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DENISE L. DESPRES

Mary of the Eucharist:
Cultic Anti-Judaism in Some Fourteenth-Century
English Devotional Manuscripts

"For mere amusement, too, the miracle is worth reading of the little Jew child who
ignorantly joined in the Christian communion, and was thrown into a furnace by
his father in consequence ... ."
Henry Adams, Mont-Saint-Michel & Chartres (1913).

Few scholars today would read Adams' gentlemanly tour of twelfth-century
French culture without skepticism, yet his view of the Virgin as a
lovely, imperious, and somewhat irrational character pervades twentieth-
century criticism of the medieval "Miracles of the Virgin," subordinating
this influential literary genre primarily to concerns of source and manu-
script transmission or liturgical symbolism1. In her recent discussion of
female book ownership as evidenced by the Marian miracles in the Ver-
non manuscript, for example, (Oxford Bodleian Library Ms. Eng. Poet
a.1. c. 1390), Carol Meale asserts "There is little obvious potential for
Mary's role as exemplary woman to be exploited within the framework
of these miraculous stories ... What is clear, however, is that the devo-
tional needs which were satisfied by the miracles can have been of
high order."2 Appalled by the violence and intolerance in the mariales
composed by Churchmen like Gautier de Coincy, Caesarius of Heister-
bach, and John of Garland, many scholars have rejected the notion that
the Virgin in the stories is exemplary. Their task is to negotiate the
chasms between contemporary ideology and evidence of medieval belief;

1 See R. W. Southern, "The English Origins of the 'Miracles of the Virgin',' Medieval
and Renaissance Studies 4 (1958): 176 – 216. Southern's article remains the most
plausible explanation of the dissemination of the mariales, but it is typical of most
scholarship in its lack of concern for the cultural influence of the mariales.
Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1990), p. 135. Meale is undecided about the extent of
the influence of Marian miracles on a literate female audience, despite "evidence
both art historical and literary to suggest that in the later medieval period women
took a special interest in the legends connected with Mary" (p. 131).
they are deeply offended by the Virgin's irrational and persecuting behaviour in the miracles and mystified by a half-alien culture that not only comprehended her actions, but also felt comforted by them. It is easier to dismiss the seriousness of Marian legends — to say they satisfy needs of no high order — than to respond to the provocative inquiry: What is exemplary about Mary's behaviour in popular and long-lived stories like "The Jew of Bourges"? Is admiration for Mary's ability to control the elements, to protect a Jewish youth from the flames, sufficient explanation for the wide dissemination of such stories in fourteenth-century English manuscripts, particularly manuscripts produced for or owned by women? If so, then I would agree that this type of devotion is less symbolically and theologically charged than other forms of Marian devotion. Manuscript evidence, however, suggests that, when viewed in the context of late-medieval cultic anti-Judaism, such stories can provide us with a profound understanding of Mary's exemplary nature as healer of the flesh and thus of the Christian community.

In this essay, I will explore the image of the "child in the oven" in a tradition of Eucharistic iconography prevalent in fourteenth-century English devotional manuscripts. I will argue that Marian miracles like "The Jew of Bourges" meshed images of bodily and communal purity, feeding, transubstantiation, and sacrifice that held a particular appeal for late medieval women, for these were "feminized" forms of devotional traditions throughout Europe. Finally, I hope to show that previous critical assumptions that anti-Judaic sentiments "infected" the Cult of the Virgin are problematic; it is far more likely, given the social program of the Fourth Lateran Council, that anti-Judaism is integral to the development of a working iconography of late-medieval Marian devotion. The powerful women whose Books of Hours included anti-Judaic Marian miracles did not meditate on them for amusement; rather, stories like "The Jew of Bourges" have been collected and confirmed the sacred mystery of transubstantiation through a tangible, sensuous, and feminized iconography.

While I cannot review the entire history of Marian miracles in England, there are a few pertinent facts that contextualize a discussion of anti-Judaic miracles in fourteenth-century English devotional manuscripts. The general collections of Marian miracles, collections having an existence independent of particular Marian shrines, commonly feature anti-Judaic tales, many of which circulated independently centuries before the great collections were compiled in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. "The Jew of Bourges" was one of the tales that existed independently, having been told in the late sixth century by Evagrius Scholasticus and Gregory of Tours. Undoubtedly the antagonism between Mary and the Jews has its origins in the early, rather than late Middle Ages. "The Jew of Bourges," in fact, appears in the earliest English mariæ, collections that most likely originated as one work compiled between 1100 and 1140 by Anselm the Younger that became the foundation of the majority of later collections. Discrete anti-Judaic tales, however, assume a new force in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century collections when anti-Judaism becomes a commonplace element of the genre. A tale like "The Jew of Bourges" relates a complex social and theological truth when it is paired with "The Chorister," an analogue of Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale," in the Vernon manuscript, or told as an exemplum on the feastday of the Assump-

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7 Southern, p. 177.

8 R. W. Frank, p. 179. Robert Worth Frank estimates that there are "eighteen miracles in which Jewish characters appear. It is a rare collection of any size that does not have several such tales, and some of them are among the miracles most frequently narrated. At a rough estimate they comprise 7.5 percent of the common stock of miracles, and they are told again and again and again."
tion, as in Jacobus de Voragine's collection. I suspect that The Jew of Bourges was particularly popular because its narrative could be adapted to a new iconographic program with profound social and theological implications.

I. The Body and the Virgin: Millenarian Concerns

As I have argued elsewhere, cultic anti-Judaism is the consequence of a changing notion of the place of Jews in Medieval Christian eschatology that is formally articulated in the anti-Jewish legislation of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. An image of community emerged from these deliberations that underlined Augustine's policy of toleration of the Jews and simultaneously embraced what Mary Douglas has termed in anthropological theory "bodily theocracy" – an image of the closed or purified body as community. Douglas's claim, that "the human body is always treated as an image of society," correlating individual, social, and cosmological experience, has provided social and literary historians with a cogent heuristic to probe the cultural implications of medieval communitas. The thirteenth-century meshing of the Pauline symbol of the body as community and the sacramental realization of this reality in the elevation and literal consumption of the body of Christ has been the focus of scholarship on several aspects of medieval ritual life, including pilgrimage, Corpus Christi drama, feast day processions, and spatial conceptualization in urban development.

Scholars by no means agree upon the corporate nature of medieval communitas or the degree to which eucharistic and other ritual symbols were polysemous; nonetheless, Douglas's discussion of ritual pollution, based upon a conceptualization of the closed body as reflective of a closed society, produces remarkable insights when applied to local contexts. An age of "classification," the twelfth and thirteenth centuries laid the theological groundwork for those forms of late medieval devotion most anti-Judaic – Marian and Eucharistic devotion – which were linked in their concern for the physical integrity of the individual and social body. As Douglas reminds us, it is impossible to produce rigorous bodily control, like that required by the medieval penitentials, without "corresponding social forms ... the same drive that seeks harmoniously to relate experiences of the physical and social, must affect ideology." Viewed from the start as aliens and associated with contemporary heresy, the Jews were "naturally" excluded from the corpus mysticum. But there are other kinds of oppression that result from this notion of the pure body as society. It was the hope of all medieval Christians to be bodily resurrected at the end of time, when the ultimate union of all Christians would take place. This very physical concept of the Church triumphant provided the Church militant with an ordering principle to be realized, so

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11 Natural Symbols, p. 99.
12 All of these studies acknowledge the profound influence of Henri De Lubac's Corpus Mysticum, L'Eucharistie et L'Eglise Au Moyen Age, second rev. edn. (Paris, 1949). See especially Chapter IV "Corps sacramentiel et corps ecclésial," and Chapter V, "L'Eglise, corps mystique." The other seminal work is Ernst H. Kantorowicz's The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology (Princeton, 1957), see especially Chapter V, part I, "Corpus Ecclesiae mysticam."
15 Natural Symbols, p. 99.
far as possible, in the present. The sign for this final regeneration in Augustinian eschatology was, of course, the conversion of the Jews.

Mary’s bodily incorruptibility was not only a sign and a promise of this ultimate triumph of sacramental truth, but also a literal, bodily link between the two ages. For this reason, visions of Mary have always been distinctive in Christian belief from other manifestations of saints. Visions of Mary were tangible, for Mary continues to connect earth and heaven in a "bodily" or "visible" way. Her body was of intense concern to theologians because it held the ultimate truths of Christ’s own humanity and reaffirmed the dignity of the body; thus, she was the first exemplar of human incorruptibility. Mary’s bodily assumption was celebrated from the beginning of the sixth century, and in England, with certainty, from the second half of the eighth century. The Feast of the Assumption reminded medieval Christians that they could look forward to the resurrection of the body, that human experience is bodily experience, sanctified by the Incarnation in the tabernacle of Mary’s womb. Gail McMurray Gibson’s discussion of late medieval drama and the processional sculpture of the church of St. Mary of the Assumption in Bury St. Edmund’s proves how integral this feast day was to any notion of community. As proud parishoners gazed up to the hammerbeam roof of Bury St. Mary (1445), they witnessed the procession of Angels in an eternal Mass; Mary, the bride, bears a crown to her mystic marriage.

While feminist scholarship has tended to discount the notion that Mary could be exemplary for women — a persuasive argument — it has ignored the material evidence suggesting that medieval Catholics trusted in Mary’s sense of their own bodily dignity, despite the central difference posed by her immaculate nature. Pilgrims throughout Europe prayed to Mary that their wounded and severed flesh might be healed. The votive images they had made to signify their petitions or materialize their thanks often took the form of body parts. Although the majority found are wax or metal feet and hands, votive objects have also been discovered in the shape of fingers, breasts, eyes, and noses. Apparently, medieval pilgrims felt that, rather than disdaining their bodily mutilations, infections, and dismemberments, Mary, in her compassion, would enable them to transcend fully into their bodily natures, not only at the Resurrection but here and now. In his study of ex votos, David Freedberg produces a rather shocking image that instructs modern scholars in medieval sensibilities: in the Sala dos Milagros at Salvador Bahia, Brazil, wax limbs hang suspended in gratitude for bodily healing. Like the fragments of the Host that not only signified, but were, the Real Presence wholly and fully, these limbs witness a faith in the inevitability of bodily wholeness.

Mary’s miracles resound this theme of bodily seamlessness; while the rationale for their repetition and illustration may seem odd to us, it made perfect sense to a late medieval audience. Johannes Herolt’s fifteenth-century collection of Marian miracles contains many stories of bodily restorations; severed heads are rejoined to the bodies of devout robbers; ploughmen who desecrate the Virgin’s feast day by working are struck by lightning, but she mercifully restores “the thigh, the shin, and the foot, and in a moment made him whole.” The Middle English Vernon manuscripts contain an analogue of Chaucer’s “Priest’s Tale,” in which the throat of a small boy murdered by the Jews is severed and miraculously healed; a story and illustration of an amputated foot restored by the Virgin; and the “Jew of Bourges.” In fact, bodily healing is a predominant theme in all of the prominent fourteenth-century English manuscripts I shall discuss presently; but in all it coincides, through the story of The Jew of Bourges, with a virulent anti-Judaism. The “positional meaning” of the “symbol clusters” that illustrate this cultic anti-Judaism, or where

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22 Johannes Herolt, Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, trans. C. C. Swinton (London, 1928), Chapter XXXV.
they appear in a manuscript context, has been largely ignored\textsuperscript{23}. The remainder of this essay will examine this symbol cluster in several fourteenth-century English manuscripts to show how cultic anti-Judaism is central to the iconography of Marian healing, particularly in what we may regard as women's manuscripts\textsuperscript{24}.

II. Cultic Anti-Judaism in Fourteenth-Century Books of Hours

Ample evidence exists of a tradition of radical anti-Judaic illustrations in English art, particularly in the decades preceding the expulsion of the Jews in 1290. The Fourth Lateran laws requiring Jews to distinguish themselves from Christians were rigorously enforced in English communities; indeed, they were supplemented by additional visual markers such as a piece of white cloth or parchment in the shape of the tabula, indicative of the Ten Commandments or Old Law\textsuperscript{25}. It is important to remem-

\textsuperscript{23} Victor and Edith Turner, \textit{Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture}, p. 146. These are useful terms for my purposes. "The operational meaning concerns not what people say about a symbol but how they act with reference to it, who so acts, and the social structural context of such action - we also include here the symbol's 'social history'; that is, the stereotyped memories of great events with which the symbol has been connected. Symbols also have a positional meaning, for they are rarely isolated units; they enter into relations with other symbol clusters and systems of signifiers and signifieds."

\textsuperscript{24} Carol Meale has rightly claimed that we must use caution in what we term a "woman's manuscript." It is difficult to determine whether a manuscript was created for a woman, and illustrators often merely adapted their exemplar's program of illustration. Women inherited their father's books as often as they willed books to other women. Nonetheless, I hope to connect feminized forms of devotion with the Marian miracles included in these manuscripts.

\textsuperscript{25} See Michael Camille, "The Jew as Image, Iconoclast, and Idolater," in \textit{The Gothic Idol} (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 180 – 194. Camille notes that Jews were made image and spectacle by this significations, which was frequently reinterpreted and reinforced. The Council of Oxford in 1222, for example, decreed that the sign should be of a different color than the garment to make it visually distinct, and its size was increased, (as it was again in 1275 by Edward I), p. 182. Also see Cecil Roth, \textit{A History of the Jews in England} (Oxford, 1964), pp. 95 – 96: "All Jews of either sex should wear on the breast a badge two fingers wide and four long, of a different colour from the rest of the garment." Roth notes that Henry III renewed this clause in 1253, "ordering the tabula to be borne in a prominent position." Edward I stipulated that the cloth be of yellow taffeta, six fingers long, and worn over the heart by every Jew over seven years of age. The requirement was extended to women in 1279 and all were repeated as ecclesiastical injunctions by the Synod of Exeter in 1289.


\textsuperscript{29} Donovan, p. 19.
Brailes manuscript, "supplemented pictorially by a meditative devotion to the Passion of Christ," will appear familiar to scholars of fourteenth-century lay devotion, but William shaped this book without an exemplar. There are only eight other English Books of Hours datable to the thirteenth century, and William de Brailes's is the earliest.

The importance of Marian miracles, disseminated widely in this century through Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus miraculorum* (1223–1224), and Gautier de Coincy’s *Miracles of the Virgin* (c. 1236), in private devotion is evidenced by the story of Theophilus threaded throughout Susanna’s book. The story was familiar enough to Susanna that it is told through illustration only, with brief identifying captions. Scenes from the miracle appear on folios 32r–40v. Only some versions of the story, such as Jacobus de Voragine’s rendition (c. 1228–1298) in *The Golden Legend*, insist that Theophilus sold his soul to the devil summoned by a Jewish sorcerer; the initial to the Prime of the Virgin, Psalm 2 (f. 34v) in the de Brailes Hours deletes the middle man, and Theophilus kneels before the devil, who holds a formal charter. While the de Brailes Hours includes an image of the wandering Jew (f. 43r, Sext of the Virgin) and the disbelieving Jews struck blind at the burial of the Virgin (f. 61v, Compline of the Virgin, Psalm 128) in its illustrative program, none of these traditionally exegetical images shows the Jews as grotesque or diabolical. By the fourteenth century, however, Marian miracles with an anti-Judaic cast appear frequently in English Books of Hours; their accompanying illustrations shed light on the manner in which symbol clusters, sometimes enigmatic to a modern eye, affirm both medieval Catholic doctrine and attendant cultural prejudices. While the "typology" of a millennial anti-Judaism may not be as overt in these devotional illustrations as in the thirteenth-century Apocalypse manuscripts noted above, its subtle presence argues the degree to which an anti-Jewish mythology became central to late medieval sacramentalism. Despite the expulsion and thus the absence of actual Jews, the representation of Jews as host desecrators, enemies of the Virgin, and perpetrators of ritual murder survive in the elegant illustrations of several important English manuscripts. A selective list includes

Queen Mary Psalter (London, British Library Ms. Royal 2B VII, 1310 – 20)

The Hours of Mary de Bohun (Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek Ms. Thott 547,4, 1380 – 1394).


Carew-Poyntz Hours (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum Ms. 48).


The Vernon Manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library Ms. Eng. poet a.1, c. 1390).

This list is by no means comprehensive, and the term "devotional manuscript" I have used includes both Books of Hours and a "coucher" manuscript like the Vernon, which is a virtual compendium of late medieval devotional works. Other equally interesting manuscripts, such as the Smithfield Decretals (London, British Library Ms. Royal 10 E IV, 1330 – 1340) also contain an illustration of *The Jew of Bourges*. My concern, however, must be limited here to manuscripts that bear evidence of sustained Marian devotion.

Why the story of *The Jew of Bourges* should merit inclusion, either as text or illustration, in all of these manuscripts may seem puzzling. The story of the Jewish boy who innocently follows his Christian friends to receive the Eucharist, thereby enraging his father, is less sensational than other popular Marian miracles, which feature as wide a range of human depravity as a modern audience could desire. The pathos of the boy’s mother who helplessly watches her son cast into the oven by her husband, only to be saved by the Virgin Mary, is appealing, but pathos is central to nearly all of the Virgin’s miracles. I would suggest that the tale, as is made evident through its illustrations, had a sacramental message that deeply moved its audience and provided the audience with a crucial meditative program. The Vernon manuscript includes a rather

30 Donovan, p. 25.

detailed rendition of the tale, accompanied by an illustration that associates it with Easter; Jacobus de Voragine relates the tale in The Golden Legend on the Feast of the Assumption, but he notes that the events took place on Easter day in Bourges in the year 527. The link between the feast day of the Assumption and Easter points to the Eucharistic imagery at the heart of the tale in fourteenth-century devotional manuscripts.

In many of the illustrations the Jewish father is grotesque and demonized, attesting to the thorough dissemination of anti-Jewish stories in sermon exempla, drama, and other forms of ideological persuasion. But the action of casting the son into the oven, where he is protected by the Virgin from the flames, must be explored in the larger context of late-medieval eucharistic iconography. This context will enable us to understand the eucharistic thrust of cultic anti-Judaism, and how Mary’s inviolable body, depicted so often in late medieval art as the subject of Jewish mockery and outrage, provides an image of a pure society. Through her virginity and assumption, Mary "expresses the particular interpretation of wholeness of the Catholic Church, and reflects two of its most characteristic aspects: its historical fear of contamination by outside influence, and its repugnance to change."

Eucharistic miracle stories in which the host appears as a child are found in Western Europe long before papal promulgation of the doctrine of transubstantiation; by the fourteenth century, however, the images of the bleeding-child-as-host and the child-as-host become pervasive in English manuscript illustration and vernacular literature. So numerous are the examples, both visual and literary, that the image of the child Jesus may be assumed a Eucharistic one. I would suggest the cumulative symbolism, the "symbol cluster" in the Jew of Bourges illustrations, points to a eucharistic meaning. Audiences of medieval drama, sermon exempla, lyrics, and saint’s lives were accustomed to the notion that the child sacrificed was a subtle image of the Real Presence in its most pathetic and thus provocative guise. While the image of a host transformed into a bleeding child may seem horrific to a modern audience, it evoked a deep sense of compassion and contrition in medieval meditation; and since contrition and sorrow were particularly appropriate in preparation for the Sacrament of Penance and yearly reception of the Eucharist, as outlined in the Fourth Lateran Council’s pastoral guide, Omnium utriusque sexus, these stories are most frequently associated with Easter.

While there are scores of examples of this image in late Middle English literature and art, several exist in the manuscripts under discussion apart from the suffering child in The Jew of Burges. In the Queen Mary’s Psalter, for example, an illumination of the Last Supper figures Christ seated and pointing to a small, haloed child who sits upon the Table. Another, more striking, example occurs in the Carew-Poyntz Hours, where one may find an image of the Virgin seated on an altar, holding the Christ child; the child offers a chalice full of hosts – clearly an image of Eucharistic sacrifice. The long exegetical tradition of the child-as-host image identified Old Testament stories as prefiguring the Crucifixion in this typological manner, including the story of Abraham and Isaac, The Sacrifice of The Innocents, as well as the Purification. The last feast day was most explicitly linked to Eucharistic devotion in late medieval drama, where Mary comes forward and places the Christ child on the altar; in plays like the York Presentation, the child is held up as is the


34 Queen Mary’s Psalter: Miniatures and Drawings by an English Artist of the 14th Century Reproduced from Royal Ms. 2B VII in the British Museum, intro. by Sir George Warner (London, 1912), p. 245.

35 Cambridge Fitzwilliam Ms. 48, Carew-Poyntz Hours, folio 86’.


34 For a discussion of the earliest story of the transformation of the host into a child (in response to Jewish disbelief) in the Vitae Patrum, see Dennis Steel Devlin, Corpus Christi: A Study in Eucharistic Theory, Devotion, and Practice, Ph. D. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1975, p. 216. Also see my “Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chau-
host at the moment of the Elevation in the Mass. In the Carew-Poyntz Hours, the initial for the prayer at the Elevation (56") shows a priest at the altar offering up the Host. Below, in a full-length bas de page illustration, four Jews stab a host placed on a sepulchre-like table. Clearly, these images were connected and read through the eucharistic symbol cluster that, until very recently, has been largely ignored.

If the "positional" meaning of the symbol, to use Victor Turner's term, connected the image to other eucharistic signifiers that underscored the link between sacramentality and sacred history, the "operational" meaning, "how they act with reference to it ... [including] the symbol's 'Social history' ... that is, the stereotyped memories of great events with which the symbol has been connected," has deep significance for the history of English anti-Judaism. In a number of child-as-host stories and images, Jews persecute the host as a sign of disbelief, thereby recalling ritual murder discourse and narratives. In fact, images of literalistic Jews tormenting the Host to discover its composition become integral to the campaign for faith and social purity that accompanied the Fourth Lateran legislation. Stories and plays like the Croxton Play of the Sacrament, which presented audiences with an image of Jews tormenting a purchased Host, exposed the laity to the power and danger of Jews conceived as a symbolic presence and a historical reality. As Chaucer's Prioress's Tale attests, late fourteenth-century audiences connected anti-Judaic fiction with "actual" cases of ritual murder, such as that of William of Norwich or Hugh of Lincoln.

Fourteenth-century English audiences could witness such images from an historically unusual perspective, for, having expelled the Jews, they could interpret these signs from the vantage point of wholeness. Having purged England of the Jews, English Christians had asserted the non-Augustian, radical anti-Judaism in literal, as opposed to merely sacramental or sacramental, ways. They had, in a sense, enacted the millenial vision, and, rather than reading such images as warnings of Jewish perfidy, they could read them as justifying purgation and social conformity.

Although it does not exist in one of the manuscripts under discussion, a Middle English sermon exemplum I have explored elsewhere is worth mentioning here because it so clearly demonstrates the operational function of anti-Judaic symbolism in an Easter setting. British Library Manuscript Royal 18 B xiii, a fourteenth-century manuscript, contains an Easter sermon clearly intended for the laity. The exemplum illustrates the sermon's theme of the belief in transubstantiation—an appropriate theme for Easter. The audience for the anti-Jewish exemplum were instructed to link the theme of transubstantiation with the purging and preservation of community through a juxtaposition of sacramental images with those of conspiracy and ritual murder— as exemplified in the elevation illustrations in the Carew-Poyntz Hours.

The exemplum describes how a Jew expects friendship with a Christian in order to obtain a host from the Easter Eucharist. He accepts a promise from his Christian friend to return to him after Mass; when the Christian arrives, the Jew has a great company of Jews awaiting him. They bind his hands and feet, demanding to know where the Host is, but the Christian has, of course, ingested the Host. In a furious attempt to lay their hands on the Eucharist, the Jews cut the Christian in half, probing his intestines and diaphragm for the precious mystery. Then, a bright light blinds them, and a child descends from heaven who repeats the theme of the sermon, "Ego sum panis viiui qui de celo descend. Qui manducat meum panem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in eo." At this point, the body is miraculously healed, the child returns to the form of a Host, and the Jews are converted.

The conspiracy and ritualized murder of the Christian when meshed with the image of the Host-child conjures the full range of anxieties about Jews that circulated in late-medieval anti-Jewish literature—all but the Blood Libel and Well Poisoning myths. The narrative demonstrates clearly how a Middle English audience could read images of the communal body purified through anti-Jewish symbolism. Images that seem absurd to us no doubt evoked reverence in this audience whose faith in

38 Sinanoglu, pp. 501 – 2.
42 P. 65, lines 13 – 19.
transubstantiation was reaffirmed through this symbol cluster. Their very history included tangible proof of such events in the shrines of the English child martyrs supposedly killed by Jews. So influential were these stories that even an ordinary robbery, such as that recorded in the eyre rolls of Norwich, circa 1285, contain the symbol clusters; this particular case alleging the desecration of the Host by Jews in the course of a church robbery.

The institution of the Feast of Corpus Christi, with its focus on communal identity, boundaries, and its enactment of both through processions, compounded the need for literature that, like Easter homilies and exempla, explained the nature of the host to the laity. Gavin Langmuir's theory, that "doubt in Christendom" concerning transubstantiation explains such myths, is convincing; the presence of the Tale of the Bleeding Child in the vernacular manuscript — a tale that explores how a man comes to belief in the Real Presence through a vision of the Christ-child-as-Host dismembered at Mass — deals with a Christian's lack of faith. But another image of the dismembered child occurs in the vernacular manuscript in the context of a Corpus Christi homily, and this image illustrates that the "child-as-Host" image is most salient when the witness of such a miracle is a Jew. In this Corpus Christi exemplum, a Jew, growing impatient for his friend who is attending Mass, enters the Church at the moment of the consecration. At the Elevation of the Host he witnesses the multiplication of the wounded child and the communicants ingesting the children. When he reproaches his friend for his participation in the grisly feast, he is told that he will never see the horrific sight again — if he converts. I contend that the image of the child-as-Host is more powerful, and sinister, in this context because it conjures other associations besides the theological doctrine of the Incarnation; the witness in this narrative is a Jew, and a story connecting Jews and the Host-as-wounded-child not only evokes the central historical event of the Crucifixion but also other stereotyped images in the symbol's social history — all of the subsequent cases of child martyrdom connected with the alien Jew. The Marian miracle of the "Chorister," the child murdered by Jews and thrown into a privy, is also present in the Vernon manuscript and plays into this iconography.

What, then, is the link among the Jew of Bourges, Marian devotion, and the Christ-child-as Host? I agree with Miri Rubin that "so used did the eye become, so trained was the mind, to think of the transubstantiated host as the real Christ, and in one of his suffering persons as a sacrificed child" that the image of a child thrown into the oven by a Jew for receiving the Eucharist would have naturally conjured attendant images of host persecution, ritual murder, and transubstantiation. When we consider the Marian context of this tale, this interpretation seems certain. According to late medieval theologians, and particularly Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, Hebrew burnt offerings prefigured the Eucharist as a sacramental reenactment of the Crucifixion. By the late thirteenth century this exegetical interpretation had influenced the presentation of Old Testament Jews in the highly influential Bible moralisée. Of particular significance for our purposes is the illustration moralizing Leviticus 2:4 (describing the composition of a grain offering baked in an oven): In one medallion, the Jews are depicted placing a large round loaf into the oven; in the medallion below, the artist has rendered a scene of the Annunciation with the angel Gabriel presenting Mary with a small child.

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45 See Camille, pp. 215 – 220.

The "adjacent commentary states that the 'Jews placing unleavened bread into the oven to bake in the fire signifies God placing his son in the virginal womb.' The connection between Hebrew ritual sacrifice and the Eucharist is common in late medieval manuscripts, as is the association between the Virgin and the baker's oven; she is the receptacle for the sacred bread, figuratively as the mother of Christ and often literally as the "Viére Ouvrante," the statues of the Virgin that opened to receive the Eucharist. The notion that Mary's womb was like an oven may seem peculiar to modern audiences, but, given medieval embryology, especially Galen's tradition in which the mother was an oven in which the foetus cooked, there is an odd logic to the image. Medieval women's writings frequently explore the connections between the closed, virginal, purified body and ingestion of the Eucharist as a source of identity and power, and we now recognize that women were largely responsible for the institution and popularization of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Women identified with God's body through the Eucharist, and this identification manifested itself through control over bodily functions and even an outright rejection of earthly food. Images of Mary like that on 86 in the Carew-Poyntz hours, in which Mary sits upon the altar holding the infant Christ with a host, forge powerful associations: Mary is the bearer of the Christ-child-as-sacrifice; she produces from her own womb the food that sustains all Christians, unites them in community, and heals their infirmities. The image of Mary as the earth in which the old sacrifice, literally roasted, is transformed into eucharistic bread, directly links a domestic space – the hearth – with sacred space – the altar; it also links Mary's virginal body with the Church wafer oven in which the hosts were baked for the sacrament of the Eucharist. In manuscript illumination and paintings well into the fifteenth century, the prefigural role of the Jewish sacrifice is hinted at by images of the Virgin Mother and child sitting by prominent and detailed fireplaces.

When we turn to the illustrations of the Jew of Bourges in fourteenth-century manuscripts, it becomes clear that we have not considered the "totality" of the image – "not merely themes and structures, but also such aspects as color, location in the manuscript, situation on the page, and relation to the text, with the aim of understanding how images function in culture and society." While I cannot undertake such an enterprise for each illustration of this Marian miracle in the manuscripts listed above, I hope to set forth a preliminary methodology that will encourage literary historians to seek the meaning in anti-Judaic tales through interdisciplinary investigation. Reading the text of The Jew of Bourges in printed editions tells us little about the complex nature of anti-Judaic images in medieval manuscripts. Only nine of the forty-one miracles described in the table of contents remain in the Vernon manuscript. It is thus impossible to make large claims about the entire collection of miracles. Nonetheless, it seems significant to me that the illustration to "The child in Paris killed by Jews" appears on 124, while the illustration to The Jew of Bourges, titled "hou a jew cutt his sone in a breynnge ovene for he was commed to opir cristene children on pe pask day," precedes the tale on 125. Both feature the Jews as caricatures with enlarged heads; great, hooked noses; and abundant beards. Both illustrate Jews tormenting young boys to the distress of mothers, who kneel and gesture plaintively, their hands signalling declamation. The women, Christian and Jew, are figures who correspond to Rachel and Mary in biblical iconology. In fact, so visible is the link between these mothers and Mary herself that the Virgin appears in neither illustration as the mediatrix. Rather, her presence and the ultimate meaning of the image is implied through the intersection of image, text, the prior narratives or myths about Jews killing children and the audience's historical awareness of such events.

50 See O'Meara, p. 79.
54 An example cited by both Bynum and O'Meara is Robert Campin's Madonna and Child before a Firescreen, reproduced as figure 14 in Holy Feast and Holy Fast. Also see his Merode altarpiece.
56 See Meale, p. 118.
In the Vernon manuscript, the entire narrative of *The Jew of Bourges* is compressed into one illustration, linking the tripartite composition through the powerful intersection of images. To the left of the illustration, a Jewish caricature grasps at his young son, pulling him from a structure that is surely the Church where he has received Communion, rather than the Jew’s house as Meale suggests, as indicated by the rose window and gothic appearance of the structure. It is important to understand that this is a Church, rather than the child’s home, for the picture then underscores the wonder and subsequent conversion the boy has experienced at Mass. While the illustration only shows the young boy emerging from Mass, the narrator describes fully the mystery and beauty that astonishes and gladdens the boy when he enters the Church and sees the lamps, tapestries, curiously painted altars, and, most especially, a statue of the crowned, enthroned Virgin with child, before which people say their beads. Thus, the boy who emerges from the church in the illustration has paid homage to the Virgin and Child before he receives the Eucharist.

To the right of this image we see the Jewish father thrusting his son into the oven head first; below, the child burns in the flames, his face peering serenely out of the oven’s mouth, his hands clasped in prayer. His mother argues or pleads with a seated, male figure. Because the figure is not a Jewish caricature, I suspect he is the Mayor, to whom the anguished women pleads in the narrative and who orders the stone to be removed from the mouth of the oven – another explicitly Christological allusion. When the stone is removed, the child reports that the flames seemed like flowers and spices to him, protected by the Mother and Child “Pat sittep in Chirche in hir Chayer.” Thus we have a conflation of images that work together to recall both the exegetical interpretations and anti-Judaic stories of child and host persecution. For the child is undoubtedly linked visually to the Christ child as sacrament, recalling the Crucifixion (and Resurrection) in its most pathetic form; and, surely, the image of the Jew casting his son into the oven is also a typological image of a Jewish burnt offering similar to the literalistic Old Testament sacrifice of Abraham. The textual references to the Virgin and Child and the Eucharist recall the notion of the Virgin as the vessel for the child and Eucharist; the Jewish boy emerges from the oven whole and redeemed, just as the Christ child emerged miraculously from Mary’s womb; or just as the host emerges from the tabernacle, or womb of the “Vière Ouvrante.” The illustration is not as specific as that in the *Bible moralisée*, but this does not mean that its reception would be less poignant for an audience familiar with the symbol cluster.

The symbol cluster occurs again in Hours of the Virgin (Hours of Mary de Bohun, ca. 1380 – 1394) (Plate I) Here *The Jew of Bourges* appears as a *bas de page* illustration. The initial for Prime above is illustrated with an image of the Nativity; a crowned, enthroned Virgin holds the Christ child at her breast. Below, the artist has rendered the narrative in three separate scenes. In the first, to the far left, we see Mary standing beside a priest as he gives the Eucharist to the small boys reverently kneeling before him in a row. In the central scene, the Jewish father, a grotesque caricature, thrusts the naked body of his child headfirst into a glowing oven, while the mother stands by in horror. The scene is witnessed by other male figures who crowd around the oven. In the third scene, Mary, appearing exactly as in the Annunciation scene, opens her arms to embrace the small child in the oven, the flames forming a halo about him. Here, the artist has made explicit the link between the

57 Meale, p. 128, n. 60. Further evidence for this interpretation may be found in the text, where the father “said where he from chirche come” (p. 151, line 84, *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript*). Meale incorrectly claims “there is no reference to the boy having attended mass, which is the cause of his father’s murderous rage.” The illustration may be found in A. I. Doyle, *The Vernon Manuscript: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library Oxford MS. Eng. Poet a.I., with an Introduction by A. I. Doyle* (Cambridge, 1987).


Easter Eucharist and the Christ-child-as-sacrifice; I suggest that the connection between the Nativity and the Virgin and Child-in-the-oven also would encourage an explicitly sacramental reading of the tale. While the Nativity scene is embedded within the sacred text, The Jew of Bourges, nowhere narrated in full, exists in the present time—and the popular imagination.

The Carew-Poyntz Hours, as I speculated earlier, contains a number of images from the symbol cluster, although not created by one artist, but three from the end of the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries. The prayer at the elevation of the Host on f. 56 is illustrated by the Miracle of the Bleeding Host tormented by Jews (Plate II). The Hours of the Virgin depict the Massacre of the Innocents for meditation at Compline, and the Litany of the Virgin is illustrated with a series of bas de page tinted drawings of the Miracles of the Virgin with Anglo-French inscriptions, including The Jew of Bourges (ff. 152–189; Plate III). Thus the symbol cluster works throughout the manuscript in a cumulative manner, as does the Theophilus story in the De Brailes Hours. These images appeal to the underside of consciousness, linking the Marian devotion so explicitly illustrated in the miniatures of women praying before statues of the Virgin and Child, or at altars (f. 86 and 164), with cultic themes of sacrifice, eucharistic feeding, and sacramental transformation. Let me stress again that my reading takes into account the circumstances of manuscript production, for I am not arguing a deliberate program copied from a specific exemplar so much as a historical development of symbol linkage and reception.

One of the most subtle renditions of The Jew of Bourges may be found in London British Library Manuscript Egerton 2781, which Lucy Freeman Sandler calls “a near encyclopedia of devotional iconography.” In this mid-fourteenth century manuscript the marginal status of the Miracles of the Virgin has been raised, and The Jew of Bourges appears as one of ten historiated initials illustrating Prayers to the Virgin (f. 24; Plate IV). In this illustration of the tale, we see the oven guarded by the Virgin, who prevents the Jew from thrusting his son into the oven before the eyes of his anxious wife. Unlike the previous illustrations I have discussed, however, the Jew in Egerton 2781 is less grotesque a caricature than in other manuscripts: his nose and ears are enlarged slightly, and his eyes are slanted, but his mauve cope, hood, and short gown with dagged sleeves lack the oriental, markedly foreign appearance of other illustrations of Jews, and his red stockings make him appear almost English. Upon closer observation, however, one cannot help but notice his neatly trimmed, bright red beard. As Ruth Mellinkoff has observed in her comprehensive study of anti-Judaic imagery, “The gossip that Judas had red hair spread, so that at least by the sixteenth century, examples of Judas with red hair and red beard, and ruddy skin—one or all three—can be spotted in England, France, Flanders, and Spain.” Mellinkoff notes that of the two thirteenth-century, and thus earliest, examples she has discovered of this phenomenon, one is English. In addition to Judas, other unmistakable Old Testament characters link Jews with red hair, including Cain and David. On the balance, however, red hair is largely indicative in medieval art with scurrilous Jews, such as the flagellators of Christ, Malchus (the high Priest’s servant), and anonymous figures of Christ’s arresters. Whether the Jew in the Egerton Jew of Bourges is meant to recall Judas is doubtful, but in connecting Jewishness with a visual tradition of persecutors, the artist has achieved the same effect. In fact, he has done so, in my opinion, with greater subtlety. This Jew’s elegant dress at first sight draws attention away from his marginally grotesque features, red beard, and alien identity. It is as if the artist has embedded in his illustration the kind of warning that led to the anti-Jewish legislation: Jews who do not wear badges can perpetrate greater evil among Christians than those whose alterity is visually pronounced from the outset.

Illustrations of The Jew of Bourges in late-medieval English manuscripts reaffirmed the cultural myths that led to the expulsion of the Jews; in one respect, they functioned, as do anti-Judaic sermons in a society without Jews, as an antidote to the skepticism that inevitably results from such purification. One marks boundaries against an “Ot-

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60 See Sandler, p. 145.
61 Sandler, p. 128.
63 Mellinkoff provides manuscript evidence on p. 37.
The Eucharist transcended temporal boundaries, pogroms, and expulsions, but its mythology still required a wholly foreign "Other." Anti-Judaic myths that featured Jews engaging in host desecration and ritual murder ensured the veracity of transubstantiation by producing a deep sense of outrage, anguish, and devotion in the viewer. I would argue from such manuscript evidence that this outrage is integral to genuine faith in the sacramental function of the Eucharist in medieval spirituality.

One cannot claim that Eucharistic devotion buttressed by anti-Judaic tales appealed more to women than men; indeed, mariages were composed by great churchmen. Nonetheless, the fact that The Jew of Bourges appears in Books of Hours largely for women by the fourteenth century is intriguing. Similarly, Chaucer's decision to assign an anti-Judaic Marian miracle to his Prioresse is surely no coincidence; critics have puzzled over his feminization of The Chorister and, until recently, have failed to provide sufficiently convincing responses to this problem. Why should a female audience come to find Marian stories of bodily mutilation and healing so compelling, particularly when they involve Jews? Indeed, why should Marian mythology from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries be characterized by a) miracles and visions experienced by marginalized peoples (children, women, shepherds); b) bodily mutilation, and c) a millenarian message inspired by political crisis?66

64 This is Mary Douglas's argument in Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (New York, 1966).

65 Ian Doyle notes in his Introduction to the Vernon Manuscript Facsimile that its contents and use of the vernacular point to an audience of nuns or devout lay women (although this cannot be claimed definitively from manuscript evidence). Carol Meale further explores this possibility in her discussion of the Vernon Marian miracles (see pp. 131 – 136). The Carew-Poyntz Hours were most likely created for Sir John Carew's wife (d. 1363). Meale points to the evidence that Mary de Bohun owned Copenhagen RL Thats Saml. 547, while Bod. Auct. D. 4.4 was possibly made on the occasion of her marriage, and Egerton 3277 may have been completed for her (p. 133). While Sander speculates that Egerton 2781 (no. 115, p. 128) was created for the man and woman who are depicted on folios 35 and 36 in prayer, the manuscript also presents a single praying woman in an historiated initial (f. 102); another (f. 27') showing a woman kneeling before the Crucified Christ; a third (f. 122') depicting a woman and a girl in prayer; another (f. 125') woman in prayer.

66 Victor Turner addresses some of these issues in Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, as does Michael P. Carroll in his The Cult of the Virgin Mary. Psychologi- cal Origins (Princeton, 1986). I find Carroll's analysis, which depends heavily upon Freudian theory, unconvincing and inapplicable to medieval culture, particularly his speculation about the reasons for female Marian devotion (pp. 58 – 59). Carroll's theories, besides being informed by a purely androcentric psychology, depend upon Latin family models for verification – particularly family structures in Spain and Italy – and these are not especially useful for a consideration of Northern Europe. Nonetheless, his identification of a kind of Marian masochism in Marian legends is important. I would differ, however, in separating the masochism of the popular legends from the "The official Mary ... portrayed as a benificent mother image, whereas these legends clearly associate the Madonna ... with violence and brutal punishment" (p. 65). With respect to late medieval culture, I would argue that the brutality is legitimized by the "official Church."

67 See Holy Feast and Holy Fast, p. 269. Kathleen Biddick's objections to Bynum's methodology, as articulated in "Genders, Bodies, Borders" tell us more about feminist historiography than late medieval religiosity. Biddick claims that "Bynum's rhetorical practices ... reinscribe a historical fantasy of the feminine as maternal" (p. 416). Rather than "reengendering Europe as a foundational category, nostalgically and romantically," (p. 417) in my own discussion, I hope to show that Marian miracles consciously link her Motherhood with the host, the "classic" identity of Western Christendom, what Biddick terms "the fantasy of an original and a natural identity, the Corpus Christi" (p. 415). Furthermore, Mary's motherhood is intrinsic to the link between Eucharistic devotion and anti-Semitism (see Biddick, pp. 402 – 408); indeed, the miracles themselves admit to and tend to focus on the "medieval Christian economy of exteriority" – Jews, adulterers and prostitutes, Saracens.

a form of devotion that, while celebrating the miraculous power of the Virgin, simultaneously indicted Jews of the most heinous atrocities. Still, is it mere coincidence that Duke Phillip the Good’s wife, Isabella of Portugal, presented the Carthusian Canons of St. Chapelle a monstrance for displaying the Bleeding Host of Dijon, a communion wafer persecuted by a Jew? This Host is represented in a startling illumination in a Book of Hours, currently in possession of the Pierpont Morgan Library (Ms. M. 1001 170). What kind of devotional response was such an image meant to elicit? And to what kind of narrative – textually absent, as is the case in the majority of the manuscripts showing scenes from *The Jew of Bourges* – does such a signifier refer?

In many ways, it seems natural to me that we should find this anti-Judaic symbol cluster, disseminated through an anti-Judaic homiletic tradition and in the mariales in England, in women’s Books of Hours. Books of Hours reflect women’s family obligations. Often given as wedding presents in the fourteenth century, Books of Hours were compendia of important concerns for women, largely related to the body. Women tended to inscribe the births and deaths of family members in their Books of Hours, and many contain information of medicinal import, such as prayers to a particular saint known for healing. John Harthan notes the peculiarly marked “Dies Mali” which appear in the Queen Mary Psalter and Gorleston Psalters, and which were particularly popular in England; these were days on which bloodletting or purging were held to be considerably unlucky. Books of Hours were repositories for ex votos and other powerful talismans, some actually sewn into the pages. In this way, Books of Hours evoked a physical response from the reader in prayer or petition in the form of touching or kissing. These treasures and much practical wisdom were passed on to those who inherited the books, or to the children for whom such “women’s books” became texts for primary education.

Female existence was bodily existence, and it is not surprising that medieval women eagerly prayed to a Mother whose inviolable body signified the resurrection of all Christians in the mystical body of Christ. Her body had a singular distinction and offered the singular hope that the human body would be dignified at the final Resurrection, as was hers at the Assumption. Rather than being ethereal in her virginity, Mary, “who disappeared from the world at the Assumption ... can reappear in the body, in a more concrete way than a saint whose body remains buried ... Mary continues to connect earth and heaven in a ‘bodily’ or ‘visible’ way.” Central to the pageant of Mary’s Motherhood is her eagerness to heal the flesh of innocents, of children, as a manifestation of these larger promises to come. Rather than being unusual in their mixture of violence and sentimentality, stories like *The Chorister* and *The Jew of Bourges*, featuring bodily mutilation and The Virgin’s thaumaturgical power reflect a popular form of female eucharistic piety in the fourteenth century. Her healing powers affirm the integrity of the body here and now, simultaneously pointing to its ultimate seamlessness at the Resurrection. Far from celebrating passive virginity, the Virgin of these tales mothers her children toward a terrifying vision of transcendence – a society purged once and for all – corporealized through the tender body of a child.


72 See Bell, pp. 160 – 165, on the importance of medieval women’s Books of Hours.


The author wishes to thanks the Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum for permission to reproduce ms. 48, The Carew Poyntz Hours, f. 56v and 187v – 188v; the Oxford Bodleian Library for permission to reproduce ms. Auct. D. 4.4, f. 203v – 204v; and the British Library for permission to reproduce ms. Egerton 2781, f. 24.
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