

Chapter 3

Simplicity and Faith

Childhood, Maternity, and the Creation of a Jewish Threat

In 1144, a child's body was found brutally murdered in a wood not far from Norwich on or just before Easter. The incident might have been attributed to the lawlessness of political anarchy under King Stephen, except that soon after the event rumors spread that the Jews of the city had committed it. A story quickly developed, one that stressed the child's vulnerability, the Jews' hatred, and the mother's grief. The death was recognized as an exceptional event, which, because of its imitation of Christ's Passion, endowed the victim's life and death with a larger religious significance. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this child, known as William of Norwich, inspired a flourishing cult as well as a variety of written sources dealing with his life, myth, and miracles.¹

The tale of William's death is now recognized as the first of many allegations, according to which the Jews of Europe caught, tortured, and killed Christian children out of hatred of the dominant religion and its practitioners. The accusation of ritual murder, as it is most commonly known, spread rapidly throughout England, France, Spain, and Germany over the next century and a half, and it spawned a variant version, known as the blood libel, that sought to explain the murders as ceremonies enacted for procuring the victim's blood. For more than a century, scholars have studied ritual murder predominantly for its relevance to the history of Judaism and have argued that the charges represent an important moment in the rise of anti-Semitic sentiment in Western Christendom.² In doing so, historians have correctly focused on the tales as Christian fantasies of Jewish cruelty and thus on the increasingly hostile characterization of Jews, often of "the Jew" as a singular stereotype—characterizations that parallel the deteriorating social, economic, and cultural position of Jews in Western Europe.³

Scholars have rarely studied the prominent role and symbolic value of the child in the accusations.⁴ A shift in focus from the "malefactors" to the "victims" allows for a new emphasis on the theme of Jewish violence toward children, a theme that enlarges the number and variety of relevant sources. Chronicle reports, hagiographic literature, judicial records, sermons, and several miracles of the Virgin share a fascination with fantasies of Jews' cruelty inflicted on children, both

Christian and Jewish.⁵ Precedents for the accusation, products of the charge, and the myth of ritual murder itself all contain three closely related elements and figures: the memory of a threatened, innocent child who was slain by merciless Jews and was mourned by an anxious mother. These sources provide evidence for important connections between discourses on childhood, popular piety, gender, and anti-Judaism.

The child remains the narrative focus and emotional center throughout these stories, by acting as a catalyst, an often passive object of hatred by the Jews, the object of sadness on the part of the mother, and the object of pathos felt by the Christian crowd that usually gathers at the end of the tales. Despite his passivity in the martyrdom and in the events following his death, the child, while alive, is endowed with several positive characteristics—some typical, and others, given his status as a child, extraordinary. The victim becomes a symbol of sanctity, of simple piety, of innocence, of sacrifice, of human frailty and loss, of an ignorance that unwittingly reveals truth. In all of these, but especially the last, the child acts as both metaphor and concrete reality. The tales are recounted as truths, as recent, actual events that demand a reaction from the audience.

In this sense, the stories unfold as family tragedies, as studies in the correlation between religious piety and familial *pietas*, both standing in direct opposition to the Jews' pitiless, sacrilegious acts. The family, particularly the dyad of mother and child, is invested with profoundly religious significance, becoming an almost sanctified object primarily through parallels to the life of Christ. These tales betray a renewed interest in familial *pietas* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and its connection to Christian piety, and they reflect contemporary pastoral concerns.⁶ The attention to mother and child also parallels and, as we shall see, derives in a variety of ways from the twelfth- and thirteenth-century tendencies to humanize Christ and his Mother.

The extraordinary rise in concern over an imagined Jewish violence toward children stems in part from these changes in devotion to the Holy Family, evinced particularly in the cults of the Virgin Mother and of the Christ Child. From the eleventh century onward, a greater interest in Mary's humanity, rather than her sovereignty, emphasized two moments in her life: first, her giving birth to and nurturing Jesus, and then her mourning at the Cross.⁷ Just as the Marian literature of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries often mentions Mary's specific maternal functions, such as swaddling or breastfeeding, so the sources of ritual murder connect these actions with an increased emotional awareness of, and concern for, the Child and any child. When depicting women in these legends,

the authors of the tales blur Mary's two earthly roles, as nurturing mother and as mourner, so that the mothers simultaneously assume both functions, just as Mary did when searching for the twelve-year-old Jesus at the temple (Luke 2:41–52). As striking as the parallels between the Virgin and the victims' mothers are the actual appearances by Mary in several legends studied here, where she displays concern not only for her own son but for all children in distress.

As with the mother, so with the son. Christological images manifest themselves throughout these tales in several ways. They do so literally, with the Christ Child's actual appearance to and communication with the children, and, more often, figuratively, with Christ as a model and analogy, in the sacrificial and sanctified aspects of the victims' lives. Like Mary's life, Christ's life is reduced to two moments here, his childhood and his Passion, the beginning and end of his earthly journey. In a common topos of visionary literature, many authors recount tales of people, both Christians and Jews, who saw the Christ Child in the Eucharist at the moment of its elevation after consecration.⁸ Such visions replace the adult crucified Christ with his infantile counterpart at the heart of the Christian ritual, a transformation comparable to the substitution of a Christian child for Jesus in the accusations of ritual murder. In the tales analyzed below, the child stands in for Christ as a sacrificial offering in a reenactment of the Crucifixion, owing to his status as an innocent creature who believes in Christ and to the murderers' occasional belief that he is Christ. On one level, the accusation of ritual murder is a composite of many elements, including the older topos of the Jews as Christ-killers, the tendencies to humanize both Mary and the Christ Child, the high-medieval blurring of (adult) Christ with the Christ Child, and a concomitant blurring of "innocent" children with the Christ Child.

The parallels with and references to the Holy Family throughout these tales call attention to one of the most overlooked aspects of ritual murder, its discussion of a close relation between family and religion. Contemporary Christian religious culture abounded in familial imagery, both biological and spiritual, as an expression of community, often focused on Mary as both mother of God and mother of all the faithful. The legends of Jewish violence toward children present a strong connection and compatibility between Christian private and public life, domestic and communal, secular and religious. The family and Christianity become blurred here and are often presented as unproblematic. Familial *pietas* and parental pity are taken as signs of piety. The Jewish family, on the other hand, is presented as loveless, pitiless and impious, especially in the Marian miracles of the Jewish boy who has taken communion (the Juitel). By posing the differences between religions along familial, gendered lines, with the maternal

figure signifying compassion and grief and the male Jewish figure, sometimes also the father, representing aggression and hatred, the tales valorize (female) Christianity while deprecating (male) Judaism and in the process serve to strengthen Christian piety and sense of community.

The legends act as *exempla*, teaching the faithful the benefits of Christian goodness and the violence of Jewish malice. Certainly the Marian miracles were written to increase their audience's piety, and the tales of ritual murder also focus on the family tragedy in order to capitalize on the emotive aspects of the narrative. The inherent drama, even melodrama, of the stories is played out in a conflict of two personifications, of love and hate, over the child. The tales depict moments of charged emotions and reveal a strong concern, on the part of both the mother and the larger Christian community, for the child's fate. By centering the narrative on the child, the authors concentrate on the emotions in the tales and the emotional impact on the audiences, who are meant to react as the authors depict the crowds reacting, with pathos for child and mother but hatred for the perpetrators.

In the (usually) strict dichotomy between love and hate, the Jews act as foils, the enemy who dissembles, lies, and uses the pretense of marriage rituals or circumcision to gather and kill, thus defiling several key aspects of Jewish family life. Within these texts, the Jews are made to invert many aspects of childish behavior, turning the boys' naïveté to their purposes, making sinister even the image of children playing together. As the child-killer, the Jew becomes the destroyer of an important, vulnerable part of the Christian community. The Jew represents the outsider threatening the heart of the inside.⁹ Thus in his role as envious murderer, the figure of the Jew serves to reinforce the place of the child as an important part of contemporary Christian religiosity, at least in these tales and the cult of the Christ Child.

This study is organized around themes of vulnerability and power, secular and religious, and argues that the child plays a number of essential roles in the "logic" of ritual murder. The chapter begins with the weakness of the child and then contrasts this with the perceived power of the Jewish tormentors. This relationship then leads into a study of masculinity and femininity in tales of ritual murder, through a contrast of male harshness and maternal mercy. Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates the connections of mother and child-"victim" to the highest forms of spirituality in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I conclude by noting the powerful resonance these tales had in other arenas, as evinced in part by the wide variety of sources, religious and secular, that contained echoes of these accusations. Throughout it all, I suggest that the texts are all linked by one

underlying concern: the belief that Jews were capable of extreme violence against children, who in turn are depicted as fatally vulnerable creatures. When viewed in this light, the early accusations of ritual murder constitute part of a larger Christian concern over the connections and disjunctions between the child, family relations, Christian community, and Judaism.

Historical and Textual Backgrounds

From the first accusation of ritual murder onward, there arose a considerable literature dealing with the fantasy of Jewish violence toward children. In this section, I shall provide a brief narrative of the development of the accusations and then an overview of the sources from their origins in the mid-twelfth century through the thirteenth century.

The earliest accusation, as mentioned above, occurred in Norwich in the 1140s, following the death of a child named William. Although no victim of ritual murder received official canonization prior to Simon of Trent in the fifteenth century, the success of William's cult amounted to popular canonization (common enough in the twelfth century), as attested by a chapel dedicated to him, various miracles, offerings, and his inclusion in the liturgical calendar through the fourteenth century.¹⁰ As the first of their kind, the legends surrounding William of Norwich set many precedents for later accusations of ritual murder and even provided the key elements of the later myth of the blood libel. A strong hagiographic tradition exists for William, primarily because his cult met with Christian opposition at the beginning, forcing his supporters to defend his sanctity. Between 1150 and 1155, not long after the actual events, a Benedictine at Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, portrayed the subject of his *Life and Passion of Saint William of Norwich*¹¹ as a devout child and thus attempted to legitimize claims for the boy's sanctity by arguing for William's virtuous and charitable life. The primary features of ritual murder are articulated here: the child, the hating Jews, the grieving mother, and the empathizing crowd. Thomas's story focuses initially on evidence of the boy's piety and signs of his sanctity while William lived. The author continues with a detailed description of the events around Passover in the year 1144, when the Jews were thought to have bought, tortured, and crucified the twelve-year-old boy. Upon the body's discovery, William's family publicly suspected the Jews of Norwich and spread the accusation through the mother's loud laments and the uncle's accusations in a monastic council. As a result, the Jews of Norwich turned to the sheriff for justice while the child's body was relocated to the monastic cathedral and slowly began to become the focus of a local cult.¹²

Within a generation, similar accusations arose across England and northern

France in cases involving Richard of Pontoise (or Paris) in 1163, a boy named Harold from Gloucester in 1168, a child at Blois in 1171, Robert at Bury-St.—Edmunds in 1181, and a boy at Winchester in 1192.¹³ The quality and quantity of sources varies with each case, but patterns nonetheless emerge. A young Christian either disappeared or was found dead, often around Easter, on account of which some Christians suspected the local Jews of crucifying or at least of killing the child in hatred of Christ. While the sources for other tales of ritual murder from the second half of the twelfth century are extremely minimal, the story of a French boy supposedly murdered in Winchester in the 1190s demonstrated the extent of the accusation's diffusion. In his chronicle of the first half of the reign of Richard I, Richard of Devizes turned his attention to noteworthy events in Winchester, among them the apparent murder of a boy in 1192.¹⁴ Richard informs us that the accusation—brought by a child who was the missing boy's friend—went nowhere, despite some popular support.

Rumors of Jewish violence toward Christian children spread beyond the English Channel as well, as made evident by two chroniclers associated with King Philip Augustus of France. Citing the example of the boy Robert of Pontoise, both Rigord in his *Gesta Philippi Augusti* and Guillaume de Breton reworking of Rigord's chronicle refer to oral traditions, repeated by Philip's childhood friends, that Jews crucified, sacrificed, and even ate the hearts of Christians.¹⁵ Guillaume le Breton even went so far as to claim that Philip used these rumors to legitimize the *captio*, or seizure, of Jewish assets in 1180–81 and the expulsion of Jews from his kingdom in 1182. The accusation of cannibalism introduced a theme different from the earlier accusation of crucifixion and closer to what later became known as the blood libel.

The thirteenth-century shift from crucifixion to cannibalistic bloodletting, the blood libel, involved a number of important shifts in the discourse of ritual murder—a continental rather than insular origin and diffusion, a further demonizing of the supposed perpetrators, a move away from discussion of the child toward an even greater focus on parental grief, and a resulting increase in violence toward Jews. The earliest recorded case of blood libel, an incident at Fulda in 1236, is known only through a few brief accounts in German chronicles and provides little information on the children involved. While a miller and his wife were at church on Christmas day, their house burned down, all of their five sons dying in the fire. Two Jews of Fulda were accused not only of setting the blaze but of doing so to hide a much more shocking deed, the collection of the children's blood, apparently for medicinal use.¹⁶ Despite Frederick II's declaration that the accusations were false, the new variant on ritual murder quickly acquired a

legitimacy of its own.

Eleven years later, a similar charge arose in a small town east of the Rhône in Provence, on the border between French and imperial territory. Like the Fulda incident, the case at Valréas in 1247 provides little information on the child involved but focuses on the parents' actions and emotions and on the Jews' supposed intentions and motivations. We know the Valréas incident primarily through a detailed inquest recorded by the scribe of the local lord, Dragonet de Montauban, sire de Mondragon.¹⁷ The Valréas incident was the first case in which the victim was female, a two-and-a-half-year-old girl named Meilla. The trial record concludes prior to the sentencing of the defendants, a factual void filled by two Bulls issued from Lyons by Innocent IV, both addressed to the archbishop of Vienne. In the announcements, both dated May 28, 1247, the pope strongly condemned the trial and its consequences, which included the death by fire of several Jews in Valréas and the expulsion, despoiling, and dismembering of others. In both letters, Innocent refers briefly to the accusation "of having nailed to a cross a certain girl who had been found dead in a certain ditch."¹⁸ Apparently, the Jews of Vienne, who had brought the case to the pontiff's attention, did not even mention the blood accusation in their description of the events in Valréas. Yet two months later, Innocent addressed the charge of blood libel and firmly denied the accusation of cannibalism as part of the Passover service, just as Frederick II had opposed the charge eleven years earlier. Nevertheless, the papal opposition to the charge came too late for five suspects, whose confessions, though extracted under duress, were enough to convict them of having murdered a Christian child for ritual purposes.

Despite the popular support for the new child martyrs and the influence of figures as powerful as Philip Augustus, Innocent IV, and Frederick II, the early accusations of ritual murder often developed simply into local cults. It was only with a mid-thirteenth-century tale that an extensive and sustained cult arose. The events of 1255 in Lincoln surrounding the death of a child named Hugh¹⁹ became famous throughout England and eclipsed the stories of the other children to such an extent that, almost a century and a half later, Chaucer, at the end of "The Prioress's Tale," invoked little Hugh of Lincoln as the quintessential example of a victim of ritual murder.²⁰ Closer to Hugh's time, the popularity of the saintly child was also apparent in the large quantity of contemporary material referring to the case—more than a dozen royal documents, three main Latin chronicle narratives, and an Old French ballad, all dating from the 1250s and 1260s. Although I focus on the narratives rather than the brief documents, all the sources reveal an important novelty in the history of the accusations: For the first time, the story of

the "cruel death" of a child at the hands of the Jews received English royal approval, which resulted in the arrest of ninety-three and the execution of nineteen of the accused.

The twelfth- and thirteenth-century concern over a Jewish threat to Christian children surfaces not only in documents concerning ritual murder but also in a variety of other sources, particularly in thirteenth-century collections of Marian miracles. As mentioned above, the Virgin appeared at several key moments in the tales of ritual murder and was often closely connected to the child, as a friend and as the figure to whom mothers turned for guidance. Marian miracles more emphatically drew such connections by focusing on the Virgin's role as Jesus' mother, a role broadened to include her maternal mercy for those in need. Although many Marian miracles were already well established, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed a dynamic interest in the retelling of old stories and in the creation of new Marian tales,²¹ several of which combine imagery of maternal love and Jewish child-slaying.

One such legend relates a story remarkably close to the narratives of ritual murder, one that blurs with, and serves as a source for, much of Hugh of Lincoln's tale.²² The miracle of the singing boy (sometimes called the "tale of the Chorister") probably originated around 1200 in England, since no version of the story predates that year and all early versions place the event in England. The tale quickly became popular among writers of Marian miracles and remains known today mainly through Chaucer's retelling in "The Prioress's Tale."²³ A brief rhymed version of the legend, in John of Garland's *Stella maris, or Miracula Beatae Virginis Mariae*, written around 1248, encapsulates the plot in twelve densely packed lines:

A boy nourished his mother's poverty [by] singing something he
knew about Mary. Out of envy, a base Jew killed and buried him
in his house. The mother, searching, called to him. He sang again
the usual song under the ground. The boy was soon liberated.

The law punished with death the guilty Jews in England.²⁴

The poem only hints at the rich details of the longer narratives: the poor schoolboy who sings the response *Gaude Maria* throughout the city; the Jew who, offended by a line in the song, leads the child away and then kills and buries him; the mother who, on hearing her son sing, searches for and locates him; the boy's extraction from the ground; and the Jews' (usually plural by this point in the narrative) punishment. Although in most versions there is no ritual element to the murder, the plot revolves around a religiously motivated hatred of Christianity,

manifested once again through violence toward a child, who is here taken to symbolize Christian devotion.

Other anti-Jewish discourses suggested that it was not simply Christian children who, according to Christian folklore, could spark Jewish men's anger. Jewish children were also perceived to be threatened by similar violent outbursts from their parents, especially their fathers. Belief in a Jewish predilection for killing young Christians found many parallels in a story from another miracle of Mary, one that predated the earliest accusations by more than half a millennium. The tale of the *Juitel* (the "little Jew," *judeulus*, or *Judenknabe*, also known as the *Jew of Bourges*)²⁵ centers on the issue of conversion to Christianity but also provides a considerable amount of material on childhood and childrearing.²⁶ It seems to have first appeared in Western Europe through the version of Gregory of Tours, in the first book of his *De gloria martyrum*, written soon after 590. Later versions in Latin, Old French, and Middle English²⁷ particularly stress the tension between patriarchal belligerence and childhood curiosity. An anonymous version written by a French Cistercian in the first half of the thirteenth century contains the basic elements:

A certain Jewish child, having received the body of Christ with the other [children], [was] thrown into a burning furnace by his father. However, on the altar where he took Communion, there was an image of the blessed Virgin, at which he had stared intently. When he was in the furnace, the blessed Virgin appeared to him in the form of the image that he had seen over the altar and freed him without even feeling the heat. This occurred in Bourges.²⁸

Through the adults' roles in the drama, the narrative allowed writers to discuss ideal and improper parenting behavior in a story filled with images of nurturance and threat. This miracle presents a child-centered view of Christianity,²⁹ a study in contrasts, of maternal Christian mercy versus paternal Jewish savagery. The miracle brings to the foreground issues of the Virgin as protector of children, of the cult of the Christ Child, and of children's piety.

Although there were few renderings of the *Juitel* prior to the twelfth century, the tale became immensely popular from about 1100 onward, owing in part to its prominent appearance in two of the three main groupings of Marian miracles and subsequent reproduction and retelling in hundreds of twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts.³⁰ The legend's antiquity led to the development of many variant versions, which were related to one another in complex ways.

Although the ultimate source of the tale is unknown, the plot closely resembles a story in the Arabic Infancy Gospel.³¹ By the twelfth century, coinciding with a broader interest in the mother of God and an increasing belief in Jewish animosity, the tale had appeared in miracle collections, chronicles, sermons, and saints' lives.³² In analyzing these twelfth- and thirteenth-century Marian tales, I shall focus on their connections with accusations of ritual murder, specifically their mutual interest in, and awareness of, childhood and the emotions children aroused in adults.

Finally, one tale combines many of the narratives described above: the little-studied and mysterious tale of Adam of Bristol. It purports to recount events from the 1170s but is most likely a later thirteenth-century creation; it is found only in a manuscript dating from the latter period. The text largely deals with the passion of a seven-year-old boy who was lured, captured, and tortured by a Jewish family. The story fuses together elements of ritual murder and the story of the *Juitel*. It combines the capture and painful killing of a Christian boy by a Jewish family with the murder of a Jewish wife and child by an angry patriarch, Samuel. The story of Adam and Samuel reinforces the increasingly broadened fantasy of Jewish violence toward children as a general category, not just Christian children.

Powerlessness and The Child

Like the previously studied debates over infant baptism, the sources for this chapter share one important characteristic, unusual in texts of this period: They all place the child at the center of attention. However, in contrast to the discussions of baptism, with their generalized inclusion of all children, these tales single out a specific child and his (and, in one instance only, her) particular fate. In the process, the tales utilize distinctive characteristics of children as a primary impetus for much of the action. The sources intertwine the typical with the extraordinary in several ways: by shifting between the child seen as ordinary and the child seen as exceptional and by contrasting the quotidian with scenes of extreme violence. The boys were often simultaneously ordinary, in demonstrating attributes deemed to be appropriate to a child, and remarkable, in transcending the weaknesses and inadequacies inherent to childhood. The child's low and at times marginal social status plays an important part in the narratives of ritual murder and Jewish violence toward children. Not only do the narratives capitalize on the vulnerabilities associated here with childhood generally, but they further identify the helplessness of the "victim" by highlighting the child's poverty and even abject misery.

The child's powerlessness was most prominently associated with two characteristics: He was usually half-orphaned and he was always extremely poor. The two often coincided, and writers carefully chose particular examples from their subjects' lives to emphasize their social vulnerability. Thomas of Monmouth tells us that William of Norwich, the first ritual-murder "victim," was born into a poor Anglo-Saxon family from rural Norfolk. Because his father had died, the text accentuates his family's economic need. At the age of eight, William made the transition from the family to the public realm by entering into an apprenticeship with the local skinnners.³³ William compared favorably with his fellow apprentices, whom he surpassed in learning the trade. The child, who had already exhibited a prodigious piety, manifested a similar zeal and gift for his vocational training, to such an extent that he quickly equaled his instructors. In making such observations, Thomas of Monmouth shifts between the mundane—a young commoner's trade—and the extraordinary abilities of this particular child. The family's need and William's ingenuity not only foregrounded his many talents and remarkable (but not necessarily miraculous) abilities but also helped to explain his move from his rural homeland to the urban world and thus into contact with the Jews of Norwich.

Just as William moved from the countryside to an urban apprenticeship, other child martyrs were similarly divorced from their place of origin owing to their economic need. The Winchester boys, according to Richard of Devizes, were doubly uprooted. First, they were both orphans and had only each other, with no adult male advocate or protector. Second, they had traveled from France to Winchester and so were even further isolated in their new surroundings. The victim was an unnamed Christian boy, trained as a cobbler, "French in origin, a minor and an orphan, of low condition and of extreme poverty."³⁴ As with William, the child's poverty plays several important roles in the narrative and helps to explain his presence in a distant locale, which in this case is Winchester. The boy was acquainted with a French Jew who had urged him to travel across the channel, away from the impoverished life he then led, to a "land flowing with milk and honey," where no upright person would die poor. Enticed by the French Jew's descriptions of English plenitude, the child decided to follow the advice. Invoking poverty in order to heighten the tale's emotional impact, Richard emphasizes the boy's dire condition by noting that the child departed with nothing but a staff and an awl, with which to practice his trade. He also took with him a companion of the same age, also French and unnamed, who became the primary center of emotional outpouring in the events that followed. Richard's brief description of the boys' lives in England prior to the disappearance links together their poverty and their attachment to one another: "No matter where the poor

little ones worked or ate away from each other, every night they rested in a little bed in a hut of an old woman."³⁵ With this and other images, Richard dramatically accentuates the marginal nature of the boys' social and economic position.

In the tale of the Gaude boy, the theme of poverty plays a crucial role, linking the family's desperation, the child's innocence, and the Jew's violence and, in the process, dominating the narrative. Gautier de Coinci in his *Miracles Nostre Dame*, written between 1218 and 1231, notes that the mother, much devoted to the Virgin, was so poor that she resorted to begging (*porquerre sa substance*) in the city streets. In introducing the son, Gautier stresses the boy's uniqueness, both as the woman's only child (*un seul enfant avoit sanz plus*) and as an exceptionally good and gentle soul, to whom Christians often gave alms, simply on seeing the boy's "fair face."³⁶ In his version of the miracle, Gautier identifies the boy as utterly devoted to his mother and does so in a way that emphasizes the duo's precarious economic and social status. Despite their poverty, the boy received an education, during which he learned to sing, his voice being described as that of "a little angel" (*angelot*). His talent attracted listeners and consequently money.

The boy displayed other "angelic" attributes, particularly when he brought home the food and money donated by his audience. The boy's presentation of his meager earnings to his mother embodied the ideal of familial duty, as demonstrated in a speech filled with references to *pietas*:

"Mother, you have nurtured me entirely from the assistance of others, from others' alms. But by the faith that I owe to my father's soul, it often cuts my heart with grief when I see you begging for your bread. It stabs me in the heart very harshly. From this point forward do not beg for it, I beseech you, my sweet mother. If God preserves my clear voice and keeps me safe and sound, there would doubtless never be a day when my good health would not bring you bread, meat, and sustenance...

." And so the little cleric comforts the poor good woman."³⁷

The nurturing has been reversed in this speech, so that the son soothes the mother and the child assumes the role of an adult male, that of the dead father. As the reference to the father's soul suggests, it is a question of family honor that the suddenly mature child must address. While it illustrates the close bond between mother and child, the quotation also emphasizes one important factor in the relationship: Unlike the son, the mother seems to have no skills and can only beg for a living. With his singing, the boy was able to provide comfortably for himself and for his mother (lines 93–94) and so became her hope, her escape

from starvation. Her economic and emotional dependence on the boy forecasts the extent of the tragedy wrought by his disappearance.

While the other "victims" did not come from quite such desperate circumstances, all were commoners: The boy Adam of Bristol came from a family of tailors and the young Meilla was of poor village stock. One account of the life of Hugh of Lincoln emphasizes the boy's humble status as well as his physical stature: "saint Hugh, a little child of nine years, a student, the only son of a certain poor little woman."³⁸ In each case, the children came from modest origins, and some were utterly impoverished, in desperate need of employment. Equally important, most were also vulnerable because they had no father to provide for and defend them. We shall look later at the religious and other implications of their status. For now, the socioeconomic straits of these children, who belonged to a group of marginal city dwellers often ignored in the documents of the period, provides the opportunity for considerable melodrama and for a clear contrast between the sinister enemy and the desperate children.

The tales not only cite the economic status of the child as a motivation for supposed Jewish violence but also identify several attributes of childhood that mark the "victims" as easy prey. Many of the victims in these tales exhibit a carefree playfulness and naïveté. In particular, the innocent interactions among children take on a considerable significance in several tales. Each version of the miracle of the *Juitel* emphasizes the bond of friendship between Christian children and the Jewish boy. The writers introduce the main character, the Juitel, as emotionally attached to other children in the city, particularly Christian schoolboys. According to Gregory of Tours and most later tellers of the tale, the boy received his education alongside the Christian children.³⁹ In a sermon from the early twelfth century, Herbert of Losinga expresses a dislike of all interaction between the religions, *except* the children's commingling: "The children of the Jews learned Christian letters, and the sap of truth was poured little by little into the tender minds of the Jews."⁴⁰ While the other versions refer only to the Juitel as being taught alongside Christians, Herbert identifies the boys' education as one manifestation of the widespread communication between Jews and Christians in the unnamed Greek city.

Children's games received considerable attention in this literature. The invocation of puerile pastimes appears to be the catalyst for the drama that ensues. The tales of the *Juitel*, particularly the longer thirteenth-century Old French versions, define the relations between the children. A Latin poem of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century begins the tale with the boy entering a

church because he was "playing together with the children of Christians and [was] touched by a love for them."⁴¹ Gautier de Coinci emphasizes the Juitel's friendship with the others, in contrast to his disdain for his Jewish peers and for his father's wishes: "A Jew had a Jewish boy (*giuetel*) more intelligent and much fairer than all the other Jewish boys because he was pleasant and good. All the little clerics of the city felt great affection for him."⁴² In their midst, the Juitel found himself caught up in their excitement as they were called to Mass on Easter Sunday. Most of the tales of the *Juitel* invoke a notion of interreligious camaraderie, suggesting a belief in the inherent goodness and openness of childhood.

In contrast to the idea of positive interaction between the Juitel and Christian boys, the references to children playing together in the French royal court during Philip Augustus's childhood include highly pejorative comments about Jewish malevolence. The royal chronicler Rigord noted that Philip "had heard many times from the boys who were raised (*nutriti*) with him in the palace, and this he commended to memory without forgetting, that the Jews who stayed in Paris every year on Easter or in Holy Week [used to] hide in underground crypts and cut the throat of a Christian as a sacrifice, in reproach of the Christian religion."⁴³ To substantiate the rumors, Rigord noted one particular instance, that of the child Richard of Pontoise, who was thought to have been "killed and crucified" by the Jews of Paris in 1163 and whose body was translated to the Church of the Holy Innocents, one of many connections between the "victims" of ritual murder and the infant proto-martyrs, as we shall see.⁴⁴ It is intriguing that the accusations could spread fear quickly, especially *among* children. Suggesting that the rumor was more than a simple tale to frighten the young, Rigord states that it was as a pretext—for the despoiling of the synagogues—that Philip Augustus later employed the allegations against the Jews.

The playfulness of children took on a further dark connotation in thirteenth-century tales, as it was identified by writers as a means by which Jews could capture Christian children. We first encounter young Hugh of Lincoln at the moment of his abduction, in the midst of playing with several friends in the streets of the city. The Burton chronicle and Matthew Paris both provide a strong contrast between the harmless fun of children and the malicious hatred of the adult, male Jews. Only after establishing this setting of childhood camaraderie and amusement—Hugh was engrossed in "the jokes and dances of his fellow Christians of his own age"—does the Burton chronicler mention the Jew Jopin's "sneak attacks" (*insidiis*) on Hugh.⁴⁵ While he also refers to the children's games,

Matthew Paris suggests a more sinister aspect to the sports: The neighbors claim that they had seen Hugh "playing with the children of the Jews, of the same age as him, and entering the house of a certain Jew."⁴⁶ The passage betrays a Christian fear that the interaction of Christian and Jewish children was used as a ruse to lure the boy into the Jews' hands.⁴⁷ Here and elsewhere, attempts of the Fourth Lateran Council to segregate adherents of the two religions of Western Europe were implicitly portrayed as ineffectual.⁴⁸ In the Burton chronicle, the claim that the horseplay took place in the streets at dusk provides the "perpetrator" with the opportunity he needed to seize the boy, while for Matthew Paris the commingling of children of both religions serves the same purpose.

The reinterpretation of child's play as a sinister ruse is most pronounced in the story of Adam of Bristol. We first meet Adam in a scene that momentarily inverted expectations of children's innocence: An unnamed Jewish boy, the son of Samuel, knowingly lured Adam away from his neighborhood with promises of food and entertainment. The Jewish boy even claimed that his parents were Christians. The contrast between one boy's conscious fraud and another's innocence problematized the Jewish boy's status as a child, since the concept of an evil child was rarely acknowledged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁴⁹

Common to all the tales alleging Jewish violence are the concepts of children's vulnerability and simplicity. Whether susceptible because of his simplicity or of his economic desperation, the child in these texts had become a symbol of societal impotence, the lowest of the low, the weakest of the weak, the simplest and most naïve. Such observations do not, however, fully address the question of what the origins of the accusation of ritual murder might be. The answer must be sought in various arenas, including the relation of the supposed victim to his fictional persecutor(s). It is to this issue, a study of the antithetical roles of child and Jew(s) and their meanings, that we shall now turn.

Power Misused: Jews and Children

Many modern scholars have rightly pointed to the crucial role of anti-Judaism in these tales, but they tend to isolate Christian animosity toward Jews from Christian anxiety over children. In this section, I would like to connect these two strands and view the tales as expressions of at least two simultaneous emotions: hostility toward Jews and fear for the welfare of children. The texts construct a direct, inverse correlation between the vulnerability of the child and the strength of the Jew(s), who in the earliest sources are associated with a council of men and are later often reduced to a single male Jew. In fact, the sources often create a one-dimensional character of "the Jew" as a foil to the child. Every

characteristic attributed to the Jewish enemy provides a clear contrast with the characteristics demonstrated by the child: prosperity and poverty, strength and weakness, cruelty and love, control by local authorities and powerlessness, an entire Jewish community and a solitary child, disguised malice and patent naïveté. The powerful resonance and drama of the tales lie in this antithesis and antagonism.

Children, Jews, Money, and Deceit

On the most secular and social level, the tales often center on the urban economic world, its pitfalls and dangers, enacted through the interplay of children and adult Jews. The child's poverty and subsequent powerlessness become, on the surface, the entry point for the villains of the story: Most tales introduce the Jewish perpetrators as coaxing their prey with promises of economic gain. The writers combine contemporary cultural concerns over urban anonymity, Jewish wealth, categories of poverty, and the simplicity of children to set the stage for the violent fantasies they explore.

The main pretense for enticing the children into a Jewish house was often some form of employment or remuneration. In his *Life* of the first of these child-martyrs, Thomas of Monmouth associates the Jews of Norwich with greed and cunning, both of which he identifies as playing key roles in William's dramatic death. In a passage that stresses scheming avarice, the Jews choose to work with him in preference to all the other young skimmers because of his skills and his economic need, which induces him to work for less money.⁵⁰ The half-orphan is depicted as needing money badly enough to leave a secure (though not yet lucrative) apprenticeship. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* solidifies the economic backdrop of the accusation by noting rather obscurely that the Jews of Norwich "bought a Christian child before Easter."⁵¹ In describing the Winchester accusation of the 1170s, Richard of Devizes explains the boy's choice of employers by claiming that, in contrast to Christian employers, the English Jew paid more money for less work.

The emphasis on indigent children and wealthy Jews leads to some concern over the dangers of urban life, an anxiety that is expressed through the child's tragic fate. In Richard of Devizes' chronicle, a French Jew convinces the boys to choose Winchester over the other urban centers of England because it was purported to be more hospitable and to offer better opportunities for prosperity. It is in the midst of a now famous discussion of the vices of other English cities that the French Jew extols the virtues of Winchester and thereby seals the boy's fate. The French Jew seeks to exploit the boy's desperate need for employment. The

resurgence of urban communities provides a variety of forms of employment and the possibility of interaction with different types of people, including members of a religious minority.

The intertwining of childhood innocence, urban poverty, and Jewish wealth is most pronounced in the story of the Gaude boy. We have already encountered his resolve in his quest to feed his mother. Gautier de Coinci describes in detail how the boy sang to large crowds around the city. One day, he enters the Jewish quarter with some companions and encounters several Christians, who eagerly press him to sing for them. Finding himself the center of the attention of all of feudal society, "knight, cleric, and layman," he enchants his audience as usual. After the crowd disperses, a Jew attempts, on the pretext of wanting to hear him sing once more, to entice the boy into his house by praising his voice and his education, expressing a fascination with the music, and promising rewards to the boy and particularly to his mother. In representing the threat to the child's life, Gautier depicts the Jew in all the negative guises common to medieval anti-Semitic discourse: He is "cruel and perverse," "poisoned by the devil's venom," ready to lure the devout child away to his doom. Gautier depicts the Jew as appropriating the same praise that the Christians had earlier lavished on the boy: No child has ever sung as he does; the Jew has been enchanted; and the song has moved him deeply. The Jew refers several times to the boy's mother in a speech that, as the poem's audience (and apparently the Jew) knows, will resonate with the boy's sense of familial *pietas*. The Jew even echoes the child's previous declarations: "By the faith that I owe to my father's soul, your mother will be the better for it, if you come with me into my house... . For love of you, I will deliver your mother from her cares" (lines 177–79, 184–85).⁵² Tellers of this Marian miracle often identify the indigence and impercipience of the Gaude boy as the child's essential characteristics that attracted his attacker.

Association with religious minorities is only one urban concern expressed by the writers describing the purported Jewish threat. Urban anonymity serves to explain the apparent success of the Jews' plans. In the story of Adam of Bristol, the Jewish patriarch Samuel has trained his young son to choose a Christian boy carefully. For several reasons, the boy must find a Christian from another parish in the city—so that neither the victim nor any potential onlookers will know the son's Jewish identity, and so that the victim's family would not easily find him. The tale of the entrapment centers on the danger of a city's size and on the consequent ease with which one can hide one's tracks, just as the killer hides his motives.

Thomas of Monmouth goes to great lengths to contrast malice and childhood

gullibility. Portrayed at first as an economic incentive for the Jews to interact with the boy, the simplicity of William of Norwich is transformed by Thomas into imprudence, an inability to perceive evil intentions, a weakness that entices the Jews to choose him. Thomas tells us that several Christians, aware of William's guileless ignorance and optimism, warned him not to associate with the Jews. In response, Thomas claims, the Jews sent out an unnamed man to find the boy and to act as betrayer, a new Judas. The man used "deceptive word tricks" and lies to entrap the "simple boy."⁵³ William was handed over to the Jews and spent the night at the house of one of them, where he was treated in a kindly manner that disguised a darker deceit. In the morning, when the leaders of the Jews (*iudeorum principes*) suddenly seized the boy while he ate, William, although taken entirely by surprise, nevertheless still "feared absolutely no deceit."⁵⁴

Similarly, Richard of Devizes portrays the French boy as utterly unable to identify falsehoods. In fact, Richard plays on this idea by having the French Jew (who sends the boys across the channel) reassure his prey, "I do not forget whom I am instructing; you have beyond your years a warmth of talents (*ingenii*), a coldness of memory, and, from these two contraries, a temperance of reason."⁵⁵ Such compliments stand in contrast to the Jew's actual motive, to direct the boy toward Winchester and to his death. In fact, the conclusion of the speech emphasizes the particular irony that the boy, contrary to the claims of intelligence, "interpreted in a good sense" everything the Jew had said, and willingly took with him a letter in Hebrew, supposedly a letter of introduction but actually a death "warrant." The rhetoric of the guileless child and the malicious Jew work in tandem throughout these tales. The child "freely frequented the devil's house, seduced by his gifts and deceits (*dolis*),"⁵⁶ a phrasing that parallels William's inability to perceive guile in others as well as the eagerness of the Norwich boy to accept a chance for employment. Similarly, in the story of Adam of Bristol, the Jewish mother pretends to greet the child lovingly, "kisses the Christian boy with so much deceit, saying, 'Welcome, son,'" and brings in bread, meat, and beer.⁵⁷ In all cases, such a façade of kindness or employment disappears immediately after the child is securely within his killer's grasp.

While recognizing the importance of the socioeconomic underpinnings to the tales, we must always remember that they are largely a backdrop against which the religious significance of the tales is placed. The child-victims may be isolated and desperate, but in this context their connection to their supposed malefactors comes to signify what these Christian writers increasingly saw as an antagonism based on religious difference. Like the social distinction between the poor and the

wealthy, the antithesis of Christian and Jew is reduced to a conflict of seemingly impotent child and all-powerful Jewish adult(s).

Ritual Violence

The tales quickly become the site of a conflict of religions, a conflict played out over the body of a child. The most visually arresting element of the tales of ritual murder is, without a doubt, the violence itself. While I argue that what precedes and what follows the ordeal and death are of equal importance in understanding the accusations, the attention to detail in describing the passions of the child-martyrs remains the most memorable part of the tales. The illustration from the British Library demonstrates this (although its depiction is inaccurate on many accounts; see London, BL Harley 957, folio 21r), as it reduces the scene to a menacing Jew and a helpless boy on a cross. To describe the tortures inflicted on the children in these tales would be as tedious as it is gruesome and sadistic. Instead, I shall focus on select moments that emphasize the victim's status as a child.

We encounter in the first account of ritual murder some attention to the torture and killing, but it is in the tales dating from the second half of the thirteenth century that a greater fascination with the violence attributed to Jews begins to emerge. The tales of Hugh of Lincoln seem to revel in the bloody and overly dramatic details of the child's death. In one elaborate telling of Hugh's passion, the child's jailor, Jopin, leads the bound boy into the gathering of the wealthiest English Jews: "All the Jews who were there expressed great joy when they saw the child entirely naked; they had very little pity for him."⁵⁸ The child, bound and naked, a symbol of extreme vulnerability, stands entirely at the mercy of his pitiless captors, who sell him to one member of the *grant semblé*, Agon or Agim, who takes on the role of primary torturer. To complement the idea of Jewish control and power, the balladeer contrasts the actors' physical and emotional reactions: the Jews' sadistic joy and the child's pain and terror. We hear how "the child now was trembling greatly ... how the young child had fear at this hour, when the cross was placed there securely."⁵⁹ Through the reminders and repetitions of the victim's childhood, the poet emphasizes the difference between the large number of Jews (*tuz les Jus*) and the single and tiny figure of Hugh. In fact, many of the earlier stories emphasize a unity of Jews against a solitary Christian child.

Judaism itself appears as a perverse, bloodthirsty mockery of a religion throughout many of the texts. In the anonymous tale of Adam of Bristol, by far the most sadistic tale of ritual murder, the torture is described as a ritual,

officium, the main purpose of which is to sacrifice the child, who is alternately described as the God of the Christians and as "our pig."⁶⁰ The Jewish family stabs, burns, crucifies, slaps, spits on, and hurls words of abuse at the Christian boy in an extremely lengthy, almost obsessive description of his passion. Religious ritual figures prominently here and always emphasizes the size and hence the age of the hapless seven-year-old. The boy's primary adversary, Samuel, has prepared a piece of wood "the width of a child's arms." The child-sized cross stands as a testament to the author's belief in Jewish hatred not just of Jesus as divine Messiah but also of Christianity as a whole.

The tales continuously misrepresent contemporary Judaism through violent actions toward children. In many accounts the Jewish crowd has ostensibly gathered for Passover, a circumcision, or a wedding. In both the tale of William of Norwich and that of Adam of Bristol, Jewish religious song is used to drown out the sound of the boys' torment. We shall consider the christological connections later but must note here that the many references to a sacrificial lamb hint at a belief in a hidden Passover ritual. In his forced confession, a Jew of Valréas "said that, if a child could be had, he would be, and with his blood they would make something like a sacrifice. And he said 'like' because they cannot make a sacrifice, since they don't have a Temple."⁶¹ The contemporary ceremony, we learn, was based on an ancient rite wherein the high priest sprinkled the blood of a bull in front of the Temple as atonement for the people's sins. Another suspect said simply that "if a boy or a girl were to be found, he would be killed," while another man even more succinctly claimed that "it was agreed that one child would be killed."⁶² In the tales of blood libel, there is a broadening of the threat to all non-Jewish children; one of the accused in Valréas notes that even a Muslim child would do, if no Christian were available. Combined with the tales of the *Juitel* and of Adam of Bristol, in which Jewish children were also killed, the sources as a whole suggest that no child was safe from Jewish cruelty.

True to the Christian idea of an angry Judaism intent on ritual slaughter, the animal imagery most often associated with the child-victim is the lamb. In Gautier de Coinci's tale of the Gaude boy, the death scene is quick but bloody, and stress is placed on the fragility of the child. The Jew successfully lures the child to his house with the promises of money for his mother: "The exhausted child very much believed that all this was true. The little cleric simply, like a little lamb, followed the Jew into his house. Man never caused such cruelty" (lines 186—90).⁶³ Expecting to play the singing *angelot* (little angel), the boy enters the house only to take on the role of the *aingnelés* (little lamb), a reference to the young sheep led off by wolves, to the animal sacrifices of Jewish antiquity, and to

Christ. But the boy's death here is not so carefully planned as that of William and the other children. The poet predictably draws a contrast between the cold violence of the perpetrator, who splits the boy's skull open with an ax, and the victim's "tender and fair mouth" (the body part that incited the Jew's anger), from which pour forth his blood and brains. Gautier's description of the boy's death, particularly in its excessive violence, serves to reinforce the delicate and diminutive nature of the child.

The tales often alternate between depicting scenes of orderly, ceremonial sacrifice and moments of frenzied, uncontrollable violence. Describing the supposed martyrdom of Hugh of Lincoln, one chronicler creates an anachronistic fiction in which the high priests, the wisest representatives of English Jews, assembled and sentenced young Hugh: "They should hand over the innocent one to death."⁶⁴ Although the idea that all the Jews of England gathered for a ritual murder is common enough in this literature, the most striking aspect of the passage lies in the emphasis on Jewish wisdom as distorted and terrifying.

While many tales of ritual violence emphasize the apparent might of Jews by creating a sense of communal purpose, others identify only a single evildoer, though one whose actions implicate all Jews. Whether it is the collective unity of Jews—in Europe (as with William of Norwich), in England (Hugh of Lincoln), or in a specific town—or a solitary Jew, the texts momentarily identify Jews, and specifically Jewish men, with awesome and awful power over a small child.

The Jewish Patriarch and the False Family

Among the many themes that intertwine in these texts, one of the most consistent is the importance of the family. The tales abound in images of good and loving families as well as in domestic scenarios that are false and harsh. It is to the latter that we shall now turn, and we shall note their connections with deceit and violence. Especially in the thirteenth century, the entire tale is reduced to a conflict between a single patriarchal figure and a single child. In the texts, Jewish hatred of Christianity (via children) is personified as distinctly male and aggressive. Although women are sometimes involved in the anti-Christian violence toward children, it is always adult Jewish men who are portrayed as the instigators and primary actors. The secret councils that meet to announce the death penalty are all male, as are the jailors and torturers.

The gendered association that is made between Jewish malevolence and men is most apparent in the tales that reduce the actors to one criminal and one victim. Jewish hatred of Christianity becomes synonymous with patriarchal rage, and it leads to a series of discussions of Jewish and Christian families. In many tales,

the Jewish family is depicted as false, destructive, and destructible, in purposeful contrast to the true and loving but equally fragile Christian family.

In several tales, Jews use familial imagery to allay the child's suspicions about their intentions. We have already seen that the Jew in the story of the Gaude boy invokes the memory of his own father to strike a chord with the child, who sings to support his poor mother. We find some evidence of false claims of openness and intimacy in the story of the French boys in Winchester. Richard of Devizes tells us that the English Jew welcomed the boy into his household (*in familiare familie sue consciuerat ministerium*). The seemingly redundant words *familiale familie* stress Richard's preoccupation with the pretense of kindness that the two Jews show toward the boys, always with an ulterior motive. Throughout the tale, Jewish kindness and intimacy become outward appearances that mask an interior malice. Despite the warm welcome into his household, the English Jew did not allow the boy to live with the family, fearful that such proximity would later put the Jew under suspicion. In the story of Adam of Bristol, the Jewish woman, desperate to keep the victim in the house despite his requests to leave, lies to the boy and declares that she is his father's niece: "Truly, with your brothers, you are my blood and my flesh, and I will lead you home to your father and mother."⁶⁵ When he still resists (which suggests that he does not believe her claim of kinship), she continues her feigned desire for intimacy with the child, now introducing a physical dimension to their false relation: "I will place you in my bosom all this night" (*collocabo te in sinu meo*).

In several tales, we find not just false claims of love and kinship to the victim but also the image of the Jewish biological family as a perverse mockery of the ideal family. In the story of Adam of Bristol, the Jewish family that kidnaps the Christian boy acts as the antithesis of the proper family. Samuel, the father and ringleader, closely controls his family and has trained his wife and son to help kidnap Christian boys. The entire Jewish family, here reduced to father, mother, and son, is involved in the bloody endeavor. While their victim lies securely in the back room, the family calmly sits down together for a meal, eating, drinking, and discussing "the ways in which they could more cruelly punish and kill the innocent."⁶⁶ Samuel tells his son to stab the crucified boy and even holds the son high enough to do so, in a passage that reminds the audience of the Jewish boy's small stature. The Jewish family, goaded on by the patriarch and his seemingly endless hatred of Christianity, acts in the most unnatural way.

While the tale of Adam of Bristol may be the most violent example of a Jewish family gone awry, it is by no means the only one in a literature devoted to the demonization of Jews and Judaism. The story of the *Juitel* centers on the collapse

of a Jewish family brought about by the father himself, as he reacts with horror and anger to his son's taking of Communion. The destructive power of the father certainly takes center stage, but some versions of the tale actually, though fleetingly, present a positive image of the Jewish parents. In two versions of the tale, they react with the same anxiety as do the Christian parents in the other stories. Like the mothers of Hugh and of the singing scholar, both parents grow quickly concerned at the disappearance of their son: "The child's parents sought their infant everywhere, with the greatest grief and pain; everyone they encountered they asked concerning their son."⁶⁷ In the anonymous Anglo-Norman poem, the concern of the parents receives greater emphasis, through references to their lamentation (*fesant deol e gueimentaunt*). In a passage paralleling the later ballad of Hugh of Lincoln, the parents "think that this is trickery, that their child has been stolen (*emblé*) from them."⁶⁸ The representation of Jewish parental concern (to be repeated by the mother after the attempted murder) includes the same commonplaces as are in all the other mourning scenes discussed above, with a crucial difference: One of them will soon transform anguish into anger and attempt to kill the child. The attribution of parental concern to the Jewish father, the unrepentant villain in all but one of these tales, is exceptional in a literature devoted largely to the demonization of Jewish men.

Despite the two sympathetic portrayals of the Juitel's parents, all of the versions continue the negative characterization of the father once the child has returned from Mass. The scene in which the parents interrogate their son concerning his recent whereabouts revolves around a contrast between the son's fear and the father's anger and between the boy's naïve weakness and the adult's uncontrolled strength. After taking Communion, the child returns home, filled with joy and eager to relate the day's excitement. In some cases, following the version of Gregory of Tours, the father reacts to the son's exuberance with an equally effusive display of emotion, by hugging and kissing him, who then tells his tale to the father's horror.⁶⁹ Gautier de Coinci slightly alters this by stressing the shining beauty in the child's face (already established as extremely fair), on account of which the father runs to meet him.

Some versions of the *Juitel* present the child's interaction with the parents in a more sinister light by mentioning the threats and fear they used when extracting information from him. One retelling, from the Cotton manuscript, draws a contrast between an earlier reference to the parents' anxiety and their menacing anger on finding the child: "Entirely frightened with an infant's fear and forced by their threats, in a child's voice he revealed to his parents everything in order."⁷⁰

Although the Cotton text does not elaborate on the child's voice and fear, an anonymous Anglo-Norman poem does: "Through great fear and through threats from his father, who greatly pressed him, [he answered,] the whole time crying with an ugly expression, as is the manner of children."⁷¹ In direct contrast, for William of Malmesbury, when the parents question their son "with playful sweetness," he responds "with a child's innocence, deciding to hide nothing, for what should that age think to do wrong?"⁷² The *Juitel* acts as the ignorant child that he is, but here his effusive storytelling is rewarded by the father's uncontrollable anger. The nature of the child, as emotional and unaware of consequences, plays an important role in the fate that awaits him.

Even more so than in the other stories, the tales of the *Juitel* connect Judaism with merciless patriarchal rage, and Christianity with sympathetic maternal kindness. It is usually only the father whose ire is aroused by the boy's declaration that he took Communion.⁷³ In his verse miracles (c. 1142), Nigel of Canterbury closely links the key elements of the scene—the boy's innocent report, the father's anger, and the violence:

It happened therefore that the child, having returned to the house as usual, retold at home everything he had seen, as children do. The simplicity of the child, not knowing to lie, repaid the work of his true simplicity with his damnation. When he heard this, the father, greatly burning in anger, assaulted the child while raging in mind and hand. No *pietas*—with which he might spare his offspring from destruction—was able to control the raging father.⁷⁴

Nigel's text invokes the image of childhood prattling and connects it with the ideas of children's truthfulness and simplicity, which lead, in this case, to the boy's (temporary) destruction. Each version of the *Juitel* remarks on the father's anger, often with references such as "burning with excessive indignation," and directly links the father's rage with his choice of punishment. In most of the tales, the father's anger is immediate, uncontrollable, and all-consuming and leads to the unplanned attempt to burn the child to death in a furnace. In the legend of Gregory of Tours, the father speaks: "If you have taken Communion with these infants, I shall be harsh toward you, forgetful of paternal *pietas*, in order to avenge by parricide the injury to the Mosaic law."⁷⁵ The father's sense of duty to his children is overruled by his obedience to the law. The child's acceptance of the Christian ritual breaks the pact with Yahweh and, for the father, causes a critical tension between family and religion.

Just as medical literature problematized maternity, anti-Jewish writings

problematized fatherhood by invoking negative images of patriarchal rage and associating them with Judaism. To most of the authors, the father's emotional response and physical behavior are unnaturally, blindly harsh. Gautier de Coinci invokes this idea at the end of his poem, when he discusses the enduringly hard hearts of the Jews, as he rhymes (in more than a dozen consecutive lines) various words that contain the syllable *dur*, meaning "hard" and "harsh."⁷⁶ At times, the father's anger appears slightly less spontaneous but no less severe. In some versions, for example, he must light a fire rather than simply toss his son into an already burning furnace. Other details, such as his dragging the child by his hair over to the fire, his adding wood (sometimes specified as dry wood), or his blocking the door with large stones, receive mention simply in order to underscore the man's destructive desire and the child's defenseless plight.

However, even in the midst of depicting the father's violence, some writers attempt to make the man's actions vaguely understandable, if not acceptable. Adgar's Anglo-Norman poem of the late twelfth century describes the father's predicament: "He did not know what to do or what to say, he had such wrath and anger in his heart."⁷⁷ Another Anglo-Norman poem creates a unique scenario in which the father is clearly bitter toward and angry at the child but also feels great anguish and remorse for the deed he feels obliged to perform. Unlike every other version's murder scenes, the imagined execution in this version of the tale involves the entire Jewish community of Bourges, just as accusations of ritual murder generally implicated large numbers of Jews. The father's emotions range from bitter anger to resigned anguish and grief. The author suggests a rationale for the murderous action, an explanation that refers to Phineas, who killed a fellow Israelite as vengeance for the man's fornication with a foreign woman (Numbers 25). The father's attempt on his son's life here is justified by the classification of the child's crime as one against his religion; the father thus burns the child "for the Jews and for his anger." Despite the recognition of the child's sacrilege toward Judaism, the author still interprets the murder as shocking, an "outrage" that demands Christian retribution.⁷⁸

Whether as the source of employment, deceit, anger, or violence, Jews appear in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century tales of violence as the direct antitheses of their supposed victims. Despite his (and rarely her) general passivity in the torture, the child plays an important symbolic, social, and physical role in the accusations. But these two actors are not the only figures of importance here. The mother's actions and reactions assist in the success and diffusion of these accusations. The child became the battleground over which a socioreligious conflict was fought, a conflict symbolized by (male) Jewish hatred on the one side

and (female) Christian love on the other.

Power Redefined: Maternal Mourning and the Child

"You son of a dirty whore, you thief, you traitor, you devil, you have crucified my friend. Alas, why haven't I the strength of a man? I would tear you to pieces with my hands."⁷⁹ Richard of Devizes places these words in a long speech by the surviving French boy as he denounces the Jews of Winchester after the disappearance of his friend. The speech in its entirety is unusual not only in the unlikely eloquence of such a young orator—Richard comments on the uniqueness of the boy's ability, inspired by the dire circumstances—but also because it expresses very clearly the frustration and anger felt by the lost child's survivors in these tales. Each of the early narratives of ritual murder⁸⁰ contains an emotional outpouring over the death of the child. However, most unusual here is that the speaker is male. With rare exception, the tales quickly introduce the third crucial figure in these narratives as female—the mourning mother. In the tale of the boy of Winchester, the remaining French boy displays exactly the emotions that maternal figures exhibit in the remaining narratives: the sense of sorrow, outrage, and powerlessness. Interestingly, the child invokes one social reality that, like the emotions he expresses, links him with the mothers we shall soon examine: He is not (yet) a man and does not have the physical—and, as Richard later notes, judicial—clout of an adult male. If the depiction of the adult Jewish male provides a sinister model of unbridled power, then the depiction of the lamenting survivor provides a model of an apparent powerlessness that masks a hidden strength: the ability to move its audience to action.

The emotional power of the tales centers not only on the child but also on a figure who keenly feels the loss of the child and who can induce sympathy in her immediate audience, her fellow townspeople, and in the texts' audiences more broadly. Essential to this process is the emphatic evocation of a naturalized maternal instinct. We will now examine the third element of the triad—victim, evildoer, and victim's survivor—that make up the essential elements of these accusations. The idea of a battle fought by the latter two groups over the body of a child lies at the emotional center of the accusations under discussion.

The dualistic nature of the basic premise—that the forces of good and evil contend for the child—is most evident in a moment of Thomas of Monmouth's biography of William of Norwich. Thomas's account of the meeting between the Jews' messenger and the boy's mother centers on a lengthy metaphor. A wolf and a sheep struggle over a lamb. It is an inverted fable, filled with "animalized" humans. In mentioning the Jews' search for the boy, Thomas had introduced the

theme by referring to William as their *preda*, their prey.⁸¹ The Jews' messenger becomes a merciless and sly beast, while the other two take on the characteristics of a devoted mother and child, with obvious divine parallels in this dyad. Thomas's choice of the word *agnus* here serves several purposes. As in the term *agnus Dei*, it provides another parallel to Christ as sacrifice on the Cross and in the Mass; as the lamb of the exodus, the original lamb of God, it refers to ritual slaughtering during Passover; and, on a more literal level, as a lamb, the offspring of the sheep, it is the vulnerable child in need of protection. Despite the boy's enthusiasm when relating the offer to his mother, she immediately mistrusted the mysterious messenger. In "casting the net of his treachery," the man secured his hold on the boy with his promises, which proved too alluring to the "childish mind" (*puerilem inanibus pollicitis facilius illexit animum*). Yet Elviva senses that something is amiss:

The mother resists, fearing for her son through some foreboding and through a maternal affection. On the one side is the traitor, on the other the mother. He asks, and she refuses. He asks, but in order that he may make off with him; she refuses, so that she may not lose him... . So between her and the other you might have seen a struggle as between a sheep and a wolf (who at first glance seemed the strongest) on account of a third. The lamb was in the middle—here the sheep, there the wolf. The wolf stands by that he may tear apart and devour; the sheep stands firm that she may rescue and preserve.⁸²

The dichotomies of aggressive violence and protection, of false claims and true affection, provide striking contrasts. The mother's love for the son, already naturalized through the invocation of the animal imagery, leads to a visceral reaction (*presagis uisceribus*) in suspicion of the stranger. The interaction becomes a duel (*duellum*) in which the mother sheep must use her main attribute, a defensive and maternal emotional response to danger, in order to fight off the cunning male wolf in a tug-of-war over the child's fate.

The passage provides a narrative of William's capture by the Jews but also includes a detailed study in maternity. After the heated deliberations, the mother requests a delay until after Easter. Only then does the traitor offer money to the mother to allow the boy to leave immediately. This time William remains silently in the background while the drama revolves around the tension, in Thomas's eyes, between Elviva's dual persona as mother and as woman. Her "emotion of maternal *pietas*" is eventually overcome by the "inconstant stubbornness of feminine fickleness," won over, as Judas had been, by the glitter of coins. Despite her resistance, which is due to familial *pietas* and a "presentiment of a future

evil," she hands the child over to the unnamed man, having been seduced by the silver. Throughout this passage, Thomas often invokes the mother's duty, affection, and concern for her child, all expressed in the term *pietas*. She is portrayed in a negative light, although Thomas attributes her failings more to the general conflict of her two roles in the narrative—as sinning woman and loving mother, Eve and Mary—than to any personal failing.

Such negative characterizations of the mourning mother do not appear in the tales that developed after Thomas wrote the life of William in the 1150s. Instead, the Christian mother (in the tale by Richard of Devizes, a boy in lieu of the mother) always appears as an unambiguously positive figure overwhelmed by sorrow and apparent impotence. The relative moral complexity of Elviva's position in the tale becomes simplified in later tales and reduced to an embodiment of medieval maternal virtues.

The maternal figure appears in many tales only after the child has disappeared. In the tale of William of Norwich, the discovery and the recognition of William's body by his uncle, brother, and friends begins a series of scenes devoted to images of mourning, particularly by the two women already established as closest to the boy: his mother and his aunt. As with the other tales of ritual murder, the women's laments focus as much on the loss of the child as on the guilt of the Jews. The women's mourning scenes, often very public, here serve to spread, often all too successfully, the accusation against the Jews in a powerful, emotional popular appeal.

The Language of Loss

The absence of the child takes on many meanings in this literature, and it is always associated with a figure who expresses a strong emotional bond to the missing or dead child. At times the imagery involves the maternal body as the vehicle for emotional expression. One version of the tale of the *Juifel* includes a scene in which the mother beseeches the Jewish patriarch, her husband, to spare their child. Most important, she uses the term *viscera*, which refers to the belly generally and the pregnant womb more specifically, to describe the young child. The child, as postpartum fruit of her womb, becomes momentarily indistinguishable from that part of her body from which he came. We shall examine the speech more closely soon; here we shall note that the child at the moment of his (apparent) death becomes an extension of the mother's body.

However, the pain of losing the child is by no means reserved for the mother. In the *Life of William of Norwich*, Thomas of Monmouth attributes to the boy's aunt, Liviva, a metaphor that expresses her feelings of love, loss, and hatred. When

told that her beloved nephew was dead, Liviva announced that a week earlier she had a dream foretelling this event, just as the boy's birth was foretold by a dream her sister had had. Liviva immediately drew a connection between dream and reality and accepted the dream as divine revelation. In it, she was attacked by Jews, who surrounded her, broke off her right leg, and ran off with the limb. She now claimed to understand the vision to signify that "it would happen that I would lose one of my loved ones (*amicis*) through the Jews, one whom I certainly loved more than the others."⁸³ The image of the right leg, like that of the lamb protected by its mother, differs markedly from earlier metaphors in which she compared him to a rose and a fish. William is not differentiated from his family but part of it—in this case, a limb from his aunt's body. Thomas uses the image to impress on his audience both the emotional proximity of the aunt to her nephew and also the brutality of his death, theft, and excision at the hands of the Jews.

Corporeal metaphors for the child appear often in the texts, especially when the mourner is not the biological mother. The surviving French boy describes, in language far more exaggerated than Liviva's dream, his devastation at the disappearance of his friend. The boy claims that the Jew "is a devil; this man has torn the heart out of my breast; this man has cut the throat of my friend; I presume he has also eaten him."⁸⁴ Richard of Devizes contrasts the demonic Jews (only two individuals in contrast to Thomas's world conspiracy), now cannibalistic throat-sliters, with the vulnerable children. The passage manipulates bodily imagery by creating a double wounding committed by the Jew: The victim's actual throat is cut, and the survivor's metaphoric heart is eaten. In all of these examples, loss of the child is most dramatically expressed in terms of the survivor's own body.

But body parts—a womb, a leg, and a heart—are by no means the only things that disappear in the vocabulary of loss. In Gautier de Coinci's tale of the Gaude boy, the mother's grief leads her to a crisis of faith. After weeks of frantic searching and questioning, she found no clues to her son's whereabouts. Her fear for his safety was transformed into an equally strong anger at Mary for permitting his disappearance. Expressing her helplessness through blasphemous hostility, the mother "said to [the Virgin] privately that, if she lost her child, she would never again have confidence in her sweetness or in her power" (lines 293–96).⁸⁵ The mother's crisis of faith revolves around a tension between the ideal of Mary—as a mother of mercy, a compassionate defender of the defenseless—and the disappearance of the poor woman's vulnerable child, precisely the kind of creature the Virgin should protect. Loss of maternal status led directly to a loss of belief in the Virgin's maternal pity.

At key moments in all of these texts, the narratives of Jewish violence toward children shift the focus toward the survivor and her or his feelings of loss. The sources describe the experience of dread and powerlessness felt by the loving survivor and begin to associate these emotions with a scapegoat, a Jew or a community of Jews, as the cause of the pain. Although the identification of the malefactors as Jews is largely novel in the twelfth century, the actions of the bereaved survivor derive from an old tradition of the mourning mother, a symbol of weakness, sorrow, and sympathy.

Ritualized Mourning: Rachel Crying

"All evening, until the hour when curfew was sounded, she went crying, 'I have lost my dear child whom I always loved so much.' ... Even before the dawn arrived, the woman went crying through the Jewry and asking at the doors of the Jews, 'Where is my child?'" (lines 13–16, 25–28).⁸⁶ With these words a long litany of sorrowful speeches in the Old French ballad of Hugh of Lincoln begins, but they could easily appear in almost any other tale of Jewish violence toward children. The metaphors of loss and language like that of Hugh's mother enact a ritual that predates Christianity but acquires greater significance in medieval Christian piety, which centers increasingly not just on divine Incarnation but more specifically on the interaction of blessed Mother and holy Child.

The image of a mother expressing sadness and anxiety over her young child derives from a complex series of typological connections—Rachel crying in the desert (Jeremiah 31:15), the Massacre of the Innocents (Matthew 2:16–18), and Mary searching frantically for the twelve-year-old Jesus, who had been left behind in Jerusalem (Luke 2:40–52). All of these biblical precedents for the mothers' outbursts equally lay bare the raw emotions that medieval and earlier societies expected mothers to express with respect to their children. Some texts quote directly from biblical passages in which doleful displays are depicted; Richard of Devizes places a quotation from Jeremiah into the mouth of the surviving French boy and thereby creates a contrast between the child's small size (*pauperculus*, the little poor one) and the intensity of the boy's emotion: "See if there is a grief like unto my grief" (Lamentations 1:12).

Like Hugh's mother, many of the mourners search frantically for their lost loved one, in scenes that heighten the dramatic potential of the scenarios. The French boy manifests his concern over the lost friend by searching "for several days in every corner of the town." The legal documents concerning the girl from Valréas provide much evidence for parental and societal concern over the disappearance of a child, particularly one as young as Meilla.⁸⁷ After noticing the absence of the

child at dusk, the parents scoured the town "most diligently" (*diligentissime*), an adverb that etymologically refers as much to loving devotion as to deliberate care. The quest to locate a child whose whereabouts and fate are unknown most closely resembles Mary's anxiety at the disappearance of the Christ Child. The mother's tireless determination to find her child and sometimes to find justice for her slain child transforms her from passive sadness into active dissemination of the accusation. The tales also take these biblical models, place them in the contemporary world, and thereby further legitimize the accusations.

The maternal figure's fear and sadness appear most often in highly theatrical, visible ways throughout the texts. The importance of William of Norwich to his aunt Liviva is made apparent in corporeal manifestations of the pain she feels: "A cold shiver invaded her innermost marrow, her face grew pale, her mind fled along with her blood, and as if dead she fell from the hands of the bystanders to the ground."⁸⁸ Fainting speaks as powerfully as the most eloquent speech. Thomas of Monmouth also includes a lengthy discussion of the mother's mourning ritual, which parallels and elaborates on Liviva's performance. Like her sister, Elviva (their names are as interchangeable as their roles) fainted at the first report of William's unusual death. Not believing the news, she rushed to Norwich, where, on receiving verification of the story, "immediately, with torn hair and frequent clapping of hands, she ran back and forth weeping and wailing through the streets, like a mad woman."⁸⁹

Following well-established models for female despair, the mother's anxiety over the child's fate was manifested in her exclamations, gesticulations, constant and frenetic movement, endless tears, exhaustion, all-night vigils, hair-pulling, and fainting spells. Gautier de Conci's version of the miracle of the Gaude boy includes a massive passage—one hundred and eighty lines in length—that provides an unrelenting (and repetitive) study in maternal mourning. Although she has still heard no news of the boy, the mother one day walks through the "street of the Jews" and calls out to her son, and, in doing so, attracts a large crowd. Her loud sobbing and palm-beating lead her to declaim: "'Son! Son! My heart breaks into pieces... Sweet son, these Jews, these foul dogs have murdered you and ripped out your heart. Sweet son, my heart very much tells me that they have killed you in this street'" (lines 342, 346–49).⁹⁰ The quotation closely parallels the speeches by Hugh's mother and the French boy but adds to them a seemingly instinctual knowledge of hidden events.⁹¹ Once again we see a direct correlation between the victim's and the survivor's hearts, except that here it is not simply pain that the survivor's heart feels but also revelation of truth.

The public nature and setting of the mourners' behavior is an important part of the entire scenario. Just as the scenes of torture and murder were meant to induce horror and pathos, the very public displays of the mother were meant to produce feelings of empathy for her. The child's physical wounds, inflicted directly by the Jews, find a parallel in the mother's anguish, indirectly effected by the same menace. The cases in which we know accusations were actually made—those concerning the deaths of William of Norwich, the girl Meilla of Valréas, and Hugh of Lincoln—all indicate that the mother's sorrow was highly visible and served to spread the rumors of a Jewish threat toward children. The other, more literary tales of Jewish violence also clearly identify the survivor's actions as important steps in the perpetuation of the myth of Jewish villainy. References to the mother's seeming impotence, her inability to protect her son, later become assets in the search for justice.

Gender, Parenting, and Justice

Up to this point the discussion of loss and mourning rituals has largely focused on patterns of behavior expected of mothers. Alongside the parallels between biblical past and contemporary ritualized mourning, many texts directly refer to an idea of a maternal instinct. Everything these women do presupposes a deep love for the lost child, a love that some texts identify as natural or at least cross-cultural. Often the accusations contrast women's behavior with that of men, both Christian and Jewish. This is most apparent in the tales of the *Juitel*, which present a struggle between law and family, between paternal violence and maternal devotion. According to one telling of the story, in the midst of her public mourning "the child's mother cried out, hit her hands, [and] called the child, as is the custom of pious women, whether Christian or Jewish, when they see anything unfortunate happen to those whom they wish well, especially to their children."⁹² Another version of the *Juitel*, in the Cotton manuscript, naturalizes a concern for one's child, by noting that the Jewish mother was "compelled by a love for the child" (*amore nati compulsa*).⁹³ The Latin poem in the Graz manuscript specifically contrasts the parents' actions and reactions, when it mentions in passing that "*amor* [love] is [natural] for the mother, as should be the father's inclination to *pietas*."⁹⁴ The author contrasts emotion and duty (*pietas* in the older Roman sense, rather than the affective Christian meaning) as gender-specific, indicates that the attempted murder did not fulfill the father's duty, and so uses the woman's "natural" behavior to condemn the man's unnatural cruelty.

The primary gendering of Christian responses to the child's death consists of a

division between the emotional and the rational, associated by long-standing tradition with female and male respectively. After the discovery of William of Norwich's body, the desire for justice and the concomitant accusation of Jewish infamy are divided between the mother's spectacle in the streets and the uncle's speech to a local episcopal synod. Elviva, the mother, begins screaming and denouncing the Jews:

And so, assuming that everything she had suspected was true and asserting, as if she had seen it, that what she imagined was certain, she went through the quarters and streets and, forced on by a motherly pain, disturbed everyone with her dreadful screams and protested that the Jews had seduced, stolen away from her, and killed her son. This event converted the minds of everyone to believe the truth, and so everyone was calling out that the Jews ought to be utterly destroyed as eternal enemies of the Christian name and religion.⁹⁵

Thomas suggests, but does not seem to condone, a direct connection between the instigation of violence against the perpetrators, here generally defined as "the Jews," and public lamentation, a use of one reaction to provoke another emotive response. Maternal *pietas*, again represented as an intuitive, visceral awareness of danger to one's children, provides the crowd with plausible proof of Jewish guilt.

While he attributes popular awareness of the charge to female emotional outpouring, Thomas of Monmouth, like other later chroniclers of ritual murder, places rational arguments for ritual murder in the mouths of men. Thomas includes the report of a speech that the boy's uncle, Godwin, made at the local synod presided over by Bishop Eborard of Norwich, a speech that illustrates the pseudojudicial arena in which ritual murder cases were sometimes heard, and thus provides a contrast with the more emotional terrain of public mourning. William's uncle, a local priest, requested the attention of those clerics present, that they hear a complaint about a recent "outrage" (*contumeliam*) committed against all Christians. The accusation, already familiar to some of the assembly, was that "a certain boy, a very little one and surely innocent," had been found horribly murdered.⁹⁶ Later, when mentioning the boy's close relation to his own children, Godwin takes a moment to point out the tears he is trying to stop. This rhetorical device is the closest the speaker comes to acknowledging his own emotional state. In contrast to the earlier effusions of the women, this constitutes restraint. His empathy for the child's fate is something Godwin displaces onto others, who, significantly, are women and children, the children being William's brother and friends. Accusing the Jews of having shed "innocent blood," the uncle

lists his proofs, including a vague reference to Passover practices, but emphasizes the prophetic dream of William's aunt—note that he refrains from acknowledging her as his wife—and the mourning and accusation by the boy's mother (*flebilis mater*).⁹⁷

Godwin's testimony inspired some interest in the child as a possible saint; a visiting prior who was present at the synod requested permission to remove the body ("a most precious treasure") of the "most holy boy."⁹⁸ That the request was denied suggests that the monastic community anticipated the benefits of a potentially popular local saint, an idea that led to the translation of the "most blessed boy's" body to the monks' cemetery.⁹⁹ Despite the obstacles, Thomas presents the case as having already been decided in many people's minds, owing largely to popular perceptions of Jews and to the powerful testimony of the mourning women.

Even more illustrative of the distinction made between emotion and reason, the case for Jewish responsibility in the death of Hugh of Lincoln was made very differently by a woman and a man. According to several different accounts, Hugh's mother and her supporters suspected the Jews of Lincoln because of claims by the boy's playmates. In one source, the Burton chronicle, we are told of the remarkable lengths to which a mother would go to obtain justice for her child. The mother quickly leaves the city for Scotland in order to petition King Henry III to investigate the case. The arduous journey to the north highlights her concern for her son, her strong belief in the Jews' guilt, and her determination to find justice. The audience with the king also presents a clear contrast between the saintly son and his earthly mother. Unlike the persevering child, who accepts his fate quietly, the mother expresses her emotional and physical pain loudly, as she travels "with tears and sighs" and greets the king by "crying out and wailing her complaint."¹⁰⁰ Her frantic and undisguisable maternal grief, so different from her son's divinely inspired patience, plays an important role in the narrative, being represented as the motivation for the king's intercession. In another source, the Old French ballad, King Henry, shocked by the tale of Jewish abduction told by the sobbing woman at his feet, swears a merciless vengeance on either the criminals or, if the woman were lying, on the accuser. The mother's emotional and physical state reinforces the king's belief in her words and stirs his interest in the case.

In the tales of Hugh of Lincoln, other women were associated with spreading the news and with emotional outpouring over the child. One blind woman, who "earlier had greatly loved the child," publicly lamented his death and became the recipient of the first miracle attributed to the intercession of the boy-martyr: She

recovered her eyesight upon touching the corpse.¹⁰¹ In another account of Hugh's life, the events surrounding the body's discovery involved a woman who actively spread throughout the city the news of his demise. The unnamed woman found the child's body in a well outside the city and immediately remembered the lost boy. After informing the oddly marginal stepfather of the boy (we hear nothing more of him, except that he also quickly suspected the Jews), the woman traversed the city, announcing the discovery of the child and thus enticing people to come to the well while the coroners removed the body.¹⁰² The stepfather's lack of emotional and physical involvement in the proceedings contrasts strongly with the roles played by the women, highly stylized mourners who spread the accusation of murder through loud laments.

Unlike Hugh's stepfather, another man took an active interest in the circumstances surrounding the boy's death. Immediately after the mother's declamations concerning Jewish guilt, Matthew Paris places the entry of a royal advisor, John of Lexington, into the affair. His authority and wisdom being immediately established by such adjectives as "discerning" (*discretus*) and "lettered" (*litteratus*), John claims that he has heard such accusations before, legitimizing a process already underway.¹⁰³ It is this combination of intellect and emotion, of learned law expert and mourning mother, of two responses gendered male and female, that, Matthew hints, led to the king's belief in the accusation and to the execution of nineteen Jews. According to the logic of the discourse, Christians responded with intelligence and pity, in direct opposition to the Jews, who acted after deliberation in a misguided council, without pity for the "innocent" child.¹⁰⁴ It was as punishment for the perceived Jewish act of merciless and ill-advised violence that the mother could urge, and the king could command, the Jews' executions.

A similar pattern of male involvement in the judicial process occurred in the case of the girl Meilla of Valréas. Just as William of Norwich's uncle, a priest, had gone to a local synod and Hugh's mother and male defender had gone to the English royal court, Meilla's father, Adalard, went to the court of his lord, Dragonet de Montauban. It is in fact due to the father's demand for an inquest that we know as much as we do about the case. Both parents had searched for the child throughout the city. The mother, Guillelma, cried loudly "in the Jews' street" and demanded that the father make a public accusation against the Jews in Dragonet's court, even before the body was found. Though far less emotionally wrought than that of his wife, Adalard's testimony nonetheless reveals his anxiety, mainly through physical action, through his exertions to find his daughter

and to punish the alleged kidnappers.¹⁰⁵ The father searched for his daughter at night with several friends, after the *bailli* told him to return when he had found something. Only when describing the discovery of the body the next morning did Adalard explicitly mention his emotional reaction: "And he searched [the ditch] and found her, and because of the pain of his heart he could not approach her and went to find someone who would remove her."¹⁰⁶

Here both parents helped to spread the claim of Jewish violence through their anxiety over the young girl. Meilla's corpse was placed on display in the market, where the mother—who had earlier prayed to the Virgin to return the girl either dead or alive—watched over (*custodivit*) it for two days, after which it was taken to the church and buried privately within. Guillelma stated that "the pain and sadness of her heart was greatly diminished by the miracles that God performed for this girl."¹⁰⁷ These final details in the mother's statements serve to emphasize the mother's emotional state and to indicate the beginnings of a cult of the girl, whose body was left in a public space for popular veneration. Such statements reveal a close connection between the mother's piety, expressed through her (public) mourning, and the villagers' devotion to and interest in the child. The tale also reminds us of the importance of adult men in the judicial legitimation of the accusation, and, for once, the sorrow of a father over his lost child.

Unlike the cases of William of Norwich, Hugh of Lincoln, and Meilla of Valréas, the story of the French boy in Winchester demonstrates the failure of a judicial case brought by a woman and child. Even after the surviving French boy had gathered and won over a crowd with his speech, the case went nowhere, despite (and in part because of) corroborating evidence. Richard of Devizes mentions some corroborating evidence from a witness who saw the lost boy descend into the Jew's storage room (*in penu*) without reappearing. The witness was "a Christian woman who, contrary to the canons, nursed the Jewish children in the same house,"¹⁰⁸ a fact that seriously damaged the evidence she introduced. Her employment stands in opposition to the Third (and later Fourth) Lateran council, which had forbidden Christians to nurse Jewish children.¹⁰⁹ Richard's tale, far more secular in approach than the Lives of the other child-martyrs, focuses on physical as well as social powerlessness. The last characteristic is revealed in the tale's conclusion: "The accusers failed, the boy because he was under age and the woman because her work for the Jews made her infamous (*infamem*)."¹¹⁰ Owing to these problems and to the bribing of the judges, Richard tells us, the English Jew was not brought to trial, and the matter was dropped. Richard's tale ends as a story of injustice and weakness, two themes associated here with women and

children.¹¹¹ Richard of Devizes' account, like Thomas's tale of William, focuses on the deficiencies and dangers of childhood as well as on the juridical weakness of women, the poor, and the young. The French child dies because of his desperate need for employment and because of his inability to interpret correctly the intentions of both the French and the English Jews, just as the friend fails to prosecute because of his age (*infra etatem*) and the nurse because of her care of Jewish children. In different ways, childhood stands in the way of all of these actors (the boys and the nurse), a coincidence that accords perfectly with Richard's belief in the crafty, demonic motives of the Jews.¹¹²

While mothers, maternal surrogates, and close friends generally come to represent a strong solicitude for the lost child, one that moves crowds, if not legal apparatuses, some women do not receive such positive characterizations. We have encountered an ambivalence toward William's mother, and we also occasionally find Jewish mothers who initially exhibit anger and even hatred toward children. In only one version of the *Juitel*, a sermon by Herbert of Losinga, does the mother play an active role in the child's punishment. Here, the boy, "with a child's simplicity," first revealed the events in church to his mother, who, "stirred by a feminine fury," relayed the story to the father, who then punished the child.¹¹³ Like the mother of William of Norwich, the *Juitel's* mother has at least two sides to her persona. She alternates between the negative attributes of womanhood and the positive characteristics of an ideal mother. In the end, she performs the role expected of her after her husband seals the boy in the furnace: She screams with fear for her child's safety and thereby attracts a crowd of Christians.

Equally revealing is the role of the Jewish mother in the story of Adam of Bristol. Initially she follows her husband's lead and helps to capture and torment the child. During the long night of torture, the woman is transformed from disingenuous and hate-filled Jewish wife to compassionate mother figure and Christian convert. While she has earlier deceived Adam with false claims of kinship and affection, she ultimately reverses herself and feels deep pity and love for the child. After a divine voice demands that the family stop torturing Christian boys, the Jewish woman reassures Adam with language that parallels her earlier false declarations, but with far greater sincerity: "Adekin [a familiar diminutive of the boy's name], speak to me and I shall lead you home to your father and mother."¹¹⁴ She demands that Samuel stop burning the child and later calls the boy "my beloved son" while asking him what he saw during his torture. In the end, she and her son convert to Christianity because of the miraculous events during Adam's passion. The wife/mother and the son reject the religious world of

the Jewish patriarch, both his Judaism and his vehement hatred of Christianity. The vehicle of their conversion is the child Adam as well as the miracles that God performed during the boy's final hours. Once again, a woman and child are associated with compassion and Christianity in these tales, in strong contrast to the negative emotions associated with the male Jew.

In the tale of Adam, a Jewish man's desire to torture a Christian boy is portrayed as a deep-seated hatred of Christianity in general and specifically of Jesus and his mother. The wife and son come to stand for compassion, contrition, Christian truth, and familial love, against which Samuel acts as a foil.¹¹⁵ The text emphasizes the importance of mother and son in Christian piety, both through the conversion of the Jewish woman and of the boy and through Samuel's abiding contempt for both Mary and Jesus. This narrative, and many others in the tradition under examination here, almost inevitably create a parallel between two pairs of mother and child, one being contemporary and the other being the Christian Mother and Child. It is to this connection that we shall now turn.

Power, Piety, and Intimacy: Mother, Son, and Christian Family

The secular world of poverty, frailty, violence, and family took on increasingly religious and celestial significance as the accusations of ritual murder developed. At the heart of the accusations lay a series of deeply religious presuppositions that became prominent in high-medieval Christian culture: the belief in a bitter antagonism between Christianity and rabbinic Judaism, a renewed Christian fixation on experiencing Christ's Passion, a fascination with the birth and childhood of Jesus, a parallel emphasis on the importance of Mary as mother figure for all Christians, and a linkage of all these with the spiritual worthiness of the child as an avatar of innocence.

The Virgin and the Child

If the figure of the mourning mother explores the issues of loss and powerlessness, it connects with the Blessed Virgin Mary's lament at the Cross, the *planctus Mariae*, as we have seen. Yet Mary's role in these texts is not simply as a model for contemporary women or as biblical allusion. The Virgin herself appears to the victim in many tales of Jewish violence toward children. When Mary is present, it is not as the passive object of sympathy but as an active intercessor for mother or child. In the popular theology of the central Middle Ages, Mary's earthly experiences as *theotokos*, a human bearer of the Word made flesh, and as a mother who watched her son die allow her to sympathize with humans in duress. Unlike the contemporary mother, Mary can either comfort the child during the torture or save him altogether from Jewish animosity. The contrast of

impotent living woman and powerful celestial maternal figure leads us to the correlation between secular and religious gendered familial images.

The earliest case of ritual murder provides only a few glimpses of Mary, beyond the parallels of William's mother and aunt with the Virgin at the Cross. From the moment of his birth, William's life is connected with the Holy Family, both explicitly and implicitly. The date of his birth, February 2, coincides with Candlemas, the feast of the Purification of Mary, expressed by Thomas in a phrasing that emphasizes Mary's dual importance to William and to later child-martyrs. As mother and virgin, she complements William's status as child and virgin. While Thomas had earlier compared William to Jesus, he now suggests further comparisons with Jesus' mother, particularly with her purity and holiness. "Perhaps by this [his birthdate] is indicated how the child would be of great purity and sanctity."¹¹⁶ Such an observation acts as a sign of the boy's predetermined fate to remain a virgin and to interact closely with Jesus and his mother.

Even in this first text on ritual murder, the Virgin appears explicitly several times in Thomas of Monmouth's *Life of William*, in the miracles involving visions of heaven. The visions illustrate important elements in Thomas's bid for the boy's sanctity: His unique position as a martyred child, as one who is closer to Christ than are the other saints, and as an intimate friend of the Virgin. In one vision, a sick man named Lewin, who had never heard of the boy, was led by an angel to the glories of heaven, where he saw the Virgin sitting next to the golden throne and, at God's feet, a twelve-year-old boy seated on a golden footstool, "his raiment whiter than snow, his face brighter than the sun, and on his head a golden crown studded everywhere with precious stones." Choirs of saints congratulated the boy while angels revered him. Lewin inquired as to the child's identity, which the angel revealed as simply the one whom the Jews killed in Norwich in mockery of Jesus' Passion. Told that he would recover only at the boy's tomb, the sick man awoke and found William's sepulcher but only after considerable difficulty, as the murder was not well known in Norwich.¹¹⁷

The Virgin appears more closely connected to William in another vision recounted in Thomas's *Life*, a vision involving one Peter Peverell, an old monk who witnessed a nighttime procession in the chapter house. He saw the Virgin sitting by William's sepulcher and was told by one of her attendants that she had come "to visit her most dear friend who is with you." Peverell then watched as the boy knelt before Mary, who crowned him with a wreath of flowers, hailed him as patron of the church, and conferred on him the power to heal.¹¹⁸ As the miracles of Mary also reveal, the Virgin is depicted with an interest in protecting and

befriending children, particularly when the danger involves Jewish violence. In this instance, William appears as her "most dear friend" (*amicum dilectissimum*), whom she honors with the status of martyr and patron saint as well as with miraculous powers.¹¹⁹ The tales told about William of Norwich create a pattern continued in later accusations and begin a process of identifying these child-martyrs with the Virgin and the Christ Child.

While these examples provide indications of the unique connection between the child-victim and the Virgin, it is the thirteenth-century tales that emphasize the intimacy of child and Mary far more prominently. In the accusations of ritual murder and in miracle tales, the Virgin is consistently associated with protection of children. The tale of the Gaude boy as told by Gautier de Coinci expresses this most clearly. After the disappearance of her child, the impoverished mother explodes with anger toward Mary and thereby creates a strong link between the lost boy and the Virgin: "With my hands together, I commended to you my poor little child. I gave him to you early, sent to be educated and tonsured, to serve you and your sweet son. Lady, what did you do with him? Where is he? ... If you do not wish to return him alive, at least return him to me dead or send death to me soon."¹²⁰ Focusing as always on the different meanings of *pitié* (as devotion to family, religious devotion, and pity), Gautier notes that the mother's public statement of devotion to her child and her anger at Mary induced great pity in her audience and compassion in the Virgin.

In reaffirmation of her status as mother of mercy, Mary revives the boy and induces him to sing from the pit where he lies buried. The mother immediately recognizes her child's voice and incites the crowd to attack the Jews and to search their houses. After their initial confusion as to the boy's location, the crowd forcefully enters the murderer's house and, digging, "finds him safe and sound as if the mother of God had protected him in her bosom" (lines 451–53).¹²¹ The mother embraces him for a long time and lets no one else approach him. The expression of joy and maternal devotion had transformed and exalted her: "It seemed very much to the exhausted good woman that she was more of a lady than is a queen or an empress, when she was able to hold her son, who had been lost, within her embrace" (lines 467–71).¹²² The lengthy hugs, the many kisses, and her inability to speak indicate the transition from her anger at the Virgin to reconciliation and joy at the return of her son.

Unlike that of the ritual murders, the ending of this miracle is happy, as the boy speaks again and recounts the tale to the crowd. The child's words always reveal the intimacy and privileged status conferred on him by the Virgin. In Gautier's

tale of the Gaude boy, we learn that he had fallen asleep for what seemed like a short period, when "the sweet mother of Jesus Christ" woke him and chided him for his laziness. In a similar, Latin version of the tale, from the second half of the century, the child explains that the Virgin revived him after having been "moved by my mother's tears."¹²³ Just as the boy's singing signaled the Virgin's reaction to the mother's request, so did the crowd's musicmaking demonstrate the townspeople's joy. Bells were rung and "the mother of Jesus Christ was very much glorified and acclaimed, who made this very sweet miracle through her very sweet *pïeté*" (lines 534–37).¹²⁴ The child, who angered the Jew through his piety, was enticed into the Jew's house when his dutiful concern (*pietas*) for his mother's welfare. As a consequence, Mary was moved to pity for the mother and son owing to the mother's *pietas* for her lost child; at the same time, Christ was moved by pity to increase his mother's name in the world. Gautier's version of the miracle involves an extensive blurring of *pietas*, piety, and pity, a repeated invocation of each of these related concepts. The narrative ends with a reference to the conversion of some of the Jews, moved by pity toward Christian piety, and to the massacre of the unconverted, whose perceived lack of both pity for the child and piety for Mary and her son was thought to warrant their fate.¹²⁵

More often than the independent appearance of the Virgin, we encounter the association of the child-victim with both Mary and her Son. We have seen that the image of the Mother and Child finds many parallels in the contemporary dyad of human mother and child-martyr. We shall now examine how the Holy Family, and especially the Christ Child, heightens the status of the child in these accusations.

Holy Family and Earthly Child

The tales of Jewish violence provide several unusual glimpses into the lives of children and into their viewpoints. The pathetic lives of the two French boys in Winchester as well as the begging by Hugh of Lincoln and the Gaude boy demonstrate an awareness of poverty's impact on children, albeit for highly dramatic narrative purposes. But perhaps the most revealing description of a child's view of the world appears in the tales of the *Juitel*, as the Jewish boy enters a church for the first time. The scene allows writers to imagine Christian sacred space, ceremony, and decorations from a doubly unique perspective, that of a child in his simplicity and that of an outsider, a Jew who knows nothing of the dominant religion. The depiction of the ritual from the perspective of a naïf highlights the *Juitel*'s innocence, eagerness, and status as a child while at the same time demonstrating that Christian love and faith were knowable through visual stimuli, particularly simple church iconography. More important, the writers

construct a vision of the church and Mass that creates a family-centered image of Christianity, focused on the dyad of Virgin and Child.

In the lengthier versions of the *Juitel*, the authors focus on the child's reaction to the physical space of the church. They concentrate on images immediately recognizable to a child, on the depictions of a very human couple, a mother and child, kept in a place of honor over the altar. In the anonymous Anglo-Norman poem, the boy searches all around the church ("up and down, here and there"), fascinated, pleased, and frightened by the decorations, particularly an image of a woman holding a laughing and fair child.¹²⁶ The representation of the Mother and Child—sometimes a mural or tapestry, at other times a statue—becomes the child's primary interest and the source of the story's miraculous conclusion. The *Juitel* stares intensely at the "graceful," "honorable," "beautiful" woman, who, in every version, holds the Christ Child. The emphasis on Mary's role as kindly mother connects with a central motif of the tale and of contemporary Christian piety: the maternal mercy of Mary. Yet the many versions concur that the child does not know the identities of the mother and child; he remains an ignorant boy, who innocently but immediately finds the image moving.

In fact, in some versions the image of the Virgin literally moves, as the boy watches the woman come alive to participate in Communion. In handling this scene, the writers display an increasing interest in the holy dyad's humanity and in their involvement in the Communion ritual. In the earliest versions, especially that by Gregory of Tours, the boy simply appreciates the representation of the Virgin and Child above the altar. Later, to Paschasius Radbertus, Mary, still holding the child on her knees, hands the Eucharist to the priest, symbolizing her role as Christ's portal to the world.¹²⁷ In several thirteenth-century versions, Mary plays an even more active role in the Mass, by taking the consecrated host from the priest's hands and distributing it to the people.¹²⁸ Gautier notes that, as she hands the bread to him, Mary smiles at the *Juitel*, a detail that emphasizes her human kindness and her choice of this particular boy.¹²⁹

Equally important, the Communion service provides an opportunity for twelfth- and thirteenth-century writers to place the child at the very center of Christian ritual. In some depictions of the *Juitel*'s Communion, the beautiful woman offers to the officiating priest the host, which has become the flesh not simply of Christ but specifically of the Christ Child. The Latin poem from Graz claims that, "with his knife, the sacrificer [the priest] cut into pieces a child similar to him whom holy Mary held in her lap."¹³⁰ In the thirteenth-century version by Caesarius of Heisterbach, "the priest took up the child from the arms of that image that stood

over the altar and divided him into pieces for all the people."¹³¹ Caesarius had previously described the Christ Child as a "tender son" in his mother's embrace. Similarly, the *Vie des anciens peres* relates that the Juitel not only saw the priest pass out the Child as sacramental food but witnessed the congregation eating that Child, an action the boy then imitated.¹³² Such images find a parallel in the accusation of cannibalism at Valréas, although in that case the blood rather than the body was to be used for ritual purposes. An Old French prose version from the thirteenth century, proclaiming the *Vie* as its source, elaborates on the appearance of this host-child: The Juitel saw the priest hold up "a child, crowned with gold, his arms and legs bleeding, shining brighter than the sun."¹³³ The same Old French rendition notes that the boy, after joining his companions at the altar and taking Communion, was filled with the Holy Spirit.¹³⁴ Here the idea of child sacrifice, common in the tales of Eucharistic visions throughout the same period,¹³⁵ is valorized (and metaphorized) as a legitimate religious event that blurs Christ's infancy and death in a vision witnessed by a child at the moment of transubstantiation.

Later in the tale of the *Juitel*, after his rescue from the fiery death to which his father had consigned him, the boy again becomes the center of attention when he explains the events and receives a far more positive response than earlier. As elsewhere, many writers refer briefly to the boy's naïveté, a phrase that partially serves to legitimize his claim of experiencing a vision of Mary in the church.¹³⁶ His simplicity, which they perceived as inherent in the child's nature, becomes a primary reason that the Virgin chose to be his particular protector. As with the tale of the singing boy, a child's explanation of the miracle increases the emotional appeal and affirms the veracity of the tale by reference once more to the "puerile voice"—the boy is too simple, too ignorant, and too good to lie.¹³⁷ His state at the opening of the furnace suggests that Mary was concerned not simply with the Juitel's deliverance but also with his comfort and with the satisfaction of his childish needs. The amazed crowd sees the boy alive, unharmed, happy, and either lying asleep on the flames in comfort as if they were a bed of feathers or playing with the flames as if they were flowers. He assures the crowd that, owing to the protection given by "that beautiful woman" or unnamed "lady" whom he had first seen that morning in the church, he felt no pain while in the furnace.

The writers directly link the boy's salvation to Mary's role as the ideal representation of maternal mercy. In many versions, the beautiful woman sheltered the child with her veil, her cloak, or the cuffs of her clothing. However,

other retellings of the story, all twelfth-century or later, continue to accentuate the Virgin's maternity, in references to her protecting the child by "taking him into her bosom," precisely as in the appearance of the Christ Child in the church.¹³⁸ Such actions not only demonstrate the close associations between the Juitel and the Christ Child but also serve to infantilize the boy, returning us to the image of the Virgin and Child, in a move that illustrates the idea of Mary as Mother of all.

The Virgin is not the only figure to appear as a celestial protector to children in times of need. The Christ Child also plays the role of friend and guardian of his fellow children. The tale by Herbert of Losinga refers to protection by both the Virgin and the Child: "The lady who sits above the altar of the Christians, and the little one whom she fosters in her bosom, stood around me and walled in my body by stretching out their hands.... By his fostering and protection [that of the one whose body the Juitel consumed in the Eucharist] I left the furnace unharmed."¹³⁹ The maternal imagery here blurs the roles of Mother and Child, an idea that one Old French version would continue to explore. The *Vie des anciens peres* shifts the role entirely from the Virgin to the Christ Child, who here becomes the boy's sole protector. When asked if he has been hurt by the fire, the boy replies:

Not at all, because he whom I ate today in the church is here with me. He has done me a great service and has been good company for me. Do you see him here? Don't you see him at all, how he holds me by the hand? I suffer no cold or heat or hunger, but I am truly so comfortable here that I would never wish to move from here.¹⁴⁰

Once again, the image of children playing together appears, this time with the Christ Child himself taking the place of the Christian boys as the Juitel's companion. Such a passage reinforces the idea that the child, perhaps any child, becomes a privileged creature, precious to the Virgin Mother and her young Son, in a time of need.

The tale of Adam of Bristol similarly evinces a strong bond between contemporary child and Christ Child. When nailed to the cross, Adam awakens "as if out of sleep" and for the third time cries out to the Virgin for assistance, at which Samuel again spits in his face and refers to Mary as "that whore." The woman, having asked her husband's permission to speak with the child, offers to return him to his parents on the condition that he tell her what he saw when placed in the fire. The boy describes a situation remarkably similar to the legend of the Juitel, with some important additions:

The child [said] to her, as well as he could with his lips cut open, "When you placed me in the great fire, an exceedingly beautiful lady came to me and sat between me and the fire, and, kissing me while I was in the fire, said to me in English, 'Son, this night you will come to your father and mother and you will rejoice with them.'" The [Jewish] woman [asked] him, "Did you hear anyone talking with us when you were in the fire?" And he [said], "I saw at my right side a child kissing the wounds on my hands and feet, and saying to me, 'You are my beloved brother.'"¹⁴¹

Unlike the unharmed Juitel, Adam, although saved from the fire, still doubly suffers the wounds of Christ, having been attached twice to the cross and wounded in the head. However, like the more elaborate thirteenth-century versions of the Juitel, this narrative concentrates on the boy's connection to the Christ Child. The complete absence of Adam's parents (except as distant, unseen figures) in the narrative is filled by the reference to the boy's new spiritual family, his biological relations having been replaced by a Holy Family. In the tale, Mary knows, and the audience can assume, that the child will die before he sees his earthly parents, yet she reassures him with an ambiguous reference to his "parents," presumably Mary and God the Father. The physical and emotional proximity of the Christ Child to Adam highlights the boy's uniqueness and at the same time suggests, for everyone, an ideal, the creation of a new eternal family that parallels yet surpasses the human (nuclear) household. In blessing the wounds with a kiss, the Christ Child embraces Adam's martyrdom and "prefigures" his own Passion as an adult. Adam takes up the sacrificial role of Christ not just as an adult but also as the Child, especially the child seen in the eucharistic visions at the moment of transubstantiation.

Ritual murder is certainly premised on the substitution of a child for Jesus, a contemporary reenactment of the primary drama of Pauline Christianity. But some tales interpret and expand on the concept of a child as replacement for Christ in startling ways. Many tales of ritual murder refer to the idea of a child physically suffering, at the hands of Jews, for Christ. One rendering of the tale of Hugh of Lincoln even hints at the idea of the victim's resistance to Jewish violence:

The little one smiled [or laughed] at the whole spirit of malignity in those people who reveled wildly around him. Neither a murmur nor a complaint resounded from his mouth. Indeed, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, he remained with a happy face, as if suffering nothing. And it is marvelous to say, although he was of such a tender age, he did not let out a word or a sigh.¹⁴²

In this and other tales, the child acts as a martyr should, despite the unusual circumstance that he is a young boy and that the martyrdom occurs in the midst of a Christian world. Jewish malevolence and a child's innocent vulnerability commingle in these texts to create a new kind of martyr in imitation of Christ.

But the story of Adam of Bristol moves beyond simple emulation of the Crucifixion. At times it blurs at times the distinction between God and blessed child. Throughout the boy's martyrdom, Samuel continually confuses Adam with the Christian God; the child has, in Samuel's mind, become Christ and so must suffer what Jesus endured, in a perpetual repetition of the Crucifixion, with Samuel in the role of eternal Christ-killer. When he spits on Adam, Samuel simultaneously distinguishes the boy from Jesus ("Such honor is due to your Christ and to his mother") and conflates the two by mocking the boy with claims that they would convert if he descended from the Cross. Acknowledging three earlier ritual murders, Samuel refers to Adam as the fourth God he has crucified.¹⁴³ The boy invokes Mary several times, and pleads that Samuel not kill him "for love of Saint Mary of Redcliffe."¹⁴⁴ Reflecting his strong hatred of the Virgin, Samuel spits on Adam, promises that the boy will "die the cruelest death for love of that whore," and forces his own young son to cut "our enemy Christ."

But after Adam is nailed to a cross and placed over a fire, a miracle occurs, in which Samuel and his wife hear a voice from the boy's throat, saying in Hebrew, "Samuel, why do you burn me all night? I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, whom for the fourth time now you have crucified."¹⁴⁵ A stunned Samuel commands his wife to release the boy and to check for signs of life. What follows depends closely on the narrative of the *Juitel*, except that here the woman is complicit in the child's torture and has yet to repent. Nevertheless, from this point onward, the Jewish woman plays the role of the caring parent, concerned over the child's pain, ever the anxious mother in the tales of ritual murder and Marian miracles. On pouring some beer into his mouth, the couple sees Adam breathe "as if awakening from a sleep. He said nothing, but lay as if sleeping in a bed."¹⁴⁶ This is exactly the outward appearance of the *Juitel* when rescued from the furnace. Yet no matter what it may borrow from another genre, this is a narrative of ritual murder, not a miracle of Mary. The child's fate is sealed; he will die that same night at Samuel's hands. While her husband stands incredulous at what he heard, the woman kneels down by the Christian boy "and says three times, 'Adekin, talk with me, and I will lead you home to your father and mother.'"¹⁴⁷ The use of a diminutive version of the boy's name and the promise (it is uncertain at this point that she would keep such a promise) to

return him to his parents indicate the turning point for the woman, the moment at which she begins to reconsider her beliefs. Taking up the role of nurturer, she suggests that they put Adam in a bed so they can speak with him later, an option that Samuel quickly rejects.

The spiritual kinship of Adam with the Christ Child continues as Adam tells the Jewish wife that the Child at that moment still remains next to him on the cross, kissing his wounds. The family cannot see anyone with the boy, but the wife asks the name of the invisible child. The privileged status of the Christian boy is apparent in that only he can see and speak with the mysterious boy, whose identity even he does not know. After Adam asks the question, a loud voice resounds through the room: "Jesus Christ the Nazarene is my name." Although Samuel continues to deny the miraculous events, his wife interprets them as a sign from God. After again asking why Christ does not save the crucified boy, Samuel adds, "If this child Jesus, whom the Christian sees, would come to me, I would attach him to a cross and punish him."¹⁴⁸ Earlier, Samuel had confused Adam with Christ, but here Samuel makes the distinction in a statement of violent defiance. After this pronouncement, Samuel seizes the knife from his wife's belt and fatally stabs the child in the side, at which point the family hears the sound of thousands of voices singing as "the innocent released his spirit." Samuel's perversion of his own religion has been castigated by a deep voice emanating from the boy himself. Samuel's wife, on the other hand, correctly interprets the voices and converts, as does their son, both of whom Samuel promptly stabs to death. Later, visitors to the house witness a vision of the wife and child in a procession led by an angelic choir that escorts them to heaven. Another dyad of mother and son, the Jewish dyad only recently converted to Christianity, provides further evidence of Christianity's truth.

The account's chief foci elaborate several familiar themes, chiefly the contrast of Jewish paternal hatred with Christian maternal love and with childhood piety. The child again acts as the (unwitting) source of revelation of Christian truth and justice; through him, the Jewish mother and son convert, a sinful priest repents, and Samuel suffers for his hatred. The text is saturated with images of families, true and false, spiritual and physical. This tale, unlike the others, contains implicit ambivalence toward earthly families and asserts the supremacy of a spiritual community, which, nevertheless, is portrayed in intimate familial imagery.

The narrative of the ritual murder of Adam of Bristol emphasizes the transition from a biological family to a new spiritual family for Adam, via a false Jewish family. As in the *Juitel*, the author locates the emotional center in the Jewish family, thus removing any narrational need for the presence and grief of the

biological parents. The author contrasts the community of Christianity, centered around a holy family, with the sad and isolated figures of Samuel and his sister, and he provides a vivid illustration of the conflict between the old law of the fathers and the new true Israel of Jesus, son of Mary. The conflict plays out at the heart of a tale that provides a gendered study of the nature of families and patriarchal authority. Samuel's hatred, fear, and cruelty toward Mary, the child, and eventually his own loved ones finds its antithesis in the welcoming, merciful, and loving images of Mary and the Christ Child. Yet again, a child and a woman become the source of true, loving emotion (in contrast to Jewish feigned affection) as well as a source for change and conversion. The tale connects a child's innocent and simple piety with the humanity of Mary and Christ, adult and child. In contrast to the various appearances of saintly and divine personages, God appears not as a distant adult figure but as an intimate, the Child consoling a fellow child. The lowest of humans, a poor child, represents and embodies the holiest elements of high-medieval Christianity—a reenactment of the Passion and direct contact with the divine.

The Child, Christian Community, and Revenge

The private and intimate connection between a child and the Holy Family in so many of these tales generally leads directly to a public reaction by the Christian community. In the tales of the *Juitel*, a family's pain becomes an open trial when a crowd forms around the scene of the crime. In William of Malmesbury's rendering of the story, the mother, "exhausted by maternal feeling," draws a large audience, and only then is the father accused of harshness and expelled from Pisa, just as the child is "expelled" from the furnace.¹⁴⁹ In discussing the opening of the furnace, William mentions something no other author includes, a reference to the Christian crowd having been "deprived of the sight of the little one's martyrdom."¹⁵⁰ William of Malmesbury died in 1143, one year before the first known case of ritual murder, yet already he shows the populace willing to interpret Jewish violence to a child—who is already almost Christian, by virtue of his having received Communion—as evidence of sanctity through martyrdom. However, the father's fate is usually not as bloodless as the expulsion in the tale by William of Malmesbury. Rather, it often involves a reversal of roles: He, rather than the child, is burned to death in the furnace. In the Latin version that scholars consider the source for many of the Old French adaptations, the mother's outcries move the crowd to tears and to take action, to rescue the child and punish the father.¹⁵¹

In most versions of the tale, the crowd quickly reacts to "such a horrible deed"

by burning the father even before hearing the boy's story of salvation.¹⁵² Their abrupt action parallels the father's hasty decision to kill the child, but here the authors justify the Christian violence by describing the emotion involved not as anger but as horror at the inhuman nature of the crime. The Christians thus rectify the situation by undoing the father's deeds, by "ejecting" what the father had "projected" into the furnace and then replacing the boy with the father. The response of the masses is portrayed as being based on feelings of pity for the mother, concern for the boy, and revulsion for the father.

Throughout the many versions of the *Juitel*, a single Jewish family becomes the focus of Christians' interest, which then extends to the entire Jewish community. With rare exceptions, the tale pits Jewish patriarchal authority and cruelty against the kindness, mercy, and pity of the earthly and heavenly mothers and against the child's vulnerability. As with the legends of ritual murder and of the singing boy, the mother and child become the primary focus of and inspiration for Christian popular concern over Jewish domestic affairs. The tale of the *Juitel* provides an example and justification of Christian intervention in Jewish communities, here based on a concern over the child. While the stories of ritual murder point to negative consequences of interaction between members of the two religions, the tale of the *Juitel* suggests that Christian involvement in Jewish affairs could be benign in that it could lead to the saving of the lives and souls of Jewish children.

From their very origins, the narratives of ritual murder require at least an attempt to find justice, often with the execution or outright slaughter of Jews. We hear that the Jews of Norwich fled popular anger after William's disappearance, that Philip Augustus cited childhood rumors of ritual murder as an explanation for the seizure of Jewish property, that the incident at Valréas led to the torture and probable execution of several Jews, and that the Crown executed nineteen Jews for the death of Hugh of Lincoln. In almost every case, the sources point to a response by the Christian community of the region, often both punitive toward the Jews and celebratory of a new martyr or miracle. The sadness of the mother and the simple piety of the child combine with a perceived Jewish violence to inspire a greater cohesion among Christians. The stress on the humane and human characteristics of Mary and her Child, as well as of the contemporary suffering mother and child, provides an opportunity for the Christians of the area—and possibly the Christian audience for the tales—to learn the extent of Jewish perfidy and Christian truth.

Further Diffusions

Despite the differences of genre, style, and language, the tales discussed in this chapter share one important characteristic: Each expresses a profound concern over children manifested through a fearful distrust of Jews. Yet similar stories that mentioned but did not center on infanticide surfaced in a wide variety of areas. At a time when the status of the Jews in France and England was rapidly deteriorating, the tales of child-murder, with their ability to induce visceral reactions, played an important role in introducing and legitimizing new accusations for a wide Christian audience increasingly hostile to its Jewish neighbors. The discourse of ritual murder, which by the late twelfth century were already established as legitimate in the minds of many, can be connected with the earliest cases of host desecration, disputes over the Talmud, well-poisonings, royal expulsions, and prominent conversions to Judaism.

Among the legacies of ritual murder are several Marian miracles that evoke the image of Jewish child-murder. A miracle in a Franco-Provençal collection from around 1250 combines older tales of image desecration with stories of child-murder. In the legend, a Jew broke off the Child from a statue of Mary and brought it home, where it poured forth blood. The man then threw it in a well, where it was found by Christians who, following the trail of blood, confronted the Jew and baptized the perpetrator.¹⁵³ Similarly, the Dominican Jean Gobi, in his *Scala coeli*, written in the 1320s, included the tale of a pregnant Jewess¹⁵⁴ who, in a lengthy painful labor invoked the Virgin, quickly gave birth and was baptized with her newborn. The father then slew the child in its crib, fled, and sought forgiveness for acting as a wolf that had killed an innocent lamb; at the father's baptism, the infant revived and the father's life was spared.¹⁵⁵ To an earlier miracle, Jean Gobi added an irate infanticidal father and a child's death and resurrection, paralleling the *Juitel*. By the early fourteenth century, in Marian literature, Jewish antipathy toward Christianity was increasingly represented by images of Jewish violence toward children.

Concern over an imagined Jewish threat to children resurfaces in an account of one of the most famous cases of conversion to Judaism, that of an unnamed deacon who, in 1222, out of love for a Jewish woman, chose to become an apostate and to be circumcised, actions that led to his confession of various crimes before his execution.¹⁵⁶ During the trial before Stephen Langton, the deacon renounced the Cross, slandered Mary, and "confessed that he was present at a certain sacrifice that the Jews made by crucifying a certain child."¹⁵⁷ Although the accusation was probably never made at the trial (but reflecting, all the same, Matthew Paris's belief in ritual murder), the account of the incident

combines the major thirteenth-century Christian perceptions of Jewish perfidy—attempted conversion of Christians, contempt for the cross, slanders against Mary, and ritual murders of children.

Contemporary with Matthew Paris's report of the conversion, the debates over possibly blasphemous and heretical passages in the Talmud erupted in France, beginning, in 1240, with a list of accusations made by Nicholas Donin, a recent convert to Christianity. The charge of ritual murder arose during the famous disputation in Paris that led to the official condemnation and burning of the Talmud two years later.¹⁵⁸ A letter to Pablo Christiani (the main prosecutor in the Barcelona debate with Nachmanides, 1263) and written soon after the disputation, Jacob ben Elie mentions Donin's claim before Louis IX "that on Passover nights we slaughter young boys still accustomed to their mother's breasts ... and that the hands of merciful women cook the children and we eat their flesh and drink their blood."¹⁵⁹ The belief in Passover sacrifices and cannibalistic offerings combined easily with Christian beliefs in Jewish blood rituals thought to be found in the Talmud.¹⁶⁰

The readiness of many Christians to believe in Jewish violence directed at children lent some weight to several new accusations brought against the Jews of Western Europe, particularly to accusations of host desecration.¹⁶¹ Although the charge became common only after 1290, one incident in 1150, in Cologne, connects several themes of this chapter—the invocation of the vulnerable child, the cult of the Christ Child, and the belief in Jewish malice. The twelfth-century *Chronica regia Coloniensis* mentions a convert who brought a host home from church and buried it in a cemetery. When a priest heard of the sacrilege, he dug up the grave and found "the tiny form of a little infant" (*formulam infantuli*), a phrasing that uses multiple diminutives to stress the precious nature of the transubstantiated flesh of a very human Christ Child.¹⁶² One scholar, citing this case, considered the accusations of ritual murder and host desecration to be almost synonymous, an exaggeration that contains some truth.¹⁶³

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, just as the accusations of host desecration became more frequent, the charge of child-murder again appeared in connection with another new accusation, that of well-poisoning. While the most famous early case took place in 1321 and was thought to involve an alliance between the Jews and the lepers, an earlier and lesser-known incident concentrated solely on the Jews as perpetrators. In 1306, the Jews of Forcalquier were accused of killing an infant and attempting to throw the body into a well near Manosque, in order "to taint the water of this well and thus to bring about

poison, so that those drinking from that tainted water would sicken and die."¹⁶⁴ Although the outcome of the case is unknown, the invocation of infanticide here finds a new context, that of poisoning the countryside. The accusation stands out as a striking prelude to the charges made in the 1320s and again in 1348.¹⁶⁵

Finally, accusations of child-murder can be connected to the expulsions of the Jews from France and possibly from England. Rigord and Guillaume le Breton clearly pointed to the influence that Philip Augustus's childhood fear of ritual murder had on his decisions to order the raid of 1180 and the expulsion of 1182. In studying the status of Jews in England in the second half of the thirteenth century, Sophia Menache plausibly suggests that in England a case could be made "for regarding blood libels as a possible cause of the expulsion of 1290."¹⁶⁶ Certainly the incessant accusations of ritual murder that plagued the English Jewry throughout the thirteenth century, including the accusation of a "detestable" murder (according to the Calendar of the Close Rolls) in London in 1276,¹⁶⁷ helped neither the Jews' image nor their status. Thirteenth-century kings of England and France were sometimes depicted as shocked, irate, and vengeful on hearing the rumors, as shown by Philip Augustus's "rancor" in Guillaume's text and by Henry III's outburst in the ballad of Hugh of Lincoln. The royal reactions helped to further legitimize the accusations, yet they also serve as indicators of the powerful emotional impact of such tales on ostensibly devout Christians. It is this, the attempt to use the emotions expressed in the tale to influence the emotions of the tales' audience, that proves to be one of the most insidious aspects of the phenomenon of ritual murder.

Conclusions

Over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the narrative of childhood vulnerability and Jewish menace spread throughout Western Europe primarily in the form of ritual murder and pious tales. The affective resonances within the accusations of child-murder, pervasive in this literature, suggest connections between the emotions induced by both twelfth- and thirteenth-century religious and family life, since these tales depict tragedies that lie in between the realms of the pious and the familial. While the kings' reactions lent credibility to the charges, the emotional responses of the mother and later the crowd similarly legitimized the tales, as Thomas of Monmouth notes explicitly in his report of Godwin's proofs for William's sanctity and for the Jews' guilt. The tales reveal the interpenetrations of the public and private (familial) in contemporary culture, by turning a personal tragedy into a public spectacle with implications relevant to all Christians. The accusations of ritual murder

perpetuated themselves, through their references to public awareness of rumors of previous outrages (even William's tale contains such claims) and through their attempts to produce visceral reactions to the raw emotions depicted in the tales—love, hate, fear, and religious devotion. The Jewish threat was portrayed as menacing not only Christian children but all children, as the *Juitel* and a statement in the confessions at Valréas indicate: "When they cannot have a Christian, they buy a Saracen [child]."¹⁶⁸ The raconteurs of these legends and miracles found, capitalized on, and elaborated the emotional potential and religious significance of the family tragedy. Ritual murder in this sense reveals a close connection between child, mother, family and religion. While it is generally argued that Christian piety of a later period (the *devotio moderna*) displayed tendencies toward extreme emotional outpourings, the texts discussed here suggest a similar phenomenon in twelfth- and thirteenth-century piety, centered on images of childhood and maternity. These tales in part illustrate the appropriation of emotions surrounding the family for the purpose of inducing religious fervor.

The accusations of ritual murder underscore the socioreligious significances of the child to Christian society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The focus on the child as victim often allows for elaborate representations of the domestic world as well as for discussion of the importance of biological and spiritual families. These texts legitimize and demand a proper love of family, through the invocation of examples of positive maternal roles and demonized Jewish paternal characters. The mothers all act as unsuccessful protectors and advocates for their children in mock trials taking place in the streets, seeking either justice or the return of the lost loved one. The gendered discussion of religious difference, of Christian female compassion and Jewish male severity, idealizes the image of mother and child, directly related to the holy dyad, and accentuates the important role played by the mother in announcing and perpetuating the tales of Jewish child-murder. The references to the piety of both child and mother find parallels throughout this literature in the devotion and concern reciprocated by Mary and her son. The religious nature of these tales, all of which take the child as the center of attention, points to connections with and inspirations from the cults of Mary and of the Christ Child. The legends in part derive from and promote these cults and reflect an interest in the religious meanings of child and family. The visions of the Christ Child in the Eucharist, the *Juitel*'s fascination with the prominent image of Mother and Child in the church, and the intimate connection that many of the children enjoyed with both Mary and the Christ Child illustrate the extent to which maternal and child-related images suffused Christian culture in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These texts depict the holy dyad as

intimately human, visible in the interaction, with both Mother and Child, that the Juitel and Adam of Bristol shared. Such references to the happy Child and caring Mother reflect the humanizing trend, the immediacy, and palpable humanity of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Christianity.

The centrality of familial imagery can also be seen in the figure of the Jews, whose roles as angry patriarchs, killers of Christ, murderers of children, haters of Mary, and desecrators of the host blur in the miracles and legends of ritual murder. Throughout these narratives, Jews communicate in a fraudulent and sometimes ironic language, while Christian speech can only be caring and honest, a phenomenon that serves to legitimize the fallacious accusations. Yet the actions of Jewish figures in the *Juitel* and elsewhere are not always depicted as evil but sometimes as misguided and false interpretations of religious precepts. The father's sense of duty to punish the Juitel and the apparent necessity of the blood collection in the Valréas case are viewed as distorted, misunderstood versions of Judaeo-Christian values, although the latter is always represented in a far more negative light, as a malicious aping of the central Christian rite, using a child in place of the transubstantiated host. The Christians' consumption of the Christ Child in the *Juitel* finds a direct echo in the cannibalism of the blood libel, yet one is valorized as the height of pious solemnity and the other demonized as the most outrageous act. Such oppositions find their justification in the Christian belief that the eucharistic ceremony was an act of love, by both the recipient and the donor (God who here gives a child as sacrifice to demonstrate the extent of his love), whereas the violence of the blood libel (and ritual murder) was depicted as a reactionary, hateful response to the Christian rite. Whether or not the accusations reflected ecclesiastical fears of interaction between Christians and Jews (as the tales of the Winchester boy and the *Juitel* suggest), the tales in the end served to validate and to increase the excesses of Christian anti-Jewish actions, by representing such reactions as proper revenge for Jewish outrages against pious children.

The child's importance in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Christian culture is apparent in the accusations' reworking of the gospel narratives, replacing the adult on the cross with a child, just as the eucharistic visions and the *Juitel* substituted a bleeding Christ Child for the host. Ritual murder conflates the two most important moments of the Incarnation, the beginning and the end of Christ's life, made all the more poignant through the depiction of the mother's emotions: her earlier joy at the birth and infancy (manifested in the mothers' vocalized memories and in Mary's infantilizing of the children by placing them in her lap, replacing the infant Christ) and her grief at the Passion, here suffered by a child. The tales studied here serve to strengthen the commingling of familial and

religious imagery, and they attempt to demonstrate the compatibility of the family with Christianity, at the same time representing the family as problematic to, and conflicting with, contemporary Jewish interpretations of Mosaic law. The tales of ritual murder and of Marian miracles manipulate emotionally charged anti-Jewish imagery in order to depict devotion to God and to family as two complementary parts of the same phenomenon, summed up in the literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with one word, *pietas*.

Notes:

Note 1: On the cult, see Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977), 120–22. [back](#)

Note 2: The literature is immense. The primary studies include Hermann L. Strack's *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*, trans. Henry Blanchamp (New York, 1909), which provides a detailed study of the many motifs in the killings (reasons for and purposes of the killings, in a broad folkloric context); Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (New Haven, 1943), chaps. 9 and 10; Langmuir's work on various incidents, collected in Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley, 1990), part 4; and Friedrich Lotter, "Innocens virgo et martyr: Thomas von Monmouth und die Verbreitung der Ritualmordlegende im Hochmittelalter," in *Die Legende von Ritualmord* (Berlin, 1993), ed. Rainer Erb, 25–72, which provides far less discussion of the "victim" than the title might suggest. The introductory chapter in R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder* (New Haven, 1988), identifies many more studies on the subject. [back](#)

Note 3: On ritual murder as demonizing, see Leon Neal McCrillis's unpublished dissertation, "The Demonization of Minority Groups in Christian Society during the Central Middle Ages" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 1974), chap. 4; and on ritual murder as "chimerical fantasies," see Langmuir, *Definition* (part 4), 301–52. [back](#)

Note 4: The only work currently available is Magdalene Schultz, "The Blood Libel: A Motif in the History of Childhood," *Journal of Psychohistory* 14, no. 1 (summer 1986): 1–24, which, after adding two new paragraphs, she republished as "Projektion versus Realität: Der Ritualmord," in *Die Juden in ihrer mittelalterlichen Umwelt*, ed. Helmut Birkhan, Wiener Arbeiten zur Germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie, no. 33 (Bern, 1990), 225–47. Her work is chronologically broad (mixing the twelfth with the fifteenth centuries) and contains many ahistorical claims (e.g., that sending one's child off as an apprentice at age twelve constitutes child abuse). [back](#)

Note 5: Robert Worth Frank, "Miracles of the Virgin, Medieval Anti-Semitism, and the 'Prioress's Tale,'" in *The Wisdom of Poetry*, Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel, eds. (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1982), 177–88. [back](#)

Note 6: There has been much work in medieval pastoral preaching; see the work of Nicole Beriou, *La prédication de Ranulphe de la Houblonnière* (Paris, 1987), D. L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford, 1989), and Michel Zink, *Prédication en langue romane avant 1300* (Paris, 1982). [back](#)

Note 7: With a field as immense as the history of Mariology, one must necessarily be very selective with references. For an overview of the high medieval cult, see Jean Leclercq, "Grandeur et misère de la dévotion mariale au moyen-âge," *La Maison-Dieu* 38 (1954): 122–135 and E. Sabbe, "Le cult marial et la genèse de la sculpture médiévale," *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 20 (1951): 101–25. A detailed survey of Mariology can be found in Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (London, 1963–65). [back](#)

Note 8: The history of the Christ Child has strangely received little attention; the primary studies are Peter Browe, *Die eucharistischen Wunder des Mittelalters*, Breslauer Studien zur historischen Theologie, n. F., Bd. 4 (Breslau 1938), 100–111; Rosemarie Rode, "Studien zu den mittelalterlichen Kind-Jesu-Visionen," Ph.D. diss., Johan Wolfgang Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main, 1957; and Leah Sinanoglou, "The Christ Child as

Sacrifice: A Medieval Tradition and the Corpus Christi Plays," *Speculum* 48 (1973): 491–509. [back](#)

Note 9: My observations parallel the extensive work on the image of Jews in medieval culture; see Cecil Roth, "The Medieval Conception of the Jew: a new interpretation," *Essays and Studies in Memory of Linda R. Miller*, ed. I. Davidson (New York, 1938), 171–90; Bernhard Blumenkranz, *Le juif médiéval au miroir de l'art chrétien* (Paris 1966), useful for iconographic sources; Alain Boureau, "L'Inceste de Judas: Essai sur la genèse de la haine anti-sémite au XIIe siècle," *Nouvelle revue de psychoanalyse* 33 (1986): 25–41. [back](#)

Note 10: On the details of the cult, see Edward Meyrick Goulburn, *The Ancient Sculptures in the Roof of Norwich Cathedral* (London, 1876), 108–15, which includes the Proper for William's feast day, March 24. [back](#)

Note 11: The sole manuscript of the text, the *Vita Willelmi*, was discovered in the 1890s by M. R. James and published by Augustus Jessopp and James as *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich* by Thomas of Monmouth (Cambridge, 1896), hereafter VW. The editors included their translation, which lacks the precision needed for my purposes; the translations here are my own. [back](#)

Note 12: For detailed studies of the broader historical contexts of the case, see Gavin Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth, Detector of Ritual Murder," *Speculum* 59 (1984): 822–846, reprinted in Langmuir, *Definition*, 209–36; and John M. McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth," *Speculum* 72, no. 3 (1997): 698–740. [back](#)

Note 13: Pontoise / Paris—Geoffroi de Vigeois, M. Bouquet, ed., *RHF* 12, p. 438 (and see below); Gloucester—W. Hart, ed., *Historia Monasterii S. Petri Gloucestriae*, Rolls Series, 33.1 (London, 1863), 20–21, which focuses on the state of the body when found and makes no reference to the parents; Blois—see Robert Chazan, "The Blois Incident of 1171: A Study in Jewish Intercommunal Organization," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 36 (1968): 13–31 (there are few Latin sources on this case, for which the main source is a letter found in a Hebrew Crusade chronicle); Bury—Jocelin de Brakelonde, *Chronica*, Rolls Series 96.1 (1890), 223, very brief; Winchester—Richard of Devizes, see below. On all of these, see Lotter, 49–52. [back](#)

Note 14: The account of the ritual murder is the passage most often cited by modern scholars as evidence of its author's playful and satiric style. There are several editions and many translations of this chronicle. For the Latin, see Richard Howlett, ed., *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, Rolls Series 82.4 (London, 1886), 435–40, and John T. Appleby ed. and trans., *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First* (London, 1963), 64–69. Other translations in *Chronicles of the Crusades*, Bohn's Antiquarian Library (London, 1848) and, for this passage only, in Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England: Documents and Records* (London, 1893), 146–52. For an overview of the case, see Patricia Allin, "Richard of Devizes and the Alleged Martyrdom of a Boy at Winchester," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 27 (1978–80): 32–39. [back](#)

Note 15: Henri-François Delaborde, ed., *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton* (Société de l'Histoire de France, 1882), 14–16: "Audierat enim multoties a pueris qui cum ipso pariter in palatio fuerant nutriti, et hoc sine obliteratione memorie commendaverat, quod Judei qui Parisius manebant, singulis annis christianum unum, in opprobrium christiane religionis, quasi pro sacrificio, in cryptis subterraneis latentes in die Cene, vel in illa sacra Hebdomada Penosa, jugulabant." For Guillaume le Breton, see Delaborde, 179–80: "Philippus ... audierat a coetaneis et consodalibus suis, dum sepius cum eis in palatio luderet, quod Judei singulis annis unum christianum immolabant, et ejus corde se communicabant; et ideo, concepto ex hac occasione ranore contra eos, omnes proposuit ejicere de regno suo." [back](#)

Note 16: The case has been studied extensively because of the novelty of the charge and because Frederick II condemned in strong language both the accusation and the deaths of thirty-four Jews of Fulda. See the simultaneously published work by B. Diestelkamp, "Der Vorwurf des Ritualmordes gegen Juden vor dem Hofgericht Kaiser Friedrichs II. im Jahr 1236," in *Religiöse Devianz, Ius commune* 48 (1990): 19–39; and Langmuir, "Ritual Cannibalism," in *Definition*, 263–81. [back](#)

Note 17: The transcript has been published several times; see A. Molinier, "Enquête sur un meurtre imputé aux juifs de Valréas (1247)," in *Le cabinet historique* 29, no. 2 (1883): 121–33; and Moritz Stern, *Urkundliche Beiträge über die Stellung der Päpste zu den Juden* (Kiel, 1893–95), 2:46–58. Gavin Langmuir discusses the case briefly in "L'Absence d'accusation de meurtre rituel à l'ouest du Rhône," in *Juifs et judaïsme de Languedoc, XIIIe siècle-début XIVE siècle*, ed. M. H. Vicaire and Bernhard Blumenkranz, *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 12 (1977), 235–49. [back](#)

Note 18: Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (New York, 1966), 1:268–71: "[Judeos] quendam puellam, que mortua in quodam fossato reperta extitit, crucis patibulo affixisse... ." The other Bull was even vaguer about the charge and simply referred to a girl said to have been secretly killed by the Jews. [back](#)

Note 19: There have been three studies of the case: Joseph Jacobs, "Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society* 1 (1893): 89–135; Francis Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1965), 224–234, best on archaeological findings concerning the case; and Gavin Langmuir, "The Knight's Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln," *Definition*, 237–62, which focuses on the role of the interrogator, John of Lexington. [back](#)

Note 20: Certainly, as Finucane (see above, note 1) has shown, there was a steady decrease in income from William's shrine; the other saints had only very local shrines and less documentation. At the same time, Chaucer's choice may reflect the fact that the stories of Hugh and of the singing boy were extremely similar; see below. Jacobs and Langmuir both begin their work with Chaucer's allusion. [back](#)

Note 21: Albert Poncelet, "Index miraculorum Beatae Virginis Mariae quae saeculis vi-xv latina conscripta sunt," *Analecta Bollandiana* 21 (1902): 241–360, lists more than 1,750 references to the different versions of Marian miracles. [back](#)

Note 22: Carleton Brown, in his comparative study of the versions of the tale, suggested that Hugh's story was almost a variant of the Marian legend of the singing boy, or at least contained a surprising number of parallels to the miracle; see Brown's *A Study of The Miracle of Our Lady Told by Chaucer's Prioress* (London, 1910), 90. I would reverse the argument and suggest that the singing boy's tale is actually a variant on the theme of ritual murder. [back](#)

Note 23: It is because of the tale's interest to Chaucerians that there is a considerable amount of material detailing the legend's origins. See Brown, *Study*; Walter Morris Hart, "Some Old French Miracles of Our Lady and Chaucer's Prioresses Tale," *University of California Publications in Modern Philology* 11 (1922): 31–53; Beverly Boyd, "Young Hugh of Lincoln and Chaucer's 'The Prioress's Tale,'" *Radford Review* 14 (January 1960): 1–5. [back](#)

Note 24: Brown A5, p. 7; Evelyn Faye Wilson, *The Stella maris of John of Garland* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), no. 43: "De Maria quicquid scivit / Puer cantans, enutrivit / Maternam inopiam. / / Hunc Iudeus nequam stravit / Domo sua quem humavit / Diram per invidiam. / / Mater querens hunc vocavit, / Hic in terra recantavit / Solita preconia. / / Puer liber mox exivit, / Mortis reos lex punivit / Iudeos in Anglia." Note that John's version contains many contemporary and rudimentary glosses, which were probably written for schoolboys. [back](#)

Note 25: I have chosen the title *Juite!* rather than the others because 1) the term appears in most of the Old French versions and 2) the title includes all variants of the tale, not simply the version set in Bourges. I use the term both as a title for the story and as a term for the boy in the story; I distinguish the two through the use of italics when I refer to the tale rather than its hero. [back](#)

Note 26: There are no known earlier Latin versions of the tale; Gregory's tale also is the main source for many (though definitely not all) later Latin and vernacular renderings of the tale. For the Western tradition of the tale, the basic sources are collected in Eugen Wolter, *Der Judenknabe: 5 Griechische, 14 Lateinische und 8 Französische Texte Bibliotheca normannica* 2 (Halle, 1879). For a discussion of the relations between the many retellings of the story, see Theodor Pelizaeus, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Legende vom Judenknabe* (Inaugural-Dissertation, Halle a. d. Saale, 1914). [back](#)

Note 27: I shall not discuss the two Spanish versions, in the Cantigas de Santa Maria (cantiga 4, with illustrations), various editions, and in Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de*

nuestra señora, ed. Brian Dutton (London, 1971); an Italian version, in *Romania* 13 (1884): 54–55; and several Middle High German poems, in *Germania* 27 (1882): 129–44, discussed most recently in W. Hofmeister, "Das Jüdel im Kontext mittelalterlicher literarischer Kindesdarstellungen," in *Die Juden in ihrer mittelalterlichen Umwelt*, ed. A. Ebenbauer and K. Zatloukal (Vienna, 1991), 91–103. [back](#)

Note 28: H. Isnard, "Recueil des miracles de la vierge du XIIIe siècle," *Bulletin de la société archéologique, scientifique, et littéraire du Vendomois* 26 (1887): 38–39, editing Vendôme, Bib. publ. 185: "De puero iudeo cum aliis communicante. Quidam puer iudeus accepit cum aliis corpus Christi quem pater eius in fornacem ardentem misit. Erat autem super altare ubi communionem acceperat imago beate uirginis quam ipse diligenter inspexerat. Cum autem esset in fornace apparuit ei beata uirgo in specie imaginis quam super altare uiderat & eum eciam sine sensu caloris liberauit. Hoc bituricas factum est." [back](#)

Note 29: By child-centered I mean that the tale often attempts to describe the rituals and beliefs of Christianity from the point of view of a child. I also suggest that, at least here, the focus is on fears for the child and on the efforts of the child's mother, the Christian crowd, and the Virgin to preserve the boy. [back](#)

Note 30: The *Juitel* appears as the first miracle in the Four Elements series (the element being fire) and in the Hildefonsus-Muriel collection. On these primary groupings of miracles, see the still essential "Studien zu den mittelalterlichen Marienlegenden," by Adolphe Mussafia, *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 113 (1886), 115 (1888), 119 (1889), 123 (1891), 139 (1898). Evelyn Wilson, in her introduction to *The Stella maris of John of Garland* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946) provides a substantial amount of new material on the various collections. [back](#)

Note 31: Edward Meyrick Goulburn, appendix to vol. 2 of *The Life, Letters, and Sermons of Bishop Herbert de Losinga* (Oxford and London, 1878), and see James Alexander, "Herbert de Losinga, Bishop of Norwich, 1091–1119" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1964). [back](#)

Note 32: The vita of Mena of Constantinople, *AASS Aug.*, v. 5, p. 170; the case is heard before this patriarch, but the miracle is attributed to Mary [back](#)

Note 33: *VW* 1.3, pp. 14–15: "Cum itaque tam uenerabili floreret pueritia et octauum iam ageret annum, a parentibus traditur pellipariis arte pelliparia instruendus." [back](#)

Note 34: Howlett, 435–36; Appleby, 64: "Fuerat autem Francus genere, pupillus et orphanus, abiecte conditionis et paupertatis extreme." [back](#)

Note 35: Howlett, 439; Appleby, 68: "Ubi cumque diebus pauperuli operarentur ab inuicem, uel comederent, singulis noctibus in uno unius uetulae ueteri tugurio in uno lectulo quiescebant." [back](#)

Note 36: *Les Miracles de Notre Dame par Gautier de Coinci*, V. Frédéric Koenig, ed. (Geneva, 1966–72), 4. p. 45. [back](#)

Note 37: Koenig 4, p. 45: "D'autrui relief, d'autrui aumosnes / M'avez, fait il, tout norri, mere; / Mais, foy que doy l'ame mon pere, / Souvent de duel li cuers me serre / Quant je vos voy vostre pain querre; / Mout durement au cuer me point. / D'or en avant n'en querrez point, / Ce vos pri je, ma douce mere. / Se Diex me sauve ma vois clere / Et il me garde sauf et sain, / Il n'iert ja jors que plain mon sain / Ne vos aport, tout sanz doutance, / De pain, de char et de substance. / ... Ensi la povre bone fame / Reconforte li clerçonciax." [back](#)

Note 38: Burton, 340: "... sanctum Hughonem puerum parvulum ix. annorum cujusdam pauperulae mulieris filium unicum, scholarem ..." See below on the parallels in the miracle of the singing boy. [back](#)

Note 39: Gregory of Tours, *De gloria martyrum* 1.10, in *MGH SS rer. merov.* (Hanover 1885), Bruno Krusch, ed.: "... apud christianos pueros ad studia litterarum exerceretur..." [back](#)

Note 40: Goulburn, *Losinga*, 2:30: "Discebant iudaeorum liberi christianas litteras, et

veritatis succus teneris iudaeorum mentibus paulatim infundebatur." [back](#)

Note 41: A. Mussafia, "Miscellen aus Grazer Handschriften," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Alterthum* 29 (1885): 350—"Judeus quidam puer, olim christicoliarum / concludens pueris et eorum tactus amore ... " [back](#)

Note 42: Koenig 2, p. 95: "Uns giūs eut un giuetel / Mielz entendant et mout plus bel / De toz les autres giuetiaus / Por ce qu'il ert plaisans et biaux / Tuit li clerçon de la cité / Le tenoient en grant chierté." [back](#)

Note 43: See note 15 above [back](#)

Note 44: There has been little work on the boy Richard, mainly because the chronicle references are extremely brief and the only *Life* we have is extremely late (fifteenth century, *AASS* March 3, 591–92); see Lotter, 49–50. [back](#)

Note 45: Burton, 340–341: " ... Hugonem ... quidam ejusdem civitatis Judaeus nomine Jopinus, jam sole vergente ad occasum, a suorum contribulium et coetaneorum jocis ac choreis tetensis insidiis furtive sustulit... ." [back](#)

Note 46: Matthew Paris, 517: "... a vicinis, quod ultimo viderunt puerum, quem quaesivit, ludentem cum pueris Judaeorum sibi coetaneis, et domum Judaei cujusdam intrantem." [back](#)

Note 47: The story of Adam of Bristol explicitly makes such an allegation, even insisting that Samuel's son had been trained to do so and consciously understood the purposes behind the ruse. [back](#)

Note 48: Among other provisions from the Councils, see J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima Collectio*, vol. 22, col. 231 (chap. 26: Ne Christiani habitent cum Judaeis vel Saracenis). See Raymonde Foreville, *Latran I, II, III et Latran IV*, *Histoire des conciles oecumeniques*, no. 6 (1965). 147–48. [back](#)

Note 49: The Jewish boy enters the ranks of the select few "evil children" mentioned in central medieval culture. Penitential literature acknowledged that children could sin but were not necessarily aware of their crime, because they were unable to commit deceit (*doli non capax*). However, in literature, we encounter other examples of evil children: Robert le Diable (promised to the Devil before birth) and Merlin in, among other texts, *Huth Merlin*. Philippe de Novara also discusses a child brought up poorly who becomes a criminal in *Les quatres aages de l'home* (Paris, 1888). [back](#)

Note 50: *VW* 1.3, p. 15: "Illum etenim sibi maxime reputabant idoneum, siue quia simplicem et artificiosum didicerant, seu quoniam auaritia ducti minori ipsum pacari precio existimabant." [back](#)

Note 51: There are many editions of the Peterborough Chronicle, Bodleian MS. Laud Misc. 636. The best and most easily accessible include *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. B. Thorpe, *Rolls Series* 23 (1861), 383, and *The Peterborough Chronicle 1070–1154*, ed. Cecily Clark (Oxford, 1970, 2d ed.), 57. See the translations by G. N. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1972), 265–66, and D. Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1961), 200. [back](#)

Note 52: Koenig 4, p. 49: "Foy que je doy l'ame mon pere, / Mielz en sera ta povre mere / S'en ma maison vienz avec moy / ... Ta mere pour l'amor de toy / Liverai toz ses estevoirs." [back](#)

Note 53: *VW* 1.4, p. 17: "Decipitur simplex puer, hominique se credit." [back](#)

Note 54: *VW* 1.5, p. 19: " ... puerumque Willelmum epulantem et nichil fraudis prorsus metuentem subito rapiunt." [back](#)

Note 55: Howlett, 436; Appleby, 65: "Non ignoro quem instruo. Habes supra tuam etatem feruorem ingenii, frigiditatem memorie, ex utrinque contrariis temperantiam rationis." The quality of coldness refers to natural philosophical theories of the child's nature, which was normally hot and humid, humors which were not conducive to learning. The child's coldness of memory is thus a sign of prodigious maturity. [back](#)

Note 56: Howlett, 435; Appleby, 64: "Non ibi continuum residebat ad opus nec magnum aliquid semel sinebatur explere, ne prouisam sibi cedem probaret cohabitatio, et

ut pro modico labore melius ibi quam pro multo alibi remuneratus, domum demonis donis eius et dolis illectus libentius frequentaret." Note the strong contrast with William, who was chosen by the Jews of Norwich because he charged less money. [back](#)

Note 57: London, BL Harley 957, fols. 19r—v: "et abiit mulier, et ingressa talamum, tradidit pueris poma, et accedens deosculata est tanto subdolo puerum christianum, dicens, bene venias fili." [back](#)

Note 58: Jacobs, 126b: "Tuz les Jus qui la furent / Mult grant joie trestuz firent / Qe l'enfant tut nu virent; / Mult poi de pité de li ourent." [back](#)

Note 59: Jacobs, 127a: "Mult fu l'enfant al jur tremblant, / L'enfant dist tant ne quant (lines 102—3). Ore orez grant pru u dolor / Deu merci cum out poür / Li juven enfant à cel ure / Quant la croiz i fu mis sure" (lines 108—11). [back](#)

Note 60: The unclean nature of the pig to Jewish culture was not lost on the Christian author, who elsewhere invokes Levitical dietary restrictions concerning pork as an example of cultural differences between the two religious cultures. [back](#)

Note 61: Molinier, 130: "Et dixit Lucius, quod si posset haberi infans, haberetur et de ejus sanguine fieret illud quod dictum est quasi sacrificium. Et ideo dixit quasi, quia sacrificium non possunt facere quia non habent Templum." [back](#)

Note 62: Molinier, 130 (Astrucus): "si inveniretur puer vel puella, occideretur"; 131 (Frossetus): "fuit acordatum quod interficeretur unus puer." Cf. 131 (Crescas): "occideretur puer, si posset haberi." [back](#)

Note 63: Koenig 4, p. 49: "Bien cuide que ce soit toz voirs / Li las enfes. Li clerçonnés / Symplement, com uns aingnelés, / Le giu suit en sa maison. / Tel cruauté ne fist mais hom." [back](#)

Note 64: Burton, 341: "... ut morti traderent innocentem." [back](#)

Note 65: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 19v: "Cumque sepius reiterando potasset, ait mulieri, O domina volo ire domi, ne forte irascatur pater meus. Cui mulier, ego sum nepota patris tui. Tu enim es cum ceteris fratribus tuis, sanguis meus et caro mea, et ego ducam te domi ad patrem tuum et matrem." [back](#)

Note 66: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 19v: "... et ait date nobis epulandum, et bibendum, et manducauerunt, et satiati sunt, et biberunt et locuti sunt quibus modis innocentem crudelius punirent et morti traderent." [back](#)

Note 67: Wolter, no. 10, p. 49: "Dum hec aguntur, parentes ipsius pueri cum maximo merore et dolore ubique suum infantem querunt; omnes quos inveniunt adeunt, singulos de filio suo sciscitantur." [back](#)

Note 68: Wolter, no. 24, p. 118: "e quident ben ke ceo seit gile, / ke lur enfant emblé lur seit." [back](#)

Note 69: *MGH SS rer. merov.* 1 (Hanover, 1885), p. 494. [back](#)

Note 70: Wolter, no. 10, p. 48: "Igitur inventus a parentibus, quo isset vel ubi fuisset minando interrogantibus, infantili metu perterritus minisque coactus, cuncta per ordinem puerili sono pandit parentibus." [back](#)

Note 71: Wolter, no. 24, p. 118: "Par grant pour e par manace / de sun pere, ke mult l'engace, / tut en plorant od lede chere, / cum est de enfant la manere... ." [back](#)

Note 72: Malmesbury, Canal, 137: "Qui cum ludibunda dulcedine ubi fuisset exquirent, ille puerili innocentia nihil occulendum arbitratus,—quid enim illa aetas deliquisse putaret? —in ecclesia se fuisse et azimum panem ... asseruit." Note the use of the word for unleavened bread, a common term for the consecrated host. [back](#)

Note 73: Goulburn, *Losinga*, 2:30. Note the parallel with Thomas of Monmouth, a monk at the cathedral fifty years after its founding by Herbert, particularly with Thomas's ambivalence toward William's mother and the discord between women's femininity and maternity. [back](#)

Note 74: Nigel of Canterbury, *Miracles of the Virgin, in verse*, Jan Ziolkowski, ed.

(Toronto, 1986), 62: "Contigit ergo domum puerum de more reuersum / utque solent pueri uisa referre domi, / simplicitas pueri mentiri nescia ueri / simplicitatis opus in sua dampna refert. / Quo pater audito, grauiter succensus in iram, / irruit in puerum, mente manueque furens. / Nulla patrem *pietas* potuit reuocare furentem, / quo labem nato parceret ipse suo." [back](#)

Note 75: *MGH SS rer. merov.* 1, p. 494: "'Si cum his infantibus communicasti, oblitus paterna pietate, ulciscendam Moysaicae legis iniuriam parricida in te durus existam.'" The middle phrase of this sentence is difficult to decipher. *Obliviscor* usually takes the genitive or accusative, so it may mean what it literally says, "having been forgotten by paternal *pietas*." (However, Gregory's Latin is by no means flawless.) The main problem lies in deciding who is the subject of the phrase: Has the child forgotten (or been forgotten by) his paternal *pietas* (meaning both his religious heritage and the piety he owes his father), or has the father, in wishing to kill the son, forgotten his paternal duty? The placement of the phrase directly after the verb *communicasti* suggests that the subject is probably the Juitel, as interpreted by Raymond Van Dam, the most recent translator of the *Glory of the Martyrs* (Liverpool, 1988), 30; however, the phrase can just as easily be interpreted as the father's justification of his own situation-specific lack of *pietas* toward his son. [back](#)

Note 76: Koenig 2, p. 100. The hard and harsh quality of the Jews' hearts and laws here may contrast with Gautier's earlier description of the Juitel's soft (*tenrete*) flesh, beaten for his friendship with the Christian boys. [back](#)

Note 77: Adgar, *Le Gracial*, ed. Herbert, 414; ed. Pierre Kunstmann, 110: "Ne sout ke faire ne que dire, / Tant ot el quor curuz e ire." Note that curuz (=corot) can mean indignation, grief, or affliction as well as wrath. [back](#)

Note 78: Wolter, no. 24, p. 119: "Ke pur les Gius ke pur sa rage / le Giu pensa mult grant utrage." [back](#)

Note 79: Howlett, 439; Appleby, 68: "'Tu,' inquit, 'fili sordide meretricis, tu latro, tu traditor, tu diabole, tu crucifixisti socium meum. Hei michi, modo quare non habeo uires hominis? Ego te manibus meis dilaniarem.'" [back](#)

Note 80: I distinguish more-extensive narratives here from the brief references to an accusation that occasionally occur in contemporary chronicles and annals. [back](#)

Note 81: The other meaning of *preda*, "booty, spoils," also has possible value here, given the other martial references in the passage, particularly the description of the betrayer's speeches as *insidiis*. [back](#)

Note 82: *VW* 1.4, pp. 17–18: "... resistit mater presagis uisceribus et materno affectu filio suo timens. Hinc traditor et inde mater: rogat ille, negat et illa. Rogat ille, sed ut perdat: negat illa, sed ne amittat... . Inter illam igitur et illum, ceu inter ouem et lupum prima fronte fortissimum, pro tercio duellum cerneret. Agnus erat medius, hinc ouis, inde lupus. Instat lupus ut diripiat et deuoret: perstat ouis ut eripiat et conseruet." [back](#)

Note 83: *VW* 1.14, p. 40: "... de amicis quempiam me nouiter contingeret per iudeos amittere, quem plurimum pre ceteris me constaret dilexisse!" I have translated *amicis* according to its etymological origin in its broadest sense rather than in the more specific sense of *friends*. B. McGuire notes the twelfth-century monastic use of the family as a model for cloistered friendships, see *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350–1250* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1988), passim, esp. 227–30. [back](#)

Note 84: Howlett, 439–40; Appleby, 68–69: "Iste Iudeus diabolus est; iste cor meum de uentre meo rapuit; iste unicum sodalem meum iugulauit, presumo etiam quod manducauit." [back](#)

Note 85: Koenig 4, p. 53: "Et bien li dit tout en apert, / Que, s'ele ensi son enfant pert, / Ja mais nul jor n'ara fiance / En sa douceur n'en sa puissance." [back](#)

Note 86: Jacobs, 125b: "Tute la vespre ele ala criant / Desqu'al ure de corfeu sonant / 'Perdi ai mon cher enfant / Que jo tuz jurz ai amé tant.'" Jacobs, 126a: "Jà plus tost ne vint l'ajornant / Qe la femme ne ala plorant / Par la Juerie demandant / As us de Jus: 'U est mon enfant?'" [back](#)

Note 87: I by no means wish to imply that older children or adults would not have been

sought when missing. The girl's age, however, emphasizes a child's particular vulnerability to any number of dangers, which she would not have had the knowledge (1) to recognize in advance and (2) to avoid or escape. [back](#)

Note 88: *VW* 1.14, p. 41: "Vix dicta compleuerat, et medullas frigus inuasit, uultus expalluit, mens cum sanguine fugit, et tanquam exanimis inter astantium manus humi dilapsa concidit." [back](#)

Note 89: *VW* 1.15, p. 41: "... continuo discerptis crinibus, palmisque in inuicem crebro connexis, flens et eiulans per plateas tanquam amens cursitabat." The chapter is entitled "De planctu matris." [back](#)

Note 90: Koenig 4, pp. 55–56: "'Fiex! fiex! fiex! fiex! li cuers me part / ... Fiex doz, murtri et acoré / T'ont cil giü, cil puant chien. / Fiex dox, li cuers me dist mout bien / Qu'en ceste rue t'ont tué.'" [back](#)

Note 91: The close affiliations, here as elsewhere, between "literary" and "historical" sources (vernacular ballads or miracles and Latin chronicles) serve to remind us that such typologies of written sources, especially with regard to religious writings, are largely irrelevant and false distinctions. [back](#)

Note 92: Adgar, ed. Herbert, 414; ed. Kunstmann, 110: "La mere a l'enfant s'escriad, / Bati ses mains, l'enfant clama, / Cume custume est de meres pieuses, / Seient crestienes u j[u]eues, / Quant veient mesavenir rien / A cels ke eles volent bien / E surketut a lur enfant." [back](#)

Note 93: Wolter, no. 10, p. 48. [back](#)

Note 94: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Altertum* 29 (1885): 350–51: "quod cernens mater tolerare nequibat, / (amor est matris, cum sit pater ad pietatem) / accurrens igitur amens exclamat in altum." [back](#)

Note 95: *VW* 1.15, p. 42: "Porro quicquid animo suspicabatur iam pro certo habens, quodque ymaginabatur quasi uisu compertum asserens, facto per uicos et plateas discursu et materno compulsa dolore uniuersos horrendis sollicitabat clamoribus iudeisque filium dolo seductum sibi surripisse protestabatur et occidisse. Que res maxime in suspicionem ueri uniuersorum conuertit animos, unde et omnium acclamabatur uocibus omnes radicitus debere destrui iudeos tanquam christiani nominis et cultus semper aduersarios." [back](#)

Note 96: *VW* 1.16, pp. 43–44: "... puerum quendam admodum paruulum et utique innocentem ..." [back](#)

Note 97: *VW* 1.16, pp. 44–45. [back](#)

Note 98: *VW* 1.17, pp. 49–50. [back](#)

Note 99: The actual translation is described in chaps. 18 and 19, after the still uncorrupted body had been laid out and washed. The laying out and the burial proper were, by Thomas's account, witnessed by a large crowd of local townspeople eager to see and venerate the body; see *VW* 1.17, pp. 51, 53–4. [back](#)

Note 100: Burton, 342. [back](#)

Note 101: Burton, 343: "... ecce mulier ... quae prius infantem plurimum dilexerat, ibidem adducta accessit propius, et corpus cum fide tetigit sic exclamans, 'Heu, heu Hugeline puer mi dulcissime, quod sic contigit!'" [back](#)

Note 102: Jacobs, 128a–b. Emotional legitimization of the charges—seen in the endless references to female grief—find a parallel in the texts' occasional attempts at realism, such as the role of the coroners in investigating an unnatural death. [back](#)

Note 103: Paris, 517–518: "Erat autem ibidem dominus Johannes de Lexintona, vir quidem circumspectus et discretus, insuper eleganter literatus, qui ait; 'Audiuimus quandoque quod Iudaei in obprobrium Jesu Christi Domini nostri crucifixi non sunt veriti talia attemptare.'" [back](#)

Note 104: Paris, 519, in the section entitled "De iudicio reliquorum Iudaeorum," in which the mother returns, demanding justice: "... matre dicti pueri contra ipsos de tali

morte appellationem suam coram rege constanter prosequente, Deus ultionum Dominus dignam pro meritis reddidit retributionem." For the Jews' council and lack of pity, see above. [back](#)

Note 105: Note that, on the night of the disappearance, the Jews were accused of only "holding her captive," presumably (in the parents' minds) with the intention to kill her. This may explain the swiftness with which the parents reported the incident to Dragonet. However, there is no indication of a search of the Jews' houses in an effort to locate the child before the kidnapping could turn into murder. [back](#)

Note 106: Molinier, 133: "Et quesivit et invenit eam, et pre dolore cordis non potuit accedere ad eam, et ivit quesitum aliquem qui extraheret eam." He would thus seem to have been searching alone at this point. Note that the testimony and confessions were transcribed in the third person. [back](#)

Note 107: Molinier, 133: "Item dixit quod multum refrenatur dolor et tristitia cordis ipsius, propter miracula que Deus facit pro ipsa puella." [back](#)

Note 108: Howlett, 440; Appleby, 69: "Non defuit illi testis ad aliqua, quoniam et femina Christiana que contra canones in eadem domo nutrierat Iudeulos constanter iurabit se uidisse puerum in penu Iudei descendere sine regressu." [back](#)

Note 109: See note 48. [back](#)

Note 110: Howlett, 440; Appleby, 69: "Deficiunt accusatores: puer quia infra etatem erat; femina quia infamem eam fecerat Iudeorum ministerium." [back](#)

Note 111: Some see the accusation's failure as one more sign of Richard's playful scepticism about the entire incident. While he may have had reservations about this particular charge, Richard consistently throughout the chronicle displays a strong dislike for, and demonization of, the Jews. [back](#)

Note 112: Of course, Richard does not mention, here at least, the most important aspect of the failure: the lack of a body. Instead he focuses on the accusers' legal inadequacies, and only then denounces the Jew's bribery. [back](#)

Note 113: Goulburn, *Losinga*, 2:30. [back](#)

Note 114: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 21r: "Tunc mulier accedens ad crucem ait, Adekin loquere mecum, et ego cras ducam te domi ad patrem tuum et matrem. Cui puer sicut male poterat labiis absisis, quid dicam tibi. Cui mulier, quid vidisti cum esses in calore ignis ardentis vel quid audisti." [back](#)

Note 115: It must be noted that Samuel evinces sorrow at the death of his son, but the author uses the moment to reiterate the Jewish man's hatred of Jesus, whom he blames and curses for the outcome of the night's activities. [back](#)

Note 116: VW 1.2, p. 12: "et fortassis ut per hoc ipsum denotetur quoniam multe puritatis et sanctitatis puer foret, atque candelas et candelarum luminaria plurimum diligeret." [back](#)

Note 117: Such observations indicate Thomas's uphill battle to prove definitively the boy's sanctity. The tale appears in a lengthy chapter, VW 2.4, pp. 67–74. Thomas's chronology here, as elsewhere, is contradictory. Still, the murder had obviously taken place, yet no one could give any definite information on it, despite Thomas's claims that many went to view the body, suspected the Jews, and heard Elviva. A century later, Vincent of Beauvais mentioned William's death and a similar vision, attributed to a child also named William. Vincent suggests a special bond between the child-saint and other children. *Spec. Hist.*, bk. 27, chap. 83 (William's death reported) and 84–85 ("De reuelatione inferni facta Guillelmo puero" and "De visione Guillelmi pueri a Iudaeis crucifixi"), Douai, 1624, pp. 1125–26. The language of the vision does not follow Thomas's version, but the visions are very similar in many details. I have not yet located Vincent's source. [back](#)

Note 118: VW 3.6, pp. 129–32, at 130: "amicum suum qui penes uos est uisitare dilectissimum"; and p. 131: "Ecce regina celi et domini mater patronum huic ecclesie adeo assignatum martirem Willelmum amicum equidem suum uisitare dilectum uenit, coronauit, eique pro libito curandi potestatem contulit." [back](#)

Note 119: *VW* 1.14, p. 40: "de amicis quempiam ... quem plurimum ... dilexisse." See above for a discussion of "amicus." [back](#)

Note 120: Koenig 4, pp. 56–57: "Ha! mere au roy de paradys, / Ja t'avoie commandé tant / A jointes mains men las d'enfant. / Je le t'avoie tot doné, / A lettres mis et coroné / Pour servir toy et ton doz fil. / Qu'en as tu fait, dame? Ou est il? / ... Se tu rendre ne le vielz vif, / A tout le mains rent le moi mort / Ou tu m'envoiez tost la mort." [back](#)

Note 121: Koenig 4, p. 60: "Ausi le truevent sauf et sain / Con se l'eüst dedenz son sain / La mere Dieu adez gardé." [back](#)

Note 122: Koenig 4, p. 60: "A la lasse de bonne fame / Samble mout bien que soit plus dame / Que roïne n'enpereris / Quant son enfant, qui iert periz, / Estraindre puet dedenz sa brace." [back](#)

Note 123: Brown, A8, p. 10: "beata uirgo, matris mee commota lacrimis, me modo suscitauit de stabulo." [back](#)

Note 124: Koenig 4, p. 63: "Glorefiie et reclamee / Mout fu la mere Jhesu Crist, / Qui ce tres doz myracle fist / Par sa tres douce pieté." [back](#)

Note 125: Koenig 4, p. 65, lines 578–593. After this, the miracle then contains an extended reference to candles (such as those the mother brought to Mary to pray for her child), the symbolic power of illumination and the problems of clerical stinginess with candles and other objects important for popular devotion. [back](#)

Note 126: Wolter, no. 24. [back](#)

Note 127: Wolter, no. 6. [back](#)

Note 128: It should be noted that in no version does Mary perform the actual consecration of the Host. [back](#)

Note 129: Koenig 2, p. 98: "la bele ymage / Qui hui matin me sousrioit / Quant ele me commenioit... ." [back](#)

Note 130: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Alterthum* 29 (1885): 350—"cultro qui puerum sacrificem in frusta secaret / talem qualis erat, quem sancta Maria tenebat / [depictum] gremio." This echoes the earlier reference to the *Juitel* in Honorius Augustodunensis's *Speculum ecclesiae* (beginning of the twelfth century), *PL* 172.852; Wolter, no. 8, p. 43: "videbatur Judaeo puerulo quod puerum illi picto similem populo divideret." [back](#)

Note 131: Aloys Meister, ed., *Die Fragmente der Libri VIII Miraculorum des Caesarius von Heisterbach*, *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Alterthumskunde*, 13 Supplementheft (Rome, 1901), bk. 2, chap. 13, p. 141: "sacerdos ille a brachiis illius imaginis, quae stabat in altari, puerum acciperet et omni populo per partes divideret." [back](#)

Note 132: Wolter, no. 22, pp. 94–95. The novelty here is the author's direct declaration of infant cannibalism. [back](#)

Note 133: In Paul Meyer, "Trois nouveaux manuscrits des sermons français de Maurice de Sully," *Romania* 28 (1899): 256—"Et quant li prestres faisoit le sacrement, il sembla au juié que li tenoit un enfant entre ces mains, et estoit ci[!] enfes couronnés d'or, et li saingnoient les mains et les piés, et estoit plus luisans et plus cler, se li sembloit, que li solax." [back](#)

Note 134: Like the *Vie*, this version is not a Marian miracle and thus portrays the Christ Child and the Holy Spirit—rather than Mary—as the primary actors in the miraculous events. [back](#)

Note 135: See Sinanoglou, "Christ Child as Sacrifice," *passim*, and Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), 116–18, 135–39, and 142–47, the last on the presence of Mary with the Christ Child. [back](#)

Note 136: William of Malmesbury and Nigel of Canterbury both mention the boy's *simplicitas*. [back](#)

Note 137: Cotton ms., Wolter, no. 10, p. 49: "Narratur voce puerili... ." [back](#)

Note 138: Honorius Augustodunensis, *Speculum ecclesiae*; PL 172.852; Wolter, no. 8, p. 43: "me in gremio suo accepit." [back](#)

Note 139: Goulburn, *Losinga*, 2:32: "Quibus ille. Domina inquit quae super aram christianorum sedet. et paulus [corr. parvulus] quem fovet in sinu suo circumsteterunt me. et porrectis manibus suis. corpus meum vallaverunt... . Ejus igitur fotu et protectione clibano egredior illesus...." [back](#)

Note 140: Wolter, no. 22, pp. 98–99: "'Nanil, par foi, / que cil ci est aveques moi, / que j'ai hui mangié au mostier. / Molt m'a ci eü grant mestier / et m'a fet bone compagnie. / Veez l'i; nel veez vous mie, / ou il me tient parmi la main? / Je n'ai ne froit ne chaut ne fain, / ainz sui trop a aise, pour voir, / ne m'en querroie mes movoir.'" Cf. the OF prose version, *Romania* 28 (1899): 257. An early Greek version of the *Juitel* claims that the Virgin supplied food to the child, who was held in the furnace for three days; see Th. Nissen, "Zu den ältesten Fassungen," 394. [back](#)

Note 141: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 21v: "Cui puer sicut male poterat labiis absisis. Cum me appouissetis ad ignem magnum venit ad me valde pulcra domina et sedit inter me et ignem, et ait mihi lingua anglicana deosculans me quamdiu eram iuxta ignem, fili hac nocte venies ad patrem tuum et matrem, et gaudebis cum eis. Cui mulier, audisti aliquem loquentem nobiscum cum esses in igne. Et ille, vidi a dextris meis puerum deosculantem vulnera manum mearum, et pedum et dicentem mihi, tu frater meus es dilectus." [back](#)

Note 142: Burton, 341: "Arridebat parvulus toto malignitatis spiritu in eum debacchantibus, nec murmur resonat, nec querimonia ab ejus ore. Quippe Spiritus Sancti repletus gratia, alacri vultu quasi nil patiens permanebat. Et quod dictu mirabile est, in aetate tam tenera constitutus, nec vocem nec gemitum emittebat." It is difficult to decipher the verb *arridebat*. Placed immediately following this phrase, the claim that the child did not utter a sound strongly argues for the silent smile. However, the sounds referred to are all reactions of pain and acknowledgement that the captors were causing pain; a laugh negates the efficacy of the torments and is neither a word nor a sigh of pain. [back](#)

Note 143: London, BL Harley 957, fols. 20r–v: "Erat enim puer .vii. annorum et semis exceptis diebus paucis, et conspuat iudeus iterum, et iterum in faciem pueri, dicens talis honor debetur christo tuo, et matri eius, et dedit ei alapam dicens, tu es christus filius dei, decende de cruce, et credemus in te, sicut in deum nostrum... . O mulier, gaude et letare, ecce quartum deum christianorum cruci affiximus, [h]ac nocte." [back](#)

Note 144: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 20v: "cui puer lingua anglicana, potabo ego domine, et noli me interficere pro amore sancte marie de radecliue." [back](#)

Note 145: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 21r: "a gutture pueri egrediebatur vox resonans et dicens, voce magna, samuel quare me comburis tota nocte, ego sum deus abraham et deus ysaac et deus iacob, quem quarto nunc cruci affixisti." [back](#)

Note 146: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 21r: "Cumque infundissent in os eius modicum quid seruisie suspiravit quasi euigilans a sompno, nichil tamen loquebatur, sed iacebat quasi dormiens in lecto." [back](#)

Note 147: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 21r: "et accedens mulier genibus flexis apposuit os eius ad aurem pueri sinistram, et ait tercio adekin, Adekyn, Adekyn, loquere mecum, et ducam te domi ad patrem tuum, et matrem tuam, at puer non respondit ei verbum." [back](#)

Note 148: London, BL Harley 957, fol. 21v: "et addidit samuel, si iste puer iesus, quem christianus videt, veniret ad me, cruci affigerem ipsum et punirem." [back](#)

Note 149: Malmesbury, Canal, 137. The passive voice ("Patris durities accusatur") does not permit us to know if the mother "formally" accused her husband. Whether she did so or not, the end result was the same: Her cries evoked a response that forced the father out of the city. [back](#)

Note 150: Malmesbury, Canal, 137–38: "Sedatur christiana gens miraculo; paruulique martyrium exoculata ... " [back](#)

Note 151: Wolter, no. 9. [back](#)

Note 152: Cotton manuscript, Wolter, no. 10, p. 48: "cunctas optinet stupor in tam horribili facto." [back](#)

Note 153: See Paris, BN fr. 818, an unedited tale (82 lines long) entitled "De l'ymage Nostre Seigneur qu li Juis feri." On the manuscript and summary, see Paule Bétérous, *Les collections de miracles de la vierge en gallo et ibéro-roman au XIIIe siècle* (Marian Library Studies 15–16, Dayton, Ohio, 1983–84), 40, 45. [back](#)

Note 154: An earlier (thirteenth-century) version appears in Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. hist.*, bk. 7, chap. 99, col. 258a (Douai, 1624). [back](#)

Note 155: See *La Scala coeli de Jean Gobi*, ed. Marie-Anne Polo de Beaulieu, Sources d'histoire médiévale, no. 660 (Paris, 1991), 445–47. [back](#)

Note 156: The case is extremely well-known, due in part to Frederic W. Maitland's "The Deacon and the Jewess," in *Roman Canon Law in the Church of England, Six Essays* (London, 1898), 158–79. [back](#)

Note 157: Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, Rolls Series 44.2, p. 254: "confessus [est] se palam interfuisse cuidam sacrificio, quod Judaei fecerant de puero quodam crucifixo." No other account of the incident mentions this detail. Maitland questions Matthew Paris's credibility on this and several other details of his account, which the chronicler claims come from an eyewitness. [back](#)

Note 158: There is a considerable literature on the various attacks on Talmudic literature; see especially Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca, 1982), chap. 3 and passim; Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (Rutherford, N.J., 1982), most useful for its translation of some of the records. [back](#)

Note 159: Translated in Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the Thirteenth Century*, 1:339. Compare the *Nizzahon Vetus*, a thirteenth-century polemical tract, in *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages*, David Berger, ed. and trans. (Philadelphia, 1979), 229–30. [back](#)

Note 160: Berger, 344–45. The Talmud was also thought to contain blasphemies against Mary's virginity and against Christ's purity at birth, specifically that he was fed on unclean menstrual blood in the womb. [back](#)

Note 161: The classic study of the phenomenon is Peter Browe, "Die Hostienschandungen der Juden im Mittelalter," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 34 (1926): 167–197. See Langmuir, "The tortures of the body of Christ," in *Christendom and Its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution, and Rebellion, 1000–1500*, ed. Scott Waugh and Peter Diehl (Cambridge, 1996), 287–309. [back](#)

Note 162: *Chronica regia Coloniensis*, MGH SS rer. germ. 18 (Hanover, 1880), 90: "formulam infantuli inveniens." Recension I contains a simpler version: "formam infantis invenit." The stream of light parallels the light that marked the location of William of Norwich's grave. [back](#)

Note 163: Léon Poliakov, *From the Time of Jesus to the Court Jews*, vol. 1 of *The History of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1974), 58–60. [back](#)

Note 164: Joseph Shatzmiller, *Recherches sur la communauté juive de Manosque* (Paris, 1973), 133–34: "volentes ipsum infantem in dicto puteo demergere et aquam ipsius putey indeturpare et veneno afficere ita quod ex ipsa aqua deturpata et venenosa gustantes seu potantes ex ea nequarentur et morirentur." [back](#)

Note 165: On well-poisonings, see M. Barber, "The Pastoureaux of 1320," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32 (1981): 143–66, and Ernest Wickersheimer, *Les accusations d'empoisonnement portées pendant la première moitié du XIVe siècle* (Angers, 1927). [back](#)

Note 166: Sophia Menache, "Faith, Myth, and Politics—The Stereotype of the Jews and Their Expulsion from England and France," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 75 (1985): 351–74, at 357. She readily admits that no primary sources make any such connection between belief in ritual murder and expulsion. [back](#)

Note 167: *Calendar of the Close Rolls*, Edward I, 1276—1279 (London, 1900), 4 Edward I, 273, a decision that seems to reverse a judgment made during Henry III's reign, that the Jews of Douegate were innocent of the charge. [back](#)

Note 168: Molinier, 129 (Bendig, discussing Spanish Jewish ritual murders): "et quando non possunt habere Christianum, emunt Sarracenum." [back](#)
