adam, who, after being tortured, mutilated (perhaps even circumcised), and crucified, would finally be skewered on a spit like a lamb and roasted over a fire. Afterward Samuel's wife and child would repent, expressing their intention to bathe in the baptismal waters, but at this point the perfidious Jewish criminal killed them as well. (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 121)[64]

This summary is in some ways similar to the Norwich one, though problematic on its own terms. What Toaff only indirectly acknowledges is that this is a thirteenth-century account produced long after the twelfth-cen-

tury events it claims to describe, and is a quasihistorical text with narrative commentary by no less a personage than *God*. One purpose of this story, in fact, is to explain why no one in medieval Bristol knew of this murder earlier or managed to locate Adam's relics. Late in the story, Samuel disappears as a character, and Robert Stacey remarks that his crimes "go completely undetected by any Bristol citizen."[65] Again, Toaff summarizes narrative events without adequately acknowledging their questionable relation to historical reality. For the moment, however, I will set aside such problems to focus instead on the historiographical conclusions Toaff draws from the case. He writes,

> As we can see, the popular psychosis of ritual murder sometimes contributed to the distorted perception of those caught up in irrational fears. And this was independent of the fact that these fears could sometimes manifest themselves in the sad reality of the criminal deliriums of individuals, clouded by phobias and psychoses of a religious character, transferred to the operational plane. (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 121)[66]

It would seem from these remarks that those "caught up in irrational fears" are the Christians whose anxieties could sometimes manifest themselves in reality, if only in the case of deluded individuals. Following on from Toaff's previous chapter, in which he argues that Jews made use of dried blood (whether animal or human) for medicinal and ritual purposes (often as a clotting agent), we are left to infer that this practice was simply misunderstood by hostile Christians, perhaps because it intersected with the exotic practice of circumcision, and the misunderstanding was amplified by the acts of a few deluded individuals (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 95–113). Yet leaving this inference to the reader is by no means a straightforward issue, whether they are specialists or lay readers. After all, most of the accomplished professional historians who read the first edition—many of them well-versed in the same source materials—either did not make this inference themselves or felt Toaff's claim was so understated as to be entirely ineffective. And given the context, in which Toaff narrates a retrospective fable whose ties to historical reality are indirect indeed, it is a doubly ambiguous announcement. It is too easy, based on Toaff's description alone, to come away with the impression that earlier accounts simply reflect events, not disputed legends.

This problem of ambiguity is exacerbated by one of Toaff's remarks late in the same chapter, when he reports the indirect testimony of a Jewish

"sage" alleged to have confirmed on his deathbed that "the torments suffered by the Jews in body and soul could only find some assured measure of healing through the beneficial consumption of Christian blood" (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 125). Toaff then remarks, "Liquid or powdered, dried or clotted, fresh or boiled, blood, a magic liquid of ambiguous and mysterious fascination, made its overbearing presence felt in the stories of infant sacrifices, in whose folds it was concealed, perhaps with less success than was thought, up to that point" (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 125).[67] This statement can be read coherently in two different ways. Either the obsession "hidden in the folds" of these stories reflects a Christian projection, based on a hostile misunderstanding of Jewish medicinal use of blood as a hemostatic, or the truth to be gleaned from these stories is hiding in plain sight: some ritual murders have taken place. It is obvious which interpretation is favored by the openly antisemitic translators of Toaff's book online. What is often less than clear, even for an attentive reader, is which reading Toaff himself supports.

By the time we reach the twelfth chapter, "Il memoriale della passione" ("The Memorial of the Passion"), the ambiguity of myth and reality has been stretched to the breaking point. "The use of the blood of a Christian child in the Jewish celebration of Passover," Toaff writes, "was apparently subject to minute regulation, at least as it appears from the depositions of the accused in the Trent trial" (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 177).[68] Most of the testimony in this chapter is plucked from two problematic sources: the depositions of the Jews tortured for information in the Trent case and the writings of one of the modern Catholic proponents of the Trent martyr—namely, the hagiographer Giuseppe Divina, whose account dates from 1902.[69] Toaff hardly acknowledges the difficulties presented by such sources, as several scholars have observed. Roni Weinstein argues there is a gap between theory and practice in Toaff's account.

> A certain critical caution is necessary to weigh the depositions extorted by torture or issued by converts, people from whom new tests of fidelity were always required, and who were forced, under very strong psychological pressures, to renounce in a dramatic and irreversible way their previous religious and social identity. Toaff is perfectly aware of all these problems, mentioned many times in his book, but then seems to forget them the moment he confronts the sources.[70]

In fact, Toaff often masks such problems by appearing to read the sources as straightforward reference material. And too frequently, the use of much

later Catholic apologetic sources is practically rendered invisible, particularly for readers unfamiliar with the intricacies of surviving documents. Cristiana Facchini remarks that many of the most salacious details in the book, those likely to persuade readers that Toaff recovers believable historical actors from the past, are drawn from precisely such sources.

> It is not a coincidence, and can be demonstrated, that all the curious and anecdotal information about the characters (such as how they dressed, their hair color, and their strange idiosyncrasies), those elements that make the account so suggestive, including the stories of conspiracies or quotidian details, originate from hagiographical sources, namely from the information gathered in the first half the eighteenth century or in the first years of the twentieth, in order to consolidate the cult of the blessed Simonino.[71]

The casual use of sources that are not only deeply biased but produced long after the events in question is no minor matter, and Toaff claims to recognize this.

Following Carlo Ginzburg's famous rereading of some witchcraft trial records from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Toaff writes that he wants to use surviving accounts from Trent to sift the defendants' beliefs from those of their accusers. What "we must ask ourselves," he writes, is

> if the confessions of the accused were accurate reports of real events that took place or just beliefs, framed in symbolic, magical, or mythical contexts to be reconstructed. Do they constitute only the reflection of the beliefs of the judges, with their fears and obsessions, of the clergy that sided with them, of the inferior classes, or of the defendants themselves? . . . Therefore we will have to investigate the mindsets of the victims of the accusations of ritual sacrifice. (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 11)[72]

If there is a gap between what judges expected to hear and what the accused offered above and beyond this expectation, such details might yield information about Jewish ritual practices and daily life, of which the inquisitors would presumably be ignorant. Yet Ginzburg, the originator of this interpretive paradigm, decried Toaff's book and what he called its unauthorized reference to his own work. He writes that in the Trent case,

> the Jews, subjected to torture, confessed what the judges were looking for, that is, the recounting of ritual murders: between the expectations of the judges and the answers of the accused, there was no divergence whatsoever on this point. But those accounts were inserted into de-

> scriptions of ceremonies which were all too familiar to the accused, such as, predictably, those associated with the Jewish Passover. ("*Pasque di sangue* e sabba")[73]

In other words, the only details that exceeded the judges' expectations were those with which any Jew would be familiar—namely, descriptions of ordinary Passover ceremonies—and hardly pointed to anything incriminating in and of themselves.

What many readers described as Toaff's cardinal error was using hostile sources to confirm a theory the sources themselves advocate: he ended up echoing the conclusions of inquisitors and their modern successors, Catholic apologists. Several scholars and reviewers wrestled with metaphors that might adequately express the conceptual problem this represented. Ruggero Taradel refers to Toaff's interpretation as a "hermeneutic circle," "hermetically sealed" against criticism.[74] Adriano Prosperi compares Toaff's argument to "a rigged card game," while another reviewer remarks that the book is ultimately disappointing when it comes to providing evidence for its claims: "It's a bit like the gambler who raises without holding good cards."[75] Anna Foa offers a description of this inquiry in terms that recall a faulty syllogism. She invokes the similarities between Toaff's work and that of predecessors like Yuval, who work to normalize Jewish history. In Toaff's case, however, this produces a faulty logic.

> In essence, if the Jews confess, and if the Jews are actors in history and not just passive objects, then we must look for the truth in their confessions. From here, setting off on this course, Toaff turns "to investigate the possible presence of Jewish beliefs in ritual murder, tied to the celebration of Passover."[76]

This implies a syllogism along the following lines: Jews are active agents in history; Jews confess; therefore, the confessions are testimony to real phenomena. Beginning with a laudable first principle (Jews are active agents in history), Toaff clings to this idea even in the face of evidence that may not be capable of speaking to the objectives he has set for it. Like the free speech advocates who suggest that Toaff's work should not be subject to censure whatever his claims, Toaff clings to a principle regardless of the specific circumstances of its articulation.

These reviewers are speaking to a problem for understanding many medieval phenomena besides accusations of ritual murder: how are we to interpret events when our only records may come from hostile sources?[77]

Several reviewers and journalists invoked early modern witchcraft trials as a point of comparison, and the issue at stake remains the indeterminacy of such problematic evidence. Where is the truth among the lies told to satisfy investigators? If there is any truth to be found in a torture chamber, is it even possible for a modern historian to securely locate it? Many writers framed the matter in stark terms: Is the testimony reliable or not? In fact, dealing with such evidence requires recognition that simple oppositions are insufficient: in the dreary light of the torture chamber, truth and falsehood mix promiscuously. This is also a problem in Toaff's responses to his critics, whom he accuses of hypocrisy for accepting certain testimony from converted crypto-Jews on the Iberian peninsula concerning their continued private celebration of Jewish rituals, while rejecting testimony from Trent. "We have the distinct impression," he writes,

> that, in the end, there are numerous proponents of the reassuring theory that it is not wrong to admit the reality of some accusations that were judged ennobling. . . . But we commit a serious error by enhancing, even minimally, charges that today seem abnormal. (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 370–71)[78]

However this is nothing if not disingenuous. What is at stake is not simply a question of methodological principle that can be answered once and for all time, but a thorough contextualization of testimony in specific circumstances. Marrano Jews are not standing trial for ritual murder in Trent; neither group is in the same circumstances, or facing precisely the same accusers, as those people (primarily women) later accused of witchcraft.

What made Toaff's work so disturbing for many of his academic colleagues was the way it seems to replicate the very ambiguities of the evidence. Rather than rescuing some truth from uncertain contexts, Toaff appears to exploit this ambiguity. One commentator spoke of "an aura of constant innuendo" in the work, which is amplified by Toaff's ambiguous style of argument (Cavaglion).[79] As one journalist writes, "His is a circumstantial work, written on the narrow border between the possible and probable. And because he does not take a definite position on either side, the reader is inevitably driven to confusion."[80] Unfortunately, Toaff aggravates the uncertain space between the "possible and probable," an effect amplified even by the paratextual characteristics of the first edition. Several reviewers noted that the book's title and subtitle, *Bloody Passovers: The Jews of Europe and Ritual Murders,* generalize the accusation beyond the Trent case alone and seem to speak to a broader context than the circumstances

of some isolated groups of Ashkenazic "fanatics." Cristiana Facchini went further than some reviewers who complained about the cover art to question its purpose. The original image used for the cover was a woodcut that depicted Abraham preparing to sacrifice Isaac, knife in hand. But the ram that took Isaac's place is missing. What remains is a Jew with a knife menacing a helpless, bound young boy. "How many Italians recognize the basic data for that image?" she asks, but the question is rhetorical, and the effect is obvious: even the image originally selected for the cover slides easily from a particular context to a general insinuation of Jewish guilt.[81]

Perhaps inevitably, this ambiguity came to encompass the writer himself and his motives in producing the book. One of his professional colleagues suggested that the work might be an unconscious effort to strike out at his conservative employer, Bar Ilan, while a newspaper article implied that simple greed for success might be to blame.[82] Alberto Cavaglion and Giacomo Todeschini invoke Jewish self-hatred, while Gadi Luzzatto Voghera remarks that he encountered speculations ranging as far afield as accusations of alcoholism and a parricidal compulsion.[83] Adriano Prosperi was one of a few commentators to refer pointedly to Toaff's famous father and the shocking disjunction the work represents given his family heritage. After all, in the words of the journalist Adi Schwartz, "Elio Toaff [Ariel's father] is to Italian Jewry as the Eiffel Tower is to Paris" ("Wayward Son"). As one of only two men mentioned by name in the will of Pope John Paul II, and as the late pope's partner in interfaith dialogue, the elder Toaff is a well-known public figure outside the Italian Jewish community as well as within it ("Wayward Son"). Toaff's surname was on everyone's mind. The anonymous editorialist "Dreyfus," writing in *Libero,* suggested that invoking the elder Toaff in critiques of his son amounted to hitting below the belt.

> What is uglier still . . . is when [Adriano] Prosperi burdens his adversary with the betrayal of his father. He writes: "The hypothesis . . . is advanced by a historian by the name of Toaff." This is as if to say: with that name you cannot do this, you sully your father, you use the spiritual power [of that name] to offend the Judaism to which he has devoted his life.[84]

Toaff referred to his father—aged ninety-two at the time of the scandal—in protective terms and told one reporter, "I did not involve him in my research so as not to create problems: he would have been considered jointly responsible. And even if I had spoken to him about it, today I would still

deny it for the same reasons" (Cazzullo).[85] Such comments managed to suggest that Toaff had expected more controversy than he initially let on, and raised more questions than he answered about his prior discussions with his father about the project. The public speculation and frank perplexity about Toaff's motives point to yet another way debates about the book replay and amplify the ambiguous qualities of the blood libel itself. Reviewers who advanced personal speculations about the man were extrapolating from their suspicion of an argument that mirrors the indeterminacy of its subject matter.

Comparing Toaff to scholars like Israel Yuval and Elliott Horowitz (whose names come up several times in reviews), a number of writers invoke the complex Israeli intellectual scene, where debates are public, passionate, and not subject to many visible constraints. By using anachronistic terms like *fundamentalism* and *ultra-Orthodoxy,* Toaff himself seems to invite comparison with contemporary Israeli politics. And it is in this context that Toaff's moralization of history takes on particular ideological force. In a 2007 interview after the initial release of his book, Toaff clearly identified the relevant actors in his historical drama of bloody rituals. Those who engaged in such practices, he said, were

> an extremist sect, German, acting beyond the Alps and below, in Trent. You could call them Cannaìn, "the jealous ones," observant and ultra-Orthodox. People who feared lest it be known what they were doing, because they were certain that the heads of the Ashkenazi communities would have reported them. . . . This concerns a few extremists, who initiated such a revenge, between 1100 and 1500. ("Intervista a Ariel Toaff")[86]

We might feel justified in asking which "Orthodox extremists" are most relevant here—those of 1475 or those of 2007? As an Italian Jew, Toaff further aggravates the issue by touching on a sensitive question of internal Israeli politics. His book concerns not only a few extremists but specifically Ashkenazi extremists, recalling the religioethnic group that has traditionally dominated the political scene in Israel. In this book, Toaff writes:

> It goes without saying that the Christians did not raise this problem at all when it came to Italian Jews, *sefardim,* or oriental Jews, who made up the great majority of the medieval Jewish world, which was completely in the dark when it came to the ritual of the anti-Christian curses and their bloody symbolism. (*Pasque di sangue,* rev. ed., 193)[87]

In Toaff's account, extremist elements within the Jewish community become the scapegoats for the ills the "great majority" of Jews have suffered, and these extremists just happen to share an ethnic background with the traditional Israeli elite. This thinly disguised attribution of historical blame only becomes more explicit in Toaff's later remarks about his work, and especially in his stated views about contemporary politics.

Commentators were quick to suggest that the Israeli context of Toaff's work influenced the tone and direction of his argument. But what the public debate failed to capture was the way *Pasque di sangue* came to function as a moralization of Jewish history framed as internal critique, one that inverts the terms of Gavin Langmuir's earlier moralization of the history of antisemitism. Toaff spells out some of the guiding principles of his thinking in *Ebraismo virtuale,* an extended essay he released in 2008 alongside the revised edition of *Pasque di sangue*. This caustic opinion piece is intended to clarify his views about the scandal, the writing of Jewish history, and Israeli politics. In this work it becomes clear that the arguments in *Pasque di sangue* emerge from a vision of history that is initially framed in terms of the ethics of implication I analyzed in the previous chapter. What sets Toaff's work apart from Yuval's, however, is that he goes beyond the limits of what the evidence will bear in the service of a polemical goal. He moralizes the past through this lens, assigning blame to a specific subgroup within the medieval Jewish world for provoking violence, and he allows his history to be swayed by the power of his own profound *ressentiment.*[88] The result is a history that seems detached from what Hayden White describes as cognitive responsibility to the evidence. *Pasque di sangue* displays structural parallels to the historical forces of Western antisemitism.

In some respects, Toaff writes about his historiographical priorities in terms that recall those of historians like Yuval and Horowitz. Toaff complains about the dominance of a public image of the Jewish past that constitutes, as he puts it, a

> virtual and holographic Judaism, made up of spineless victims and innocent martyrs, languishing and soft, that has replaced the true and real image of a people of flesh and bone, which, among a thousand contradictions and errors, between heroism and cowardice, has learned to survive, leaving indelible traces of itself in history.[89]

It is this "true and real image of a people" that Toaff says he wants to recapture, recalling David Malkiel's language about the human face of

medieval Ashkenaz. But this characterization quickly takes a polemical turn.

> The creation and setting in motion of the artificial machinery designed to give life and credibility to a virtual Judaism, always blameless, rational, and honest, populated by meek and defenseless victims, in which all that is required to understand their behavior is to open the Bible and read the Ten Commandments, is instead an offense to the truth and common sense. (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 13)[90]

The specific targets of this critique are both historical and historiographical. Toaff resents what he sees as the continuous presence of unbending traditionalists within the Jewish community through its long history, and he criticizes the historiographical picture that, in his view, serves that group's interests. The historical image of a blameless and upstanding "virtual Judaism," according to Toaff, is deliberately maintained and serves political purposes.

> This phenomenon, which I consider counterproductive for the true image of the Jews and Judaism, with their differences and contradictions, puts all discussion to sleep, cancels any possibility of confronting real issues, and in the last analysis can only strengthen old and new manifestations of antisemitism. Recollection and memory cannot serve as an excuse and a pretext not to look to the future with courage, confidence, and hope, learning from the errors of the past and correcting the errors of the present without fear and timidity. (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 15)[91]

Toaff later ties this inability to think seriously about the future with a refusal to countenance the compromises necessary to achieve a just and lasting peace in Israel. He appears to suggest that in the subtext of *Pasque di sangue* lies the conviction that some of the "errors of the past" are being replicated in the present. More than Yuval or Horowitz, Toaff shares an affinity with the more polemical and critical aspects of postzionist thought.

In *Ebraismo virtuale,* Toaff lambasts diaspora Jews for their timorous fears of a renewed antisemitism and effectively tars them with the same brush as the ultra-Orthodox within the Jewish state, accusing Jews living outside Israel of uncritical support for Israeli policies, regardless of their merits. "Every political choice of the Israeli government leaders," he writes, "becomes their automatic and enthusiastic choice, and all the Israeli political parties are in a way interchangeable; [diaspora Jews] turn them into

their party. But they have a clear preference for the whining and bellicose nationalist and fundamentalist right" (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 11).[92] He refers darkly to diaspora money and influence, and is especially critical of the way Holocaust memory functions in modern Jewish life. He argues that uncritical support of Israel's nationalists is motivated by a sense of guilt among those who have not taken the step of actually moving to Israel.

> This guilt complex, requiring compensatory fines, perhaps even supplemented with charitable and anything but disinterested cash donations, gives them [diaspora Jews] a sense of peace, but on the other hand makes them vulnerable and obsessed by the fear of antisemitism, always lurking and ready to take advantage of the accusation, hardly disputable, of dual loyalty (to the state of which they are citizens and to Israel), to revive and lend credibility to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion.* (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 11)[93]

Such remarks are surprising in their vitriol and suggest some justification for a rusty antisemitic weapon—the accusation of dual loyalty. These scathing remarks about diaspora Jews speak to a powerful sense of frustration with interested outsiders who may affect Israeli policy, and recall Toaff's lament, in 2007, that he would have been better off publishing *Pasque di sangue* in Israel, where it might have been understood in the spirit he intended.[94] The reception of the first book has much to do with the bitterness of the latter.

Against this alliance of Orthodox and diasporic interests, Toaff pits the Israeli secular ethos, described in glowing terms. "For some time now," he writes,

> a vivacious and innovative intellectual world in Israel, one that is not afraid to look within itself, has adopted a pluralist and adversarial consciousness which instead continually puts up for discussion the founding myths of Judaism and the state of Israel. It therefore animates a frank, open, and critical political and ideological debate in a society that, amidst a thousand errors and contradictions, struggles for its very existence and survival, but doesn't grow under the cover of a threatening and obsessive antisemitism. (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 16)[95]

For Toaff, this vibrant secular culture is the antidote to the obscurantist obsession with an ideal past and the political interests it represents. It is no coincidence that the secularism he champions also struggles for its survival "amidst a thousand errors and contradictions," recalling the language he

used to describe medieval Jewish life. By rescuing the medieval Jewish past from conservative political interests, Toaff hopes to shape understanding in the present as well. Modern secular Israel, existing alongside its traditionalist counterpart, is an ideal image and also, paradoxically, a new "light unto the nations," where the "nations" in question are represented by the backward-looking Jewish diaspora. In contrast to the diaspora, Toaff writes, "Israel still remains the only free and democratic arena where the battle is fought for the future of the Jewish people" (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 17).[96] There are a number of ironies here, but the clearest is one already noted by Johannes Heil in another context: Toaff makes use of a collective notion of the Jewish people to critique those traditionalists most invested in a collective ideal of Jewish peoplehood.[97] In this sense, Toaff illustrates the suspension between Zionist ideals and critiques of the Zionist enterprise that animates much postzionist thought.

Toaff illuminates how past and present map onto one another in his moralization of Jewish history. Innuendo and suggestion do the work of explicit argument. Referring back to his own claims about an "extremist" desire for revenge among medieval Ashkenazic communities, Toaff describes a medieval rationale for violence that recalls the very terms of his critique of modern Israeli politics.

> Sometimes it was the individual who took the law into his own hands, not always sparing the innocents. Other times it was the extreme fringe within the Jewish community that decided not to limit themselves to verbal insults, mockery, and liturgical anathemas to strike out at the enemy and respond to abuse, but went on to deeds, while well aware of how they would end the uneven battle. Sometimes to render their actions more palatable, since they often did not appear suitable for delicate stomachs, they linked them to a presumed new ritualism or they exhumed ancient customs from tradition, twisting their modes and significance. The end justified the means, even if often only a few were aware or involved. (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 25–26)[98]

Once again, the distinction between extremists in 1475 and 2007 quickly becomes unclear, since, after making these historical claims, Toaff invokes the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in the next paragraph, in much the same terms.

> For long months in fact the "execution" of Rabin had openly been prepared for, anticipated, and justified by the more extreme fundamentalist rabbinic circles, especially those that still provide today the ideo-

> logical and "biblical" substratum in support of the nationalist and expansionist appeals of the settlers. There was no shortage among these rabbis, of those who had not hesitated to insert Rabin's death sentence into a presumed Talmudic rite, exhumed as needed, according to which the treasonous offender ought to be relentlessly and ruthlessly executed. (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 26–27)[99]

There is a transhistorical logic of blame at work here, in which extremist rabbis of the Middle Ages and the contemporary moment are understood to be responsible for provoking violence against the communities they hoped to fortify. Toaff makes this connection explicit: "Then as now, there were the most extremist rabbis to incite violence, either to publicize it with pseudoreligious motives or to participate in person" (*Ebraismo virtuale,* 26).[100]

Toaff's polemic against a "virtual Judaism" appeared to go largely unremarked in Italy upon its release.[101] It is easy to imagine this lack of response as a shocked silence. Toaff's book participates in the genre of the political pamphlet, and it is bitter and personal to an unmissable degree. It is easy to dismiss Toaff on these terms. But *Ebraismo virtuale,* read in tandem with *Pasque di sangue,* highlights some of the specific challenges of modern historiography on the blood libel. In a historiographical scene marked by indeterminacy, powerful emotional investments, and a legacy of political instrumentalization, it behooves us to ask how methodological, ethical, and ideological questions become entangled in the consideration of evidence and the construction of historical claims. I have argued, following a familiar tradition within the philosophy of history, that such entanglements are inevitable. However, by studying their prior iterations, we can learn to recognize something of the epistemological challenges they raise, as well as the excesses or, contrarily, the new perspectives they may afford. From this point of view, every history may be flawed but is also instructive. I view the Toaff affair as a case of historiographical excess, in which the balance between method and ideology was upset in the service of a political critique. It is at the level of the historian's ethical discourse that this imbalance becomes clear and analyzable as a specific problematic. Toaff's history raises significant problems, not because he is unable to shut out any presentist influence (an impossibility, in any case) but because he loses sight of what the evidence will bear. Instead of a productive tension between method and ideology, mediated by the terms and discourse of

ethics, his moralization of history becomes the handmaiden of ideology, and the claims of evidence lose ground.

In this case, the argument about ritual murder actually represents a kind of redundancy in Toaff's account. As Roni Weinstein points out, Toaff had enough research to support a book on medieval Jewish magic and even cultural practices concerning blood ("Un'occasione perduta").[102] But by extending his argument beyond the limits of what the documentary evidence would bear and ambiguously linking superstitions with inflammatory historical claims of violence, Toaff did something much more provocative and made his book the vehicle for an ideological critique that holds up a transhistorical traditionalist scapegoat for anger and ridicule. In this case the risks of an ethics of moralization are redoubled in a historiography of revenge and symbolic violence. Beneath the abrasive rhetoric of *Ebraismo virtuale,* behind the salacious history of bloodthirsty "fundamentalists" of the Middle Ages evoked in *Pasque di sangue,* also lies a deep and abiding frustration at what may be the most profound political impasse of our time, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many of us will sympathize with this sense of frustration, even if our evaluation of the crisis differs from Toaff's. How—or, sadly, if—the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be resolved remains to be seen. That this issue will continue to inflect and challenge historiography on Jewish life and interreligious relations is probably to be expected. The task remains to acknowledge the reality of such interests—and even allow space for asking legitimate questions about the relevance of historical events for consideration of present dilemmas—without also allowing history to become the tool of ideology.

Whatever its excesses, Toaff's argument also points to some significant continuities in historical discussion of the blood libel. As my analysis suggests, all the major issues have been present in the historiography from the beginning, though they have been worked out in different ways over time. In the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, Joseph Jacobs and Cecil Roth proposed rationalist explanations for the charge of ritual murder that have reemerged in new forms in the late twentieth century via the methods of cultural analysis. When Salo Baron issued his critique of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history in 1928, he was criticized for appearing to diminish the reality of Jewish suffering. He defended himself on the grounds of historical realism, using arguments that are still familiar today. What is more, he continued to do so during the rise of the Nazi regime, though he recognized it as a serious threat.[103] David Nirenberg and Elliott Horowitz, whose analyses of previous scholarship

have had a significant influence on my work, are cut from similar historiographical cloth. They understand very well the violence to which historical Jewish communities have been subjected, but they are wary of a scholarship that oversimplifies this history, glossing over complexities in the name of a unified view of the Jewish past. One issue I have not addressed explicitly in this book concerns Jewish identity and the role of scholars' cultural or confessional origins in their work. Certainly the interests of communal memory are on scholars' minds and sometimes form a resistance they must overcome. Jeremy Cohen refers to the "myth-wrecking" quality of recent historiographical work, and its potential to excite controversy, not only among scholars, but among Jewish communities that cling to a familiar historical account of Jewish experience (*Sanctifying,* 42–43).

I have drawn a qualitative distinction between such work and what I view as the excesses of *Pasque di sangue.* But even Toaff's iconoclastic criticism of contemporary Jewish identities has a history. This genealogy includes figures from Bernard Lazare to Norman Finkelstein and is often described in terms of a "self-hating" identity.[104] Lazare suggested that Jewish exclusivism played a role in anti-Jewish hostility.[105] Finkelstein deplores what he describes in polemical language as an exploitative "Holocaust industry" that capitalizes on Jewish suffering in the public sphere.[106] Ariel Toaff's work emerges from this tradition as much as from any disciplinary context. However I want to avoid pronouncements about self-hating impulses, and focus instead on what I see as another dialectic at work in these debates about Jewish history, one that parallels, though it is not identical with, the ethical continuum I have analyzed throughout this book. This is the dialectic between an essential model of Jewish identity and fluid models, between particularism and cosmopolitanism. Like the tension between morality and ethics, this is a dialectic that is never fully satisfied. Shlomo Sand, a recent advocate of the cosmopolitan perspective, highlights the ways Jewish identity is historically constructed rather than given; like Toaff, his arguments take the form of a severe critique of the particularistic paradigm emphasizing the timelessness and continuity of Jewish identity through the ages.[107] From Thomas of Monmouth to Muhammed al-Dura, discussion of the ritual murder accusation has been a venue for debates about Jews and Judaism, but this is a conversation with significant implications within the Jewish community as well as beyond it.

These broad continuities in the history of scholarly discussion of the blood libel and Jewish-Christian relations have come to the fore in the context of recent disciplinary shifts in medieval Jewish historiography. I

have highlighted questions of method, ideology, and ethics in my analysis, but I am aware that I have only opened a conversation, not offered the final word. I have maintained a distinction between ethics and ideology, in an effort to highlight how ethics, as a discourse of its own, contributes to our claims about the historical meaning of the ritual murder accusation. Ethical debates about justice and responsibility matter on their own, philosophical, terms in this conversation. This is true despite the undeniable fact that considerations of ideology also matter. I have focused primarily on disciplinary questions rather than questions of identity, and I leave it for others to explore in greater detail how these debates speak to evolving conversations about Jewish identity and communal memory. This debate also touches on larger questions of historiographical method that may have lain dormant but have not been resolved in the wake of the "theory wars" of the 1980s and early 1990s. My argument insists on the situatedness of historiography as the product of specific cultural moments and historical figures. My work is itself historiographical in that sense. I believe this metacritical perspective is especially helpful for confronting the burden of cultural history that weighs so heavily on historiography on the blood libel, and too often is allowed to hover in the background, unacknowledged. But my perspective is that of a cultural critic, and historians will certainly have their own insights to add. The challenge for future studies of the ritual murder accusation will be to acknowledge these factors without being crippled by them. Rising to that challenge may require a new language for articulating what history may accomplish, as well as its limits. I have proposed the language of ethics as one such grammar for asking questions about history's means and purposes, but these questions are far from settled. At the limit of Jewish history they will continue to be negotiated.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See, for example, Gabriel Schoenfeld, *The Return of Anti-Semitism* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004), and Menahem Milsom, "What Is Arab Anti-semitism?" *MEMRI Special Report,* no. 26 (27 February 2004), web, 10 August 2010.

2. For a review of major themes, see Alan Dundes, ed., *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

3. The differentiation between these terms in the scholarly literature is not always clear. Alan Dundes remarks, "These terms are used almost interchangeably but there are several scholars who have sought to distinguish between ritual murder and blood libel, arguing that ritual murder refers to a sacrificial murder in general, whereas the blood libel entails specific use of the blood of the victim." "The Ritual Murder or Blood Libel Legend," *The Blood Libel Legend,* 337. Gavin Langmuir, whose work is discussed in Chapter Two, is a prominent example of a historian who employs this distinction.The *Jewish Encyclopedia* indicates how these (modern) descriptive terms become entangled, since accusations about the use of human blood and the charge of murder easily become tied together—perhaps especially in the minds of historical accusers. Under the entry for *blood accusation,* the authors write that this term is "usually understood to denote the accusation that the Jews—if not all of them, at all events certain Jewish sects—require and employ Christian blood for purposes which stand in close relation to the ritual, and that, in order to obtain such blood, they commit assault and even murder." Richard Gottheil, Hermann L. Strack, and Joseph Jacobs, "Blood Accusation," *Jewish Encyclopedia,* online edition, n.d. August 2010. This definition has been maintained from earlier editions: see H. L. Strack, "Blood Accusation," *The Jewish Encyclopedia,* vol. 3 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1907), 260. Though I encountered Darren O'Brien's work too late in

the editorial process to engage it here, he has recently proposed a new typology for these interlinked libels and rejects the term "ritual murder" as suspect in both origin and connotation. See O'Brien, *Pinnacle of Hatred: The Blood Libel and the Jews* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2011), 5–6, 64–65. Scholarly cultural and linguistic differences also come into play. Israel Yuval writes, "The term 'blood libel' in Hebrew has taken root to indicate any false accusation against Jews of shedding blood in a ritual context, even without the cannibalistic use of blood." *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,* trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 168, n. 71. It should be clear that my usage is similar to Yuval's—I employ "blood libel" as the general term for accusations concerning an alleged Jewish preoccupation with or need for blood, within which the accusation of ritual murder is a specific element.

4. For thorough early debunking efforts, see Hermann L. Strack, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice: Human Blood and Jewish Ritual, An Historical and Sociological Inquiry,* trans. Henry Blanchamp, 8th ed. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971; orig. 1909) and Cecil Roth, ed., *The Ritual Murder Libel and the Jew: The Report by Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli* (London: Woburn Press, 1935). For papal denouncements of the accusation from as early as the mid-thirteenth century, see the documents collected in Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century,* vol. 1 (New York: Hermon Press, 1966); vol. 2, edited and with additional notes by Kenneth Stow (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1989).

5. Ariel Toaff criticizes statements like mine on the grounds that they decide questions of guilt and innocence "a priori." I disagree with Toaff, for reasons discussed extensively in later chapters. However his critique highlights the difficulty of even discussing the accusation without taking some initial position on its truth or falsity. See discussion below, especially chapter 4.

6. This legalistic style of argument need not be connected to actual structures of law in a given context. However, a tradition of juridical antisemitism might help shape existing legal structures if it achieves broad public credibility, as it did in 1930s Germany. Even use of the word *libel* points to a legalistic foundation of argument.

7. Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 37.

8. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 170, author's emphasis. These and related issues have remained important in Ricouer's thinking. See, for example, his return to the terms morality and ethics in *Reflections on the Just,* trans. David Pellaner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), esp. 45–57.

9. Ricoeur writes, "The present study will focus on this tie between *obligation* and *formalism,* not in order to denounce hastily the weaknesses of the morality of duty but in order to express its grandeur" (*Oneself as Another,* 203).

10. Rose accuses various strands of poststructuralist thought of smuggling in

transcendent ideals under the guise of what escapes or eludes systematic understanding. It may be impossible to reconcile these positions, though according to Rose's own heuristic model, the struggle between them may itself be useful. See Rose, *The Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and Law* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991).

11. See, for example, Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999) and recent contextualizing commentary, including Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age,* trans. Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), and Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., *Remembering the Holocaust: A Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Cf. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

12. Cf. Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), and David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). For a critical analysis of the tendency toward retrospective reading, see Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

13. On narrative paradigms, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, "The Social Construction of Moral Universals" in *Remembering the Holocaust,* 3–102. The original essay, "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals," appeared in *The European Journal of Social Theory* vol. 5, no. 1 (2002): 5–86. It has also been reprinted in other venues.

14. Simone Gigliotti, "Unspeakable Pasts as Limit Events: The Holocaust, Genocide, and the Stolen Generations," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 49, no. 2 (2003): 164–81; 166.

15. Saul Friedlander, Introduction, in Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xxxii–xxxiii.

16. For comparative discussion of medieval and modern ritual murder accusations under the rubric of social knowledge, see Hillel J. Kieval, "Representation and Knowledge in Medieval and Modern Accounts of Jewish Ritual Murder," *Jewish Social Studies,* n.s., 1, no. 1 (1994): 52–72.

17. *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 70.

18. Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 74. This is to be distinguished from the more technical Freudian use of this term. Also see LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), esp. 43–72, and more broadly, 173–78.

19. Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 40.

20. White is one of a number of recent critics of historiographical method. Space constraints prevent me from rehearsing these debates, the basic outlines of which are likely to be familiar to academic readers in any case. See Keith Jenkins's

anthology *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997) and Georg Iggers's *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005, orig. 1997). For discussion of some possible implications of poststructuralist criticism for medieval studies, see Gabrielle Spiegel's important discussion in "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990): 59–86. Also see Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

21. See particularly the extended argument in White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), and *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

22. White, "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation," in *The Content of the Form,* 76. Reprinted from *Critical Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (1982): 113–37. White reframes these questions in "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth," *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution,'* ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 37–53; 37–38.

23. White's argument in the *Probing* volume confirms that certain narrative options for "emplotting" the Holocaust—such as comedy—are understood to be grossly inappropriate, and not only because of cultural sensitivities, but because of something fundamental about the Holocaust itself, which calls for a new and different narrative voice to represent it—the "middle voice" of modernism. These are claims he later extends to a whole class of distinctively epoch-defining modern events he describes as specifically "modernist events," of which the Holocaust is a paradigmatic example. See "The Modernist Event."

24. LaCapra, *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 44–47; *History in Transit,* 77.

25. White, "Response to Arthur Marwick," *Journal of Contemporary History* 30, no. 2 (1995): 233–46, 239–40. Elsewhere he writes, "In my view, relativism is the moral equivalent of epistemological skepticism; moreover, I conceive relativism to be the basis of social tolerance, not a license to 'do as you please'" (*Content of the Form* n. 12, 227). Also repeated in *Probing the Limits,* 91.

26. Though I emphasize structures of argument in my analysis, White himself seldom alludes to the question of argument per se, preferring to focus on narrative. See his remarks in *Probing the Limits* n. 1, 340.

27. Ginzburg, "Just One Witness," *Probing the Limits,* 82–96, 93.

28. White is responding to Vidal-Naquet's distinction between Holocaust denial as a lie, and Zionist interpretation as an ideologically inflected "untruth." White does not accept this distinction, and his critique emphasizes responsibility to the real: "The Israeli interpretation leaves the 'reality' of the event intact, whereas the revisionist interpretation de-realizes it by redescribing it in such a way as to make it something other than what the victims know the Holocaust to have

been" (*Content of the Form,* 77). Cf. Ginzburg, "Just One Witness," 93–94, where he argues this is simply an extension of the insidious logic of White's claims.

29. Jay, "Of Plots, Witnesses, and Judgments," *Probing the Limits,* 97–107, esp. 97–99.

30. Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 233–46; quotes appear on 237.

31. Lyotard analyzes how the extreme discursive and conceptual divisions exemplified by Holocaust denial can eliminate any ground for shared meaning. It may never be possible to defend historical knowledge completely from those whose basic aim is to dismantle it. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute,* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). Cf. Eaglestone, who argues that postmodern thinkers like Lyotard offer a useful set of tools for rebutting the claims of deniers (*Holocaust and the Postmodern,* 236–46).

32. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* Medieval Cultures Series v. 40 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xx.

33. See Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Sylvia Tomasch uses the term *virtual Jew* in "Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew," *Postcolonial Middle Ages* ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen, New Middle Ages series (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 243–60. For "paper Jews," see Kathleen Biddick's *Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). Kruger offers an excellent review of a range of related terms, xvii–xxi.

34. Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1.

35. Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 5.

36. Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 3.

37. The specific Jewish blood rituals Biale discusses concern circumcision and Jewish martyrdom. See *Blood and Belief,* esp. 81–122.

38. A similar description appears in Biale, "Preface: Toward a Cultural History of the Jews," *Cultures of the Jews,* ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), xix.

39. Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); David Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz: The Human Face of Franco-German Jewry, 1000–1250,* Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010); Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

40. Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy: A Social and Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 110.

41. E.g., Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (London: Methuen, 1991).

42. Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 6–7.

43. Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim, and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) and Christoph Cluse, "Stories of Breaking and Taking the Cross: A Possible Context for the Oxford Incident of 1268," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 90 no. 3–4 (1995): 396–442.

44. Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God: Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

45. Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 4.

46. E.g., *Dreams of Subversion* 5, 8.

47. Dan Diner distinguishes between "Jewish history" and a "history of Jews," that is, between a particularistic history emphasizing the teleological destiny of a people and one that emphasizes contingency and chance in historical processes. His description shares some affinities with the patterns I discuss here. Diner, "Cumulative Contingency: Historicizing Legitimacy in Israeli Discourse," trans. William Templer, *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995), 147–70, esp. 150.

48. Butler describes her relationship to the Jewish philosophical tradition in "Ethical Ambivalence," in *The Turn to Ethics,* ed. Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (London: Routledge, 2000), 15–28. This ambivalence arguably informs her essay on antizionism and antisemitism, "The Charge of Anti-Semitism: Jews, Israel and the Risks of Public Critique," in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 101–27; later reprinted in *Postzionism: A Reader,* ed. Laurence Silberstein (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 369–86. Some well-known aspects of Rose's biography include her emergent interest in her Jewish heritage as a secular adult, involving publication of a book on Judaism and philosophy, and her deathbed conversion to Anglicanism, which shocked many of her friends. See Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) and her memoir, *Love's Work: A Reckoning With Life* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995). For discussion of Rose's conversion, see Martin Jay, "The Conversion of the Rose," *Salmagundi* 113 (1997): 41–52, and Andrew Shanks, *Against Innocence: Gillian Rose's Reception and Gift of Faith* (London: SCM Press, 2008).

CHAPTER 1

1. "sanctitati atque miraculis" (VII.272). The nineteenth-century edition and translation by Augustus Jessopp and Montague James is still the only modern edition available of MS Cambridge Add. 3037. I quote this edition, signaling emen-

dations in the notes. I have silently changed some transcriptions for convenience (e.g., *obliuio* to *oblivio*). My citations include the book number (identified by roman numeral), followed by the page number on which both English and Latin appear. Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich,* trans. Augustus Jessop and Montague James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896). Miri Rubin is working on a new edition of the text, not yet complete. The preliminary work is available online: "*Passio* of William of Norwich," *Youth, Violence, and Cult,* 2009, n.d., web, 1 August 2010.

2. "membris omnibus vehementissimam doloris sensit gravedinem" (VII.273).

3. References are, respectively, "quasi generale universis commonitorium" (VII.273); "Temerarium enim valde est in sanctos dei verbis maledicis tam audacter invehi, quos ab ipso domino tot ac tantis miraculis tam patenter constat glorificari" (VII.273).

4. Joe Hillaby discusses the need for a patron saint as a possible motive for the Norwich monks to take up William's story: Hillaby, "The Ritual-Child-Murder Accusation: Its Dissemination and Harold of Gloucester," *Jewish Historical Studies* 35 (1997): 69–109; 72, 82. Recent accounts vary in their views of the circumstances of composition but date the text to the years around 1150–1155. See Gavin Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," *Speculum* 59, no. 4 (1984): 820–46, later reprinted in Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 209–36 (hereafter *TDA*). Also see John M. McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth," *Speculum* 72, no. 3 (1997): 698–740; Emily Rose, "The Cult of St. William of Norwich and the Accusation of Ritual Murder in Anglo-Norman England" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, 2001; abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts,* 62 [2001], 283-A). Also see Emily Rose's forthcoming book, not yet released as of this writing.

5. The accusation's origins continue to exercise scholars who work on the topic. John McColloh, building on Israel Yuval's arguments, suggests Thomas may have composed his account only after rumors about William's demise had reached the Continent and circulated there, and builds a case for parallel but separate strands of transmission ("Jewish Ritual Murder," esp. 739–40). Yuval even suggests that Thomas's account is as long and detailed as it is because he needs to convince an English audience less familiar with accusations of this sort than their Continental contemporaries. Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb,* 170. For a review of earlier theories about the origins of the accusation, see Gavin Langmuir, "Historiographic Crucifixion," *Les Juifs au regard de l'histoire: Mélanges en l'honneur de Bernhard Blumenkranz,* ed. Gilbert Dahan (Paris: Picard, 1985), 109–27, later reprinted in Langmuir, *TDA,* 282–98 (also see discussion below). In addition, see Friedrich Lotter, "*Innocens Virgo et Martyr:* Thomas von Monmouth und die Verbreitung der Ritualmordlegende im Hochmittelalter," *Die Legende vom Ritualmord,* ed. Rainer Erb (Berlin: Metropol, 1993), 25–72.

6. "depravandi consuetudine" (VII.272).

7. I use the words *doubt* or *disbelief* to refer to Christian skeptics, and *unbelief* to refer to Thomas's portrayal of Jewish skepticism. Since Jews are members of a separate religion, it makes sense to refer to their "unbelief" rather than doubt, since doubt or disbelief implies questioning something one has formerly accepted or feels obliged to accept. I understand *skepticism* as a characteristic of both doubt and unbelief in this context.

8. See note 5 above. Langmuir's account remains the preeminent effort to reconstruct Thomas's investigation.

9. Thomas's opponents are mentioned by other writers, yet no one has attempted the kind of reconstruction I present here. For a few references, see McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder," 732; Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth," 843–44; Hillaby, "The Ritual-Child-Murder Accusation," 75. Benedicta Ward mentions these critics and points out that Thomas assembles around himself an alliance of monks devoted to William's cause. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record, and Event, 1000–1215* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 70. Jeffrey J. Cohen characterizes those who fail to support William's sanctity as "acting Jewish" (in Thomas's terms) through their refusal to participate in the fledgling cult, a remark that supports my conclusions. Jeffrey J. Cohen, "The Flow of Blood in Medieval Norwich," *Speculum* 79 (2004): 26–65 (esp. 58–59, 63). This article was later incorporated into Cohen's book *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 109–73.

10. Langmuir reveals something of a literalist bias in his reading of the text (*TDA,* 230–33). Jeffrey J. Cohen, by contrast, stresses the narrative's ideological, imaginative purpose over claims to its being "a truthful record" of events ("Flow of Blood," 45).

11. "certa et manifesta in eo martyrii deprehensa sint indicia" (I.52).

12. The sentence reads, "Et nos rem diligentius inquirentes et domum invenimus et rei geste signa certissima in ipsa deprehendimus et manifesta" (I.21). My rendering of "signa certissima . . . et manifesta" differs somewhat from that of Jessopp and James, who refer to "most certain marks."

13. "eisdem referentibus audiens et revera verum esse cognoscens" (I.30).

14. "Hostio [*sic*] interaperto puerum posti affixum, quia duobus non potuit, oculo uno videre contigit. Quo viso exhorruit factum; clausit oculum, et illi hostium [*sic*]" (II.90). Before this, William's cousin is supposed to have "watched him on his way with her eyes, saw him go into the Jews and after his entrance actually saw the door shut close behind him" ("iterque illius oculis explorans, et ad iudeos intrare et post intrantum statim hostium claudi certissime conspexit," II.89).

15. See Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 99–124, 172–78. Thomas says at one point that "we learnt [about this] afterwards from one of them" ("sicut ab aliquo eorum post-

modum didicimus," I.24), but he never ties his evidence for these conversations to a named witness, as he does with many of his claims. The likeliest candidate for this mystery informant would be the Jewish convert Theobald, who is alleged to have told Thomas about the ancient pedigree of certain nefarious Jewish practices (II.93–94). But Theobald (assuming he existed) was supposed to be from Cambridge, and Thomas never says he came to Norwich, though some recent commentators have assumed he became a monk there. Langmuir makes some of these connections and argues if Theobald were a Norwich monk, Thomas would surely alert us to this fact (*TDA,* 224–25).

16. "dubitantibus illis et quid faciant nichil [*sic*] adhuc pro certo habentibus" (I.23).

17. "quid agerent prorsus adhuc ignorantibus" (I.24).

18. "christianum nescio sive iudeum" (I.16).

19. "Dumque sic an revelet an taceat dubia decernit, tandem terror interveniens revelandi ausum compescuit" (II.90).

20. Thomas says his Christian opponents proceed with "*malivole* [*sic*] *intentionis*" (II.60) and persecute him with all "the crafty malice of the envious" ("invidorum versuta malivolentia [*sic*]," II.61). Thomas claims that the Jews are motivated by "a malignant spirit" ("<tali ma>lignitates spiritu," I.21), harbor a "malignant purpose" ("malignitatis sue propositum," I.16), and are subject to an "inborn hatred [or envy] of the Christian name" ("innatam sibi christiani nominis invidiam" I.22). This is the only time Thomas refers to "innate" feelings of enmity among the Jews. Jeffrey J. Cohen links *innatus* with "a hunger for Christian blood" ("Flow of Blood," 48).

21. "ingrati beneficiis divina etiam in quantum prevalent vel ausi sunt magnalia sub palliate voto religionis adnullare vel imminuere sive saltem depravare non nunquam conantur" (II.58).

22. "Ad vituperandum prompti ac precipites" (II.57–58).

23. "rationum allegationes . . . spirituales" (II.58). Jessopp and James translate this as "spiritual weapons of reasoning" (II.58). This reading makes sense in the context of the passage, in which Thomas compares himself to a new David setting out to confound "the abusive Philistines." However, I want to emphasize the association between *allegatio* and argumentation, the idea of advancing allegations or claims, alleging by way of proof.

24. Alarmed by the rise of scholastic methods—particularly dialectic—and the citation of classical texts in key areas like theology and philosophy, he writes, "The reason of faith . . . is to put all human reason after faith or to reduce reason to captivity in obedience to faith, and not to ignore the limits of that faith our Fathers established, nor to disregard them in any way." Cited in Stephen Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and Their Critics, 1100–1215* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 74.

25. Respectively, "duri corde et ad credendum tardi" (II.85); "Nos equidem ut

sanctum veneramur quem nos revera sanctum cognovimus" (II.61, translators' emphasis). Jessopp and James render "duri corde et ad credendum tardi" as "hard and slow of heart to believe."

26. This sentence is worth reproducing in full (the passage cited is italicized in Jessopp and James): "Terciis denique respondemus, eis scilicet qui crudeliter quidem occisum sciunt, sed quoniam *a quibus et quare interemptus sit incerti sunt,* iccirco [*sic*] nec sanctum nec martirem dicere presumunt" (II.88).

27. "qui gloriosissimi martyris Willelmi ledentes famam imminutione quadam sanctitatis indebitam laudem laudisque promotionem pro posse suo supprimunt et minuendo persequuntur" (II.60–61).

28. For a discussion of the early emergence of the stereotype of the violent, child-murdering Jew, including discussion of the Fleury Playbook, see Lee Patterson, "'The Living Witnesses of Our Redemption': Martyrdom and Imitation in Chaucer's *Prioressis Tale,*" *JMEMS* 31, no. 3 (2001): 507–60, and Theresa Tinkle, "The Fleury 'Slaughter of the Innocents' and the Myth of Ritual Murder," *JEGP* 102, no. 2 (2003): 211–43.

29. Respectively, "novo scilicet operi veniam concedendam" (I.2); "lectionem novam desiderantes invitem" (I.3).

30. In his Prologue, Thomas refers to the duty of every Christian to publish the deeds of the saints (I.4), and later remarks on his desire to instruct those who are properly disposed to hear his message.

31. They are perhaps even products of the prestigious French schools subsequently transplanted to a new English cathedral foundation as part of the general Norman movement toward ecclesiastical reform. For divisions among the Norwich clergy along ethnic lines and the association between the cathedral and its "Continental monks," see Jeffrey J. Cohen, "Flow of Blood," 50–52.

32. "Presumptuosum nimis est quod universalis ecclesia non recipit tam audacter suscipere et non sanctum pro sancto habere" (II.59).

33. "Neque quispiam que dico his tanquam [*sic*] rebus suo tempore insuetis cordis aures et fidei diligentiam avertat" (II.64).

34. Respectively, "cum promulgarentur miraculis insultabant, eaque ficticia esse dicebant" (II.85); "nemo veris me non vera cudere sive interkalare [*sic*] existimet, nemo nugarum vel mendatiorum compilatorem appellet" (II.74).

35. "nos deliros autumant" (II.61); "a quibus et quare et qualiter occisus sit prorsus in incerto fluctuamus . . . si a iudeis vel aliis penaliter constet occisum" (II.86).

36. "Et ut verum fatear, preter gloriosam virginem dei matrem et baptistam Iohannem atque apostolos, paucis sanctorum attribuitur quo ubique terrarum quibus christiani nominis floret religio ipsorum notitia propaletur" (II.59–60).

37. "Nunquid illud celebre beatissimi regis et martyris Eadmundi gloriosique confessoris Cuthberti nomen in partibus Anglie universis innotuit Grecie populis sive Palestine?" (II.60).

38. Norman skepticism of English saints is a long-standing scholarly com-

monplace, though S. J. Ridyard suggests scholars' claims to this effect are sometimes inflated. See Susan J. Ridyard, "*Condigna Veneratio:* Post-Conquest Attitudes to the Saints of the Anglo-Saxons," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 9, Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1986, ed. R. Allen Brown (London: Boydell Press, 1987), 179–206. Here Thomas also refers to the limited notoriety of Roman and Gaulish saints, so he may be more concerned about bolstering Norwich's institutional standing than about Norman skepticism. For the relation between institutional standing and historical writing, see Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 21–35; Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 57–79.

39. It may be easier to glimpse the role of a popular following in cases where the institutional church discourages a cult in the face of public support. For an overview of some cases, see André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 147–56.

40. "Hoc quippe miraculo beati martyris Willelmi revivixit memoria, que paulatim decrescens, in cordibus universorum fere funditus iam fuerat emortua" (II.84). See the story of a man who goes searching for William's shrine after his son receives a vision, only to discover that no one appears to recognize the story or know anything about a shrine. It is only in the wake of a public accusation against the Jews in an ecclesiastical synod that this family is able to locate the saint (II.67–74).

41. "Et quoniam pena martirem non facit, sed causa" (II.86). The same qualification is repeated at II.96: "Quod autem opponitur, *martirem pena non facit sed causa*" (editors' emphasis).

42. "pauperculum atque neglectum" (II.85). Patricia Healy Wasyliw writes that most medieval child saints are reported to have been precocious in their religious devotion and observance: "The Pious Infant: Developments in Popular Piety during the High Middle Ages," *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: A Search for Models,* ed. by Ann W. Astell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 105–15, esp. 108–14. Aside from several remarks about William's "innocence," Thomas makes only a few modest claims for his piety—on this count, I disagree with Healy Wasyliw's suggestion that "Thomas took care to construct a pious *pueritia* for William" (114). See also Patricia Healy Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic: Child Saints and Their Cults in Medieval Europe* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

43. "quis indubitanter credat viventem illum pro Christo mortem appetisse, vel pro Christo illatam pacienter sustinuisse?" (II.86).

44. See Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture,* 106–22. She briefly considers ritual murder accusations as martyrological narratives similar to those she analyzes, labeling them "a less reputable subgenre of *passio*" (120).

45. There is, however, a substitute in the conversion of the Jew Theobald, discussed in Book II.

46. Monika Otter describes Thomas's *Vita* as "the most thorough and skillful exploitation of the *inventio* model" among his contemporaries (38). A conventional expectation of this model is that the community will show it has "earned" its saint by the difficulties encountered in finding him—Thomas's account of his efforts to overcome the initial opposition to the cult, especially his conflicts with the prior, are supposed to serve this function of showing that the community (via Thomas) has earned its claim to William. For Thomas's account of his battle of wills with prior Elias, see esp. III.127–28 and IV.172–74.

47. "qui certis vulnerum indiciis, quisquis ea fecerit, quibusdam quasi argumentis revera occisus comprobatur" (II.64; emphasis mine).

48. "quomodocunque res gesta fuerit, id tamen pro certo tenemus, quoniam durissimis attrectatus modis tandem occisus sit" (II.65; emphasis mine).

49. Vauchez, *Sainthood,* 148–54. Vauchez states, "However diverse the circumstances, two fundamental elements are found in every story: the shedding of blood and the glaring injustice of their death" (151). For an example of a successful cult formed on the pity/piety model, see André Vauchez, "Anti-Semitism and Popular Canonization: The Cult of St. Werner," *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices,* trans. Margery J. Schneider, ed. Daniel Bornstein (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1993), 141–52. For a study of the holy dog Guinefort, see Jean Claude Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound,* trans. Martin Thom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

50. "Nempe penarum indicia in sancti Willelmi corpore percepimus, quarum causam fuisse patet Christum, in cuius contumeliam penaliter sit occisus" (II.96).

51. Christopher Ocker describes this work of analogy when he links medieval injunctions to identify with and imitate Christ to the appeal of the ritual murder accusation for Christian audiences. The alleged victims of such crimes appear to be "ennobled by imposing the syntax of Christ's passion" on their deaths. Christopher Ocker, "Ritual Murder and the Subjectivity of Christ: A Choice in Medieval Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 91, no. 2 (1998): 153–92; 170.

52. When Thomas remarks that "the heavenly crown" of martyrdom "is bestowed in return for special merits of some special persons" in addition to those who "strive lawfully," he may have the wounds in mind—and specifically the shedding of blood—as William's "special merits." If so, this would qualify as another example of his subtle redefinition of key terms. The Latin reads: "procul dubio constat solis legitime certantibus celestis bravii coronam repromitti, et tamen pro meritis singulorum singulis retribui" (II.62–63). Thomas does mention the example of the Holy Innocents but curiously does not capitalize on an explicit comparison between William's "martyrdom" and theirs.

53. Thomas tends to deploy the term in its legal sense, referring, for instance, to the priest Godwin's support of the "cause" of the martyr before the ecclesiastical synod where he first accuses the Jews of murder (I.43).

54. "ut sic suas in illum ulciscantur iniurias cuius mortis causa ipsi et a sua exclusi sunt patria" (II.93).

55. "Non enim verismile videtur quod aut christiani de christiano, aut iudei talia fieri aliquatenus voluissent de iudeo" (I.24–25).

56. "credibilium . . . virorum" (II.57); "Quod ego Thomas monachus Norwicensis, eisdem referentibus audiens et revera verum esse cognoscens, scripto tradere curavi" (I.30).

57. "plenam veri certitudinem non prevaluimus indagare. Porro ea presenti placuit interserere libello que nos visu sive auditu pro certo cognouimus" (III.162). Also see II.64.

58. See Jeanette Beer, *Narrative Conventions of Truth in the Middle Ages* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1981), esp. 23–34, and Nancy Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 116–18.

59. Caroline Walker Bynum, "Miracles and Marvels: The Limits of Alterity," in *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter,* ed. Franz Felten and Nikolas Jaspert (Berlin: Duncken and Humblot, 1999), 799–817, esp. 809. Bynum describes even a "flattening" or "naturalizing" of unusual occurrences ("The Limits of Alterity," 807–11). Also see Bynum, "Wonder," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 1 (1997): 1–26; 10–12. Vauchez highlights the cautious and sometimes skeptical cast of mind adopted by ecclesiastical officials regarding miraculous stories, once these began to be evaluated by papal commission after 1215 (*Sainthood,* 481–98). Cf. the recent discussion by Steven Justice, "Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?" *Representations* v. 103, no. 1 (2008): 1–29.

60. Partner, *Serious Entertainments,* 114–40; Otter, *Inventiones,* 102–7.

61. For instance, see Godwin Sturt's claims in synod (I.42–43) and Thomas's report about those who come out to see "the boy lately killed by Jews" (II.70), even before the formal accusation was made.

62. This is an issue with important interpretive implications for scholars like John McCulloh and Israel Yuval. Yuval has argued that rumors and stories circulated among Christians about Jewish acts of self-sacrifice in 1096, that these probably contributed to the formation of the legend, and that Thomas is transmitting such Continental rumors to an English audience (*Two Nations in Your Womb,* 161–72). McCulloh emphasizes the existence of separate strands of rumor circulating about the Norwich case before Thomas composed his text ("Jewish Ritual Murder").

63. "Porro quicquid [*sic*] animo suspicabatur iam pro certo habens, quodque ymaginabatur quasi visu compertum asserens, facto per vicos et plateas discursu et materno compulsa dolore universos horrendis sollicitabat clamoribus" (I.42).

64. Jeffrey J. Cohen presents an argument to this effect, suggesting that the narrative is supposed to heal ethnic and racial divisions within Norwich by offering a vision of Christian unity ("Flow of Blood," 64).

65. This quotation is from Andreas Osiander's attempt to refute the ritual murder legend from a Christian perspective, written in 1529 and published in 1540. Quoted in R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 137.

66. See Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder* and *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Also Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town* (New York: Norton, 2002). Even when modern cases have not led to guilty verdicts, for many people in the town or locale where a given accusation was levied, the conclusion remained "obvious" and manifest. See Kieval, "Representation and Knowledge," and Barnet Hartston, *Sensationalizing the Jewish Question: Anti-Semitic Trials and the Press in the Early German Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), esp. 129–87.

67. "Cet ouvrage établit et développe une grave accusation contre les Juifs de nos jours." Henri Desportes, *Mystère du Sang Chez les Juifs de Tous les Temps* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Parisienne, 1889), 3.

68. "Nous soutenons et nous prouverons que, depuis la dispersion du peuple juif jusqu'à nos jours, dans tous les siècles et *tout récemment* dans le nôtre, dans presque tous les pays d'Orient et d'Occident, plus d'une fois les Juifs ont été convaincus en justice d'avoir assassiné des enfants chrétiens au temps des fêtes de Pâques; que ces assassinais se commettent en haine du Christ et de ses fidèles; qu'ils n'ont pas été le fait d'hommes isolés et aveuglés par la superstition, mais que ce sont des crimes nationaux et légaux, observés et pratiqués par tout le peuple juif, toutes les fois que cela parait possible et sans danger" (*Mystère du Sang,* 40, author's emphasis).

69. Quoted in Randall L. Bytwerk, *Julius Streicher* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 199. The passage is from the infamous 1934 special issue dedicated to the subject of ritual murder.

70. For a discussion of Strack's complex relation to Judaism in the context of missionary Protestantism, see Alan T. Levenson, *Between Philosemitism and Antisemitism: Defenses of Jews and Judaism in Germany, 1871–1932* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 64–90.

71. In his own eyes, Strack's Christian religious convictions ratified his work of defending Jews and played a role in his missionizing efforts: "I then reflected that the esteem in which both the Christian religion and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are held among the Jews, had suffered severely, owing to the aforesaid calumnies, and especially owing to the 'blood-accusation' against them. I knew it to be my sacred duty as a Christian theologian to do everything in my power to compass the conviction in Israel that Jesus does not desire falsehood but truth, not hatred but love . . ." *The Jew and Human Sacrifice,* xvi.

72. Strack claims some individuals "have dared shamelessly to *calumniate* me as a scholar, as a man and as a Christian, although they knew the truth, or could have ascertained it without any trouble. Nor did it suffice them to utter the false-

hood that Prof. Strack was hardly acquainted with the elements of Hebrew grammar, and only knew about the Talmud what the Rabbis had stuffed him with; they had actually the effrontery to presume that I was receiving money from Jewish quarters for my writings" (*Jew and Human Sacrifice,* ix–x; preface to the fourth edition).

73. This argument is undermined by Ariel Toaff, who suggests that the use of dried animal or even human blood for certain magical and ritual purposes was pursued despite rabbinical prohibitions, in common with the surrounding Christian culture. Strack had a ready response to such arguments: "The Jews have always, and also since their 'dispersal among the people of the earth,' been strongly influenced by their environment (e.g. in dress, food, language, etc.), likewise in the matter of superstition. Superstitions, too, of Jewish origin are not wanting. For both reasons it is not permissible to assert à priori [*sic*], that such views and customs as we have learnt about in the first main portion of this work [concerning blood superstitions among Christians] never occur among Jews, because they are impossible among them. Assuredly, however, not only a Jew, but also an unbiassed Christian inquiring into the matter may point out, that several precepts of Judaism are bound to form a great obstacle at any rate to the wide dissemination of the thoughts and acts described or alluded to in the preceding chapters" (*Jew and Human Sacrifice,* 123–24). Strack discusses specific superstitious uses of blood among Jews, which parallel similar practices among Christians. See esp. 132–46.

74. The convert is Friedrich Albrecht Christiani, baptized in 1674 in Strasbourg (*Jew and Human Sacrifice,* 243–44).

75. *Ritual Murder Libel,* 31–37. Lord Rothschild petitioned the Vatican for a copy of this church-sponsored refutation in response to the prosecution's claim that it could find no such document. In recounting this incident, Roth goes so far as to reproduce images of Cardinal Merry del Val's letter in response to Rothschild's request—including even the envelope in which it arrived! Clearly nothing can be taken for granted in this public contest over meaning (*Ritual Murder Libel,* 36–37). This case was also the inspiration behind Bernard Malamud's novel *The Fixer* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1966).

76. Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust,* trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

77. Lipstadt writes, "Irving, who had frequently proposed extremely controversial theories about the Holocaust, including the claim that Hitler had no knowledge of it, has become a Holocaust denier." *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 111.

78. See Lipstadt's discussion in *History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 31–32, and D. D. Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 1–3. For a more general discussion of the historiographical issues at stake, see Richard Evans, *Lying about Hitler: History, Holocaust, and the David Irving Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Also see Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern.* For a popularizing account of the

intellectual stakes, see Robert Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2001).

79. The full text of the judgment may be downloaded at two locations: "The Irving Libel Trial," *The Guardian* (London), n.d., online edition, 15 July 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/irving, and through the Nizkor Project website, dedicated to refuting Holocaust denial, "Irving vrs. [*sic*] Lipstadt: The Judgment," *The Nizkor Project,* 11 April 2000, web, 5 July 2010, http://www.nizkor.org .

80. Anthony Julius, "On Blood Libels," *Engage* 3 (2006), web, 28 October 2009. Also see Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

81. Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); also Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (London: Free Press, 1992).

82. Most prominently, Israel Shamir, "The Bloody Passovers of Dr. Toaff," *The Writings of Israel Shamir,* n.d., web, 30 April 2007.

83. August Rohling, *Talmud-Jude. Mit einem Vorworte von Eduard Drumont, aus der auch anderweitig verm. französischen Ausg. von A. Pontigny in das Deutsche zurückübertragen von Carl Paasch* (Leipzig: T. Fritsch, 1891).

84. Also see the more broadly contextualizing discussion of the contemporary political scene in Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 245–91, esp. 281–91.

85. Anderson transfers to the Jewish community interrogation techniques that, at the time, would have been the prerogative of the Christian judicial order. She imagines the Norwich Jews "press[ing] with strange questions" (102) and "resort[ing] to torture" when they could not "draw from him [William] the information they sought" (103). At the same time, she seems to echo Thomas of Monmouth's lurid imaginings when she writes of the Norwich Jews, "It would be death to them all if he once told his tale in Norwich. It was a matter of his life or those of many Jews and so a quick knife thrust was aimed at his heart and the body hurriedly hidden in a tree" (104). None of these speculations appears in Thomas's text, though he might have appreciated the creative contribution. References are from M. D. Anderson, *A Saint at Stake: The Strange Death of William of Norwich, 1144* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).

86. William Thomas Walsh, *Isabella of Spain* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1931), 440.

87. Cecil Roth, "The Feast of Purim and the Origin of the Blood Accusation," *Speculum* 8 (1933): 520–26.

88. Joseph Jacobs, "St. William, of Norwich," *Jewish Quarterly Review,* o.s., 9 (1897): 748–55.

89. See Hartston, *Sensationalizing the Jewish Question,* 129–218. For further discussion of this context, see Sanford Ragins, *Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1870–1914: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1980).

90. See Jeffrey J. Cohen, "Flow of Blood," as well as R. I. Moore, *The Forma-*

tion of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), and Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978). Yuri Slezkine has described this phenomenon in structural terms, arguing that Jews traditionally functioned as "service nomads" in medieval and early modern culture, forming an enclave that performed tasks considered distasteful but recognized as necessary by the majority society. "Death, trade, magic, wilderness, money, disease, and internal violence were often handled by people who claimed—or were assigned to—different gods, tongues, and origins." Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 4.

91. Pierre-André Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck: The New Anti-Semitism in Europe,* trans. Patrick Camiller (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), 5. For general analysis of changes in the codependent contemporary language of racism and antiracism, see Taguieff, *The Force of Prejudice: On Racism and Its Doubles,* trans. Hassan Melehy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

92. Bauman, "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern," *Modernity, Culture, and "the Jew,"* ed. Brian Cheyette and Chana Kronfeld (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 143–56; 143. Also see Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), esp. 31–60.

93. *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism,* 2nd paperback ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983; orig. 1945), 1.

CHAPTER 2

1. ". . . genus nostrum tunc ab Anglie partibus funditus exterminabitur; immo et, quod nobis magis verendum est, nos et uxores ac parvuli barbaris trademur in predam, repiemur ad mortem, dabimur et exterminium" (*Life and Miracles,* I.25). I have silently amended the translation of *genus* from "race" to "people." For the function of such invented speeches in medieval historical writing, see Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages,* 99–124, 172–78.

2. The full sentence reads: "Communi itaque actum est consilio Iohanni quidem ut suggeratur ne iudeos contra deum manuteneat, iudeis vero ut peremptoria proponatur sententia, quod ni citius purgandi veniant se proculdubio exterminandos esse cognoscant" (I.47).

3. ". . . ac universos brevi temporis processu celestis exterminaverit sive disperserit vindicta" (II.97).

4. Lewis and Short refer to several Vulgate passages that seem to indicate that the definition as "destruction" was well-known, but also cite "expulsion" as a meaning used in ecclesiastical Latin. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A New Latin Dictionary,* rev. ed. (New York: American Book Company, 1907), 708.

5. For a philosophical analysis of this move from exclusion to murder, see Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. Daniel

Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Kathleen Biddick suggests that such potential is latent in the work of typology itself, with its supersessionist logic. Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary.*

6. Some recent work in medieval Jewish studies points to moments of calm, rapprochement, and friendly relations between Jews and Christians during the Middle Ages as well as hostility, e.g., Jonathan Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart.* Also see the discussion of recent trends in Johannes Heil, "'Deep Enmity' and/or 'Close Ties'? Jews and Christians before 1096, Sources, Hermeneutics, and Writing History in 1096," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 9 (2002): 259–306.

7. The teleological narrative is a feature of some older histories that are still widely read. See, for instance, Raul Hilberg's evocation of medieval "precursors" to the Nazi genocide in volume one of his three-volume history *Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961). Medievalists have sometimes been complicit in this back-reading of medieval history. See references below.

8. See Baron's initial formulation of these ideas in "Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?" reprinted in *Menorah Treasury: Harvest of Half a Century,* ed. Leo W. Schwarz (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964; orig. 1928), 50–63, and his defense in *Ancient and Medieval Jewish History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), esp. 513–14, n. 54, and discussion 258–64. Robert Liberles discusses this issue extensively in *Salo Wittmeyer Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York: NYU Press, 1995). For Nirenberg's remarks, see *Communities of Violence,* esp. 6–7.

9. Cf. Dominick LaCapra, "The Return of the Historically Repressed," *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 169–204.

10. A memorial notice dedicated to Langmuir emphasizes that these works were the culmination of three decades of research. *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* was also awarded the National Jewish Book Award in 1991. See Geoffrey Koziol and James Given, "Gavin I. Langmuir," *Perspectives on History: The Newsmagazine of the American Historical Association,* April 2006, web, 15 August 2010.

11. Norman Cohn's books pursue this thesis of continuity between medieval and modern persecutions in broad terms. See Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages,* rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961); *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: Heinemann for Sussex University Press, 1975); and *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* new ed. (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981). He was also involved with one of the first academic programs for the study of genocide, the Centre for Genocide Studies at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, dirs., "About Us," *The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies* (MIGS), n.d., web, 31 July 2002. For Trachtenberg, see *Devil and the Jews.*

12. R. I. Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society,* and Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy.*

13. Langmuir offers an extensive discussion of this idea, using examples that range from the limit case presented by the Nazis to the biblical episode of the binding of Isaac (*HRA,* 42–68).

14. For Langmuir, religion and religious phenomena represent a special case in this regard. Not only are the concepts difficult to define, scholars' definitions are often shaped by their own confessional status, a phenomenon he acknowledges. Langmuir is a self-described unbeliever (*HRA,* 8–9).

15. Critics have suggested this focus takes him beyond the proper concerns of history itself, into ahistorical speculation about individuals' inner thoughts and motivations. See Marc Saperstein, "Medieval Christians and Jews: A Review Essay," *Shofar* 8, no. 4 (1990): 1–10, esp. 8–9; Robert Stacey, "History, Religion, and Medieval Antisemitism: A Response to Gavin Langmuir," *Religious Studies Review* 20, no. 2 (1994): 95–102, esp. 100; David Berger, "From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions: Some New Approaches to Medieval Antisemitism," Second Annual Lecture of the Victor J. Selmanowitz Chair of Jewish History (New York: Touro College, 1997), 15–16. Cf. Friedlander, *History and Psychoanalysis, An Enquiry into the Possibilities and Limits of Psychohistory,* trans. Susan Suleiman (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1975), 9–29.

16. Langmuir participates in what André Taguieff describes as a language of antiracism that invokes the idea of racial prejudice as a "natural" failing, yet paradoxically suggests we must overcome it in order to be fully human; we must leave behind a human failing in order to fully live our humanity. See *The Force of Prejudice,* 43–67.

17. Langmuir's definition of objectivity is pragmatic: "I conceive of objectivity not as a characteristic of historical assertions that makes them valid for all historians hereafter but as a way of thinking at a particular time, as a process, not its product. Objective thinking, I suggest, is how we think about objects when we think rationally and empirically about how we think about them and how others think of them. . . . No history book is the objective truth or the past as it was. Historical works are objective only in the derivative sense that, at the time the authors were seeking answers to the questions they themselves had posed about past human actions, they were thinking as rationally and empirically as they could about how they were thinking" (*HRA,* 354–55). Perhaps ironically, there is some coherence between Hayden White's definition of acceptable relativism and Langmuir's remarks here. Cf. p. 13, above.

18. I am necessarily glossing over some of Langmuir's other distinctions, for instance between religion as a property of communities and religiosity as a property of individuals. He also distinguishes between psychocentric religions like Christianity, with its emphasis on a being endowed with conscious intention ruling over the world, and the claims of a physiocentric "religion" like Nazism, in

which indifferent and undirected historical and physical processes determine human destiny. (Soviet-style communism is also a religion in the latter sense.) These distinctions, while important in Langmuir's work, are less directly relevant for my arguments here. See *HRA,* 158–231.

19. See, for example, *HRA,* 259–61, 300–302. Cf. Rubin, *Gentile Tales.*

20. Here Langmuir concedes the role of "rational empirical" thought in modern antisemitism, since it "can make irrationality so lethal. However the SS perceived Jews, they knew that Jews had bodies of different ages and genders and could be killed" (*HRA,* 257). It should be clear from my earlier discussion of cognitive responsibility that I am in sympathy with Langmuir's conviction about the importance of standards of rationality in discussing and evaluating historical claims. However, as will become clear, I am skeptical about his tendency to apply modern standards of rationality to premodern actors.

21. Religious fundamentalists constitute an exception to this rule. Langmuir classifies their insistence on accepting faith-based claims that conflict with their empirical knowledge of the world as a form of religious irrationalism. See *HRA,* 268–69.

22. Some readers might be inclined to make connections between Langmuir's definition of nonrational thought and Freudian theories, or to draw parallels with Bourdieu's *habitus.* Langmuir does not discuss either thinker, though he draws on several scholars of religion, anthropologists like Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, and some cognitive scientists.

23. "As they would do with the bread and wine of the Eucharist, many Christians, when they perceived real Jews, began to think about Jews as if they existed physically only as a symbol that expressed Christian faith" (*HRA,* 294).

24. This focus also preserves "rational empirical" thought from unsettling associations with the "bureaucratic rationality" often discussed in relation to the Holocaust. If it is irrational belief, rather than instrumental rationality or self-serving ends, that is responsible for antisemitic actions, then reason may be less a contributing factor in antisemitism than a cure.

25. Robert Stacey, "John of Lexington," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* 2004 online edition, 3 December 2011.

26. Though I privilege Stacey's account here, Sapir Abulafia's approach is also important since she questions Langmuir's theory at one of its key junctures: his division of mental processes into universal categories of rational, nonrational, and irrational. "Many [medieval] thinkers," she writes, "were inspired by a genuine confidence that proper use of reason (which they did not restrict to rational empirical thought) would necessarily lead not only to understanding but also to concurrence with Christian doctrine. But since they also thought that reason was the hallmark of human beings, separating humans from animals, they were led to conclude that those who could not accept their rational conclusions about Christianity were not really human. . . . I would argue that developments in what he would probably call nonrational thought

conjured up chimeras of Jews as much as irrational thought did." Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1995), 6–7.

27. Saperstein, "Medieval Christians and Jews," 7. Cf. Elliott Horowitz, who considers the historical possibility of similar deliberate acts of defiance on the part of medieval Jews. *Reckless Rites,* esp. 149–85.

28. I might quibble that medieval clerics could also demonstrate skepticism of miracles, and Gratian denied the validity of confessions extracted under torture. Nevertheless, Stacey's larger point about the cultural context stands.

29. On Jewish communities' efforts to avoid altercations with passing recruits, see Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 85–90.

30. Robert Stacey observes that violence in one case does not look substantially different from violence in the other, and he disputes the idea that the origin of the violence makes the kind of difference Langmuir suggests it does. "Antisemitic myths contradict knowable facts," Stacey writes; "anti-Judaic myths are built on a factual sub-stratum, however distorted. Both sets of myths murder Jews" ("History, Religion, and Medieval Antisemitism," 98).

31. E.g., *Pasque di Sangue, Ebrei d'Europa e omicidi rituali,* 2nd ed. (Milan: Il Mulino, 2008), 13.

32. E.g., Davide Frattini, "Toaff: infrango un tabù ma non accuso nessuno," *Corriere della Sera,* 13 February 2007, 49.

33. For a discussion of the Catholic Church's spotty record on this score in the modern era, see Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs, An Image and Its Interpreters: Continuity in the Catholic-Jewish Encounter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

34. The theme of responsibility is a leitmotif of the essay. Langmuir cites M. R. James in this context: "If this is a lie—and we are assured that it is by those who have studied the subject—it is one of the most notable and disastrous lies of history; and we must look upon Theobald of Cambridge as *responsible* for the blood of thousands of his fellow-countrymen." *TDA,* 289; Langmuir's emphasis; quotation originally appears in *Life and Miracles,* lxxi–lxxii.

35. Although he focuses on antisemitic innovators in his claims about the origins of the accusation, Langmuir also recognizes the role of "social irrationality," a concept he painstakingly describes in *HRA* (264–67). Though irrational beliefs are individual in origin, they can be accepted by others "who do not assert them from their own knowledge but are willing to accept what others assert as true when it reinforces their own beliefs" (*HRA,* 265). When an institution, such as the medieval church, becomes the purveyor or tacit supporter of such irrational beliefs, they become more broadly social, and more potentially dangerous. It is according to this logic that Langmuir asserts it is the church, through its "transmission of the Christian historiographical interpretation" of Jewish responsibility for Christ's death, that is "ultimately responsible" for the creation of the ritual murder accusation (*TDA,* 297), though Langmuir also writes with some confidence that he can

"pin the origin of the first such fantasy down to a single individual"—Thomas of Monmouth (*HRA,* 298). The claim about corporate responsibility is not new, but it does trouble attributions of responsibility in specific cases. Are antisemitic innovators truly active subjects, or reflections of larger structures of discourse?

36. Peter Novick's book *The Holocaust in American Life* remains seminal. Jeffrey C. Alexander makes an argument for the universalization of the Holocaust's moral lessons, emphasizing the American context, in "The Social Construction of Moral Universals." For a different sociological account of the transnational use of the Holocaust as moral metaphor, see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age.* Also see Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Hilene Flanzbaum, ed., *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create the Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking Books, 1995).

37. The term and its origins have been repeatedly debated, but Alexander relies on Gerd Korman's account in "The Holocaust in American Historical Writing," *Societas* 2 (1972): 251–70.

38. Langmuir's wife, Nelee, was a "hidden child" in France during the Holocaust. She and her sister were separated from their parents and hidden with a Christian family during much of the war. She published a book and later made a film based on her memories of this time. "Nelee Langmuir, Stanford Teacher and Hidden Child in Shoah," jweekly.com, 19 August 2010, web, 9 May 2011. Cynthia Haven, "Nelee Langmuir, French Holocaust Survivor and Influential Stanford Teacher, Dies at 78," *Stanford Report,* 18 August 2010, web, 9 May 2011.

39. See Geoffrey Koziol and James Given, "Gavin I. Langmuir." George Hardin Brown, Philippe Buc, and Paul Seaver, "Memorial Resolution: Gavin Langmuir," *Stanford Report,* 31 October 2007, web, 15 August 2010.

40. See Geoffrey Koziol and James Given, "Gavin I. Langmuir," and Lisa Trei, "Gavin I. Langmuir, Worldwide Authority on History of Anti-Semitism, Dead at 81," *Stanford Report,* 27 July 2005, web, 15 August 2010.

41. See discussion in *Representing the Holocaust,* 90–110; *History and Memory after Auschwitz,* 26–39. In addition to the uncanny experience of the sublime evoked by Nazis like Himmler, which depends upon a sense of radical transgression, LaCapra has pointed to the ways trauma can be transvalued by critics and secondary witnesses to generate a questionable sublimity of witnessing. See *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory,* 144–94; *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence,* 59–89.

42. Saul Friedlander, "The 'Final Solution': On the Unease in Historical Interpretation," *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 102–16; 111.

43. Earlier I referred to this as a parallel to the biblical fall from innocence. Others have remarked how themes of sacrifice and redemption, prominent in the Christian tradition, influence cultural understanding of the Holocaust. See, for

example, Bernard Giesen, "From Denial to Confessions of Guilt: The German Case," in Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., eds., *Remembering the Holocaust: A Debate,* 114–22, esp. 120–21. Giesen suggests that because the Judeo-Christian tradition is less prominent in the Far and Middle East, these cultures have different ways of thinking about collective responsibility and genocide. For use of the word *Holocaust* and its implications of religious sacrifice, see Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, "Why Do We Call the Holocaust 'the Holocaust'? An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels," *Modern Judaism* 9 (1989): 197–211. Also see James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), esp. 85–88.

44. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 46. Hereafter *GA.*

45. While Jeffrey Alexander refers to this debate in terms of its universalizing dimensions, which tend to sever moral lessons learned from their historical specificity ("Social Construction," 42–44), Robert Eaglestone argues for a distinction between Browning's universal definition of the human, and the implication in Goldhagen's work that the "human" is a category defined within particular cultural contexts. Eaglestone's argument highlights the tension between Goldhagen's emphasis on cultural uniqueness and his claims about a more generalizable moral lesson. Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern,* 194–223. I have already remarked that Langmuir's arguments emphasize a universal psychological dimension to persecution.

46. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

47. Caplan, "Reflections on the Reception of Goldhagen in the United States," in *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past,* ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 151–62; 156.

48. For discussion of the controversy surrounding the book and a number of critiques, see *The "Goldhagen Effect,"* ed. Geoff Eley; Robert R. Shandley, *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Ruth Bettina Birn, *Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998); Franklin H. Littell, ed., *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen* (East Rockaway, NY: Cummings and Hathaway, 1997); as well as Karyn Ball, *Disciplining the Holocaust* (Binghamton: State University of New York, 2009), 19–44.

49. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

50. Christopher Browning, "German Memory, Judicial Interrogation, and Historical Reconstruction: Writing Perpetrator History from Postwar Testimony," *Probing the Limits,* 22–36; 36.

51. *History and Memory After Auschwitz,* 34–35. He also discusses this in terms of "blocked transference" in *History in Transit,* 74–76.

52. Jeffrey Alexander writes of recent second-guessing and self-examination

among Allied powers and neutral countries concerning their own possible complicity with the Nazi regime. He emphasizes how this speaks to the loss of control of the "means of symbolic production" in cultural narratives about the Holocaust ("Social Construction," 44–49). I see the impulse to engage in this kind of self-examination as part of a broad concern with less easily legislatable aspects of the ethical sphere.

53. Levinas describes an analogous phenomenon as a "persecution," because even when impingements are not hostile, they can be overwhelming for the one who is impinged upon. Butler builds on psychoanalytical theorist Jean Laplanche's arguments in her adoption of the terminology of impingement and its association with subject formation (*GA,* 70–82).

54. Butler is emphatic that this is never a question of being held responsible for acts of violation another commits against us. "For Levinas, who separates the claim of responsibility from the possibility of agency, responsibility emerges as a consequence of being subject to the unwilled address of the other. This is part of what he means when he claims, maddeningly, that persecution creates a responsibility *for the persecuted.* Most people recoil in horror when they first hear this kind of statement, but let us consider carefully what it does and does not mean. It does *not* mean that I can trace the acts of persecution I have suffered to deeds I have performed, that it therefore follows that I have brought persecution on myself, and that it is only a matter of finding the acts I performed, but disavowed. No, persecution is precisely what happens *without the warrant of any deed of my own*" (*GA,* 85).

55. For the details of Levinas's major arguments about the encounter with the other, see *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority,* Trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence,* Trans. Alphonso Lingis, (Dordrecht and Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1978).

56. See discussion in *GA,* 92–97.

57. See *GA,* 93–96, as well as Butler's essay, "The Charge of Anti-Semitism," in *Precarious Life.*

58. For a highly critical version of the claim that Butler shares some commonalities with postzionist writers, see Elhanan Yakira, *Post-Zionism, Post-Holocaust: Three Essays on Denial, Forgetting, and the Delegitimation of Israel,* trans. Michael Swirsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. 313–19.

59. Karyn Ball analyzes Daniel Goldhagen's reception in these terms, arguing he was criticized as much for the disciplinary "impropriety" of his obvious "ressentiment" in connection with historical events he analyzes as for any methodological failings. See Ball, *Disciplining the Holocaust,* 19–44.

CHAPTER 3

1. "iudei . . . nobis audacter insultare solebant dicentes: Gratias nobis persoluisse debueratis, quia sanctum ac martyrem vobis fecimus. Fecimus quidem vo-

bis perutile bonum quod in nos retorquetis ad maleficium. Fecimus vobis quod vos ipsi vobis facere non potuistis" (II.95).

2. This characterization assumes that Thomas reports something he witnessed or heard, rather than inventing the story. Since he does not "get" the joke, however, it seems somewhat more likely that he reports his own experience, or someone else's.

3. See Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim, and the Legacy of Jewish Violence;* Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God;* David Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz.*

4. Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb.* For the original article, see "Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation: From Jewish Martyrdom to Blood Libel Accusations" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 58 no. 1 (1993): 33–90; English summary, vi–viii. Responses appeared in a follow-up issue, along with Yuval's reply: *Zion* 59 (1994): 2–3, 169–414; English summaries, xi–xvii. The ripple effect of this controversy has established that Yuval's work signals a disruption of business as usual. For further responses, see Alfred Haverkamp, ed., *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzügge* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1999), and Yom Tov Assis et al., eds, *Facing the Cross: The Persecutions of 1096 in History and Historiography* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000). Also see commentaries by Rainer Walz, "Die Verfolgungen von 1096 und die Ritualmordlegende Die Debatte über die Thesen Israel J. Yuvals," *Aschkenas: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 9 (1999): 189–232; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Historisches Bewußtsein und historische Verantwortung," in Barbara Schäfer, ed., *Historikerstreit in Israel: Die »neuen« Historiker zwischen Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2000), 151–207; and Johannes Heil, "'Deep Enmity' and/or 'Close Ties'?"

5. Vincent Lloyd writes: "Rose's readings of philosophers are, to put it generously, idiosyncratic. In the discussion that follows, it is Rose's philosophy which is of interest, not the philosophies of those she reads. . . . This may be irksome to, for example, the Kant or Hegel specialist who witnesses his cherished subjects seemingly disfigured, but it is necessary if we want to be able to understand Rose's own contribution—and to consider what her own unfinished project might hold in store." Vincent Lloyd, *Law and Transcendence: On the Unfinished Project of Gillian Rose* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 13. I follow a similar path, avoiding some obvious Hegelian terminology, such as the Actual, Absolute, or Spirit. Rose does not often use these terms, but more importantly, I want to focus on her particular arguments.

6. Rose develops this argument most searchingly in *Dialectic of Nihilism.*

7. Arnold Jacob Wolf, "The Tragedy of Gillian Rose—Jewish Social Critic," *Judaism,* Fall 1997, 184, no. 46, 481–88; 487.

8. Martin Jay puts the matter eloquently in his memorial essay for Rose: "But now when alterity, heterogeneity, non-identity, difference and otherness have become the tired buzzwords of our fractured culture, it is Rose who paradoxically represents a form of genuine strangeness, unassimilable to any school of thought, *à l'écart de tous les courants.*" Jay, "The Conversion of the Rose," 50.

9. I offer only a conceptual summary of these ideas here, which Rose develops over the space of a few major works. See *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (London: Blackwell, 1992); *Judaism and Modernity;* and *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). My analysis is indebted to this last work, which is a dense, compact synthesis of the major structures of thought Rose pursued over her career.

10. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust.* Within Giorgio Agamben's oeuvre, see, for example, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.*

11. Her complaints about Levinas's implicit reliance on the model of an autonomous self differ somewhat from Butler's arguments, but both philosophers take up positions among critics who complain about the ethereality of Levinas's ethics of alterity. Though I do not have space to engage this issue in the manner it deserves, I want to acknowledge that some readers would dispute this characterization. Among a large bibliography on Levinas's relation to the political, see Diane Perpich, *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), and Howard Caygill, *Levinas and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

12. The same might be said of the valorization of the Palestinian cause, Third World cultures, or other "others" characterized as carriers of "premodern" authenticity in some contemporary circles. For some of the conceptual problems represented by mapping premodern authenticity onto non-Western cultures in the present, see the genealogical discussion in Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

13. Vincent Lloyd discusses Butler's work in relation to Rose's as an incomplete expression of a related philosophical impulse. See *Law and Transcendence,* 33–63.

14. Cf. Gerson D. Cohen's arguments about passive Ashkenazic messianism in "Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim," *Studies of the Leo Baeck Institute,* ed. M. Kreutzberger (New York: F. Ungar, 1967), 115–56. Reprinted in Gerson Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 271–98.

15. This is a clear, if indirect, response to critics like Ezra Fleischer, who accused him of minimizing the disparity between Jewish prayers and anger in response to abuse, and Christian acts of violence against Jews (Fleischer, "Christian-Jewish Relations in the Middle Ages Distorted" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 59, no. 2–3 (1994): 267–316, esp. 279–81).

16. Walz remarks on the sensitivity of this point and the heated responses it aroused: "Yuval's assumption that expediting deliverance was one motive for the Jews [in committing self-martyrdom] has received the harshest criticism in the debate. The emotional defense is here very clear. 'Expediation' as motive lades kiddush ha-Shem with guilt. The national symbol does not function any more when one accepts this motive" ("Am schärfsten wird in der Debatte Yuvals Annahme

kritisiert, daß die Beschleunigung der Erlösung ein Handlungsmotiv gewesen sei. Die emotionale Abwehr ist hier sehr deutlich. Die Beschleunigung als Motiv belädt das qiddusch ha-schem mit Schuld. Das nationale Symbol funktioniert nicht mehr, wenn man dieses Motiv akzeptiert." Walz, "Die Debatte," 226–27).

17. Yuval differentiates between the "vengeful redemption" he argues was prominent in Ashkenazic communities and a rival messianic view among Sephardic Jews that privileged "proselytizing redemption," or the belief that all peoples of the world will eventually acknowledge the God of Israel (*Two Nations,* 93–114). Yuval's theory about an Ashkenazic messianic worldview was criticized early on by other scholars. Fleischer was not persuaded that any typology of vengeful versus conversionary redemption existed, and accused Yuval of importing modern categories into his analysis ("Christian-Jewish Relations," e.g., 273, 290). Grossman and Breuer acknowledge the importance of the concept of vengeance, but Grossman disputes Yuval's strong division between vengeance and conversion, which he argues were two steps of the anticipated messianic process, not competing alternatives. He also argues Ashkenazic views were not unique in this regard. Grossman, "'Redemption by Conversion' in the Teachings of Early Ashkenazi Sages" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 59, no. 2–3 (1994): 325–42. Yuval's reply disputes all these points. "'The Lord Will Take Vengeance, Vengeance for His Temple'—Historia sine Ira et Studio" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 59 no. 2–3 (1994): 351–414. In the book, Yuval devotes considerable time to the emergence of the messianic ideal and distinguishing more clearly between regions where he believes vengeful redemption held sway (Ashkenaz) versus proselytizing redemption (Sepharad).

18. Fleischer disputes this idea in his 1994 article (279).

19. For the curses, see *Two Nations,* 115–30; for a longer discussion of Christian and Jewish exegeses of Passover, see especially 56–90.

20. This helps to explain Yuval's otherwise cryptic earlier remark that the curse incorporated into the *Amidah* "had the significance of a repeated crucifixion of Jesus" (*Two Nations,* 117). This is itself a provocative statement. For the full context of discussion, in which Yuval examines the curse in relation to the Pauline exegesis of Deuteronomy 21:23, see 115–18.

21. Cf. Daniel Lasker, who is skeptical about using polemical literature as historical evidence and questions direct Jewish knowledge of Christian doctrine. *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), xx–xxvi and passim. Fleischer and Grossman criticized Yuval's use of liturgical poetry as historical testimony; see earlier references.

22. Also see Mary Minty, "Responses to Medieval Ashkenazi Martyrdom (Kiddush ha-Shem) in Late Medieval German Christian Sources," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 4 (1995): 13–38; Minty, "*Kiddush Ha-Shem* in German Christian Eyes in the Middle Ages," *Zion* 59, no. 2–3 (1994): 209–66; and Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God.*

23. A point that emerges more forcefully in Yural's response to critics: "The

Lord Will Take Vengeance." Cf. Jeremy Cohen, who critiqued Yuval's 1993 article for appearing to presume that the chronicles reflected the actual ideology of the victims of martyrdom, as opposed to explanations brought to bear after the fact by survivors. Cohen, "The 'Persecutions of 1096' from Martyrdom to Martyrology: The Sociocultural Context of the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 59, no. 2–3 (1994): 169–208. Also Cohen, *Sanctifying.*

24. Some of Yuval's critics clearly understood this differently. Walz remarks, "The harsh reaction of Yuval's opponents is explained by their inability to differentiate between a causal connection and guilt (a shortcoming frequently encountered among historians). It is clear that the indirect causal nexus (the darkening of the Christians' image of the Jews due to the suicides) does not imply guilt on the side of the Jews. . . . To interpret this as guilt, because the 'persecuting society' was able to latch onto some of these related features, is not a concern here. In this respect, one can consider Yuval's thesis much more calmly" ("Die harte Reaktion der Gegner Yuvals erklärt sich aus ihrer Unfähigkeit, zwischen Kausalnexus und Schuld zu unterscheiden (ein bei Historikern häufig anzutreffendes Manko). Es ist klar, daß der indirekte Kausalnexus (Verdüsterung des christlichen Judenbildes durch die Selbstmorde) keine Schuld auf der jüdischen Seite impliziert. . . . Dies als Schuld zu interpretieren, weil die 'persecuting society' an damit verbundene Merkmale anschließen konnte, geht nicht an. Insofern könnte man die Thesen Yuvals viel ruhiger betrachten" ("Die Debatte," 231).

25. Walz describes the difficulty in terms of intertextuality rather than overdetermination, but the dynamic he has in mind is much the same and produces the kind of indeterminacy I am highlighting here. See "Die Debatte," esp. 215, 229. He remarks that this is a difficulty for projects like Jeremy Cohen's as well as Yuval's. Cf. Cohen, "The 'Persecutions of 1096' " and *Sanctifying.*

26. See Heil, "Deep Enmity," Christoph Cluse, "Stories of Breaking and Taking the Cross," and Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites.*

27. Raz-Krakotzkin cautions against reading Yuval's work in terms of a simple causal explanation for the emergence of the ritual murder story ("Historisches Bewußtsein," 179). Yuval says he is interested in the circumstances of the story's emergence and its appeal (167), yet his account effectively offers us a new origin story for the ritual murder accusation. Walz distinguishes between direct and indirect causation, a distinction he says was lost in early debates over Yuval's work ("Die Debatte," 229–31, and n. 24, above).

28. Marcus, "History, Story, and Collective Memory: Narrativity in Early Ashkenazic Culture," *Prooftexts* 10 (1990): 365–88; 365. For a contrary view, see Robert Chazan, "The Facticity of Medieval Narrative: A Case Study of the Hebrew First Crusade Narratives," *AJS Review* 16 (1991): 31–56. For a recent reflection on these questions, see Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God,* esp. 31–54. Also see my forthcoming article, "Massacre and Memory: Ethics and Method in Recent Scholarship on Jewish Martyrdom." For the evolution of this conversation outside Jewish studies, see Gabrielle Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social

Logic of the Text"; Monika Otter, *Inventiones,* and Robert M. Stein, *Reality Fictions: Romance, History, and Governmental Authority, 1025–1180* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

29. Yuval reexamines a few early cases dismissed as accusations of "simple murder" by Gavin Langmuir, which allows him to date emergence of the ritual murder accusation to an earlier period. See discussion, *Two Nations,* 167–73. Breuer is unpersuaded by Yuval's efforts to trace the origin of the accusation to Germany and count earlier deaths only sketchily described in the records as examples of the story at work ("The Historian's Imagination," 320–22). Cf. Langmuir, "L'Absence d'accusation de meurtre ritual à l'ouest du Rhône," *Juifs et judaisme de Languedoc* (Toulouse: E. Privat, 1977), 247–49.

30. Robert Chazan considers and rejects a link between the events of 1096 and the emergence of the ritual murder charge as early as 1987, on the basis of limited evidence for widespread Christian knowledge of the martyrdoms as well as the pervasiveness of other negative stereotypes that might account for it (*European Jewry,* 213–14). Cf. David Biale, "Blood Libels and Blood Vengeance," *Tikkun* 9, no. 4 (1993): 39–40, 75; esp. 75.

31. "in obprobrium [*sic*] et contumeliam Christi christianum ubicunque terrarum deo litare altissimo, ut sic suas in illum ulciscantur iniurias cuius mortis causa ipsi et a sua exclusi sunt patria et tanquam servi exulant in aliena."

32. See, for example, Jeremy Cohen's extended oeuvre, including *Living Letters of the Law.*

33. David Berger's remarks speak to the general problem of uncertainty in this context: "To utilize this text, then, Yuval must assume multiple distortions [on the part of Christians]. With respect to the vengeful redemption, killing by God becomes killing by Jews, eschatological killing becomes contemporary killing, mass killing becomes the annual killing of one person; with respect to 'the blood ritual,' Jewish children become Christian children, and killing to arouse divine wrath becomes killing to counteract the effect of Jesus' death. Again—this is possible, but the larger the magnitude and quantity of the distortions, the weaker the argument. It requires a monumental stretch to maintain that even this text is evidence of Christian familiarity with either of the Jewish beliefs in question" ("From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions," 19–20).

34. Cf. Fleischer, who makes similar statements on this point, though in more polemical terms (305–6).

35. In the space of one critical chapter, Yuval refers to these practices of Jewish self-sacrifice or martyrdom in 1096 as a "blood ritual" (139, 163, 164, 174), "sacrificial ritual" (139), "blood rite" (140, 165), "cult of blood and sacrifice" (143), "cult of blood" (154), and "blood sacrifice" (161). These locutions deliberately recall the language of "ritual murder" and "blood libel," the two terms most commonly used to describe accusations against Jews of ritual violence and illicit use of blood. However, Hebrew terms make this parallelism even more explicit. Yuval writes of *alilot kedoshim*, "deeds of the saints" (literally holy ones) and *alilot dam*

"blood libels." *Alilah* can mean either a deed or act in a relatively neutral sense, or a false charge or calumny. Yuval emphasizes what he sees as a significant transformation: Jewish "stories of the saints" are transformed in Christian understanding into "blood libels."

36. Yuval discusses a few early modern Christian polemicists, including the testimony offered by some Jewish converts to Christianity (see for example 124–28 and 241–44). However he does not explicitly analyze the volatile modern life of these legends. Elliott Horowitz devotes substantial attention to these questions in *Reckless Rites,* esp. 213–47 and passim.

37. Breuer worried openly about possible exploitation of Yuval's thesis by antisemites, prompting an angry response from Yuval (below). "The Historian's Imagination," 324. Fleischer also accused Yuval of blaming historical victims, in "Christian-Jewish Relations." Also see Johannes Heil, who explains the hostile reaction to Yuval's work as the result of an anxiety that the fine distinctions Yuval proposes would inevitably be lost in an era of provocative headlines: "The criticism of Yuval was, therefore, directed less at his work than at the misreadings that lazy or hostile readers might get out of it—or read into it." "'Pasque di Sangue'—Ariel Toaff and the Legend of Ritual Murder. A Comment," trans. Andrew Gow, *Hochschule für Judische Studien Heidelberg,* January 2007, web, 8 November 2008. See also some early coverage of Yuval's work, in "Is There a Basis for the Blood Libel?" (in Hebrew) *Haaretz* 2 July 1993.

38. Quoted in Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying,* 40, and earlier, "A 1096 Complex?" 20.

39. Assaf Likhovski offers an interesting perspective on this question when he distinguishes between political and cultural history. "Political history is more interested in intentions and motivations (and also tends to be more judgmental)," whereas cultural history is more interested in cultural artifacts and processes. This admittedly broad characterization speaks to some critical differences between Langmuir (trained in constitutional history) and Yuval. Likhovski, "Post-Post-Zionist Historiography," *Israel Studies* 15, no. 2 (2010): 1–23; 5–6.

40. Following his discussion of the controversy over Yuval's work, in fact, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin discusses recent work on Israel's early settlement, while criticizing an Israeli historical consciousness intent on maintaining a firm division between earlier historical periods and more contemporary questions ("Historisches Bewußtsein," esp. 180–207).

41. This is an idea that resonates in the public sphere, where activists sometimes cast Israel as a violent, apartheid, even Nazi-esque nation. Often discussion of such critiques turns upon difficult distinctions between antisemitism, antizionism, and postzionism. See, for example, David Hirsh, "Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan Reflections," Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism Working Paper Series, undated, web, 22 February 2009. (The Yale Initiative has recently been terminated, and this paper no longer appears to be available online.) Also see Avishai Ehrlich, "Zionism, Anti-Zionism, Post-

Zionism," in *The Challenge of Post-Zionism: Alternatives to Israeli Fundamentalist Politics,* ed. Ephraim Nimni (London: Zed Books, 2003), 63–97.

42. In addition to Horowitz's *Reckless Rites* (discussed below), see Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz.*

43. See Yuval's characterization of his own position, which he describes as both Zionist and critical ("Myth," 16). Ilan Greilsammer describes a crisis between normalizing and particularizing views as a component of debates about postzionism. *La nouvelle histoire d'Israël. Essai sur une identité nationale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), esp. 503–6; Cf. Dan Diner, "Cumulative Contingency." Cf. David Biale, "Confessions of an Historian of Jewish Culture," *Jewish Social Studies* new series 1, no. 1 (1994): 40–51.

44. Several articles make this point in Anita Shapira and Derek Penslar, eds., *Israeli Historical Revisionism from Left to Right* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

45. A number of commentators have mentioned these major themes; see the articles collected in *Postzionism: A Reader,* ed. Laurence J. Silberstein (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

46. Anita Shapira ("The Strategies of Historical Revisionism," 62–76) and Daniel Gutwein ("Left and Right Post-Zionism and the Privatization of Israeli Collective Memory," 9–42) make some similar arguments about the array of political positions in *Israeli Historical Revisionism.*

47. Ram, *Israeli Nationalism: Social Conflicts and the Politics of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2011), 34. For Ram's globalization thesis, see *The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008). Cf. Yoav Gelber, who agrees that globalization is a key factor, but characterizes its influence in much more negative terms: "Redefining the Israeli Ethos: Transforming Israeli Society," in *Israel and the Post-Zionists: A Nation at Risk,* ed. Shlomo Sharan (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), 13–25.

48. A point made, for example, by Anita Shapira, "Strategies."

49. E.g., Yoram Hazony, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). The Jewish and democratic character of Israel is enshrined in its founding documents. Though this identification has traditionally been important on the left as well as the right, some now argue it is a contradiction to insist Israel is both Jewish *and* democratic, since the ethnic orientation of the state appears to leave some citizens out of the national narrative. Defenders argue there is no contradiction between these terms, and all rights and liberties are protected. Greilsammer emphasizes the resolutely secular orientation of postzionist thought: *La nouvelle histoire,* 496–503. Silberstein and Ram also stress the importance of the idea of a secular, democratic state in this context, though postzionists represent a range of positions on this issue as on others.

50. Laurence J. Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999). Emanuele Ottolenghi describes the book as "the only comprehensive scholarly English language textbook on post-Zionism" (139), acknowledging its importance before proceeding to a severe cri-

tique. This is still basically true, despite the proliferation of essays and anthologies on the subject. A number of books have responded to the movement rather than offering a history or survey of its themes. Ottolenghi, "Paradise Lost: A Review of Laurence Silberstein's 'The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture,'" *Israel Studies* 8, no. 2 (2003): 139–50.

51. Greilsammer says that within the postzionist perspective Zionism is viewed as a legitimate national movement but one that has accomplished most of its objectives, and so is, therefore, redundant (*La Nouvelle Histoire,* 497). Silberstein would surely qualify this statement, while acknowledging that it reflects some postzionists' views (*Postzionism Debates,* 7–8). Cf. Ottolenghi, who outlines a more coherent claim than many critics that postzionists are antizionist in effect if not intent ("Paradise Lost," 144–46).

52. The characterization is a common one, but see Gregory Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 258.

53. An overview of election results appears in Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, eds., *The Elections in Israel 2006* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 2008), 1–11.

54. Ariel Sharon, for example, was disgraced after accusations that he was complicit in the massacre of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps by Christian Lebanese forces. However he eventually recovered from this debacle to become prime minister in 2001.

55. Postzionism has also been characterized as a larger cultural phenomenon along the lines of postmodernism, influencing cultural artifacts, such as literature and the visual arts, but that lies beyond my purview here. For instance, see Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 259–71.

56. For the origin of the term *new historians,* see Benny Morris, "The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past," reprint, in *Making Israel,* ed. Benny Morris (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 11–28. Both terms have been disputed but have largely stuck.

57. Benny Morris is widely credited with opening the floodgates with his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Also see Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimension of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Though I do not have space for a complete bibliography, it is instructive to consider these authors' later works as well.

58. I offer just a few examples here: Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood,* trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Adi Ophir, "The Identity of Victims and the Victims of Identity: A Critique of Zionist Ideology for a Postzionist Age," in *Postzionism: A Reader,* 81–101;

Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "History Textbooks and the Limits of Israeli Consciousness," in *Israeli Historical Revisionism,* 155–72.

59. Ilan Pappe describes the postzionist moment as a lost opportunity, consigning it to the recent past, while Uri Ram argues for the concept's continued usefulness. Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine,* 253–71, and Ram, "Postzionist Studies of Israel: The First Decade," in *Postzionism: A Reader,* 61–77.

60. See, for example, Elhanan Yakira, who makes a controversial connection between leftist postzionists (whom he often polemically conflates with anti-Zionists), and Holocaust deniers. He argues for an ideological common denominator between these otherwise strange bedfellows. See Yakira, *Post-Zionism, Post-Holocaust.* For an array of other criticisms, see Efraim Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History: The "New Historians"* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); Shlomo Sharan, *Israel and the Post-Zionists;* Yoram Hazony, *The Jewish State;* Yoav Gelber, *Nation and History: Israeli Historiography between Zionism and Post-Zionism* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2011). As a critical voice, Anita Shapira is considerably less vitriolic than some other authors. Though the works cited above represent a variety of approaches, this is an area where invective and even occasional insinuations of treason are not uncommon. For a discussion of some connections between certain critics of postzionism and right-wing think tanks, see Shapira, "Strategies," and Gutwein, "Privatization."

61. "Strategies," 66. For Morris's original use of the idea in the phrase "besmirched by original sin," see "The New Historiography," 15. Cf. Ottolenghi ("Paradise Lost") who criticizes the importation of Christian theological ideas (like original sin) into this conversation.

62. Benny Morris is one exception, characterizing himself as a positivist. See Silberstein, *Postzionism Debates,* 101.

63. Ram, *The Changing Agenda of Israeli Sociology: Theory, Ideology, and Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 3. Also see his comparative discussion of sociology of knowledge perspectives in "The Future of the Past in Israel: A Sociology of Knowledge Approach," in Morris, *Making Israel,* 202–30.

64. Shalev, "Time for Theory: Critical Notes on Lissak and Sternhell," *Israel Studies* 1, no. 2 (1996): 170–88; 171. The essay is part of a special issue devoted to postzionism; for another contemporaneous collection of responses, see *History and Memory* "Israeli Historiography Revisited" 7, no. 1 (1995).

65. Efraim Karsh, for instance, provocatively labels the new history the "New Israeli Distortiography" (*Fabricating Israeli History,* 7) and engages in a debunking exercise, analyzing examples of what he argues are falsifications or misrepresentations of evidence.

66. Shapira, "Politics and Collective Memory: The Debate Over the 'New Historians' in Israel," trans. Ora Wiskind-Elper *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995): 9–40; 34.

67. Cf. earlier references to critics of postzionism, who are often suspicious of theory and willing to generalize broadly in their dismissal of it. Gelber, for exam-

ple, offers a summary of theoretical claims ("postmodern gospel") that in my view does not display a deep reading of the arguments he critiques. *Nation and History,* esp. 29–62.

68. Tom Segev, Benny Morris, and Ilan Pappe are just a few examples of postzionists who trained in Anglophone universities and published English language books. Some medievalists discussed here, including Elliott Horowitz and Jeremy Cohen also publish primarily in English, though both, it should be noted, are Americans who moved to Israel.

69. Ilan Greilsammer claims that many recent immigrants to Israel from Western countries (he mentions America and France) have tended to embrace religious-nationalist views of Israeli history and identity (*La Nouvelle Histoire,* 515–16).

70. This puts me in disagreement with some other commentators, including Laurence Silberstein, who appears to see the advocacy of theoretical discourses as incompatible with "evidentiary standards, rules of documentation, and forms of argumentation" common to the discipline, though I agree with his insight that what theoretically informed scholarship aims at is often the reexamination of disciplinary assumptions (*Postzionism Debates,* 175). Cf. Ottolenghi, one of a number of critics to argue that postzionists are contradictory in their claims about theory, though he does so in metacritical terms that are themselves "theoretical."

71. "History and National Liberation," in *Israeli Historical Revisionism,* 1–8; 4.

72. Shafir, *Land, Labor,* 5.

73. Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood,* and Adi Ophir, "The Identity of Victims and the Victims of Identity."

74. See discussion in Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God,* 40, and arguments by Breuer and Fleischer.

75. Citation is from Esther 4:14.

76. The barrel-like structure was confirmed to be a segment of piping when investigators examined its Israeli manufacture stamp and used an identical pipe in their reconstructions of the original gun battle. James Fallows reviews the Israeli investigations of the affair, as well as the public fallout after the worldwide airing of the footage. See "Who Shot Mohammed al-Dura?" *Atlantic Monthly* (June 2003): 49–56; 51. Also see the extensive archive of footage, transcriptions, and news coverage on Richard Landes's two websites, *The Second Draft,* web, 20 February 2010, http://www.seconddraft.org/, and his blog, *The Augean Stables,* web, 20 February 2010, http://www.theaugeanstables.com/. The chronology of events at the latter site is opinionated but helpful: "Chronology," "Al Durah Affair: The Dossier," *The Augean Stables.* Though Landes is a medievalist, he is well known for his work on the al-Dura case, which he regards as an example of what he calls "Pallywood," or staged scenes of Palestinian victimization put on for the benefit of Western news agencies and their audiences. Landes's documentaries on the subject, which deconstruct the al-Dura footage and the inflammatory effects of the incident, are available on YouTube.com. See, for example, "Pallywood Strikes

Again! 2," Pajamasmedia, 31 March 2008, web, 15 August 2010, and "Icon of Hatred," Pajamasmedia, 27 February 2008, web, 15 August 2010.

77. "Myth and Muhammed al-Dura," Editorial, *Jerusalem Post* 30 May 2008, 13.

78. Many reports comment on the ubiquity of the boy's name and image in the Arab world. E.g., Fallows, "Who Shot Mohammed al-Dura?" In an interview, Philippe Karsenty remarks, "The image of al-Dura doesn't tell you what's on the video. Your attitude towards the image tells you who you are." Ruthie Blum, "Muhammed al-Dura Has Become a Brand-Name—Like Coca Cola," Interview with Philippe Karsenty *Jerusalem Post,* 30 November 2007, 15.

79. Talal Hassan Abu Rahma, "Statement under Oath by a Photographer of France 2 Television," *Palestinian Center for Human Rights,* 3 October 2000, web, 17 August 2010. Reporter Nidra Poller writes that representatives of France 2 later informed investigators that on a few points Abu Rahma "had retracted his testimony, given 'under pressure' to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights." See Poller, "Myth, Fact, and the al-Dura Affair," *Commentary* (September 2005): 23–30, 28.

80. This follows at least two serious investigations, which included analysis of the film and a staged reenactment comparing bullet trajectories and impacts. See Landes, "Chronology," and Fallows, "Who Shot Mohammed al-Dura?"

81. Fallows reviews the "minimum" and "maximum" arguments, but remains largely uncommitted himself (56). Richard Landes is probably the best-known proponent of maximalist views, but Gérard Huber's book-length account also argues that the death scene was staged. Huber, *Contre-expertise d'une mise en scène* (Paris: Éditions Raphaël, 2003). Landes's website, *Second Draft,* and his blog, *The Augean Stables,* are clearinghouses for such theories, though Landes is not alone in maintaining them.

82. For some characterizations of the incident as a blood libel, see Manfred Gerstenfeld, "The Muhammad Al-Dura Blood Libel: A Case Analysis," interview with Richard Landes, *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 74, no. 2 (2008), web, 15 November 2009, and Amnon Lord, "Who Killed Muhammad al-Dura? Blood Libel—Model 2000," *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 482 (15 July 2002), web, 15 November 2009. For analysis of other accusations of systematic Israeli violence against Palestinian children that predate the al-Dura case, see Raphael Israeli, *Poison: Modern Manifestations of a Blood Libel* (New York: Lexington Books, 2002).

83. When Phillippe Karsenty won his appeal for the libel conviction, some news outlets suggested that the "hoax" had been confirmed. Yet while the court validated some of Karsenty's arguments about the problematic use of footage, this is hardly the same thing as declaring that a hoax of the dimensions suggested by critics had been committed. For some coverage of the Karsenty case, see Nidra Poller, "The Truth About Mohammed Al-Durra; A French Judge Confirms What Many Have Long Suspected," *National Post* (Canada), 28 May 2008, A22; Anne-

Elisabeth Moutet, "L'Affaire Enderlin: Being a French Journalist Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry," 13:41 *Weekly Standard* (7–14 July 2008), web, 4 June 2010. For the claim that some publications chose not to cover the case for political reasons, see Andrea Levin, "The Silence of 'The Times,'" *Jerusalem Post,* 11 July 2008, 4. Also see "Philippe Karsenty: 'We Need to Expose the Muhammad al-Dura Hoax,'" Interview with Philippe Karsenty, *Middle East Quarterly* 15:4 (Fall 2008): 57–65.

84. Larry Derfner, "Get Real About Muhammad al-Dura," *Jerusalem Post,* 19 June 2008, 16. For the full context of these remarks, which involve heated exchanges with Richard Landes, and Philippe Karsenty, see Larry Derfner, "Al-Dura and the Conspiracy Freaks," *Jerusalem Post,* 29 May 2008, 15; Richard Landes and Philippe Karsenty, "Conspiracy Theories and al-Dura," *Jerusalem Post,* 12 June 2008, 15; Richard Landes, "Public Secrets Exposed," *Jerusalem Post,* 10 July 2008, 16.

85. For some meditations on this narrative mirroring effect, framed in broader terms, see Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). Cf. Peter J. Haas, "Moral Visions in Conflict: Israeli and Palestinian Ethics," *Anguished Hope: Holocaust Scholars Confront the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict,* ed. Leonard Grob and John K. Roth (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 14–29.

86. Gabriel Schoenfeld, *The Return of Anti-Semitism,* and Menahem Milson, "What Is Arab Antisemitism?" In recent years a Syrian-producted soap opera,, *Al Shatat,* has also aired, featuring a dramatization of a Jewish ritual murder and a global Jewish conspiracy. For a video clip and English transcriptions, see "Ramadan 2005 TV shows—Al Shatat," clip no. 895, The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), 20 October 2005, web, 19 August 2010. Also see "Jews Portrayed as Blood Drinkers in an Antisemtic Drama Aired on Hamas TV," clip no. 2073, MEMRI, 3 April, 2009, Web, 9 December 2011; and "Egyptian Researcher Muhammad Al-Buheiri: Jews Still Use Christian Blood to Bake Passover Matzos," clip no. 1393, MEMRI, 25 February 2007, web, 19 August 2010. Although certain materials (including two of these inflammatory film clips) are only accessible to those who participate in the site's free registration, many translations from Arab print media depicting the blood libel as historical fact are publicly available on the site's "Subjects" page: "Blood Libel," MEMRI, n.d., web, 19 August 2010. Although MEMRI is sometimes criticized for cherry-picking provocative material from Arab media, the existence of the material and its broad circulation for consumption in the Arabic-speaking world are clear.

87. This characterization, attributed to Enderlin, appears in Doreen Carvajal, "Photo of a Palestinian Boy Kindles Debate in France," *New York Times,* 7 February 2005, 6.

88. Landes, for instance, suggests other investigators, including Fallows and Esther Schapira, take a "cautious" position because of the volatility of the issue (Landes, "Al Durah as Staged," *The Second Draft*). Also see Landes, "Fallows on al Durah: What is Your Position?" *Augean Stables,* (blog), 10 September 2006.

CHAPTER 4

1. Ariel Toaff, *Pasque di sangue: Ebrei d'Europa e omicidi rituali.* The second edition was published by the same press, under the same title, in 2008. My citations from *Pasque di sangue* are all drawn from the 2008 second edition, both because this edition is more generally available and because it represents the author's final summation of his arguments. As I indicate below, the revised edition remains problematic on several counts.

2. David Abulafia, "Libels of Blood," *Times Literary Supplement* 5422 (2 March 2007): 11–12; 11.

3. See, for example, Gabriel Sanders, "Scholar Pulls Book Revisiting Blood Libel," *The Jewish Daily Forward,* 16 February 2007, online edition, 21 March 2007, and comments in Lisa Palmieri-Billig, "Jews Never Committed Ritual Murders," *Jerusalem Post,* 11 February 2007, online edition, 21 March 2007.

4. See my discussion of Luzzatto's commentary below. Although Toaff disputed characterizations of his work in the media as extreme and misleading, he does not appear to have disapproved of Luzzatto's review, describing it as "faithful." Aldo Cazzullo, "Il dolore di Ariel Toaff: mio padre usato contro di me" *Corriere della Sera,* 8 February 2007, 25. For Luzzatto's initial review, see Luzzatto, "Quelle Pasque di Sangue: Il fondamentalismo ebraico nelle tenebre del Medioevo," *Corriere della Sera,* 6 February 2007, 41.

5. Lisa Palmieri-Billig, "Israeli Historian Gives Credence to Blood Libel," *Jerusalem Post,* 8 February 2007, 7.

6. In 2008, when the revised second edition of *Pasque di sangue* was released, Toaff revealed in an interview that he had left Bar-Ilan by "mutual agreement" with the university. Michele Smargiassi, "Difendo la mia ricerca," Interview with Ariel Toaff, *La Repubblica,* 21 February 2008, web, *Osservatorio sul pregiudizio antiebraico contemporaneo,* 5 May 2010. Extensive full text catalogs of previous media coverage of the Toaff controversy are available at the *Osservatorio sul pregiudizio antiebraico contemporaneo* site (hereafter *Osservatorio*), http://www .osservatorioantisemitismo.it/, and at *Morashà.it: La porta dell'ebraismo italiano in rete,* http://www.morasha.it/sangue. Early coverage, including important blog commentaries, is also reproduced in the volume *Il caso Toaff dossier: gli antecedenti, la polemica, i blog* (Genoa: Effepi, 2007). For a brief biography of Ariel's famous father, see Adi Schwartz, "The Wayward Son," *Haaretz,* 22 February 2007, online edition, 26 January 2009. Also see Elio Toaff, *Perfidi giudei fratelli maggiori* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1987).

7. Foa, "Riti di sangue e accuse infondate," *La Repubblica,* 8 February 2007, 42; Abraham Foxman, "Professor's Claim of Truth to 'Blood Libel' Plays into Hands of Anti-Semites," 8 February 2007, web, *ADL,* 1 August 2010.

8. Ofri Ilani, "Bar-Ilan Prof. Defiant on Blood Libel Book 'Even if Crucified,'" *Ha'aretz,* 12 February 2007, online edition, 21 June 2007.

9. See, for example, Toaff's interview with Fabio Isman, "Intervista a Ariel

Toaff," *Il Messaggero,* 8 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010. Self-avowed nonreaders who wrote early commentaries include Fiamma Nirenstein, "Se Toaff fa il vampiro con gli ebrei," *Il Giornale,* 10 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010, and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, "The Real Blood of Passover," *Haaretz,* 18 February 2007, online edition, 22 July 2008.

10. Lisa Palmieri-Billig, "Author Admits Blood-libel Claim Was Meant as Provocation," *Jerusalem Post,* 13 February 2007, 4.

11. Matthew Wagner, "'Blood Libel' Author Halts Press," *Jerusalem Post,* 15 February 2007, 4.

12. Agence France Presse, "Israeli Academic Recalls Book after Anti-Semitic Scandal" (Paris: Agence France Presse, 15 February 2007), web, Lexis Nexis, 25 July 2008. These remarks appeared amid some contradictory accounts of Bar-Ilan's response to Toaff's work. See Associated Press Worldstream, "University Satisfied with Professor's Explanation of 'Blood Libel' Book" (New York: Associated Press, 13 February 2007), web, Lexis Nexis, 25 July 2008 and Associated Press Worldstream, "Israeli University Official Rejects Author's Explanations of 'Blood Libel' Book" (New York: Associated Press, 13 February 2007), web, Lexis Nexis, 25 July 2008.

13. Sheera Claire Frenkel, "MKs Urge Prosecution of 'Blood Libel' Book Author," *Jerusalem Post,* 27 February 2007, 4.

14. "non meritava di essere scritto e pubblicato." Martino Cervo, "Il parlamento di Israele condanna il libro di Toaff," *Libero,* 27 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010. Ezra Fleischer makes a very similar remark concerning Yuval's thesis in "Christian-Jewish Relations," 316.

15. At least one MK, Arieh Eldad, of the National Union Party, suggested such a link himself when he remarked that "Toaff was possibly jealous of modern historians who publish modern blood libels against the State of Israel." Eldad is likely referring to the "new historians" and their tendency to publish unflattering portraits of Israel's early years as a nation-state. Ofri Ilani and Adi Schwartz, "MKs Demand the Author of Blood Libel Book Be Prosecuted," *Haaretz,* 26 February 2007, online edition, 21 June 2007.

16. Robert Bonfil, "Repeating the Blood Libel Insults Scholarship," *Jewish Chronicle,* 15 February 2007, online edition, 19 March 2007, and Carlo Ginzburg, "*Pasque di sangue* e sabba, miti ma non riti Ecco l'errore commesso da Ariel Toaff," *Corriere della Sera,* 23 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010.

17. Heil, "A Comment," and Richard Landes, "The Hyper-Critical Jew's Contribution to Antisemitism," *Augean Stables* (blog), 14 February 2007, web, 22 July 2008. Kenneth Stow published two versions of his remarks online. See Stow, "Blood Libel: Ariel Toaff's Perplexing Book," *History News Network,* 19 February 2007, web, 19 March 2007, and "A Book Full of Sound and Fury," *Omicidi rituali: Morte della storia?* ed. Cristiana Facchini, *Storicamente,* n.d., web, 5 May 2010.

18. The exceptions were generally people more concerned about academic freedom of speech than the persuasiveness of Toaff's thesis. Some worried about political pressures and censorship. See discussion below.

19. ". . . una sorta di ritorno ad un'infanzia della storiografia, ad un'età precedente all'acquisto della 'discrezione,' della capacità di discernimento: un ritorno ad una lettura pre-critica delle fonti processuali." Anna Esposito and Dieglo Quaglioni, "Pasque di sangue, le due facce del pregiudizio," *Corriere della Sera,* 11 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010.

20. The passage reads: "Più che mai, dopo la tragedia della Shoah, è comprensibile che l''accusa del sangue' sia divenuta un tabù. . . . Così, al giorno d'oggi, soltanto un gesto di inaudito coraggio intellettuale poteva consentire di riaprire l'intero dossier . . ."

21. See *Il caso Toaff dossier,* particularly for blog entries.

22. E.g., Alessandro Gnocchi, "No, lo scandalo è tappargli la bocca," *Libero,* 23 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010. See the interviews with Fabio Isman, "Intervista ad Ariel Toaff," *Il Messaggero,* 7 February 2007, and "Intervista a Ariel Toaff."

23. See comments in Piero Ignazi, "Dopo il caso Toaff—Chi imbavaglia gli storici," *Il Sole 24 Ore,* 18 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010; Dino Messina, "Caso Toaff, a rischio la libertà di stampa," *Corriere della Sera,* 19 February 2007, 31; and Amadeo de Vincentiis, "Caso Toaff—Nella natura delle accuse il punto dolente della polemica," *Il Manifesto,* 4 March 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010. Messina also suggests the criticism amounts to a "fatwa," as does Ignazi.

24. "*Pasque di sangue,* è stato oggetto di un vero e proprio ostracismo . . . Non ci si è limitati a contestare il metodo, l'uso delle fonti, ma si è scatenata una vera e propria condanna che ha coinvolto strutture, associazioni, istituzioni in una corsa invereconda alla caccia alla strega." Reported in Dino Messina, "Caso Toaff."

25. Cardini also reconsiders his initial support of Toaff's thesis. While still insisting on Toaff's "courage" in broaching such questions ("only a Jewish scholar could be so bold"; "solo uno studioso ebreo avrebbe potuto osare tanto," 17), he now writes that his initial high estimation of the book was misguided, the result of a "too hasty and superficial reading" ("troppo rapida e superficiale lettura," 24). References from Franco Cardini, *Il 'caso Ariel Toaff': Una riconsiderazione* (Milan: Medusa, 2007).

26. Lisa Palmieri-Billig, "Author Admits Blood-libel Claim Was Meant as a Provocation."

27. E.g., Sabina Loriga, "The Controversies Over the Publication of Ariel Toaff's 'Bloody Passovers.'" Trans. George Huppert, *Journal of the Historical Society* 8, no. 4 (2008): 469–502, 476–77. The article first appeared in French. Its rapid translation points to the excitement the controversy aroused. Originally published as "Une vieille affaire? Les 'Pâques de sang' d'Ariel Toaff," *Annales* 63, no. 1 (2008): 143–72.

28. Michael A. Hoffman, "Confirming Judaic Ritual Murder," *Rumor Mill News,* 30 August 2007, web, 23 July 2008.

29. Respectively, Israel Shamir, *The Writings of Israel Shamir* (homepage), and "The Bloody Passovers of Dr. Toaff," n.d., web, 23 July 2008.

30. For a few conservative Catholic responses to Toaff's book, see Martin T. Horvat, "Bloody Passovers Reported by a Jewish Scholar," *Tradition in Action,* 4 October 2007, web, 14 July 2008; and *Torture and Death of Saint Simon of Trent,* n.d., web, 14 July 2008.

31. A separate online introductory note claims the translators worked under pseudonyms. G. M. Lucchese, and Pietro Gianetti, *Blood Passover* [in French and English], 2007, web, 14 July 2010. For the references above: *Revisionist Clarion* 23 (2007) and 24 (2008), web, 14 July 2008.

32. Gian Marco Lucchese and Pietro Gianetti, trans. (pseud.), *Blood Passover,* [in English] orig. Ariel Toaff, 2007, web, 14 July 2008. The authors have since added commentary related to Toaff's second edition.

33. "If these texts disappear from one site, they will reappear someplace else. Just search for it. This is a long-term project" ("Introduction," *Blood Passover,* 2007, web, 14 July 2008). The pirate translation is no longer available in full at the original site, but can still be located elsewhere.

34. For a few examples, see Ubaldo Cordellini, "Il libro di Ariel Toaff fomenta l'odio antiebrei," Interview with Gianni Gentilini, *L'Adige,* 23 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010, and Massimo Introvigne, "Il corvo e la volpe. Ebrei e 'accusa del sangue': Ariel Toaff riscrive il suo libro," *Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni* (CESNUR), 3 March 2008, web, 10 May 2010.

35. "È uno strumento eccezionale: per i prossimi decenni il fatto che proprio un ebreo, un professore con quel nome, abbia 'provato' il blood libel, farà la gioia di tutti gli Ahmadinejad del mondo."

36. "Perché non utilizziamo di questi argomenti storici presentatici su un semplice piatto d'oro?"

37. For examples of Arabic-language television shows that use the blood libel as a plot device, as well as talk show interviews featuring historians who refer to it as a documented fact, see the archives at MEMRI (Middle East Media Research Institute), cited in chapter 3, n. 86. The website radioislam.org refers to the book under the heading "New Jewish Revelations on Jewish Ritual Murder and 'Blood Libel,'" radioslam.org n.d., web, 1 August 2010. The suspect English translation of Toaff's work is featured here, along with a hodgepodge of press coverage and a link to some writings by the antisemite Arnold Leese, described benignly as a "critic of Judaism." (Please note that I refer here to radioislam.org, not radioislam.com.)

38. While I support freedom of inquiry, I am suspicious of the way it has been deployed in the present case to suggest that serious concerns about the book can be dismissed as "mere politics." Robert Bonfil, whose remarks about *Pasque di sangue* are harsh even in a crowded field, is unmoved by defenses based on claims of freedom of inquiry: "Historians can feel free to research, make known their findings and maintain a single-minded commitment to truth only in an atmosphere of intellectual liberty—without fear of censorship or other interference. . . . But how are we to act if a member [of an academic institution] exploits academic immunity by using it as a shield behind which to hide and so guarantee the

publication of his or her work?" Bonfil, "Repeating the Blood Libel Insults Scholarship."

39. This slide from the conditional to the indicative was also noted in reverse. Several reviewers remarked that the greatest change in Toaff's revised second edition was his freer use of conditional verb forms to indicate that his work is a hypothesis or theory rather than a commonly accepted account of events. E.g., Susanna Nirenstein, "Toaff fa una sola concessione l'omicidio rituale è uno stereotipo calunnioso," *La Repubblica,* 21 February 2008, 48. Also see comments in Introvigne, "Il corvo e la volpe."

40. "Magnifico libro di storia, questo è uno studio troppo serio e meritorio perché se ne strillino le qualità come a una bancarella del mercato."

41. Amid the controversy, some criticism was also directed at the author and his publisher *Il Mulino* for efforts to popularize, even sensationalize, reception of the book with an early media campaign and a provocative title.

42. "Sostiene Toaff che dal 1100 al 1500 circa, nell'epoca compresa tra la prima crociata e l'autunno del Medioevo, alcune crocifissioni di «putti» cristiani o forse molte avvennero davvero, salvo dare luogo alla rappresaglia contro intere comunità ebraiche, al massacro punitivo di uomini, donne, bambini. Né a Trento nel 1475, né altrove nell'Europa tardomedievale, gli ebrei furono vittime sempre e comunque innocenti."

43. "In una vasta area geografica di lingua tedesca compresa fra il Reno, il Danubio e l'Adige, una minoranza di ashkenaziti fondamentalisti compì veramente, e più volte, sacrifici umani."

44. "Sangue novello, buono a vendicare i terribili gesti di disperazione—gli infanticidi, i suicidi collettivi—cui gli ebrei dell'area tedesca erano stati troppe volte costretti dall'odiosa pratica dei battesimi forzati, che la progenie d'Israele si vedeva imposti nel nome di Gesù Cristo."

45. "sostiene che l'accusa contro gli ebrei di avere praticato l'omicidio di bambini cristiani a scopo rituale potrebbe non essere stata del tutto falsa." Luzzatto, "Il libro scomunicato prima di essere letto," *Corriere della Sera,* 10 February 2007, 41. Emphasis mine.

46. The full passage reads: "A fronte di questo linciaggio culturale, è auspicabile che qualche voce di solidarietà per Toaff si levi dal mondo degli storici di professione. Non c'è bisogno di essere d'accordo con lui. Basta riconoscere che quello di chi studia il passato è un mestiere libero oltreché serio. E che non sarà un cartello di rabbini (né, in altri contesti, un cartello di vescovi o di imam) a fissare il limite dello storicamente plausibile e dello storicamente aberrante."

47. "Il tentativo di alcuni colleghi dell'università Bar-Ilan di prenderne le difese, salvo arrendersi alle ragioni politiche della situazione israeliana e alle pressioni economiche della diaspora americana. Infine, l'abiura di Ariel Toaff: il libro ritirato dal mercato italiano; i diritti d'autore devoluti alla medesima organizzazione ebraica statunitense, l'Anti-Defamation League, che senza nulla sapere del contenuto del volume lo aveva dichiarato ignobile; le scuse presentate da Toaff agli

ebrei d'Israele e del mondo." Luzzatto, "La storia divisa," *Corriere della Sera,* 23 February 2007, 31.

48. "La morale dell'intera vicenda va tratta da un'intervista rilasciata a la Repubblica dal padre di Ariel, Elio Toaff. L'ex rabbino capo della comunità ebraica di Roma si è pubblicamente compiaciuto dell'abiura del figlio, salutandone il ritorno all'ovile del pensiero unico sulla storia dell'ebraismo. Un pensiero che non ammette neppure la possibilità che gli ebrei abbiano avuto una storia in comune con altri uomini e altre donne, i «gentili»: storia fatta di incontri e di scontri, di convivenza e di intolleranza, di rispetto e di odio. Un pensiero che ha bisogno di considerare gli ebrei come al di fuori dello spazio e del tempo: mai nel bene o nel male attori vivi della storia, ma sempre, comunque, unicamente personaggi disossati, agnelli sacrificali, vittime vittime vittime."

49. See discussion below.

50. "Maestro, siamo proprio sicuri che l'essenza dell'ebraismo si salvaguardi con l'interdetto etico e scientifico?"

51."Egli naturalmente non ci fornisce le prove definitive di un fatto che davvero sarebbe per noi sconvolgente: la realtà di quell'assassinio rituale. Si limita, con limpida prudenza e con esemplare coraggio, a osservare che prove definitive che quella fosse una calunnia ci mancano; e che, in mancanza di esse, . . . nessuno è autorizzato a scartare aprioristicamente la possibilità che le indagini condotte dalle autorità del tempo fossero corrette e che ci si trovi veramente dinanzi a uno spaventoso delitto." Cardini, "Pasque di sangue: Il coraggio della storia," *Avvenire,* 7 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010. My translation is largely based on that of George Huppert, expanded to include a few phrases covered by ellipses in Sabina Loriga, "Controversies," 479.

52. Translation is Huppert's, in Loriga, "Controversies," 480. Original passage in Cardini, "Il coraggio della storia": "Ebbene: è poi così antistorico, così privo di plausibilità, il pensare che, fra tante migliaia di vittime innocenti e silenziose, di tanto in tanto non ci fosse qualcuno che—più feroce, più disperato e meno rassegnato degli altri—concepisse e mettesse in atto qualche atroce disegno di vendetta?"

53. This is a principle he continues to maintain even after he acknowledges the flaws in Toaff's analysis: "the hypothesis that in some cases the accusation of the abduction and murder of Christian children as revenge for the atrocities and humiliations suffered . . . could have corresponded to episodes that really happened, cannot be discarded; and the responsibility of a Jew made insane by the persecutions or subject to criminal, or in any case, pathological inclinations that they had unleashed, ends up in the last analysis becoming a further heavy responsibility for his persecutors" ("l'ipotesi che in qualche caso l'accusa del ratto e dell'assassinio di bambini cristiani come vendetta per le atrocità e le umiliazioni subìte . . . possa aver corrisposto a episodi realmente accaduti, non può essere scartata; e la responsabilità di qualche ebreo reso folle dalle persecuzioni, o soggetto d'inclinazioni criminali o comunque patologiche che esse avevano scatenato,

finisce in ultima analisi per trasformarsi in una pesante responsabilità ulteriore per i suoi persecutori." Cardini, *Il 'Caso Ariel Toaff,'* 18.

54. "Ed è pretestuoso perché rimprovera a Toaff di avere fornito «indizi» anziché «prove»: quasi che lo studioso di crimini commessi sei secoli fa possa muoversi sulla scena del delitto con gli strumenti di un ispettore del Ris, trovando in un angolo la pistola ancora fumante, oppure anche meglio tracce organiche da sottomettere alla prova del Dna . . . Naturalmente, che qualcosa venga confessato sotto tortura non è una prova che quel fatto sia vero. Però, non è neppure una prova che quel fatto sia falso."

55. "escludere a priori che alcuni ebrei fanatici del Medioevo abbiano compiuto gesti omicidi, per il solo motivo che l'hanno confessato sotto tortura, è un ragionamento che dovrebbe offendere qualsiasi intelligenza."

56. Cardini argues that specialists should have waited for the controversy to die down before calmly weighing in on Toaff's book: "In this way we would have defended the image and the serenity of a colleague who may well have made mistakes—everyone commits them—and made some faux pas, but who nevertheless certainly did not merit being so indecorously exposed to public ridicule. . . . Instead, some of us gave in to the enticements of newspaper editorials and TV, others felt unable to remain silent, weighing in *pro reo* or *contra reum;* . . . and finally some wanted, alas, in some fashion and for motives on which it is idle to linger, to participate in the massacre like a game. . . . those who have acted this way have committed an act of disloyalty to a colleague and to their own profession" ("Così avremmo tutelato l'immagine e la serenità di un collega che può anche aver commesso i suoi errori—tutti ne commettiamo—e aver fatto qualche passo falso, ma che non meritava certo tuttavia di esser tanto indecorosamente esposto a pubblico ludibrio . . . Invece, qualcuno di noi ha ceduto alle sollecitazioni redazionali di giornali e Tv; qualcun altro ha ritenuto di non poter tacere, *pro reo* o *contra reum;* . . . qualcuno infine ha ohimè voluto, in qualche modo e per motivi sui quali è ozioso intrattenersi, partecipare al gioco al massacro. . . . coloro che hanno agito in questo modo hanno commesso un atto di slealtà verso un collega e verso la loro stessa professione." Cardini, *Il 'Caso Ariel Toaff'* 11–13.

57. Nonspecialists involved in the Toaff debate often emphasize his voluminous footnotes, which take up roughly a third of the book, as if references alone were a self-evident sign of his *gravitas* as a historian. Yet the quantity of sources does not say anything about the quality of the historian's use of them. E.g., Piero Ignazi, "Dopo il caso Toaff."

58. See, for example, Toaff's 8 February interview with Fabio Isman, "Intervista a Ariel Toaff."

59. "L'omicidio rituale è e rimane uno stereotipo calunnioso."

60. "Tra questo sangue essiccato, utilizzato nel rito, che proveniva da ignoti e interessati 'donatori', vivi e vegeti e per lo più appartenenti a famiglie indigenti, e i presunti omicidi rituali non esisteva rapporto alcuno se non nella mente dei giudici (e non solo di quelli di Trento)."

61. "Chi afferma che Toaff tra la prima e la seconda edizione continua a sostenere le stesse tesi o non ha letto la seconda edizione, o non ha letto la prima, o ancora ha trascurato di confrontarle."

62. "Per deviare i sospetti, gli ebrei decidevano di trasportare il cadavere dalla parte opposta della città, nel bosco di Thorpe che ne lambiva le ultime case. Durante il tragitto a cavallo con l'ingombrante sacco si imbattevano però, loro malgrado, in uno stimato e ricco mercante del luogo, che si recava in chiesa accompagnato da un servo e non aveva difficoltà a rendersi conto di quanto avveniva sotto i suoi occhi. Questi se ne sarebbe ricordato anni più tardi, in punto di morte, e ne avrebbe fatta confessione a un prete, divenuto poi prezioso informatore del solerte e instancabile Tommaso di Monmouth. Infine il corpo del giovane William veniva nascosto dagli ebrei tra gli arbusti di Thorpe."

63. In the passage just cited, Toaff relies mostly on the imperfect indicative, sometimes described as the narrative imperfect, a tense often used in storytelling and journalism. This is one aspect of the book's novelistic style, a style many critics found appalling in light of his handling of evidence.

64. "In seguito, con la collaborazione della moglie e del figlio, sarebbe passato al sequestro di un altro infante, di nome Adam, che torturato, mutilato (forse sottoposto alla circoncisione) e crocifisso, sarebbe finito infilato a uno spiedo come un agnello e arrostito alla fiamma. Moglie e figlio di Samuele si sarebbero poi pentiti, esprimendo l'intenzione di bagnarsi nelle acque battesimali, ma a questo punto il perfido e criminale ebreo avrebbe ucciso anche loro."

65. Robert Stacey, "From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration: Jews and the Body of Christ," *Jewish History* 12, no. 1 (1998): 11–28; 19. For a Latin transcript of the story, see Christoph Cluse, "'Fabula Ineptissima:' Die Ritualmordlegende um Adam von Bristol," *Ashkenas* 5 (1995): 293–330.

66. "Come si vede, talvolta la psicosi popolare dell'omicidio rituale faceva venire la traveggole a chi si trovava immerso in paure irrazionali. E ciò indipendentemente dal fatto che talvolta queste paure potessero avere una qualche rispondenza nella triste realtà dei deliri criminali di individui obnubilati da fobie e psicosi di carattere religioso, trasferite sul piano operativo."

67. The second cited passage follows directly after the first: ". . . i tormenti patiti dagli ebrei, nel corpo e nell'anima, potevano trovare sicura guarigione soltanto grazie alla benefica assunzione di sangue cristiano. Liquido o in polvere, essiccato o in grumi, fresco o bollito, il sangue, liquido magico dal fascino ambiguo e misterioso, faceva sentire la propria presenza prepotente nelle storie dei sacrifici d'infanti, nelle cui pieghe si era celato, forse con minor successo di quanto si pensi, fino ad allora."

68. "L'uso del sangue d'infante cristiano nella celebrazione della Pasqua ebraica era apparentemente oggetto di una normativa minuziosa, per lo meno a quanto risulta dalle deposizioni di tutti gli imputati ai processi di Trento."

69. For Divina, see Epilogue in Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1425,* 133–35, and Stow, 95–96.

70. "Occorre una certa cautela critica nel vagliare le deposizioni estorte con la tortura o rilasciate da convertiti, persone dalle quali si pretendevano sempre nuove prove di fedeltà, e che si vedono costrette, sotto pressioni psicologiche fortissime, a rinnegare in modo plateale e irreversibile la loro precedente identità religiosa e sociale. Toaff è perfettamente consapevole di tutti questi problemi, più volte richiamati nel libro, ma poi, al momento di confrontarsi con le fonti, pare che se ne dimentichi." Roni Weinstein, "Un'occasione perduta," *Omicidi rituali,* web.

71. "Non è un caso, e si può dimostrare, che tutte le informazioni curiose e anedottiche sui personaggi (come vestivano, il colore dei capelli, strane idiosincrasie), quelle che rendono suggestivo il racconto, le storie di cospirazioni o dettagli della quotidianità, provengano da fonti agiografiche, e cioè dalle informazioni raccolte nella prima metà del Settecento o anche nel primo Novecento per consolidare il culto del beato Simonino." Cristiana Facchini, "Il fascino indiscreto del rito," *Omicidi rituali,* web.

72. "Ed è a questo punto che dobbiamo chiederci se le confessioni degli imputati siano resoconti puntuali di eventi effettivamente accaduti o di credenze, da inquadrarsi in contesti simbolici, mitici e magici da ricostruire. Costituiscono queste soltanto il riflesso delle credenze dei giudici, con le loro paure e ossessioni, del clero che li affiancava, delle classi inferiori o degli imputati stessi? . . . Dovremo quindi indagare sugli atteggiamenti mentali delle vittime dell'accusa di sacrificio rituale."

73. "gli ebrei sottoposti a tortura confessavano quello che i giudici cercavano, ossia il racconto degli omicidi rituali: tra le aspettative dei giudici e le risposte degli imputati non c'era, su questo punto, divergenza alcuna. Ma quei racconti venivano inseriti in descrizioni di cerimonie familiari agli imputati come, prevedibilmente, la Pasqua ebraica."

74. Ruggero Taradel, "L'accusa del sangue tra storia e leggenda: Riflessioni sul caso Toaff," *Morashà.it,* 2007, web, 10 May 2010.

75. Prosperi remarks, "Il modo di procedere del libro è come un gioco a carte truccate." Adriano Prosperi, "E l'ebreo torturato confessa," *La Repubblica,* 10 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010. Alberto Cavaglion compares Toaff to a bad card player: "E' il giocatore d'azzardo che rilancia senza avere buone carte in mano." Cavaglion, "Iniziato male, finito peggio," *Lo Straniero,* 6 March 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010.

76. "In sostanza, se gli ebrei confessano, e se gli ebrei nella storia sono attori, e non oggetti passivi, allora dobbiamo cercare il vero che c'è nelle loro confessioni. Di qui, parte il percorso di Toaff, volto ad 'indagare sull'eventuale presenza di credenze ebraiche negli omicidi rituali, legati alla celebrazione della Pasqua.'" Anna Foa, "I pericoli di un metodo a-logico," *Omicidi rituali,* web.

77. A few academic critics pointed out that even though such sources might converge in their accounts of particular events, the clear presuppositions guiding their reporting prevent modern interpreters from easily settling questions of fact versus perception. Roni Weinstein accuses Toaff of cutting the "Gordian knot" of testimony with a sword. See Weinstein, "Un'occasione perduta."

78. "Abbiamo la netta impressione che in sostanza numerosi siano i propugnatori della tesi tranquillizzante secondo cui non si sbaglia ammettendo la realtà di accuse giudicate nobilitanti . . . ma si commette un grave errore avvalorando anche minimamente imputazioni che oggi ci paiono aberranti . . ."

79. "un'aura di continui ammiccamenti."

80. Daniel Mosseri, "Researched Libels," *Jerusalem Post,* web, Lexis Nexis 19 March 2007.

81. "Quanti italiani riconoscono i dati elementari di quella immagine?" (Facchini "Il fascino"). At least one newspaper reported Toaff's claim that "the book's title and cover were chosen without his input and over his protests." Toaff's academic critics do not appear to have taken this disclaimer seriously. The second edition of the book changed the image, but not the title. Adi Schwartz, "Toaff Retracts Claim That Jews Killed Christians for Passover," *Haaretz,* 26 February 2007, online edition, 7 August 2010.

82. For the speculation about Toaff's teaching institution, see Kenneth Stow's remarks in Alessendra Farkas, "Gli storici: 'È un'antica impostura riesumata—Quei documenti erano noti e non attendibili,'" *Corriere della Sera,* 13 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010, and Giorgio Israel, "Il Libro Toaff è stato disinnescato. Ma quanto fango è stato smosso," *Tempi,* 22 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010.

83. Cavaglion, "Iniziato male, finito peggio"; Alberto Burgio, "La vita al prezzo dell'adesione a verità imposte," Interview with Giacomo Todeschini, *Il Manifesto,* 14 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010; Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, "Un libro scomodo," *Morashà.it,* 2007, web, 10 May 2010.

84. "La mossa più brutta . . . è quando Prosperi fa pesare sul suo avversario il tradimento contro il padre. Scrive: 'L'ipotesi . . . viene avanzata da uno storico che si chiama Toaff.' Come dire: con quel nome non si può, tu sporchi tuo padre, ne usi la potenza spirituale per offendere l'ebraismo cui ha dedicato la vita" [Dreyfus], "Quella censura sui presunti vampiri ebrei," *Libero,* 11 February 2007, web, *Osservatorio,* 5 May 2010.

85. "non l'ho coinvolto nelle mie ricerche proprio per non creargli problemi: sarebbe stato considerato corresponsabile. E se anche gliene avessi parlato, oggi lo negherei, per lo stesso motivo."

86. "Una setta oltranzista, tedesca, che agisce al di là delle Alpi e al di qua, a Trento. Si potrebbero chiamare Cannaìn, 'i gelosi,' osservanti e ultraortodossi. Gente che temeva si sapesse ciò che stava facendo, perché era certa che i capi delle comunità ashkenazite li avrebbero denunciati . . . Si tratta di pochi estremisti, che iniziano così la vendetta, tra il 1100 e il 1500."

87. "Va da sé che i cristiani non si ponevano affatto questo problema quando si trattava di ebrei italiani, sefarditi o orientali, che costituivano la stragrande maggioranza del mondo ebraico medievale, che era completamente all'oscuro del rituale delle maledizioni anticristiane con la sua cruenta simbologia."

88. Greilsammer also comments on the resentment inspired among certain

secular Israelis by coercive aspects of religious nationalism (508). Massimo Introvigne remarks, "Maybe this book does not say a lot about the accusation of ritual murder, but it says a whole lot about the climate in certain Israeli universities, torn between religious and secular factions. For certain Christians, medieval as well as modern, 'the other,' suspected of drinking blood, was the Jew. For some enlightened and secular Jews in Israel today, 'the other' is the ultra-orthodox Jew, wearing black, refusing military service and thanks to demography weighing more and more heavily in electoral politics. . . . It is the fear of the ultra-orthodox Jews (whose behavior is not always pleasant) that constitutes the second demographic bomb after that of the Arab-Islamic population, both menacing Israeli secular Zionism—this may explain how, in Israel, someone could look in old closets for the cadaver of the blood libel." Trans. by Georges Huppert in Loriga, "Controversies," 500, n. 57. For the Italian, see Introvigne, "Il Caso Toaff: Torna l'accusa del sangue contro gli ebrei," *CESNUR* Februrary 2007, web, 10 May 2010.

89. "Un ebraismo virtuale e oleografica, fatto di vittime invertebrate e di martiri innocenti, languido e molliccio, si è sostituito all'immagine vera e reale di un popolo di gente in carne e ossa, che tra mille contraddizioni ed errori, tra eroismi e viltà, ha saputo sopravvivere lasciando traccia indelebile di sé nella storia." *Ebraismo virtuale* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2008), 10.

90. "La creazione e la messa in moto della macchina artificiale, intesa a dar vita e credibilità a un ebraismo virtuale, sempre probo, razionale e onesto, popolato da vittime mansuete e indifese, per comprendere i cui comportamenti basta aprire la Bibbia e leggere i Dieci Comandamenti, è invece un'offesa alla verità e al buon senso."

91. "Questo fenomeno, che considero controproducente alla vera immagine degli ebrei e dell'ebraismo, con le loro differenze e contraddizioni, addormenta ogni discussione, cancella ogni possibilità di confronto sui temi reali e in ultima analisi non può che dar forza a vecchie e nuove manifestazioni di antisemitismo. Il ricordo e la memoria non possono servire da scusa e pretesto per non guardare al futuro, con coraggio, fiducia e speranza, imparando dagli errori del passato e correggendo senza timori e timidezze quelli del presente."

92. "Ogni scelta politica dei governanti israeliani diviene la loro scelta, automatica ed entusiasta, e tutti i partiti politici di Israele, in maniera intercambiabile, si trasformano nel loro partito. Ma con una netta preferenza per la destra nazionalista e fondamentalista, piagnucolosa e bellicosa."

93. "Questo complesso di colpa, che richiede ammende compensative, magari annaffiate da elargizioni in denaro, benefiche e tutt'altro che disinteressate, li mette con il cuore in pace, ma d'altra parte li rende vulnerabili e ossessionati dalla paura dell'antisemitismo, sempre in agguato e pronto a profittare dell'accusa, difficilmente contestabile, della doppia lealtà (allo Stato di cui si è cittadini e a Israele) per rispolverare e dare credibilità ai *Protocolli dei savi anziani di Sion.*"

94. See Palmieri-Billig, "Jews Never Committed Ritual Murders," where Toaff is reported to say, "Perhaps my book should have been aimed at an Israeli

public where there is less risk of misunderstandings and of a misuse of my findings."

95. "Da tempo in Israele un mondo intellettuale vivace e innovatore, che non ha paura di guardarsi dentro, ha invece adottato una coscienza pluralistica e conflittuale, che mette continuamente in discussione i miti fondatori sia dell'ebraismo che dello Stato di Israele. Anima quindi un dibattito politico e ideologico franco, aperto e critico in una società che, tra mille errori e contraddizioni, lotta per la propria esistenza e sopravvivenza, ma che non cresce sotto la cappa minacciosa e ossessionante dell'antisemitismo."

96. "Israele rimane pur sempre l'unica arena, libera e democratica, dove si combatte la battaglia per il futuro del popolo ebraico."

97. See "Deep Enmity," 305.

98. "Talvolta era il singolo a farsi giustizia da solo, non sempre risparmiando gli innocenti. Altre volte erano frange estreme all'interno della comunità ebraica che decidevano di non limitarsi all'insulto verbale, al dileggio e agli anatemi liturgici per colpire il nemico e reagire ai soprusi, ma passavano alle vie di fatto, pur ben consapevoli di come sarebbe finito l'impari scontro. Talvolta per rendere più digeribili le loro azioni, che spesso non apparivano adatte a stomaci delicati, le ancoravano a una nuova e presunta ritualità o riesumavano usanze antiche dalla tradizione, stravolgendone modi e significati. Il fine giustificava i mezzi, anche se spesso pochi ne erano consapevoli o partecipi."

99. "Per lunghi mesi infatti l'«esecuzione» di Rabin era stata preparata, prevista e giustificata apertamente dai circoli rabbinici fondamentalisti più estremi, in particolare quelli che ancora oggi forniscono il sostrato ideologico e «biblico» a supporto delle istanze nazionaliste ed espansioniste dei coloni. Non era mancato chi, tra questi rabbini, non aveva esitato a inserire la condanna a morte di Rabin all'interno di un presunto rito talmudico, riesumato alla bisogna, dove il reo di tradimento doveva essere inflessibilmente e crudelmente giustiziato."

100. "allora come oggi, erano i rabbini più estremisti a incitare alla violenza, a propagandarla con motivazioni pseudoreligiose o a parteciparvi in prima persona."

101. See Franco Cardini, "'*Ebraismo virtuale*' di Ariel Toaff," *Duemila ragioni per cambiare* (blog), 21 September 2008, web, 15 July 2010.

102. Weinstein, like some other critics, points to recent work by Piero Camporesi as a model. Camporesi, *Juice of Life: The Symbolic and Magic Significance of Blood,* trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: Continuum, 1995; orig. 1984). Such a project would also have complemented work by David Biale (*Blood and Belief*) and extended Strack's research from the early twentieth century on Christian blood superstitions (*Jew and Human Sacrifice*).

103. See discussion in Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron,* 274–306 and passim.

104. See the significant analysis of this concept in Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

105. Bernard Lazare, *Antisemitism: Its History and Causes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

106. Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (New York: Verso Books, 2000).

107. Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People,* trans.Yael Lotan (New York: Verso, 2009).

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