On August 29, the Church memorialized the Debauching of John the Baptist. Jesus’ cousin and the radical preacher who eventually baptized Jesus at the start of the Christ’s ministry, John was an apocalyptic gadfly who almost inevitably found himself imprisoned for denouncing the king’s marriage to Herodias as sinful (Matt. 14:3–11; Mark 6:17–28).

In addition to the major seasons and holy days, the early modern liturgical year included memorials for saints — notable Christians whose exceptional lives were acknowledged by canonization. Ranging from the biblical exemplars (the twelve apostles, Paul, Mary Magdalene, and so on) through the early church martyrs (i.e., Perpetua and Cyprian) and up to the present day, people of extraordinary faith and agents of divine grace were assigned particular days in the calendar on which their memory would be honored and their intercession before God requested. Throughout the history of the Church, certain saints had come to be associated with particular causes or concerns, the healing of certain diseases, or as the mediators related to the miracles or occupations attributed to that saint. Christians thus turned to these patrons who would provide the most expeditious assistance for a given issue. Certain saints also were recognized as patrons not only of occupations or illnesses but of towns and cities (e.g., Saint George, patron of England; or Saint Andrew, patron of Scotland).

In sixteenth-century England, following Henry’s separation of the English Church from papal authority, the government severely curtailed the saints’ days, using the argument that they discouraged productivity. Ten days after the passage of the Ten Articles of Religion under Henry VIII, the assembly passed the act “for the abrogation of, and against the canon of, all holy and holydays and holydays of obligation.” The act eliminated the official observances of all feasts during the harvest, from the beginning of July to the end of September, and during the Westminster Law Terms, with the exception of the feasts of biblical saints (the apostles, the Blessed Virgin, and the nativity of John the Baptist), Saint George, Ascension Day, All Saints or Hallowmas, and Candlemas. The economic argument was not unimportant, but anti-Catholic concern played a role in the act as well. The efficacy of prayers to the saints was a matter of intense theological debate throughout the English reformation. Perhaps as a result of this debate, by the time Shakespeare was writing, devotion to the saints had for many people simply fallen out of use. This did not mean that the veneration of saints had ended in England; however. Custom still demanded recognition of the local saints (whether officially canonized or not) important to the people in the area. Obviously, Saint George, the patron of England, would continue to be bemedded across the land (as the Act of Abrogation permitted), but parishes continued to celebrate their named feasts, even if unofficially, and towns named after saints under- standably maintained an affinity toward the calendar days for their local patrons. Certain parts of the country, too, were less inclined to follow the country’s anti-Catholic trends; Catholic sentiment and practice — including veneration of the saints — continued, for instance, in the north far longer than in the south.

In the first book of Common Prayer under Queen Elizabeth, the saints’ days that were included in the calendar commemorated the twelve apostles; the Evangelists (authors of the four Gospels); John the Baptist (this feast day, not the actual feast day); and the four leading fathers of the Church. George, patron of England; Saint Stephen, the first martyr; Saint Laurence, martyr; Saint Michael the Archangel; and the Feast of All Saints, on November 1.

The 1631 Book of Common Prayer must have been a blow to the more evangelical Protestants in England, as it added to the calendar, in addition to the feast days just mentioned, those for fifty-one other saints. The prayer book carefully noted, however, that these additional feast days were observed as official holy days and that what was meant should continue. In 1656, John Davis printed the first edition of John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments, a book that constituted, in essence, a Protestant hagiography; it is tempting to consider that the book was in no small part a response to the perceived “catholicizing” of the prayer book two years earlier.

In many cases, the mention of a holy day or season in early modern England simply marked a day on the calendar and did not necessarily bear an overtly religious meaning. In part, this is true because of the Calendar Days of the English Church. In 1671, for instance, the Calendar Days of the English Church (from November 25 to December 25) were days that were marked by special duties and ceremonies. This practice continued until the early modern period, and it was common to observe special days throughout the year.

Saints’ days

In the modern liturgical year, the Church commemorates the feast days of saints, including those who died in earlier centuries. The calendar includes feast days for saints who lived in different eras and from different traditions. The days are typically defined as holy days of obligation, meaning that it is required for Catholics to participate in Mass on these days.

Dramatic performances and the liturgical year

Dramatic performances were often scheduled to coincide with certain church seasons or feast days. This practice was not new to the English Renaissance, however. The medieval mystery plays served as a prime example of the long-standing connection between theater, religion, and holy days, and if the tradition of lively performances at the more festive times of the year continued in England under Elizabeth, it could be considered as much a continuation of Catholic tradition as a uniquely early modern or Reform tradition phenomenon. Whether the Elizabethan and Jacobean court records do, however, reveal a large number of masques performed in connection with various feasts, particularly with Twelfth Night/Fairies and Shrovetide. Whether the content of these masques had a direct connection with the religious meanings of the liturgical seasons is debatable; even such an overt liturgical allusion as Shakespearian provides in the title Twelfth Night was certainly not a reference to the religious nature of the feast, or to a performance date, but rather a metaphor for the atmosphere of frivolous chaos that had developed over the years. It is far more likely that the timing of these performances was based on ecclesiastical rules regarding secular entertainment during certain seasons of the year. The penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, for example, were inappropriate for theatrical amusements.

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92. Judaism and Jews

Brett D. Hirsch

In league with the devil but were his descendants. Belief in this diabolical kinship explained many of the demonic physical characteristics that Jews were attributed to them. Medieval and early modern Christian literature, art, and popular culture frequently depicted Jews as physically abject and distinct, with large hooked noses, red or dark curly hair, goatee beards, and dark skin and features, as monstrous attributes such as cranial horns, prehensile tails, a foul sulphurous stench, and distem-
Jews as Polarizers

Since the figure of the Jew carried so much symbolic potential in late medieval and early modern England, it is unsurprising that other social, political, and religious groups either aligned themselves with or malignoned others as Jews or "judaeizers." On the one hand, Orthodox and unorthodox Christian groups on all sides of the confessional divide were derided by one another in terms of Judaeo-relicv. On the other hand, Calvinists and other Protestant minorities identified with the Jews via the notion of divine election to experience of persecution and survival in diaspora. English xenophobia also frequently expressed the economic and political threats posed by aliens such as the Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, and even the Ottoman Turks, in Jewish terms. Thus the Jew real, imagined, symbolic - was simultaneously a figure of intense fascination and fear, and this uneasy dynamic of attraction and repulsion was regularly played out on the stage and page and from the pulpit. These competing and contradictory impulses, informed by centuries of anti-Semtic and philo-Semitic narratives, shaped English attitudes toward the Jews before and after their wholesale expulsion from England in 1650. In order to better understand the complexities of Shakespeare's representation of Jews and its contemporaries, as well as the rich and varied preconceptions of their original audiences and readers, it is necessary to trace the origin, transmission, and adaptation of these narratives through late medieval to early modern English literature, drama, art, and popular culture.

Jews and Usury

Jews migrated to England in substantial numbers after the Norman Conquest of 1066, and in many ways the experience of medieval English Jewry was no different from that of their brethren in other parts of Christendom. Theirs was a life dominated by social and church-sponsored sanctions, popular suspicion and hostility, and social and economic restrictions designed to humiliate and alienate, culminating in their wholesale expulsion by Edward I in 1290.

Medieval English Jews were property of the Crown, and although this special status afforded them royal protection, it effectively rendered them resident aliens whose rights and obligations were subject to the whims of the monarch. Restrictions were placed on Jewish ownership of land, and Christian fear of competition resulted in the exclusion of Jews from the merchant and trade guilds. Unable to practice crafts, manufacture goods, or sell either in shops or the marketplace, Jews were compelled to pursue less desirable economic activities.

Moneymending was a particularly attractive option following the decrees of the Third Lateran Council (1279), which expressly forbade Christians from practicing usury under threat of excommunication and provided an important economic niche for the Jews to fill. Englishmen of all social ranks, from commoners to members of the court and clergy to the gentry, relied on Jewish loans to finance their ventures, from buying land and building churches to waging war and fighting in the Crusades. Increasingly, a system of credit became essential to support the economic expansion of the age, and so the Jewish practice of usury as a necessary evil. Usury was a profitable enterprise for medieval English Jews, but financial prosperity came at the cost of growing resentment and vilification by their Christian contemporaries, culminating in outbreaks of violence and hostility.

Despite the fact that Christians also practiced moneymending, usury was understood as a peculiarly Jewish crime, with the term "Jew" and "usurer" rendered synonymous. Again, it was this association in England that survived the expulsion of the Jews and the subsequent relaxing of restrictions against the Christian practice of usury, made necessary by Jewish absence. In A Discoverie an Unusuall Commodity (1572), Thomas Wilson reminded his readers that usury was the reason Jews "were hated in England, and so banished wastefully," and called for Jewish usurers (termed "Englishemen ... worse then Jews") to be similarly expelled (Wilson, sig. F5).

Since Jews and usurers were rendered one and the same in the English representation, the contiguity of these narratives was similarly shared. For example, the wolf, a traditional symbol of avarice, frequently became aligned with Jews and usurers alike. Echoes of this association appear in The Merchant of Venice, where Shylock is compared to a "wolf" (MV 4.1.73) with "wolfish, bloody, starred, and ravenous" (MV 4.1.138) desires on Antonio, the "tanted wether of the flock" (MV 4.1.141). As well as a wolf, Shakespeare's repeated characterization of Shylock as a dog (MV 1.3.103, MV 2.2.14, MV 3.6, MV 3.3, MV 3.18, MV 4.1.119, MV 4.1.133, MV 4.1.287) throughout the play resonates with early modern English debates about usury, in which the practice was frequently likened to bestiality, cannibalism, and unnatural breeding. The Hebrew word for usury, 271 (mefash), is derived from the root word meaning "to bite," and this etymology was known to early modern English commentators such as Henry Smith, who reminded his readers that usury "hath her name of biting, and she may well be called devours for many have not only been bitten by it, but devoured by it, that is, consumed all that they have" (Smith, sig. A69). Through "biting" interest and "eating" debts, usurers (and therefore Jews) fed on the livelihood of good Christians. In The Merchant of Venice, these fears are given a chilling literary treatment from the point of view of Shylock's dealings on Christian flesh (MV 1.3.38-39, MV 1.3.52, MV 1.3.58-60, MV 2.5.14-15, MV 3.1.43-43).

Other "Jewish" Crimes

Like usury, offenses against the coins of the realm were similarly understood as peculiarly Jewish crimes. These offenses included "clipping" (cutting slivers off coins), "washing" (waxing coins to give them the appearance of being clipped), "rounding" or "filling" (filling down the edges of coins), the results of which were melted into bullion or forged into counterfeit coins, and the debased currency was put back into circulation. Although Christians were also accused of clipping coins, as the chief owners of currency in medieval England it was tempting for the Jews to induge disproportionately in this form of unjust enrichment. The most significant episode of Jewish coin clipping occurred in 1278, when Edward I ordered a house-to-house search of Jewish homes across the country and, upon arrest, the majority imprisoned in the Tower of London, with roughly a third of that number subsequently tried, convicted, and hanged for offenses against the king's coin the following year.

The debasement of English currency was a perennial concern of the Crown after the expulsion of the Jews, with the offenses made high treason by an Act of Parliament under Henry V (5 Hen. v. c. 6). When Mary Tudor issued her general Act of Repeal (5 Mar. sect. 5, c. 1), the harsh penalties for these offenses were abrogated. Concerns about the debasement of English currency resurfaced during the reign of Elizabeth I, who issued An Act against the clipping, washynge, rounding, or fylinge of Corges (5 Eliz. c. 11) in 1563, which made "Clipping, washynge, roundynge, or fylinge, for wicked lace, or gynes sake, or any of [the] proper moneys or coynes of this Realme, or the dominions thereof an act of treason. Chroniclers of the time were keen to remind readers of the earlier Jewish precedent for instance: Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles related how the "monie and coin" of the nation "was fowle clipped, washed, and counterfeited by those naturall men the Jews" (Holinshed 6:129). "Well into the seventeenth century," whether through usury or offenses against the coin of the realm, "Jews continued to be identified with crimes that threatened the economic health of the nation" (Shapiro 100), and opponents of Jewish readmission to England could readily draw on these fears to support their arguments.

Ways to Know a Jew

The Crown and the guilds imposed strict economic controls, but successive ecclesiastical sanctions further restricted the social lives of medi eval English Jews. Following the Third Lateran Council of 1179, Jews could not employ Christian servants or give evidence against Christians. England was also the first country in Europe to vigorously enforce the Mosaic Table of the Law, whereas a yellow circle was the most common means of identifying Jews elsewhere in Europe. Jews were later required to wear distinctive horned hats (pilum caramum) following the Council of Vienna in 1267, which, like the Jew Badge, "was enforced earlier and more consistently in England than in any other country of Europe" (Rot 39). Shakespeare alludes to this legislation in The Merchant of Venice, where Shylock refers to his "Jewish gaberinde" (MV 1.1.304) and "the badge of all our tribe" (MV 1.1.305).

As laws were put in place to ensure that Jews could be readily identified through distinctive clothing and badges throughout Christian lands, works of literature, art, and popular culture reinforced the notion that the Jews were otherwise physically abject and unmistakable. Jews were frequently depicted in medieval art with large hooked noses, red or dark curly hair, goitlike beards, and darker skin and features than Christians. See for example Figure 141, a drawing from a fourteenth-century English manuscript showing the persecution of three Jews. The Gospel of John maintained that the Jews were descended from the devil (John 8.44), and medieval textural and visual representations routinely associated the Jews with the demonic, attributed with such fendslish attributes as cranial horns, prehensile tails, and a foul stench (feotor judaicus).

The belief that Jews were horned, visually reinforced by the horned Jewish hat they were required to wear, may have also derived from the common iconographic representation 141. The persecution of English Jews. Marginal drawing in Chronicles of Roffesse, Rochester, early fourteenth century. British Library MS Cotton Nero D ii, fol. 38v. © The British Library Board.
of Moses with horns. The Hebrew text of Exodus 34.29 describing Moses’ descent from Mount Sinai with the Tablets of the Law is לֹֽאַיֶּ֫הָן (‘lō‘â‘n), the skin of his face sent forth beams of [light]). The Hebrew rootʕ (`y-n) may be translated as “shin” (`yann, a verb) or “horn” (`yann, a noun). In the Vulgate, the Hebrew verb of the Exodus text was mistaken for the noun and mistranslated as cornuta (“horns”). Many instances of the horned Moses iconic motif appear in medieval English manuscript illuminations, stained glass, and sculpture, such as the twelfth-century statue of Moses from St. Mary’s Abbey in York.

The belief that Jews emitted a noxious scent (the foe- tor judaicus), in contrast to the aromatic odor of sanctity emanating from the saintly Christian body, and that Jewish women menstruated, reinforced popular anti-Semitic narratives linking the Jews to excrement and filth, plague and disease, and poison. One particularly famous example is the tale of the Jews of Tewkesbury, an event reported to have occurred in 1357 but frequently retold up to Shakespeare’s day. According to John Foxe’s account in Acts and Monuments, A certain Jew ... fell into a priory at Tewkesbury up on a sabbath day, which for the great reverence he had to his holy sabbath, would not suffer him selfe to be plucked out. And so Lord Richard Earle of Glocester, hearing therof, would not suffer him to be drawn out on Sundays for reverence of the holy day. And thus the wretched superstitious Jew remaining there till mon- day, was found dead in the dawning.

(The Force, Acts sig. Nv.)

The notion of the “excremental” Jew persisted long into seventeenth-century England, what belittling in the foeto judaicus was evidently widespread enough for Thomas Browne to devote an entire chapter to refuting the charge that “the Jews stink naturally” in his Pseudodoxia Epidemica (1646). Notably, as Jonathan Gil Harris has insightfully shown, there is much literary, dramatic, and anecdotal material linking the fear of Jewish infestation of the Christian body politic with enemias and sodomy. In Christopher Marlowe’s The Jew of Malath, for example, Barabas claims to have received “mouths and eyes” (5.1.183) entry to the body politic through apertures that are subtly coded as its anus” and leading the Ottoman troops through the sewers (Harris 80).

According to medieval and early modern medical knowledge, these noxious fumes were understood to be the principal cause of epidemic diseases such as plague, capable of contaminating both persons and objects. In Thomas Nashe’s The Unfortunate Traveller, for example, Zodoch boasts that his Jewish “breath stinketh so alreadie, that it is within halfe a degree of poyson” and were he “crush to death ... there might be quintessent out of me one quart of precious poyson,” and if he were to cut off his uncle’s leg “from his fount of corruption” he might “extract a venom worse than anit serpentes” (Nashe sig. Nv). The Jews were so routinely accused of spreading plague by poisoning Christian wells throughout sixteenth-century Europe that “by the sixteenth century the idea that Jews tried to poison Christians was proverbial” (Shapiro 96). Thus, in John Marston’s The Malcontent, when Mendoza asks, “Canst thou imploy? cannot thou appro- sion?” Malevolo replies “Excellently, no Jew, Potecary, or Politician better” (Marston sig. Hr).

Even the Black Death that devastated Europe and Asia in the 1340s was blamed on the Jews. Edward Fenton’s Certaine Secretes of Nature, adapted from the original French of Pierre Boastustaus, described how the Jews were "determined and fully resolved amongst them selues, to exctract at one instant the name of Christians, destroying them all by poypoyn" prepared as "an oyntment, with a confection of the blood of man vnseene with certaine venemous herbs, "which they nightly cast ... into all the fountains and wellees of the Christians. Wherupon this corruption engenderd such contagious diseases in all Europe, that there died weln the third person through the said confection."

(Fenton fol. 237-v)

The accompanying woodcut depicts a Jew casting a bag of poison into a well, into which a statue of a devil is urinat- ing, next to the mutilated body of a crucified child.

JEWISH DOCTORS

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) expressly forbade medical practitioners from attending to the sick without Church approval, yet numerous instances of Jewish doctors in the service of medieval and early modern popes, bishops, monarchs, and courtiers across Europe suggest that this injunction was not strictly enforced. Jewish doctors were thought to be particularly adept at doing away with the sickle patients by poisoning the monks of Malta ongaste. In Nashe’s Unfortunate Traveller, Doctor Zachariache’s botched attempt to poison the pope’s concubine results in banish- ment of all the Jews from Rome. Robert Greene’s Salmusa (1594) and Thomas Goffe’s The Bagging Turk (1612), two Turk plays of the period that draw upon the same series of historica aos, stage the poisoning of the Turkish emperor Bayazet by his Jewish doctor.

While fictional portrayals written Jewish doctors poiso- ning their clients across continental Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the sensational trial of Rodrigo Lopez in 1594 brought the reality closer to home. The chroni- cler William Camden, writing of the event some three decades later, recounted that Lopez, personal physician to Elizabeth I and “a Jesuit Sectary,” was convicted along with other “Portugalis” (Portuguese) of having “con- spired to make away the Queen by poypoyn for his 1000 Crownes” from the king of Spain. At his execution, Lopez reportedly confessed “that he committed the Queen as well as Christ Jesus; which being spoken by a Jew, as it was, was but oute laugher at the people” (Camden 103-05).

Whether Camden’s report is historically accurate or not, contemporary commentators made much of Lopez’s Judaism – past and present – despite his outward profes- sion of Christianity. The Admiral’s Men revived The Jew of Malta to capitalize on the sensational trial, and Nashe’s Unfortunate Traveller, with its vicisport of Doctor Zacharie, was similarly published the same year. It has been argued that in Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice, reference to “a wolf ... hanged for human slaughter” (MV 4.1.134) is possibly an allusion to the Lopez affair. Although such an allusion is possible, based on the wordplay of Lopo des Lupus (“wolf”), more convincing explanations draw on the wolf as a symbol of Jewish avarice and usury, the medieval and early modern criminal prosecution and execution of animals, and the contemporary practice of hanging Jews alongside dogs, wolves, and other animals elsewhere in Europe.

More direct representations followed in the wake of Jacqueline’s Trial of Dr Solomon. In Thomas Dekker’s The Whore of Babylon (1667), Lopez appears in the character of “Rapus a Doctor of Physicke,” otherwise called “Lupus” throughout the play text. Although otherwise silent about his Jewish origins, the play’s description of Lopez as the “very man who ‘smells’ and ‘stinkes’ with a ‘disguised soul’ (Delker sig. Hr) certainly resonates with the popu- lar belief in the foeto judaicus. Likewise, the image of the “excremental” Jew is promoted by the derisive reference to Lopez as a “Glister-pipe” (ibid.), the implement used to administer enemas.

A detailed account of the Lopez plot appears alongside other failed attempts on Queen Elizabeth’s life in George Carell’s A Thousand Remembrance of Gods Mercy, origin- ally written in 1644. The enlarged third edition of 1671 featured custom engravings, one of which shows Lopez “compounding to poypoyn the Queene” (Carleton 164), playing on the word for the preparation of poison and the fee demanded by Lopez as he asks his Spanish interlocu- tor, “Quid dubitis” (“What will you give?”). In the bot- tom right of the panel, Lopez is shown hanging from the gallows with the inscription “Praditorum finis fuit” (“The end of traitors is the rope”). (See Figure 142.)

The Cohen family were adapted for use in a later seventeenth-century broadside, Popish Plots and Treasons ... Illustrated with Emblems and explain’d in Verse. The verse accompanying the Lopez engraving emphasizes the Jewish identity by reference to Judas, the archetypal Jewish traitor, and drew on a web of negative associations between Jews and the devil, the pope, doctors, and poison:

But now a private horrid Treason view
Hatcht by the Pope, the Devil, and a Jew;
Lopez a Doctor must by poison doo
What all their Plots have fail’d in hitherto.
What will you give them then, the Judas Cries;
Full fifty thousand Crowns, further replies.
Tis done – but hold, the wretch shall miss his hope.
The Treasons known, and his Reward the Rope.

(Carleton Popish Plots.)
of Norwich and Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, the alleged victims of ritual murder were venerated as saints and martyrs until the Reformation. Narratives of their martyrdom were retold and adapted in popular ballads, chronicles, and martyrologies, and depicted in stained glass, painted rood screens, and other decorations in churches and cathedrals across England. By the sixteenth century, belief that the Jews crucified Christian children was widespread and proverbial, as evidenced by the flippancy of Frari Jacomo’s remark about Barabas in Marlowe’s Jew of Malta: “What ha’st thou crucified a child?” (Marlowe sig. G2r).

Later adaptations of these allegations took on additional implications of cruelty and depravity, combining the traditional charge of ritual murder with what has come to be known as the Blood Libel — the accusation that the Jews procured Christian blood for ritual purposes, medicine, and magic. The first recorded accusation took place in 1235 when the Jews of the German town of Fulda were accused of killing five Christian boys and drawing their blood ad suum remedium (“for remedial use”). Later accusations on the Continent were even more sensational, such as the abduction, forced circumcision, bloodletting, and ritual murder of Simon of Trent in 1475.

News of these Blood Libel legends soon reached England and tainted the memory of the child martyrs. For example, a fifteenth-century painted rood screen in Holy Trinity Church, Lodden, Norfolk, depicts the bloodletting of William of Norwich by the Jews as they crucify him — an aspect almost completely absent in earlier accounts of his martyrdom. (See Figure 2.) The Blood Libel narratives also reinforced the perception of the Jews as cannibals, feasting figuratively on Christian finances through usury and literally on the blood of Christian children. Early modern echoes of the cannibalism charge are found in the repeated allusions to Shylock’s feeding on Christian flesh in The Merchant of Venice (MV 1.3.38-39, MV 1.352, MV 1.358-60, MV 2.14-15, MV 3.4.1-2) and, more explicitly, in The Trautelis of the Three English Brothers, in which Zanoni, the villain, will default on his payment, “since the sweetest part / Of a Jews feast, is a Christians heart” (Day, Rowley, and Wilkins sig. Fiv.)

SORCERY

The Blood Libel and ritual murder accusations drew on and fused with earlier associations between the Jews and sorcery. Readers of the Old Testament knew that Moses and Aaron had freed the Israelites by hosting the Egyptian sorcerers, and Joseph was adept at interpreting dreams — a service that Jews were known to sell in Roman times, as the epitaph quattuorcanque voles ludaei somnia vendunt (“The Jew will readily sell you any dream”) in Jovena’s Satiros makes clear. The medieval belief that the Jews were in league with the devil explained their perceived magical abilities and equated Jewish ritual with demonic magic in the popular Christian mind.

In 1585, a delegation of English Jews bearing gifts was barred from admission to the coronation of Richard I, amid fears that they intended to harm the monarch and the enemy eye. A crowd that had been aroused by their unwelcome presence beat several members of the delegation to death, and further outbreaks of violence broke out across the country as exaggerated rumors of the incident spread. Belief that Jews were capable of conjuring and conversing with demons found expression in many variations of the proto-Faustian Theopilebus legend, in which the monk Theopilebus is induced by a Jewish sorcerer to exchange his soul for favors from the devil. Moreover, “the Hebrew language, the tongue in which the sacred Scriptures were written, had achieved the status of an especially effective magical medium in ancient times” (Trachtenberg 61) and by the seventeenth century was considered essential for Christian practitioners of natural philosophy, alchemy, and other occult sciences. The use of Hebrew inscriptions on amulet charms, prepared and owned by medieval and early modern Christians, further attests to the perceived efficacy of the language for magic.

Blood Libel narratives often suggested that Jews obtained Christian blood to anoint the bodies of their dead, in the vain hope of redemption by proxy should Christ turn out to be the Messiah. Other charges similarly maligned the Jews as perfidious in their outward rejection of Christianity by pointing to acts that betrayed their acknowledgment of Christian truth. Jews were frequently accused of illicitly obtaining and torturing the bodies of Christians. In short, the ritual charge of the 16th century: Passion and betraying belief in the Christian doctrine of transubstantiation.

Likewise, charges that the Jews profaned icons and relics revealed Jewish recognition of the Christian doctrine of intercession and the saints themselves. Narratives detailing Jewish desecration of the Host and abuse of icons and relics were widespread throughout medieval Europe, promulgated in sermon examples, popular ballads, and popular imprints depicting the desecration of sacred icons and in stained glass in churches and cathedrals. Perhaps the most famous English example of the Host desecration narrative is the fifteenth-century Croston Play of the Sacrament, in which Jonathan and his motley crew of fellow Jews subject the Host to a variety of different tortures — se outlandish that Jonathan manages to sever his hand in the process — before burning it in an oven, in which it explodes to reveal the transubstantiated Christ. The play concludes with the miraculous restoration of Jonathan’s hand and the baptism of the repentant Jews, who then embark on a penitential voyage.

FIGURATIVE AND FORMER, COVERT AND CURRENT JEWS

Long after they were expelled from England in 1590, medi eval narratives about the Jews continued to be circulated and reimagined in writing, art, and drama. A dramatic writing that combined political polemic and historical fact, as did other Jewish plays of the time, the Croston Play was described as “an Infield” (Marlowe sig. Gav), and an extortive tribute is exacted from him and his fellow Jews “like infidels” (sig. Crz). The conflation between Jews and Muslims — Turks, Saracens, or Moors — was particularly common in Jacobite dramas of the period, in which fictional characters frequently swear by “Mahound” — a pejorative corruption of the name of the Islamic prophet — in the surviving medieval liturgical dramas and mystery cycles. For example, Jewish characters represent “Machomet” throughout the Croston Play of the Sacrament, and Herod variously swears to “Mahound” in the York and Townsley cycles and the Digby plays. This confusion of Jews and Muslim survived into the early modern dramas, evidenced by Robert Wilson’s The Three Ladies of London (1614), in which the Jewish usurer Gerontius swears “by mightie Mahomet” (R. Wilson sig. Efr).

ALIENS

Economic threats, whether posed by foreign Christian merchants or native English usurers, were routinely described in terms that drew on the long tradition of
association between the Jews and usury and financial ruin. In the last decades of the reign of Elizabeth I, unemployed laborers and returning soldiers—"masterless men and vagabonds"—flocked to the capital in startling numer-

Anti-Jewish feelings were exacerbated in 1593 when, after a bill proposed to prohibit aliens—then predominately composed of Protestant exiles from France and the Low Countries—from entering the retail trade failed to pass through Parliament, merchants in London responded by issuing a series of broadsides threatening foreign artisans with violence unless they left England. One such broadside was affixed to the wall of a Dutch church. Among the lit-

Suspicion of the insincerity of Jewish converts gradu-

The vast majority of convert and convert Jews left Spain and Portugal for the relative toleration of the Ottoman Empire, where they were free to openly practice their old faith and enjoy certain political and economic privileges. Some Jews who had converted to Christianity in Spain decided to return to Judaism, and during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a number of Jewish converts from the Iberian Peninsula migrated to the Ottoman Empire, where they were able to practice their Jewish faith openly. This migration, known as the *Emigration of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula*, had significant implications for the development of Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire and beyond. The influx of Jewish converts from Spain and Portugal brought new vitality and resources to the Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire, and their presence contributed to the growth and diversity of Jewish life in the region.
of the personnel of the New Testament and Old Testament figures, were simultaneously pervasive in early modern England. These positive and negative associations ren-
dered "Jewishness" a flexible label in Shakespeare’s plays. The symbolic potent fluid, and composite identity construct projected onto oneself and others to suit changing social, cultural, theological, national, and political agendas, with serious consequences for all Jews, real and imagined.

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93. WITCHCRAFT • Sarah Kennedy

By the time Shakespeare created his three weird sisters for Macbeth about 1606 (see Figure 144), the witchcraft hysteria in Europe had already waxed and waned a number of times. England’s spectacular and melodramatic trials had only recently waned in Europe, and England before Elizabeth I had been relatively free of this particular cultural plague. The playwright would have had a wealth of information by the turn of the century from pamphlets and other popular accounts of trials from Italy to Scotland. Sadly, after the death of William Shakespeare, the seventeenth century was to witness one of the most fearsome and bloodiest periods in this dismal chapter of European history, and many of these later trials would be held in England.

One of the earliest witch trials in Europe was held, surprisingly, at the far margin of the continent, in Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1534. Church and civic leaders in Ireland, for the most part, showed little interest in witches throughout the early modern period, but Alice Kyteler was tried after her husband, having found “flying ointment” and some bread that resembled communion wafers in her cupboard, accused her of trying to murder him through sorcery. The well-to-do Alice, after a protracted legal battle, fled to London, but her maid, Petronilla de Midea, was convicted and executed somewhere in the vicinity of Kilkenny.

WITCH-HUNTS: THE FIRST PHASE

The Kyteler trial, though well publicized (its site remains a tourist draw in Kilkenny), did not initiate a series of accusations. The witch-hunts of the early modern period begin, for all practical purposes, with Pope Innocent VIII’s Summis Desiderantes, or, as it is commonly known, the “Witch-bull,” of 1484. The intellectual ground had been laid by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in The Summa Contra Gentiles; in this long philosophical inquiry, Aquinas systematized thought about the nature of evil as part of a larger ontological structure and provided logic for its force in the human world.

Before Aquinas, attention to witchcraft had been intermittent and unsystematic. Pope Alexander had, in 1358, published a papal letter that allowed the Inquisition to make arrests for heresy, which might include witchcraft. The Inquisition of Toulouse sometime in the early fourteenth century (the date is uncertain) left the first record of a witches’ Sabbath, the activities of which included making a cauldron of witches’ brew, eating the corpses of newborn babies, and sexual orgies involving a he-goat. The inquisitor Nicholas Eymeric published the Directorium Inquisitorum in 1359, which made the connection between witchcraft and herey stronger. These publications and trials, however, did not cause any subsequent organized prosecution of witches. The Summis Desiderantes, written at the insistence of two German inquisitors, the Dominicans Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, laid out the first methodical plan for the identification and extermination of this so-called heresy.

The reasons for the increased fear of witches are impossible to sort out definitively. The devastation of the bubonic plague, which first entered Europe about 1445, may have had an effect on popular attitudes toward demonic intervention in human life. The plague attacked without warning and inexplicably killed millions of all classes and all levels of religious devotion. The terrifying infection, and the social upheaval caused by the vast number of casualties, may have increased fear of human interaction with the devil for the promotion of evil. Thomas Aquinas’s systematic explanation of the role of demonic forces certainly provided a Yahweh-like framework for belief in widespread intercourse between mortals and Satan. The individual fears of church leaders may have contributed to the official search for witches as particularly dangerous heretics, and the growing corruption of church leaders and sub-leader elite by the papacy may in turn have fueled fears of rebellion on the part of church leaders.

Whatever the reasons—and they were likely various—the Summis Desiderantes paved the way for the Mullens Maleficarum, or Hammer of Witches, published in 1486 by the same two inquisitors who pressured Pope Innocent into writing the 1484 papal bull. This document became the source and handbook for inquisitors and witchfinders for the next two hundred years. It outlined many of the characteristics that marked popular convictions about witches: that women were more likely to be witches than men, that witches copulate with the devil, and that witches fly about from one place to another. One of the most influential conclusions taken in the maleficarum is that skepticism about the reality of witches is itself heretical; the authors thereby made the very discussion of witch lore a basis for arrest and interrogation, which often involved torture.

Predictably, arrests for witchcraft increased after the publications of Sprenger and Kramer’s handbook, though few records are extant and estimates of the condemned vary enormously. Through the sixteenth century, arrests and trials on the Continent often began with an official investigation instigated by an inquisitor or other church official who visited a town on suspicion of heresy. Sometimes, the witch-hunts were fueled by profits, as the property of the accused was often seized by officials. In Trier, one particularly horrific series of trials lasted for roughly twelve years from 1583 to 1599, and one survivor recorded his impressions:

[The whole country rose to exterminate the witches. This movement was promoted by many in office, who hoped wealth from the persecution. And so, from court to court throughout the towns and villages of all the diocese, secular special accusers, inquisitors, notaries, jurors, judges, constables, dragging to trial and torture human beings of both sexes and burning them in great numbers. Nor were there spared even the leading men of Trier. For the judge, with two Buregmasters, several Counsellors and Associate Judges, canons of mony col-legiate churches, parish priests, rural deans, were swept away in this ruin.

(George Lincoln Burr, The Witch-Persuasions, in Kors and Peters 27)