

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

Alexandra Lauren Corrêa Gabbard

The Demonization of the Jew in Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale," Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Scott's *Ivanhoe*

Belo Horizonte

2011

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

Alexandra Lauren Corrêa Gabbard

The Demonization of the Jew in Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale," Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Scott's *Ivanhoe*

**Dissertação de Mestrado apresentada à Faculdade de Letras da
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais,
como requisito para a obtenção do título
de Mestre em Letras: Estudos Literários.**

Orientador: Thomas LaBorie Burns

Belo Horizonte

2011

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the issue of anti-Semitism throughout three different eras in chosen classics of the English literature- “The Prioress’s Tale” from the *Canterbury Tales*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Ivanhoe*- comparing and contrasting the demonization of the Jewish characters present in the texts. By examining the three texts, I intend to show the evolution of the demonization of Jews in literature throughout different periods in history.

The historical and cultural aspects of the works will be taken into consideration, for anti-Semitism can be clearly traced as an ideology built throughout Western culture as a form of domination and exclusion of minorities. The Lateran Council of 1215 resurrected the spectrum of anti-Semitism by imposing laws such as the prohibition of intermarriage between Jews and Christians or the obligation of different dress for Jews. This is especially visible in the chosen works, for Jews are stigmatized as demonic, pagan, heretic and unclean.

A particular trope present in two of the texts is the Christian aversion to usury- a task that was conveniently attributed to the Jews. Since they were considered inferior, such work was thought to suit their lot.

Another one is the demonization of the Jewish woman. This is done first by turning her into an object of desire and seduction in both *Ivanhoe* and *The Merchant of Venice*, then by trying to force their conversion to Christianity- which happens to the character Jessica but not Rebecca.

A theme connected to the previous one is the issue of purity and cleanliness. Jews are seen as particularly unclean, being associated with negative images such as latrines, mutilation, poison,

sexual depravity and witchcraft.

All of the anti-Semitic feelings above can be detected in the three works, and they can be effectively contrasted and compared in order to better understand the repudiation of the Jews in literature.

This analysis is done by (1) the collection of historical data, related to anti-Semitism, from the different settings in which the literary works were written and the examination of it via cultural studies and (2) a comparative study of the Jewish characters and demonic themes present in the texts. Data have been collected from historical texts, archives and manuscripts. This dissertation challenges the reader to develop a critical reading of canonical writings, questioning anti-Semitism via demonization of the Jews in literature by offering a view of these literary texts of different genres and settings.

RESUMO

Esta dissertação examina o tema do anti-Semitismo nas diferentes eras de clássicos selecionados da literatura inglesa-- “The Prioress’s Tale” de *Canterbury Tales*, *The Merchant of Venice* e *Ivanhoe*-- comparando e contrastando a demonização dos personagens judeus presentes nos textos. Pela análise dos três textos, eu procuro demonstrar a evolução da demonização do judeu na literatura em diferentes períodos históricos.

Os aspectos históricos e culturais dos textos serão considerados, pois o anti-Semitismo pode ser claramente traçado como uma ideologia construída pela cultura Ocidental como uma forma de dominação e exclusão de minorias. O Quarto Concílio de Latrão, de 1215, ressuscitou o espectro do anti-Semitismo, impondo leis como a proibição do matrimônio entre judeus e cristãos e a obrigatoriedade para os judeus de usarem vestimentas diferenciadas. Isto é especialmente visível no corpus escolhido, pois os judeus são estigmatizados como demoníacos, pagãos, heréticos e impuros.

Um tropo em particular em dois dos textos demonstram a aversão cristã à usúria-- tarefa que foi convenientemente atribuída aos judeus. Como eles eram considerados inferiores, tal função era apropriada para eles.

Outro tropo é o da demonização da mulher judia. Isto é feito, primeiramente, através da sua transformação da personagens Rebecca e Jéssica em objetos de desejo e sedução em ambos *Ivanhoe* e *Merchant of Venice*. Tentativas insistentes de conversão das personagens judias também demonstram as seguidas tentativas de assimilação das personagens judias.

Um tema conectado com o citado acima é a questão de pureza e impureza. Os judeus são

tidos como particularmente impuros, sendo associados com imagens negativas com latrinas, mutilação, veneno, atos sexuais depravados e bruxaria.

Todos os sentimentos anti-Semíticos citados acima podem ser encontrados nos três textos, e podem ser efetivamente contrastados e comparados para proporcionar um melhor entendimento da repudição do judeu na literatura.

Esta análise é feita por (1) a coleta de dados históricos, relacionados ao anti-Semitismo, das diferentes épocas nas quais as obras foram escritas e sua interpretação através da linha de estudos culturais e (2) um estudo comparativo dos personagens judeus e dos temas demoníacos presentes nos textos. Dados foram coletados de textos históricos, arquivos e manuscritos. Esta dissertação desafia o leitor a desenvolver uma leitura crítica dos textos canônicos, questionando o anti-Semitismo através da demonização do judeu na literatura, oferecendo um panorama do mesmo em textos literários de diferentes gêneros e contextos.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by offering dear thanks to my great advisor, Thomas LaBorie Burns. He nurtured my literary tastes since MY undergrad course and encouraged me to work with literature the way I knew best. Without Thomas, I would have never been able to concote the links that interweave my thesis together- he grounded me when I needed it and let me soar when he could. I can't avoid mentioning his infinite patience and good will toward last minute corrections and revisions.

Another dear professor that I have to thank is Sandra Regina Goulart de Almeida. What I have learned about academic research and “proper” academic writing is all thanks to her. She heard out my ideas and gently showed me what was feasible or not. An excellent and sharp reader, the final version of my thesis would have been lacking if not for Sandra's knowledge and assistance.

Thank you to Ana Lúcia Diniz Campelo, who held my hand and temper through it all, patiently hearing me out and encouraging my writing when I suffered from the patent writer's block. Last but not least is my friend José Firmindo, who blew my creative sparks and served at times as muse to my writing. Without the Zé and Aninha, it would have been impossible to have done all the works, sweat and tears that went into this thesis.

INDEX

Introduction

i	9
ii.	16

Chapter 1- The Focus on Cleanliness and Purity: What Is Not Christian Is

Devilish.....	22
---------------	----

Chapter 2- Money-lending Is for Devils

i. Shylock.....	45
ii. Isaac of York.....	66

Chapter 3- The Minority Within the Minority

i. Introduction.....	65
ii. Jessica.....	67
ii. Rebecca.....	75

Conclusion.....	89
------------------------	-----------

Works Cited.....	100
-------------------------	------------

INTRODUCTION

Anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head throughout the ages. Time and again, Jewish communities have been held responsible for deicide, paganism, ritualistic murder and sacrilegious acts against Christian practices. In Medieval Europe, practices such as forbidding Jews to own lands or slaves or marry Christians had been instituted as laws since the Christianization of the Roman empire (Moore 27-29), but were but loosely enforced, if not ignored, up to the eleventh century. A thousand years had passed since the foundation of Christianity, and Jews had intermingled with local Europeans, physically resembling Christians and generally fluent native speakers of the local languages, dressed in common garb and withholding traditional regional customs.

Jean Delumeau, in his book *História do Medo no Ocidente* (2009), writes that, in the eleventh century, the millennial-old accusation of deicide against Jewish communities had become discredited and obsolete, and in more open minded countries, especially in Spain, Christians and Jews routinely consulted each other's scholars, rabbis and priests alike, and both had free and regular access to the Christian mass and Jewish synagogue (Delumeau 418-19). They were also considered free men, being set apart as members from another nation and not entirely subject to the government. Hence, protected by royal titles, speaking the local language, dressing in the same manner as Christians, allowed to ride horses, bear arms and swear oaths in law courts, the Jews were clearly integrated into local society (Delumeau 417).

Delumeau states that “before the eleventh century, there were almost no traces in the West of popular anti-Judaism” (417). Indeed, it seems that a confluence of factors around this time led to the institutionalization of a virulent and aggressive anti-Semitism. It is true that between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Jews were considered by the collective- or at least, a part of the collective-

as an enterprising minority which set itself apart and was impossible to assimilate; they also posed the threat of being dangerously close to overcoming Christians in numbers (Delumeau 414). Accusations of well-poisoning and blaming Jews as contaminating agents of the Black Plague abounded in the collective imaginary (Delumeau, 415).

That is only one facet of the problem. The real agent of the intensification of anti-Semitism in the eleventh century is the militant Catholic church, which by this era felt threatened and weakened and in dire need of an ideological renewal of its cardinal principles and beliefs. The militant branch of the Catholic church had an urgent need to reassert its power by reaffirming their dogmas and detecting issues of antithesis to all they held sacred and holy. Hence, they began concocting an ideology of demonizing the “other,” and imposed upon the European population a true “religious racism” (Delumeau 415). While the need to find external enemies to the Christian cause was primordial in the renewal and establishment of Christian identity, the need to pinpoint internal enemies was even greater.

Adhemar de Chabannes (989-1034), a Christian monk of Angoulême and Limoges, master of scriptorium, skilled forger and proactive supporter of the militant apostolacy, was the convergent point of Jewish persecution in the eleventh century. Michael Frasseto's article, “Heretics and Jews in the Writings of Adhemar of Chabannes and the Origins of Medieval Anti-Semitism” (2002), details Adhemar's trajectory and his decisive role in what the author calls the “rebirth” of anti-Semitism. Chabanne's contribution begins with the documenting of a series of harsh and radical measures against Jewish communities. One of the starting points of conflict was in 1010, when the Hilduin, bishop of Limoges, ordered the Jews to either convert to Christianity or leave the city. Although three or four Jews did convert, most left the city and some even resorted to suicide as an alternative (Frasseto 5).

Frasseto implies that, although Adhemar's texts do not give the reader a clear motivation for Hilduin's actions, it can be related to the increasing Jewish immigration. This can be seen through the epilogue to Hilduin's story, which places the account in the context of the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem by al-Hakim. Adhemar associates this destruction with the forced conversion of the Jews of Limoges, and goes as far as accusing the Jewish community of sending a letter to the East warning Islamic forces of approaching Christian armies (Frasseto, 6). Adhemar concludes, in extremely apocalyptic motifs, that al-Hakim is the Anti-Christ and that in retaliation to the bishop Hilduin's actions, al-Hakim persecuted the Christians and forced them to convert— an ironical context in which only three or four Christians refused and consequently were executed.

Adhemar cannot help but point out the obvious—the conversion of most Christians of the East and the denial of most of the Jews of Limoges to do the same, in Adhemar's beliefs, hailed the Apocalypse. The passing of the millennium brought psychotic preoccupations with the Apocalypse and the rebirth of the Anti-Christ (Frasseto 6-7). Having then associated the Jews with al-Hakim, or, in more incisive words, to the anti-Christ himself, Adhemar then proceeded to connect the Jews to the internal threat to the church—the heretics. Following shortly after the incident of Limoges, Adhemar reports two other occurrences in 1020 or 1021. The first happened in Rome and consists of the accusation of Jews who mocked the cross in their synagogues. Frasseto writes that this bound the image of the Jews to the heretics, who throughout Western Europe denied the cross (7-8). The second incident was the “colaphus Judeo,” or “blow to the face,” a ritual performance at Easter that was given to Jews as a punishment for their supposed role of Christ's death. Supposedly, Hugh, the chaplain of Viscount Aimery of Rochechouart, struck a Jew so severely that, “the eyes of his victim burst from his head and he died immediately.” (Frasseto 9).

This stereotypical image of the Jews as Deicides began to be recovered and reinforced,

which, adding to their association with heretics and Saracens and the accusation of mocking the cross, enabled an anti-Semitic agenda to be set by the militant Catholic church, which consequently doubled its efforts to demonize the Jews in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. If Jewish communities did not accept Jesus as their savior, then the concept that they were certainly agents of the Anti-Christ and capable of any atrocity was possible. Joshua Trachtenberg, in his seminal work *The Devil and the Jews* (1983), shows that Adhemar de Chabanne's sermons not only join together all the temporal enemies of the church (Saracens, Jews, heretics, and others), but also links them to the devil (11-52).

The affirmation in Adhemar's accounts of the mocking of the cross by the Jews provides further insight into the "crimes" set upon Jewish heads during the course of the next two centuries. This played upon the interests of the Catholic church in reestablishing the credibility of one of its most important dogmas: the Eucharist, for, as stated in Denise L. Despres article, "Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer's *Litel Clergeon*" (1994), a symbolic convergence of Eucharistic symbols became paramount in the late medieval fervent devotion of the Host (413). Adhemar cites a series of miracles in which the body of a child was seen either as the bread being divided over the altar, a boy sitting by the altar, or the appearance of angels or bloody lambs during the transubstantiation. Such images needed some basis to be credible- and the best way was to find and accuse unbelieving blasphemers.

Despres gives us the panorama at the beginning of the thirteenth century which juxtaposed the medieval adoration of the Host with the supposedly nefarious purposes of the Jewish communities. Despres begins by quoting Pope Innocent III, in 1205, who writes to Peter de Corbeuil, the archbishop of Paris. Innocent III states that during Easter, the holy time celebrating Christ's resurrection, Christian women, who were wet nurses to Jewish children and who happened

to take in the body and blood of Christ at the ritual of the Eucharist were forced to pour their milk into the latrine for three days before they could again be suckled by Jewish children (Despres, 413).

At this point, the association of Jews with the desecration of Christian holy symbols is resolute and inevitable. The violent consequences of the accusations of mocking the cross, dating back to the eleventh century, and the more severe and radical blasphemies allegedly perpetrated by Jewish communities in the thirteenth century, can be traced to the advent of the Crusades. In the midst of the First Crusade (1095-1099), itinerant preachers, supported by the anti-Jewish doctrine that had been already effusively established by theoreticians such as Adhemar de Chabannes, found the need to coax and plead to the soldiers to eliminate the infidels that resided alongside Christians, since they were going to cross continents to combat infidels in Jerusalem, starting a series of massacres against Jewish communities along the way (Delumeau 421).

The II Crusade (1147-1149), however, brought with it the first accusations of ritual murder and Host desecration (Delumeau 422). These charges, combined with the forces of Catholic ideologues who preached on the Jews' close association with the devil, the cult of the Marian miracles, and religious theater that constantly re-enacted the mysteries of Christ expounding redundantly on the Jews' betrayal of Jesus and their role as Deicides, were more than enough to engender violent conflicts (Delumeau 423-35). The first blood-shedding incident that was recorded due to religious accusations was in 1243 in Belitz, near Berlin. Many Jews, both men and women, were burned on charges of Host desecration and intentionally spilling consecrated wine (Delumeau 436). In 1290, in Paris, a poor woman was supposedly convinced by the Jew Jonathas to sell him a Host she acquired at Mass. He took the Host and punctured it, generating a pool of blood. His family immediately converted to Christendom, but he refused and was arrested and executed. His former home was demolished in order to build a chapel, and the cult of the Holy Sacrament was

encouraged and spread (Delumeau 436-37). Host desecration charges validated the massacre of all the Jews in the city of Rottigen— those ones responsible for this mass murder then went throughout all the towns and cities of Bavaria and Franconia, slaughtering all Jews who would not convert. Similar incidents were repeated all over Western Europe (Delumeau 437).

The accusation of ritual murder was first recorded in 1144, in Norwich, England. The body of an apprenticed boy allegedly “reappears” three years later to stimulate the mass murder of all Jews in the region. Host desecration, considered by then to be the “true” Deicide (Delumeau 422), as well as ritual murder will then become evil motifs that will be intricately connected to the image of the Jew up until the seventeenth century (Delumeau 442). These themes serve only to reinforce anti-Semitism and the portrayal of Jews as agents of Satan.

Finally, there is the question of usury, or money-lending at exorbitant rates, which was considered a sin in Christian precepts, for, as the Bible states, “in the sweat of thy face thou shall eat thy bread” (Genesis 3:19). Money-lending was nonetheless essential for the development of a national economy. It was then just a convenience to tax Jews as pagans in order to have an appropriate scapegoat for the role of the usurer. With the relative insertion of Jews in Western Europe up to the eleventh century and their freedom of mobility between Eastern and Western cultures, Jews were the prototypical businessman of the Middle Ages and had enough financial capital to invest in money-lending. Most Jews resided in urban centers, holding positions as artisans or wealthy bourgeoisie, and had access not only to the arts and culture but were also literate in great numbers and represented an intellectual elite (Delumeau 419). By the end of the twelfth century, the late ascension of Christian merchants in the Western economy caused the new Christian competitors tried to either overcome or suppress the older Jewish merchants, spreading rumors that the Jews were responsible for the increase in taxes and for wars (Delumeau 416). This situation was aggravated by the fact that most royal treasuries were in great debt to Jewish money-lenders, so the

union of monarchs and ecclesiastical doctrinaires served to strike Jewish communities with the final blows of alienation, isolation, and exclusion.

At the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Pope Innocent III demanded that ancient laws forbidding Jews to hold lands or to marry Christians be upheld and enforced. He delved into deeper anti-Semitism by establishing the use of different clothes by the Jews, the display of the yellow circle to highlight their religious difference, and the prohibition of the presence of Jews on the streets during holy Christian festivals (Delumeau 418). This council was the crowning of dogmatic and persecuting religious racism against Jewish communities.

The first expulsion in Western Europe took place in England in 1290 and was ordered by King James I. It is noted by Despres that “English communities...displayed a purgative compulsion as early as 1234, when Newcastle upon Tyne expelled its Jews, an example followed by several other communities” (416). It is estimated that in 1290 some 16,000 Jews left England with only what they could carry (Delumeau, Despres, Frasseto and Williamson). Despres calls attention to “persecution literature,” as defined by René Girard in *The Scapegoat* (1986), to depict how medieval English literature created a “historiography of Jewish ritual murder and the practice of persecution both before and after the expulsion of 1290” (415). Marian miracles and the reinforcement of the Eucharist and baptism, as Despres argues, required their paradox, which is the inversion of the bodily purification that these rituals supply, the uncleanness and profanity represented by Jewish refusal to convert to Christianity.

Even when Jewish conversions occur in Medieval Europe, they are seen as incomplete for, as Despres notes, “there is often a sense that Jews perhaps cannot be assimilated fully into the body of Christ, despite their conversion and baptism.” (420). Rather than be accepted as an integral part of Christian society, converted Jews “figure centrally in tales involving punishment for Eucharistic

abuse” (416). Despres also comments, specifically about anti-Judaism in England, stating that the English government was “severe in implementing the Fourth Lateran's Council's anti-Jewish legislation” (415-16). He shows how tales of Jewish crucifixion of Christian children gained further credence in England by the establishment of shrines and of Corpus Christi as a universal feast-day by the fourteenth century (416). By that time, most Jews had left England, but anti-Semitism had not. The rumors of supposedly heretical deeds by Jews were permanent in Christian clerical sermons and became popular myth. Albeit his physical presence was absent, the “ghost” of the Jew remained.

ii.

The historical context described above was contemporary to the production of two of the literary works I have chosen for this study: Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Prioress’s Tale,” from *The Canterbury Tales*, in 1390, and Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, which is believed to be written between 1596 and 1598. The third work chosen is the novel *Ivanhoe*, by Sir Walter Scott (1819). The objective of this MA thesis is to analyze and compare the demonization of the figure of the Jew in these three canonical works of English literature. There will be found similar manifestations of anti-Semitic demonization in all three works, even though they were written at distinct moments in history, namely, the fourteenth, sixteenth, and nineteenth centuries, respectively. At the same time, I hope to demonstrate significant differences in the treatment of this theme in the three selected works.

To ensure that the objectives of this master’s thesis be fulfilled, extensive research and analysis was done on the three works, through the bibliographical research of texts in cultural studies, considering specifically New Historicism, minority literature, definitions of otherness, and

the historical context and cultural aspects related to the chosen literary works. The bibliographical work consisted in pinpointing the socio-historical and cultural contexts of the literary works selected. The subsequent focus relies specifically on the anti-Semitic issues present in each of the works. Within the scope of literary aspects, I considered the anti-Semitic themes and Jewish characters present in the texts. Of the theories mentioned above, New Historicism is the main theoretical springboard that guides my research and serves as support for my thesis

The theoretical text *The New Historicism* (2002), by Gina Hens-Piazza, discusses the Foucaultian notion that, “the many given notions between a given text and other texts- cultural texts, material contexts, and intellectual contexts...invites intertextual reading and interpretations” (14). Hens-Piazza elaborates on New Historicism's view on literature, affirming that this view equals literature like any other “social and cultural practices, artifacts, relic and data of a context” (8). The author points out that “How literature influences the construction of social context and how social context impacts the production of literature defines New Historicism's interests” (9). Hence, we may conclude that “New Historicism views the relationship between literature and other cultural phenomena as reciprocal and mutually productive” (9). The relevance of the canonical corpus to study and ponder the trope of the demonization of the Jews is thus justifiable as intrinsically connected to the social and cultural phenomena of the time the selected works are inserted in, being both the literary texts and historical context simultaneously and synchronically affected and produced by each other.

Returning to the Foucaultian interpretation of history and literature mentioned before, Hens-Piazza interprets literature as discourse, in which discourse analysis “emphasizes literature as a process rather than simply a set of products, a process which is intrinsically social, connected at every point with mechanisms and the institutions that mediate and control the flow of knowledge

and power in a community” (13). Taking Foucault’s enlarged notion of text into account, Sans-Piazza states that the New Historicism’s view of texts “attends to the many connections between [any] given text and other texts- cultural texts, material contexts, and intellectual contexts- and thus invites intertextual readings and interpretations” (13), thus corroborating the relevance of this thesis to present literary criticism. Sans-Piazza affirms that key points of New Historicist theory views on literature are “integrally tied to and identified with other material realities that make up a social context” (8), and, further elaborating; “literature [is] on par with other types of texts...[with] characteristic distinctions between literature and history...[being] sidelined” (8), and also, that “The constructions of the past are assumed as intimately tied to the present” (8). We may thus conclude that New Historicism provides an ideal theoretical springboard for this thesis, reinforcing the mutually productive relationship between literature and the historical and social context both in which the works were produced and to the social and cultural context of the present time. To summarize all of the expounded theoretical aspects, a relevant quote of *The New Historicism* comes to mind, “New Historicism motivates a reclaiming of history but with an awareness of the entanglements of the present embedded in every account of the past” (Hens-Piazza 84).

The interpretation of and meaning in history is a cornerstone for the development of this thesis. Literary or psychic tropes govern the discourse of history just as clearly as they are manifest in the other arts and sciences (White *Tropics of Discourse*, 81-100). The analysis of history through White’s theory will contribute to interpret the historical and cultural contexts of the selected literary works. This study of the discourse of history will help to discuss the discourse of the minority represented in the selected texts.

Stephen Greenblatt’s (1988) notion of the “historicity of texts,” and the “textuality of history” (586) is another crucial aid to this research, for it allows me to consider how to compare

and contrast the three works which were written in three different eras. Analyzing literary texts inserted in the cultural context in which they were produced through the collective beliefs and experiences in which they were shaped is important in the interpretation of the cultural and historical context of the works to better understand the stigmatization of the Jewish persona.

According to Montrose (1989), the concept of the social production of literature signifies that it is not only socially produced but also that literature is socially productive. This is the means by which I analyze the demonization of the Jews in the chosen corpus. By examining the trope of the demonization of the Jews in the light of Montrose's affirmation of the need to understand and study literary texts "not only in relationship to other genres and modes of discourse but also in relationship to contemporaneous social institutions and non-discursive practices" (232), I can better trace a paradigm to compare and contrast the chosen works. The subjectivity of the demonization of the Jews is linked by social networks, which, according to Montrose, unite the individual and collective structures that are mutually and continuously shaped. For the present study, this means that I can find common characteristics of anti-Semitism in all three chosen works and contrast these with the historical factors in which each of these were produced. It is then possible to move on to investigate if the historical issues are connected ideologically by being represented as written discourse, for discourse also shapes the world in which writers and readers both constitute and inhabit (Montrose 777-85).

The five primary aspects of New Historicism are essential for the theoretical basis, and are as follows: the recurrent use of anecdotes as textual evidence for aporia; a preoccupation with the nature of representations; a fascination with the history of the body; a sharp focus on neglected details; and a skeptical analysis of ideology (Greenblatt and Gallagher 60). The examples of anecdotes are useful to my analysis of "The Prioress's Tale." The concern with representation,

history of the body, details, and the reevaluation of ideology is viable in both this tale and the two longer texts. The demonization of the Jew is an ideological representation that has been either denied as such or blatantly affirmed. New Historicism therefore allows me to analyze the importance of the socio-historical context of the corpus of this thesis.

The organization of the thesis is as follows; the first part, Chapter 1, clarifies the ideology of exclusion towards Jews, the theories concocted to ostracize and limit the Jews' participation within Christian society, and deconstructs the stigmas and negative aspects connected with the Jews, such as the focus on cleanliness and purity and how it is bound up with the collective image of Jewish communities. This same chapter connects the tropes of profanity and uncleanness with the discussion of the collective Jewish community in “The Prioress's Tale” and the stereotypical roles they played. It also links the Jewish community in Chaucer's narrative to Satan and deconstructs their inevitable demonization.

Chapter 2 moves from the image of the collective evil represented by the Jewish community as a whole and narrows it down to individual Jewish characters, bearing in mind the trope of usury. The first character analyzed is Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice*, and how he is stigmatized due to his profession. The secondary character Isaac, from *Ivanhoe*, also provides an additional example of the greedy, cruel and egotistical money-lender. The third part of the thesis studies a minority within a minority—Jewish women. Initially, the heroine of *Ivanhoe*, Rebecca, is analyzed under the demonization motif with various aspects to support her depiction in the novel as an agent of Satan. Rebecca plays the parts of the altruistic heroine, seductress, and alleged Jewish witch who tempts men's minds and hearts. Jessica, from *The Merchant of Venice*, represents the excluded other whose resistance to the truth of Jesus serves to delineate the impermeable nature of the Christian story; the converted Jew could function to guarantee simultaneously both the promise of freedom implicit in

baptism and the superiority of Christians. The notions of Jewishness in the play can be understood by Jessica's betrayal of her father by denying her Jewish heritage and converting to Christianity.

Michael Ragussis, in his article "Writing Nationalist History: England, the Conversion of the Jews and *Ivanhoe*" (1993), argues that English national literature was constructed upon the demonization of the Jews, as it is seen in important English literary works such as the ones chosen to be discussed here. Hence, classic works from English literature were chosen to provide examples of such demonization. The texts, via the themes and characters, provide examples of the demonization of the Jew inserted in their historical settings. This thesis hopefully allows for a greater understanding and questioning of how historical events established this role for the Jews and to see such influence in literature.

The Focus on Cleanliness and Purity: What Is Not Christian Is Devilish

“The Prioress's Tale,” one of the many anecdotes present in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, is introduced by the character of Madame Eglantine, a Catholic prioress, to the rest of the pilgrims who are en route to Canterbury cathedral. Madame Eglantine tells her audience a narrative of a Marian tale connected to the motif of blood libel. The story begins with the description of a Jewry (a medieval word for a Jewish neighborhood), amidst a Christian town. To get to the Christian school, the Christian children needed to cross the Jewry everyday. A certain Christian child, a widow's son, learned the lines of the song *Alma Redemptoris*, a hymn to Holy Mary, and sung it in her honor each day as he was going to and from school. The Jews, supposedly incited by Satan and insulted by the boy's singing, hire a Jewish murderer who captures the child, slits his throat, and tosses him down a privy pit. The desperate mother, after waiting for her child all night, starts the next day by searching for her son all over town, all the way praying in fervor. When she arrives at the Jewry, she asks all the Jews if they have seen her son, and gets negative replies all around. But Jesus decides to aid the sorrowful mother, and while she wept, the *Alma Redemptoris* starts to be heard loud and clearly, leading the widow to her murdered son in the pit. All the Christians gather around the miraculous boy-martyr and call for the provost, who delivers the sentence that every Jew should be dragged behind wild horses and then hanged. Following the mass murder of the Jews, the Christians lead a procession through town and carry the boy's body to his bier. As the provost sprinkles holy water upon the boy's head, the body cries out “O Alma Redemptoris Mater!” The provost then questions the boy why he still sings with his throat cut and the martyr replies that, because of his devotion to the Holy Mother, who came to him as he was dying, he was blessed with singing her song until the seed she placed on his tongue be taken away, circumstance upon which she would return for the boy. The provost then retrieves the boy's tongue and takes away the grain, ensuring that the boy-martyr's spirit is laid to rest. The whole Christian community then laments

collectively for the boy and builds him a marble tomb. The narrator concludes her tale by warning her audience that, like the boy-saint Hugh of Lincoln, who was also slain by Jews during a similar act of blood libel, the child from her story suffered his fate not long ago.

The nature of this anecdote, (an anecdote is a short, free-standing tale narrating an interesting or amusing biographical incident) has been described by many critics as extremely anti-Semitic and violent. The editor of *The Complete Canterbury Tales* (2007), Anne Rooney, prefaces “The Prioress's Tale” by stating that it “combines a sickly-sweet depiction of the child's innocence with distastefully gruesome violence and disturbing anti-Semitism. The latter would not have been remarkable to Chaucer's audience, but reflected the prevalent medieval European attitude towards Jews” (115). The genre of this text, the anecdote, is of prime importance if “The Prioress's Tale” is to be thoroughly analyzed. According to Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, in their seminal book *Practising New Historicism* (2000), the anecdote serves as “counter-history,” which consists of the opposition to not only dominant narratives but also to the institutionalized forms of historical comprehension and research methods (63). Regarding this view, it is also relevant to quote Joel Finman's chapter, “The History of the Anecdote,” in *The New Historicism* (1989),

the miniature fulfillment of the anecdote interrupts the continuous flux of greater stories; on the borders of the anecdote there is a difference in the texture of the narrative, an interruption that provokes the feeling of something- 'reality'- outside of historical narrative. The anecdote, therefore, exposes history (61).

Through these views of the anecdote as counterhistory, it is possible to do a New Historicist reading of Chaucer's “The Prioress's Tale,” regarding the aspects of history, suppressed voices and intertextuality. This specific tale is an anecdote that, according to Despres in her article “Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer's Littel Clergeon (1994),” dramatically demonstrates alterity (417). The

tale specifically exploits the themes of uncleanness and impurity of Jews and utilizes the same to closely associate the whole of the Jewish community with the Devil. Despres argues that “The Prioress's Tale” is powerful because Chaucer conflates sacrificial and commensal images to reveal a community purging itself of its impurities” (414), impurities that were previously contained in the discussions of Pope Innocent III, head of the imposition of the segregationist Fourth Lateran Council, which was conceived nearly two hundred years before Chaucer penned the *Canterbury Tales*. In Miri Rubin's study, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (1991), we find a letter sent by Innocent III to the archbishop of Paris, Peter de Corbeuil, in 1205, where the pope accused the following practises: “Whenever it happens that on the day of the Lord's resurrection the Christian women who are nurses for the children of the Jews take in the body and blood of Christ, the Jews make these women pour their milk into the latrine for three days before they can again give suck to the children” (142-47, 230-32). This is a powerful statement that serves to bind the image of the Jew to an act of desecration against Christian faith and which can later be associated to other foul practices, such as the blood libel in “The Prioress's Tale”.

Interestingly enough, the first accusation of blood libel is reported to have occurred in Norwich, England, in the year of 1144 against a boy who was later sanctified as William of Norwich. The tale of blood libel was actively spread and retold throughout the region by a parish monk named Thomas of Monmouth who, according to John M. McCulloh, in his article “Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth and the Early Dissemination of the Myth” (1997), appropriated the local tale that the boy, who had disappeared a few days before Easter had supposedly suffered blood libel by the local Jews. Thomas of Monmouth then concocted a false report based on scarce evidence to promote his local parish and his own self-importance as guardian and defender of Christian principles and faith. McCulloh states that the first scholar who discussed the origin of blood libel in Western tradition, Gavin I. Langmuir, affirmed that the real

purpose of the dire accusation against the Jews is “[the] rising doubts among Christians about the truth of their own religion, doubts that led them to project anti-religious behavior onto the Jews, and he identifies Thomas of Monmouth as the inventor of the first of these fantasies” (699). Although Langmuir's theories were well received and accepted as the scholarly consensus for about a decade, Israel J. Yuval, in 1993, contested Langmuir's view on the origins of blood libel in his article “Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation: From Jewish Martyrdom to Blood Libel Accusations” (1993). Yuval counter-argues that the myth of blood libel originated in the Rhineland in the aftermath of the First Crusade (1096) where entire Jewish communities, faced with conversion to Christianity or death at the hand of crusaders, chose instead to kill their own wives and children and then commit suicide. McCulloh ponders this view by stating that the opinion of Christians who witnessed these acts was, “If Jews were willing to sacrifice their own offspring, would they not do the same with Christian children?” (699).

Both theories above constitute valid arguments for the negative myths associated with the Jews. Langmuir's beliefs of the use of blood libel to validate Christian precepts go hand in hand with Despres's views on how “medieval English devotional literature transformed symbols to verify a historiography of Jewish literature murder and a practise of persecution both before and after the expulsion of 1290 reflects a changing notion of the place of Jews in medieval Christian eschatology” (415). Despres interprets “The Prioress's Tale” according to René Girard's observation in *The Scapegoat* (1986), as a semi-fictionalized account “of real violence, often collective, told from the perspective of the persecutors, and therefore influenced by characteristic distortions” (9). Here the text serves as a counter-historic canonical anecdote, which, according to Greenblatt's and Gallagher's views, exposes what counter-historians seek; “that which is suppressed from the official version, the 'other' in the power [relationship] and the means by which they are disposed of ” (63). On an additional note, Yuri's article, promoting the horror of medieval Christians towards the extent

of the Jew's radical stance, supports Despres arguments about the “conflation of the Eucharist symbol with images of Jewish ritual murder as visual analogues to Chaucer's 'The Prioress's Tale'” (417). Despres also affirms that “The Prioress's Tale” adamantly rejects the possibility of Jewish conversion that is present in many of the sermon exempla (a brief story used in a sermon to make a point in an argument or to illustrate a moral truth), and tales of the time, therefore casting the Jews as the impure antagonists of Christians and consequently validating the social purity and Christian dogmas that were reinforced by the Fourth Lateran Council (417).

In *Purity and Danger* (1966), Mary Douglas argues that “the presence of pollution is integral to ritual primitive cultures because it serves to ward off skepticism about the ritual” (163). Douglas also states that “after elaborate systems of purification construct the connection between bodily purity and wholeness, ritual reintroduces pollutants to repeat the process of purgation and renewal” (174). Despres thus uses Douglas's theory to trace a parallel to the mass, which sketches the constant ritual of the polluted body of Christians being purged, purified and renewed (417-18). The author then applies the same metaphor to the antagonism traced between Christians and Jews; the first representing purity and the second pollutants within the whole of Christian society which therefore needs to constantly purge and renew itself.

Thus, the Christian community can be seen as a body, and in “The Prioress's Tale,” according to Despres, the Christian community present there is a “body social” (424). In the introduction of the text, the positive images traced by a street “free and open at eyther ende” (161), are contrasted by Despres in her views of the city as fragmented by a Jewry in its midst. Despres understands the Jewry as a conflagration of the impure (Jews) mixed with the pure (Christians) and as a crucial endangerment to the Christian community and society. The pollutants and metaphors linking the Jewish community with these pollutants are present in the beginning of the tale with the Jew's

latrine pit, where the Christian boy was thrown after murdered. Despres calls attention to the link between the cesspit in “The Prioress's Tale” to Grünewald's Altarpiece's Nativity tableau, where a chamberpot inscribed with Hebrew letters serves as “the symbolic antithesis of purification through the sacrament of baptism” (424). The use of the latrine, where excrements are thrown, is a vivid metaphor of the Jewish communities' hatred and loathing of Christian dogmas, used as a grotesque analogy to associate eschatology and uncleanness to their position on Christian beliefs. Compared to the most base of elements, that which comes out of bodies as fetid and unwanted remains, “The Prioress's Tale” effectively presents the Jewish community as putrid, rotten, undesired and rejected; something repulsive and disgusting: the opposition of pure, clean and wholesome. Thus, the status of the the undesirable and ostracized Jewish community in the tale is firmly cemented and contrasted with the wholesome and integral Christian community, highlighting the need for the dogmatic and insistent delineation of pollutants present within the core of Christianity. The Jewish communities are set as the nocive pollutant in order to validate the need of purging and renewal of Christians.

The filthiness and impurity associated with the Jewish body can be further contrasted as antagonist to the the Real Presence within the Host; all that is unclean as opposed to the holiness and blessing of the body of Christ. Despres writes that,

In the popular imagination, such symbols [the latrine-pit, uncleanness metaphors, etc.] linked the role of Jews as desecrators of the Host with the pure, redeemed body of Christians, likewise symbolized thought he Host, and in process recalled ritual murder and discourse narratives (417).

Delumeau provides historical studies about the importance of the Eucharist ritual in the late

medieval ages, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The need to renew and reinforce Christian dogmas, such as Eucharism and baptism, was paramount to Christian authorities in order to secure their positions over the masses. Delumeau accuses the militant church, which resorted to itinerant preachers (especially the mendicant monks), religious theater and neophytes as a doctrine of “anti-Jewish Catechism” (423). Delumeau points out that the most reenacted scenes of the Bible, at the specified periods above, were, as follows; first was the debate between the infant Jesus and the Jewish wisemen; second, the expulsion of the merchants from the temple; and third, Jesus suffering temptation by the pharisees; then, the council of Jews who convenes and decided for Jesus's execution; Judas' betrayal; the detention of Jesus; Jesus standing before the leading rabbi; Jesus' sufferings in prison; the Jewish council on Friday morning; the flagellation and crown of thorns; the crucification and, finally, the twelfth and most reenacted scene; the Jewish attempts to thwart Jesus's resurrection (423). The presence of the Jew as the evil-doer, as the antagonist of Jesus Christ and his teachings was therefore systematically repeated and over-exposed to the medieval Christian audiences. The impurity of Jews as natural-born killers, host-desecrators, and child murderers abound in the sermon exempla, visual arts, and anecdotes of medieval literature, constituting a body of work that Despres calls “persecution literature” (416), of which “The Prioress's Tale” was a prominent example of. Despres points out that “Jews tend to figure centrally in tales involving punishment for Eucharistic abuse or conversion”(416). Within the scope of these narratives, the outcome was either conversion of the Jewish characters or, as the more virulent brand present in “The Prioress's Tale,” obliteration of the Jewish figures and communities who were deemed unsalvageable from their corruption.

The typical narrative conclusions, the conversion or destruction of Jews, mirrored the doctrinal beliefs which were in prominent discussion among the upper echelons of late medieval society. The third chapter of *Practising New Historicism*, “The Wound on the Wall,” exemplifies the two

ideological doctrines by discussing the narratives present in two works; a predella made by Florentine artist Paolo Ucello, *Corpus Domini* (ca. 1465-88), and the panel *Communion of the Apostles* (ca. 1460-80) by Joos Van Gent. Gent's panel is positioned above Ucello's predella, juxtaposing intertextually two visual narratives. *Corpus Domini*, a famous anti-Jewish myth, reported to have its origins in a true occurrence in Paris in the year of 1290, is represented in detail. Supposedly, a Jewish merchant purchases a consecrated Host from a Christian woman; then, the merchant and his wife and children take the Host home amidst diabolic cajoling and offenses toward the Christian faith. When they arrive, they pierce the Host which commences to bleed. The Jewish family then tries to cook the host over the fire, which then spouts blood, running over the floorboards and onto the street. This alerts the Christians, who call for soldiers. The soldiers break down the door, imprison and interrogate the Jews, and find out about the participation of the Christian woman in the desecration. The church fathers then convene and decide upon the fates of the accused; the Jews are burned at the stake while the Christian woman suffers a less cruel execution by repenting from her act. Greenblatt and Gallagher describe Ucello's predella as a narrative of reinforcement of the mystery of Eucharism and the Real Presence (the Christian doctrine that the body of Christ is actually present in the Eucharist) (102). They expound on the last scene on Ucello's predella: that of the Christian's woman corpse in a red dress, surrounded at her head by two angels and at her feet by two demons, which symbolize the ambiguity of her acts. In opposition, there is no ambiguity about culpability present in the images of the Jew's execution (108-9). Although, as mentioned before, tales of profanations by Jews could lead to the conclusion of a conversion, Ucello's predella makes no distinction of any blame towards the Jewish merchant, his wife or children. They are all ultimately condemned and righteously burned for their collective, unforgivable acts.

Joos Van Gent's panel, *Communion of the Apostles*, narrates the two viable options for Jews in

Christian society. Greenblatt and Gallagher highlight visual features of the panel. First, the presence of Judas, hiding within the shadows to the right of the feast, as the example of the unrepentant and blasphemous Jew. In contrast, on the right side of the panel, is the portrayal of a figure in a turban that interacts with the duke of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro, the patron who commissioned the piece and requested that he be included with the apostles. The figure in turban was alluded to be an ambassador from the Persian court, a Jewish doctor named Isaac, who had come to Italy in 1472 to negotiate an alliance against the Turks. While in Rome, Isaac converted to Christianity and adopted the name Sixto, in homage to the reigning pope Sixto IV (91). This extraordinary event, the conversion of a Jew, is being celebrated in Gent's panel, and is a parallel event to the anti-Semitic movement in Italy in 1460, which was instigated by Franciscans against the rise in power of Jewish money-lenders (92-3). Greenblatt and Gallagher then conclude that, in both the *Communion of the Apostles* and *Corpus Domini*, there are two opposing visions of Jews: in Ucello's predella the narration is inseparable from the Jew's bodies, causing all of them, independently of blame, to be destroyed; in Gent's panel there is still hope that a Jewish soul may be redeemed (109).

The narrative present in *Corpus Domini* is analogous to the one present in "The Prioress's Tale." The first ritual act of the tale, as noted by Despres, of the resting of the innocent child upon the altar, "Upon his beere lay lith this innocent" (498, line 635), is an allusion to the Eucharistic sacrifice, which includes the ritual of purification and the bleeding-child-as-Host motif (423). When the abbot removes the grain from the "clergeon's" tongue, the ritual then transforms the sacrifice into sacrament, where the child's flesh is consecrated into spirit (423), effectively, in "and he yaf up the goost ful softely" (499, line 672). Despres continues to compare the lifting of the "martyr" from his "beere" as an Eucharistic miracle both in symbol and nature, and when they enclose the martyr's body "in a tombe of marbul stones cleere" (499, line 681), a comparison is traced to the tabernacle that contains Christ's Real Presence, "binding believers in the collective memory of Christ's own

tomb and resurrection” (423). Despres concludes that, at the end of “The Prioress's Tale,” Chaucer's pilgrims unite “as a Christian community bound commensally in the mystical body of Christ” (423). The procession that followed the punishment of the entire Jewish community, (which was first starvation, then dismemberment and finally hanging), resembles the ritual of Corpus Christi (426). The ritual procession represents the demarcation of territory, from the Jewry to the Abbey. The procession, which covers, in Despres words, “the geographical center to the spiritual center” (426-7), consecrates the Christian community as purged, redeemed and whole.

Despres finalizes her article by stating that “The Prioress's Tale”, “like the characteristic sermon exempla, offers an image of ritual that reaffirms doctrinally powerful directives for its audience” (427). The promise to the believers in blind faith is a purported miracle. The collective condemnation and destruction of the Jewish community is a needed part of the ritual to symbolize the pollutants; the unbelievers. Greenblatt and Gallagher remark that, “the tension between doctrine and iconicity, content and vehicle, significant and signifier is, not the consummation of a new historical analysis, but a starting point” (100). The blind faith as a trope is recurrent in *Practising New Historicism*. The authors affirm that the need to believe unconditionally in Christian dogmas required that sensorial experience be distanced by faith, which united a Christian individual to God, but, because of the wide circulation of bleeding-Host stories at the time, believers needed and intensely wished for a confirmation of the miracles (115). According to this view, the Jews, in Christian eyes, were not just “attacking a piece of bread, but directly reproducing the Crucifixion...aiming their violence directly to God's [physical] body” (117). It was then ideologically logical that the doubts arisen about the sanctity of the Eucharistic ritual be delegated to the Jews. They were the ones who doubted the validity of the ritual and wished to prove it untrue by bleeding and cooking the Host. The Jewish communities were “onerated with the doubts and need of verification of the Christian communities”(119). Greenblatt and Gallagher sustain that, in

the narrative present in Ucello's predella, the exaggeration of representation of Jewish blame versus Christian faith is overloaded with enigmas and paradoxes of Eucharistic dogma, but that the distinctions of the invented are what “connects the collaborations, tensions and homicidal conflicts of reality” (127). They conclude that the predella's narrative and its paradoxes represent an aporia; a rupture where desires and repression flow into the world (127). Hence, it can be sustained that “The Prioress's Tale” is an aporia which spills its violence, repressions, and the need of confirmation of Christian dogmas and beliefs into its interacting agents, the Jews. Referring back to Despres, “In our own historically situated and conflicted responses, we should not underestimate the appeal of such a narrative to a late medieval English audience” (427).

It is true that these English medieval audiences probably had little if not no contact at all with Jews in their society, for, (as stated in the introduction), King James I had ordered the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290. Despres mentions that this specific fourteenth century English audience, while listening to “The Prioress's Tale,” reenacts the sacrament of the Eucharist, since it had already purged itself historically of its Jews and sins (420). The absence of Jews within the historical context is ideal for their transformation as scapegoats of Christians pollutants and ecclesiastical doubts. Delumeau affirms that the Jew, to medieval European Christian society, is one of the facets of the devil (417). Delumeau continues this line of thought by stating that Christian culture fears an absent enemy, an absent one, but one who is paradoxically still very much alive. For, as distant as the Jews might be, they continue as a threat, since they are continuously hated for having committed Deicide (426). Consequently, since Deicides hate the true god, they are “spawns of the devil” and employers of all sorts of witchcraft (433). Satan is attacking Christianity through all means possible, and it is through the Jews, one of his prime agents, that he strikes at the heart of Christendom, according to Luther's writings (433). During the Middle Ages, more than a hundred cases of Host profanation and more than a hundred and fifty cases of ritual murder were recorded

(440). These facts, to Christian doctriners, reinforced the accusation of the Jews as deicides who remained obstinate in their sin and who acted as agents of Satan (436). In the beginning of “The Prioress's Tale,” the Jewish community is incited against the litel clergeon, the Christian boy, by Satan himself,

Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,
 That hath in Jewes herte his waspes nest,
 Up swal and seide, 'O Hebraik peple, allas!
 Is this to yow a thing that is honest,
 That swich a boy shal walken as him lest
 In your despit, and singe of swich sentence,
 Which is against youre lawes reverence? (495, lines 558-64).

Satan is directly taunting the Jewish community about the song which the Christian boy sings everyday while traversing the Jewry, *Alma Redemptoris*, a hymn to Holy Mary. Despres declares that one of the clearest characteristics of “The Prioress's Tale” as persecution literature is its Marian context (422). Chaucer's anecdote is an example of a gruesome and violent Marian miracle. The miraculous conception of Christ symbolizes purity, wholesomeness and the ascendance of earthly to the divine, and, according to Despres, this spiritual transcendence is “like the Host itself, which transcends fragmentation of the Real Presence, Mary's miraculous conception of Christ symbolizes fleshly integrity in the mystical body” (422). The inviolability of Mary's body also represents the unity of the Christian community, and the introduction of the anti-Judaism in “The Prioress's Tale” is the pollutant necessary to establish the ritual and achieve purity (424). Despres points out that “The Prioress offers her audience univocal rather than polysemous symbols and imaginatively conjures a world without tangible ambiguity and bodily corruption” (424). Strange tales of Jews

throwing statues of the Virgin down the privvy are a direct link to the throwing of the “litel clergeon” down the latrine pit, and add “a new dimension of carnality to the demonization of the Jews” (425). The focus on cleanliness is also expanded to the figure of the narrator, the Prioress herself, a holy woman with close connections to the piety of the Christian faith and the Virgin Mary. Despres shows that, much as “The cleanliness of Mary and the incorruptible nature of her body figure centrally in monastic and scholastic discussions”, likewise the Prioress “amazes her fellow travelers with her ability to ingest food without the human messiness, inconvenience, or animal appetite that reminds us of bodily need” (426). The holiness and innocence of the female figure was closely associated with that of Christ in the the medieval ages.

Thus, “The Prioress's Tale” directly “offers its Christian audience a conflation of sacred images linking Mary's body- a sealed vessel- with Eucharistic symbolism, implying that individual purity and communal wholesomeness are only possible in a closed society” (426). Consequently, Christian society must unite to purify itself and, confronted with the fragmentation of the body of the litel clergeon, symbolic of both the miraculous conception and purity of the Christ as child, purge the Jews from their community (426). The sinful murder of the child by cutting his throat and the subsequent disposal of the body into the latrine pit demonstrates the extent to which the Jews were willing to go to answer Satan's jibes and provocations. The opposition of Satan, the influence behind the Jewish community, and Holy Mary, who stands for the Christian martyr-boy and the Christian community, is the binary symbol that fulfills the needs to display the otherness of the Jews and affirms their predisposal to evil and anti-Christian acts.

Delumeau holds that the Jews are the very image of the foreign other, the uncomprehended foreigner who is obstinate in his creeds and who will never change into a Christian (415). Hence, this interpretation justifies the belief that Jews will never be able to accept the truth of Christianity,

the holiness and purity of Jesus and his mother Mary, and therefore could only be the contrary to all the goodness and wholesomeness of Christian dogmas. “The Prioress's Tale” is but one text that utilizes the opposition of Marian miracles with the unbelieving Jews. In the article “Mary and the Jews: Story, Controversy and Ceremony” (2006), written by Ora Limor, there are three traditional myths within the middle ages that allegedly defend the witnessing of Marian miracles by Jews. Limor writes that the three tales are very polemical in nature, and they reflect not only the complex relationship between Jews and Christians but also “internal Christian doubts with regard to Marian beliefs” (55).

The article initially explores the Jewish writings about the figure of Mary. Limor states that the on-going debate between the sanctity and purity of Mary caused the writings of Jewish oriented texts that questioned not only the status of Mary within Christian faith but also the crucial dogma of her virginal conception. Doubts about Mary's story, which, as stated above, were very much in line with Christian doubts about the same narratives, include, interestingly enough, the use of some of the same motifs there were used in narratives like “The Prioress's Tale” to portray Jews as unclean and impure. Frequent questions posed by these anti-Marian texts, called by Amos Funkenstein counter-historical texts, were the accusation of Mary's personality as dubious and suspicious, the association of the figure of Mary with menstruation and feces, (which, according to the Talmud, represented a misogynist accusation of women's impurity in general, and Mary's in particular) and the possibility that Mary's virginal conception was due not to God's intervention but of Mary's cuckolding of her husband (57). One of these texts is the *Nizzahon Vetus* (ca. 1300), from which Limor highlighted the following quotation about Jesus's and Mary's holiness;

Consequently, how could this man be God, for he entered a woman with a stomach full of feces who frequently sat him down in the privy during the nine months, and

when he was born he came out dirty and filthy, wrapped in a placenta and defiled by the blood of childbirth and impure issue. The Torah, on the other hand, warns against approaching a menstruant woman, a woman who has had an impure issue, and one who has just given birth, as it is written, “And shall continue in the blood of purification three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing until the day of her purification be fulfilled” (Lev. 12:4). Hence he was not worthy of association with anything sacred (57).

The trope of uncleanness and impurity is here used as an anti-Marian resource, for Limor affirms that, although the *Talmud* and the *Midrash* had already cast doubts upon Mary's “dubious personality” (57), the excerpt from the *Nizzahon Vetus* simply confirms Jewish doubts about the holy conception that had been in discussion for hundreds of years (57), doubts that, as stated before by Limor, Greenblatt and Gallagher, were an undercurrent among Christians as well, who used the Jews as scapegoats to transfer the blame of profane questionings of the Christian dogmas. Another example of a counter-historical text present in Limor's article is the *Sefur Toldot Yeshu*. According to Limor's article,

Amos Funkenstein has called *Sefer Toledot Yeshu* “counterhistory”, which he aptly defines as a genre of historiography with polemical aims, which systematically exploits the other party's most reliable sources contrary to their intention and spirit, as if “combing history against the grain”, to use Walter Benjamin's phrase. “The aim of counterhistory”, writes Funkenstein, “is to distort the other's self-image and identity by destroying his collective memory. (57)

Hence, the *Sefet Toldot Yeshu* presents the reader with a very different version of Mary's

conception. This version claims that Mary was raped by an evil war hero and her neighbor, one Joseph Pandera, who violated Mary twice during her menstruation. Supposedly Mary believed this rapist to be her betrothed, Johanan, and warned him of her menstrual state. When her pregnancy was discovered, the fiancée fled to Galilee and Mary bore a son who was proclaimed to be a “mamzer,” a bastard who was son to a menstruating woman (58). Limor points out that this story shifted from tragic to comic and that, although Mary had been victim of a rape, her figure is also satirized by not being able to tell the difference, in the dark, of her fiancée and her assailant (58). Hence, the ritual belief among Christians of immaculate conception was actively questioned by the Jews but, as Limor argues, touched illogical and fragile elements within Christian theology (58). In as much, the author points out that “things that Christians quoted as having been said by Jews actually represented suppressed Christian disapproval, or a guilty Christian conscience for heretical thoughts and doubts of accepted beliefs” (58). Limor then moves on her line of thought from the Jewish attacks regarding the immaculate conception dogma to the Christians' reaction; somehow Christian theology needed to assert itself and turn tables on the unfaithful. The immediate solution was the beginning of the circulation of Marian miracles that were allegedly witnessed by the Jews; who were subsequently, in these narratives, punished for their disbelief. Limor comments about the segregation of Jews and their role within Medieval Christian Europe stating the following “the stories cited below [Marian miracles witnessed by Jewish characters] are figurative reflections of these perceptions of the Jew in Christian thought and imagination. They show how Christians tried to mobilize Jewish criticism and hostility to reinforce Christian beliefs, and how Jews became a source of authority for Christian truth” (59). The fate of the Jewish characters within these narratives of Jews witnessing Marian miracles resembles the destiny of the Jewish community in “The Prioress's Tale,” following suit in different possibilities, all of which are relevant and will be discussed throughout this thesis. The conclusion regarding the Jewish character which will be discussed now is present in the first of the narratives of Marian miracle discussed in Limor's article;

the violent and bloody punishment and then assimilation of the Jewish character through his repentance and conversion to Christianity. In comparison to “The Prioress's Tale,” the macabre punishment is carried out but the opportunity of forgiveness through redemption to Christianity is denied.

This narrative describes Mary's death, more traditionally known as her “Dormitio.” Limor mentions that it is attributed to John the Evangelist and that it dates from fifth and sixth centuries but it is possibly even older. From the sixty versions pre-dating the tenth century, existent in various languages, (Syriac, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian and Slavonic), only one of these versions “omits the Jewish (or anti-Jewish) episode” (59). The possibility, drawn up in Limor's text, that the anti-Jewish version was incorporated into the narrative of Mary's death at a very early stage (59), is indicative of the historical antagonism of the Jews against the Holy Mother.

The story begins with a divine angel manifesting itself before Mary and announcing her impending death and that she would be taken, or rather assumed, into Heaven. Apostles miraculously convene from all over the country to bid farewell to Mary. At her funeral, in Gethsemane, the singing and activity of the Apostles attracts the attention of the Jewish community, whereupon the Jewish leaders decide to retaliate in fear that Mary's tomb will begin to enact miracles similar to those happening at her son's burial site. The Jews intent is to seize Mary's body and burn it. A Jew named Zephaniah struggles through the Christians and manages to catch hold of Mary's bier, causing the immediate apparition of an angel with a fiery sword who cuts Zephaniah's hands off. In some versions, his hands dry up and adhere to the bier, while in others he is struck blind. While Zephaniah cries and agonizes, begging the Apostles to aid him, they reply that only the Virgin Mother can take pity on him and help him. They advise prayer and repentance, which Zephaniah promptly agrees to, and in consequence, he is awarded with his conversion to

Christianity and the miracle of having his hands restored, or, depending on the version of the tale, his eyes healed. He is then sent by the Christians to warn the other Jews about their blindness to Christian faith. Many of the Jews are converted to Christianity and thus are cured of their blindness, recovering their true sights.

Bodily image and inevitably the cleanliness and purity trope are brought up by Limor to analyze this anti-Jewish Marian tale. The author holds that the Jewish characters are shown as wanting to viciously damage Mary's body, defile and ultimately destroy it in flames, to radically refute its sanctity and holiness (60). In similar stance, the Jews in "The Prioress's Tale" destroyed and defiled the body of the Christian boy, one of the most traditional representations of Christian purity is associated the figure of the child-Christ and the child as Host motif, defiling the child by tossing him into a latrine pit. One might bring up, once more, Despres' article, which mentions the wide circulation of stories of Jews throwing the statue of Virgin Mary down the cesspit (425), in a symbolic gesture of the denial of the Christian faith, especially in relation to Mary and the dogma of the immaculate conception. The analogy of the statue of the Virgin thrown into the filth and the child's fate in "The Prioress's Tale" exemplifies Jewish perfidy and vileness to its audience, where not only the Holy Mother and child-martyr are defiled but, in association with these two, Christ himself is also desecrated.

The attempt of Zephaniah to defile Mary's body at her funeral is so central to the issue, according to Limor, of Jewish doubts cast upon Mary's holiness; only because of her sinless life and body was Mary able to ascend miraculously into Heaven. In parallel, it was the litel clergeon's faith in the Holy Mother, by singing her hymn *Alma Redemptoris*, that caused the Jewish community in "The Prioress's Tale" to attack the boy and consequently defile him-- symbolizing a direct attack on the Virgin Mary. The brutal punishment Zephaniah receives, losing his hands or vision, is also

carried out in Chaucer's tale; the entire Jewish community is tortured cruelly then slaughtered. In the tale of Mary's Dormition, the offending Jew is converted and cured, and consequently manages to convert other Jews, therefore curing them of their theoretical blindness towards Christian faith (Limor, 60). Alas, in "The Prioress's Tale," there is no offer of redemption and the solution of the Jewish problem is conducted to total annihilation. Another version of the story is more coherent with the ideology of extinction present in "The Prioress's Tale." Delumeau reports that, in a Parisian printout of circa 1518, the tale of Mary's Assumption ends with the four unbelieving Jews, who tried to profane Mary's coffin by touching it, and are stricken by blindness. Two convert to Christianity and are cured, in compliance with the version in Limor's article, but the other two refuse to accept Christian faith and murder each other (424). These two last murdering Jews, the obstinate "others" who refuse the Christian truth, are similar to the Jewish community in "The Prioress's Tale;" Jews that are portrayed as unbelievers and evil-doers whose only solution within Christian society is their complete destruction.

Marian tales are further linked to the character of Jews is Despres' article "Immaculate Flesh and the Social Body: Mary and the Jews" (1998). In the introduction to her text, Despres states that,

[the Jews'] presence was a necessary element in the devotional world of the later medieval English laity. Anti-Judaic images and ideas were particularly closely associated with the cult of the Virgin in late-medieval England. Marian devotional works, whether fictional like Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale" or devotional compendia, allow us therefore to investigate in some detail the significance of Jewish presence in late medieval English religious culture (47).

The despair of the boy-martyr's mother in "The Prioress's Tale" is compared to the biblical

Rachel's suffering; "Unnehte mighte the peple that was there This newe Rachel bringen from his beere" (497, lines 626-7). Despres argues that Mary is a perfection of biblical Rachel, and that she offers to the Christian faithful, through her immaculate conception, a figurative sacrament of a holy child sacrifice, the validation of Eucharism, as opposed to Rachel's penance because of the true blood sacrifice of her son's physical life (53). If compared to this idea of Mary, the widowed mother in "The Prioress's Tale," is the representation of the Holy Mother within the narrative, for she too gives up her son to martyrdom and holiness, who is condemned, much as Rachel's and Mary's sons, to death by Jews. This effectively links the profanity of Host desecration, historically and traditionally blamed on the Jews, to the motif of the Host-as-child and Host-as-bleeding-child, reinforcing not only the myth of blood libel but that of the deicide committed by the Jews as a community. Despres article refers to another Marian myth, the one of the Jew of Bourges, which alludes to the child as sacrament. A Jewish child goes to mass with his Christian friend and receives the Eucharist. His Jewish father, enraged, throws him into an oven where he is protected by the Virgin Mary and reemerges whole and unharmed. In some versions the Jewish mother even converts to Christianity (55). Despres interprets this Marian tale as an example of not only "Mary's miraculous ability to protect the Christian body through Eucharist" (55), but also as a purgative ability of the social body, for she "converts the repentant Jews who can now see the meaning of the sacrament itself, not as defiling but as transformative and salvific" (55). Here again is the validity of the holiness of Mary's body in opposition to the perfidy of the Jews, and once more the purgative ritual which contrasts both as different poles. Despres again argues on the threats of the Jews defiling the Christian community (55); a theme that is one of the central issues of "The Prioress's Tale," in which the Jewry's members defile the Christians not only physically but spiritually by directly attacking Mary through the litel clergeon. Despres pointed out that the Marian stories were the fundamental tool used by the militant church to reach the laity, and thus that the exclusion program of the Fourth Lateran Council was duly represented and fulfilled (56).

The Marian cult offered the possibility of spiritual resurrection, contrasting this trope with that of carnality, a trope which was inherently associated with the Jews, symbolized by, in medieval imagery, “feces, spittle, festering sores and physical ailments”(58). The bodily impurity of the Jews is the symptom of their evilness, again coherent with the defiling act of throwing the *litel clergeon's* body into the filthy latrine pit. Through Douglas's concept of ritual of purification concept, again it is justifiable to place the Jews as the pollutants who are cleansed through the agent of purgation and purification, Mary. Despres argues that it is through both anecdotes like “The Prioress's Tale,” and its counterpart in historical Christian myth of the blood libel of Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln, that scholars may “...locate the morale within social memory...[and] better understand medieval social memory and and its collective meaning for Christendom” (60-61). Despres concludes her article by exposing the insistence of the demonization of the Jews as Christ-killers in late medieval poetry, art, and devotional literature, and opposes these anti-Semitic concepts within Marian devotionism, which represented both an individual and collective redemption (63). Christian redemption is thus achieved through anti-Semitic acts, which form binaries with the piety, holiness, and purity of the Marian persona; violent and brutal acts like the dismemberment and hanging of the collective Jewish community in “The Prioress's Tale.” One Christian child, the *litel clergeon*, was sacrificed individually and transcended spiritually, through Marian intervention. Hence, redemption was achieved by the Christian community, as both individuals and as a collective group, by collective genocide of the Jews. The ritual of purgation and purification then completes its cycle and effectively juxtaposes the Jews as impure and evil Satanic agents against the Christian beatific Holy Virgin and her miracles.

Finally, the motif of Jewish usury is also touched on “The Prioress's Tale.” In the introductory paragraphs, the narrator exposes the Jewish colony, which was protected by the ruling lord for their wicked usury, “Amonges Cristen folk, a Jewerye, Sustened by a lord of that contree,

For foul usure and lucre of vileinye” (492, lines 489-91). Usury is a recurrent theme throughout anti-Semitic texts, a favorite trope used exhaustively by numerous authors. This is not a surprising fact when one considers the historical facts present in Delumeau's text, in which the author points out how, by the twelfth century, Jews had taken over a good part of international commerce (417). Retaliations to these conditions, especially by the late ascension of a Christian bourgeoisie who wished to take control over the Jewish-dominated commerce (417). A broader view will be given to the money-lending trope in the next chapter, for it is central to the next chosen text: *The Merchant of Venice*.

The idea of cleanliness and purity, the contrast of the hallowed Marian miracles to the unclean figure of the Jews, the trope of usury present in the beginning of the anecdote in order to denote the Jew's perfidy, all focus on the issues of power and power relations. As Gina Sans-Piazza points out, “Ideological studies focus our attention on issues of power and control. New Historicists share these concerns, especially as they influence the production and reception of texts” (100). The central issue in “The Prioress's Tale” of the collective murder of the Jews reflects New Historicism's views on how texts are not socially produced, but socially productive. Sans-Piazza understands that anecdotes are crucial for New Historicists because they reflect the dynamic of historical unfoldings (7); and, in a more general aspect, the author states that all texts “...are caught up in the social processes and contexts out of which they emerge. Though identified by a single author, texts are generated by a community” (9). This notion is on par with Greenblatt's and Gallagher's statements on New Historicism's declared interests: social energies that flow through texts; energies that pressure from a bottom-up perspective in order to transform the upper spheres and from top-down to colonize inferior ones (23). Applied to “The Prioress's Tale,” the inexistent or suppressed voice of the murdered Jewish community becomes a possibility. A counter-historical view of the tale allows for an interpretation of the minority within this piece of literature. This minority, for the exact same

reason it is stereotyped and not allowed a voice in the anecdote, is, in Greenblatt's and Gallagher's understanding, suppressing the canonical work to which it is associated (46). The history of possibilities within the New Historicist view is interested in both the collective and the significance of the solitary voice, of the isolated scandal (27). The murdered collectivity of Jews, without a logical judgment or reasoning as to whether one or all Jews were responsible for the murder of the Christian boy, represents the central notion of counterhistory, the prematurely extinct possibilities, unfulfilled imaginations, half-formulated projects, silenced ambitions, doubts, dissatisfactions and half-aspirations (Greenblatt and Gallagher, 86). All of these inexistent voices, the silent and assassinated Jewish collectively, painstakingly points out, like Despres observations of the narrator's final statements in "The Prioress's Tale," that we, like the Christians, must be continually vigilant (427). After all, "The Prioress's Tale" is but a product of "material realities that make up a social context" (Sans-Piazza, 10), a social context which is not only confined to the past, but which is relevant to those in the present studying the past.

Money-lending Is for Devils

i. Shylock

In the book *Jewish Presence in the English Literature* (1990), edited by Derek Cohen and Elizabeth Heller, Cohen presents us with the chapter “Shylock and the Idea of the Jew.” Cohen initiates his chapter by stating that the name Shylock, in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century became associated in the English language as a term of abuse (25). Cohen also affirms that “what Shylock means becomes crucial to all English writing that deals with the Jewish presence” (25).

Many critics have thus studied, analyzed and pondered the character of Shylock. One such critic is Herbert Bronstein, who, in his article “Shakespeare, the Jews and *The Merchant of Venice*” (1969), poses the following questions; “Is Shylock a vicious and vengeful villain whose hate for Antonio arises from the latter's interference with Shylock's greedy usury?” (3); “Or is he a tragic figure....the one person in the play remaining at its conclusion with a shred of human dignity?” (4). To better understand the figure of Shylock, this thesis will assert that the character of Shylock, portrayed in Shakespeare’s play, *The Merchant of Venice*, is not only the main villain of the narrative, but, as Bronstein points out, he is a “Jew-villain” (4). Bronstein argues that in all of Shakespeare's plays, none of the disgusting character traits are so connected and interweaved with a national identity as they are with Shylock and the fact that he is a Jew (4). Bronstein writes; “Shylock is referred to as 'the Jew' for over sixty times [in the play], and as a Jew he is repeatedly associated in one form or another with the devil” (4).

The study *The Jewish Persona in European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (2010), written by Leonid Livak explores the deicidal relationship between Jews and Jesus in a paired

relationship, where the Jew's anti-Christianism is evident even in the etymology of their names. Limor interprets how the the Jews' satanic relationship poses them as enemies of Christians not only set in the anti-Christian argument, but also on the etymology of the word “Satan”; the Hebrew word “stn” and the Greek “diaobolos” have meanings that are very much akin to the English “opponent,” or “adversary” (27). Judas is chosen as “Satan's proxy in the basic Christian story...[because] his hellenized name derived from the patriarch and tribe of Judah, making him the symbol of the Jews” (27-8). Livak also demonstrates how the two words, “Judas” and “Jews” were often combined into “Judas-Jew” and “Jew-Judas” (28). Therefore, Shakespeare's resource of objectifying both Shylock and other Jewish characters, (such as his daughter Jessica) as “the Jew” reinforces the myth of deicide and overshadows Jewish characters within all the historical anti-Semitic ideology present in the Middle Ages.

The demonization of the character Shylock is pertinent to what he does for a living: usury. As discussed before in the introduction and Chapter 1, money-lending was frowned upon by the Church, because that usury went against its dogmas and beliefs. The Christian rejection of usury can be clearly seen in what Bronstein highlights as a common saying within biblical tradition “*Muutuum datum inde sperantes*: Give freely, hope for nothing (in return)” (7). Money-lenders, as logic demands, cannot give up on the return of their investments; therefore they went against the precepts of what it meant to be a good Christian in medieval eyes. Bronstein calls attention to the first scene in which the audience meets Shylock, where he refers to Antonio as a “good” man, but not to signify that he is a virtuous, generous or good human being. In Shylock's case the interpretation of the word “good” means to be in a good financial condition, a man who has riches and goods (7). In fact, Shylock is so typified as the greedy money-lender, so interconnected with the negative trope of usury that he is binarily opposed to the figure of Antonio; the good Christian who lends money without interest, effectively fulfilling his role as a generous man of pure heart, a man that cared about others. Shylock indeed states that “he hates Antonio because Antonio lends

out money gratis, 'in low simplicity,' bringing down the rate of interest in Venice and in this manner hindering Shylock's gains" (Bronstein 8). Bronstein interestingly points out that it was easy to implicate all the negativity associated with usury to the figure of the Jew, since the Jew "symbolized usury," and the "word Jew was synonymous with usury," while the "word Christian meant good" (8). Warren D. Smith states, in his article "Shakespeare's Shylock" (1964) that the figure of the usurer is associated to villains (193). As the church, in the Middle Ages, found it fit to condemn usury as unnatural and irreligious (Smith, 195-6), the opposition against the figure of the Jew-usurer was, by the time *The Merchant of Venice* was written, well established and a redundant comparison of Shakespeare. Smith states that Shakespeare's Elizabethans were culturally conditioned to accept the role of Shylock, the stereotypical Jew, connecting it to what was collectively perceived as Jewish essentialism; all Jews were usurers and unbelievers (195). The Jew as the opposite of the Christian is a concept blatantly inserted in Shylock's views, for another set of justifications Shylock gives warrant his hatred of Antonio, besides his interference with Shylock's financial gains, is that Antonio is a Christian, and that Antonio mistreats him because he is a Jew (Bronstein, 196).

In the book *Shylock is Shakespeare* (2006), by Kenneth Gross, some interesting observations on the topic of Shylock and usury are made. According to Gross, the *Discourse on Usury*, a text from 1572, written by Thomas Wilson and published a year after the Parliament conceded a rise of ten per cent in all loans, is a fine example of Elizabethan's view on money-lending. Gross states that the *Discourse on Usury* defends that the practise is,

a kind of infection, parasitism or sickness that can spread itself through a whole nation or the body politic...the demand for interest- something that can fairly disguise itself as fair exchange- becoming a demonic principle with a life of its own, uncontainable, something that in time corrodes all natural bonds, contaminates even charitable loans of the old sort, and exposes all social relation to a proliferation of

lack (45).

Furthermore, Gross points out that Israelites were allowed usurious practises only with strangers or aliens, and that when Antonio replies to Shylock with “bitter” words “Lend it rather to thy enemy,” he is referring to usury as an act of war, aggression or revenge (45-6). Hence, as usury was forced upon Jews in the Middle Ages, a practise of “...economy that was most unsettlingly suspect and paradoxically powerful...the question of Shylock's being a Jew and a money-lender cannot be pried apart” (Gross, 50). In conclusion, the character Antonio views Shylock's usury as a war against all Christians; money-lending is but one more act of aggression which is ideologically linked to the theory of the inherent hatred Jews bore of Christianity in general.

In Act I, during Shylock's initial scenes, he refers to a biblical analogy to defend his craft; that of Jacob's incident with Laban, in which the issue of profit is debated. Antonio replies that even the Devil would be able to cite Scripture if he was to gain something with it (Bronstein, 196). Shylock explains that he has taken an oath in heaven to have Antonio's pound of flesh as a guarantee for his loan, reinforcing his behavior as an anti-Christian Jew, a man that is evil and contemptuously uses his religion as an meek explanation for his cruel demands. After his discussion with Antonio about the Scriptural passage, Bronstein alleges that Shylock once again utilizes “his religion as a guise for his villainy” (197). Shylock complains that Antonio has spat upon his garb, and called him a “misbeliever, cutthroat dog,” which causes Shylock to conclude with the lines “Hath a dog money?/ Is it possible / A cur can lend three thousand ducats?” (211). The association of the figure of the Jew with the uncleanness of a lowly animal, and his accusation of being an unbeliever of the Christian faith are in accordance with the previously discussed tropes of impurity and foulness. Antonio's anti-Semitic reply is “I am as like to call thee so again / To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too” (I.iii.12607). Bronstein ends his observation by presenting one more line where Shylock justifies his usury through his religion, the line given at the end of his argument with Antonio, “For

suffrance is the badge of all our tribe” (197). The way Shylock “is perfectly willing to use the Jewish faith as a cloak” (198) validates not only the superiority of the Christian religion but the worthlessness of the Jewish faith, in which its professed members mock their religious precepts and use their religion as a tool for cruelty and greed. The Christian-Jewish opposition of good versus evil, of truth versus blasphemy is reinforced through Shylock's disregard of his own beliefs. Bronstein writes that Shylock “is not presented by the dramatist as a truly religious Jew” (198). More instances of Shylock's disbelief in his own religion are pointed out by Bronstein in two other incidents; after Shylock tells Bassanio he would not smell pork or enter a residence where the Nazarite prophet had conjured the devil into, he freely goes to supper with the Christians (198). When Shylock, further in the play, learns that Antonio will probably not be able to repay his loan, Shylock willingly chooses the synagogue, a holy place of worship and reverence, to plot his evil and spiteful revenge against Antonio (198). His justification of “I will have the heart of him if he is forfeit. For, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will” (III.i.127-30). A third instance is when Shylock forswears his holy oath made in Heaven to have Antonio's pound of flesh when he learns that he is in danger of losing his property and life (198). In this same incident, Shylock also commits blasphemy against his religion by swearing “by our holy Sabbath.” Finally, when he finds out about Jessica's elopement with the Christian, he compares all the historical suffering of the Jews to his personal loss of two thousand ducats in the lines “Why, there, there, there, there! A diamond gone cost me two thousand ducats in Frankford! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now” (III.i.87-89). As an unbeliever of both the Christian faith and his own Jewish faith, Shylock is doubly despicable and forsworn. This concept is also on par with the Christian medieval doctrinary agenda, the one extensively discussed in the first chapter, in which doubts about Christian dogmas and beliefs, including those of Christian superiority, were conveniently projected onto the figure of the Jew.

Hence, it is not surprising that Shylock's association with his Jewishness is redundantly

demonstrated throughout *The Merchant of Venice*. According to Cohen, “The word Jew is used 58 times in *The Merchant of Venice*. Variants of words like *Jewess*, *Jews*, *Jew's* and *Jewish* are used 14 times; *Hebrew* is only used twice. There are, then, 74 direct uses and unambiguously related words in the play” (54). Therefore, Shylock is only referred to by his name seventeen times in the play, in all other instances he is called “Jew,” or “the Jew.” Cohen argues that “The reason for this discrimination is, of course, to set Shylock apart from other characters...Calling the play's villain by a name which generalizes him while at the same time ostensibly defining his essence is, in a sense, to depersonalize him” (55). This objectifies Shylock to the audience and makes it easier to associate him to nefarious themes, such as the Devil. While in the beginning of the play only “light-hearted” connections are made between the “Jew and the Devil,” the connections become “more and more validated by Shylock's behavior” (55). Direct allusions are made in direct reference to Shylock's inner essence- his heart. Both Cohen (57) and Bronstein (4) call attention to Antonio's following lines,

I pray you think you question with the Jew,-
 You may as well go stand upon the beach
 And bid the main flood bate his usual height,
 You may as well question with the wolf,
 Why hath he made the ewe bleat for the lamb:...
 You may as well do any thing most hard
 As seek to soften that-than which what's harder?--
 His Jewish heart!”(IV.i)

Cohen gives great importance to the anti-Semitic aspect of these lines, holding that this statement from Antonio is a direct reflection to Shylock's rise in power, and that “the image of him as a cur changes to the image of him as a potent diabolical force...Shylock's lust for blood takes on

the motive energy of Satanic evil, impervious to reason or humanity” (57). Cohen also states that these lines present the image of Jews with power as extremely dangerous, violent, bloodlusting and demoniacal, and that something must be done by the Christians to combat the blood-thirsty Jew (57). Bronstein makes a cross-reference of Shylock's “Jewish heart” to these lines in “The Prioress's Tale,”; “Our fist foe, the serpent Sathanas, That hath in Jewes herte his waspes neste...” (495, 558-9). The satanic aspect of Shylock's status as a Jew is further reinforced by the clown Lancelot, Shylock's servant, in these lines,

Certainly, my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master...To be rul'd by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who (God bless the mark) is a kind of devil; and to run away from the Jew, I should be rul'd by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation, and in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew (II.ii.1-30).

Lancelot's opinion of his Jewish master mirrors the medieval Christian European ideals of the satanic Jew. In the “The Prioress's Tale,” it does not matter in the narrative's outcome whether one Jew or all Jews were guilty of blood libel-- inherently the conclusion is that all Jews at heart are devil-spawn. So does Shylock also fit within this stigma-- he is a Jew at heart, and therefore contains all of the anti-Christian evilness and unholiness. Thus he also, individually and collectively, as a Jew, belongs to the Devil. The fact that Shylock plans out his revenge in the synagogue is brought forth by Cohen as another Satanic association to the character's image. Cohen argues that to an Elizabethan audience, the synagogue was a “mysterious place where strange and terrible rituals were enacted” (56). A holy and sacred place belonging to Jewish religion is then transformed into a bloody place for vengeance, a strange and evil place where Jews plot and scheme against the welfare of their Christian neighbors. The Satanic evil present in Shylock's Jewish heart is

also associated with another Jewish character in the play. Solan, a Christian, remarks pertly, as Shylock's associate, Tubal, approaches, "Here comes another of the tribe; a third cannot de match'd, unless the devil himself turn Jew" (III.i.76-77). Shylock's demand to collect his pound of flesh is a cruel and inhuman request which could only spout forth demonic intentions. Bruce Boehrer, in his article "Thinking Social Exclusion in *The Merchant of Venice*," rethinks the issue of the bond of flesh by stating that these effectively invert the positions of Christian and Jews; the first who are free and the latter "enslaved," but by Shylock's pound of flesh, and his assertion of his right in taking it, creates an inversion of the free and enslaved dichotomy (162).

The inversion of Christian's and Jew's position (Boehrer 162), done through Shylock's bond of flesh, denotes to the audience the Jew's envy, and his wish to usurp what is rightfully a Christian prerogative. It may be argued that, even as the Jewish community in "The Prioress's Tale" was incited against Christianity by one of its paramount symbols, the Virgin Mary, Shylock the Jew withholds the same hatred by desiring the freedom of Christians. Shylock wishes to retaliate against a Christian, against all that is good and pious, by exacting upon Antonio a torture which is reminiscent of Christ's own physical tortures before the Crucifixion. Therefore, by wishing to physically wound a Christian's flesh, Shylock is metaphorically attacking the epitome of Christian faith; Jesus. Similarly to his ancestors, Shylock is mimicking their evilness, hatred and spite; he wishes for Christian blood and flesh to be sacrificed. Like the blood libel in "The Prioress's Tale," Shylock's bloodlust demands a parody of the Crucifixion through Antonio's pound of flesh. His gruesome tendencies are linked throughout the narrative not only in his continued reference to the Devil, but to bloodthirsty dogs, curs, and even ravenous wolves. His initial comparison to dogs and curs has a relevant interpretation which is pointed out by Boehrer in his text. The article in question is "Shakespeare's Dogs" (1998), in which Marjorie Garber remarks that words like "cur," "dog" and "stranger" are all interlinked to the idea of strays and mongrels; equivalent to the Jews as homeless dogs which are of "mongrel race" and show a "cut-throat tendency" (294-313). Boehrer then

analyzes Shylock's transition in the tale from “cur” and “dog” to a more aggressive and carnivorous animal: the wolf (163). Boehrer chooses the following extract from the play to demonstrate how Shylock was depicted as feral, dangerous and lethal,

O, be thou damn'd, execrable dog!
 And for life let justice be accus'd.
 Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith
 To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
 Into the trunks of men. Thy currish spirit
 Govern'd by a wolf, who hang'd for human slaughter,
 Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
 And whilst thou layest in my unhallowed dam,
 Infus'd itself in thee, for thy desires
 Are wolvis, bloody, starv'd and ravenous. (IV.i.128-38)

In this passage, Shylock is accused of having an abnormal soul; he is deemed guilty of having a wolf's soul, a bloody animus. In the passage cited before, in which Antonio describes the evil present in Shylock's heart, the Jew is also compared to the wolf, the metaphor of his bloodlust is drawn by comparing him to the wolf which devours the lamb and leaves the ewe to perish. The fact that the wolf's chosen victim is a lamb is another implication of Jewish hatred towards Christians and one more evidence in the play of the theological insistence that Jews wished to destroy Christians and their religion. In the same way that Antonio's flesh is connected to the martyred flesh of Jesus Christ, Shylock as wolf wishes to destroy the sacrificial lamb, the recurrent metaphor for Christ himself. Furthermore, in the passage cited above, the wolf Shylock is compared to is presented as not only naturally feral but especially so, since this wolf was hanged due to human slaughtering (Boehrer 164).

The allusion to the hanged wolf can be associated with a common practice between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the period in which *The Merchant of Venice* was written, to a legal procedure that allowed for the prosecution and punishment of animals, especially dogs, mainly for the offenses of bestiality and manslaughter. In addition, in Central Europe, from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, a common practise consisted of “hanging condemned Jews alongside or between dogs” (Boehrer, 165). This was supposedly a “reversed Crucifixion,” in which the dogs represented the thieves at the Crucifixion and the Jew, hanged upside down, denoted from his inverted position both the ideology of the Anti-Christ and from his central position the dishonor of having committed deicide (Boehrer 165). The comparison of Shylock to a man-eating wolf can be further exploited by the play's lines that depict the instances Shylock goes to social interactions, to which he “go[es] in hate, to feed upon” his Christian host (II.v.14-5). Shylock's lines “Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst cause, / But since I am a dog, beware my fangs” (III.iii.6-7) further bestializes, dehumanizes, and demonizes Shylock. The foreshadowing of Shylock's desire to sink his fangs into Antonio's flesh is given in the First Act, in which the usury deal is sealed with the guarantee of Antonio's fair flesh, any part of flesh that would please Shylock to take. When Portia, in the last act, vehemently announces that Shylock shall not take a drop of Christian blood, and lays out the laws terms before the helpless Shylock, he replies with the phrase “Why, then the devil give him good of it!” (IV.i.345). Cohen claims that until the last scene of the play “Shylock has been vicious and sadistic, nastily rubbing his hands together in anticipation of a bloody revenge, thriving on the smell of blood he is about to taste” (62). The image of the Christian-hating, bloodthirsty, vengeful and demonic Jew is thus duly accomplished and portrayed in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Shylock's desire for Christian flesh is not the only demonic trait associated to Jews. The idea of the antagonism of purity, uncleanliness and impurity, can be detected not only in the offenses directed towards Shylock, vilifying him as a “cur,” but in Shylock's last statements about his

wishes. He refers to Antonio's pound of flesh as "carrion flesh" (IV.i.43-45), rotten flesh consumed by carrion eaters such as vermin and vultures. This concept of rotting flesh and Shylock's lust in consuming it makes allusion to the myth of *faetor judaicus* and the putrid odor which in some versions would be able to be purged through Christian baptism. In the article "Shylock's Gender: Jewish Male Menstruation in Early Modern England" (1999), written by David S. Katz, the *faetor judaicus* is thoroughly analyzed and used as a means of interpreting the Jewish vileness present in Shylock. Katz states that the *faetor judaicus* "...was also one of the Devil's traits, and like him, Jews were thought to have horns, a tail, a goat's beard, and a black color" (440). Katz claims that the distinction needed by the Medieval European to set apart Christians and Jews was so intense that Jews were seen as "...not entirely human" (440). Besides from their unnatural stench, another reported feature associated with the demonic Jews was male menstruation. Katz approaches this allegation by quoting a 1648 Yorkshire minister, Thomas Calvert, who associates Jewish male menstruation to the blood libel, claiming it was a curse cast upon the Jews due to their murder of Jesus Christ, a curse that could only be healed by the consumption of Christian blood (441). The article also presents the view that, although Shylock's set speech contains the lines "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" (III.i.54-9), Portia emphasizes the Christian Jewish paradox by stressing that although Shylock can have Antonio's flesh, he cannot have "...Antonio's Christian *blood*, for that blood is essentially different from the fluid that flows in Shylock's veins" (460). Shylock's appeal to a sense of equality is then disenfranchised by the set of values that classified Christian blood above his own. Katz demonstrates that the character Shylock, always shown on stage wearing distinctive clothes and bearing a strange accent, was systematically set apart from Christians, and that his discourse of equality with Christians was thought of as being "inherently funny" (461). His foreignness is such that the argument used to turn the tables on him is that he is an alien, a stranger and unaccepted being within the Christian community. Returning to Despres's ideas on the social wholeness and purity needed to form the body of the Christian community, the outcome of Christian and Jewish confrontation needs once again to eliminate the pollutant. In Shylock's case he was

offered the mercy of undergoing the purgation and purification ritual and converting.

As conversion has historically been presented as a solution for the Jewish problem, as seen in Mary's Dormitio myth in the first chapter, Shylock can undergo his humiliation in penance and reform by embracing the Christian religion. This draws Shylock's fate to the following conclusions; though he repossesses half of his fortune by the ever forgiving, good-hearted Christian Antonio, he will no longer be able to practise his trade; therefore all of his life and experience of commerce in usury will be denied to him and his future means of living severely limited and uncertain. Secondly, he will have to leave whatever is left of his monies to his eloping, converted daughter and her Christian husband, effectively denying Shylock of any Jewish heir in both the physical and symbolic sense. Shylock's Jewishness has then been effectively cleansed, albeit against his will. Cohen's statement that "The symbol of evil in *The Merchant of Venice* is Jewishness, and Jewishness is represented by the Jew" (58), is righteously solved by the conversion of the Jew-villain. Similarly to the silent Jewish community in "The Prioress's Tale," Shylock is tongue-tied and nearly silent at his chosen fate, muttering feeble lines such as "I pray you give me leave to go from hence, / I am not well" (IV.i.296-6). He must suffer his sentence in silence, losing half his fortunes, his trade, his daughter and, above all, his identity. Such a punishment is fit for the Devil himself.

ii. Isaac of York

The novel *Ivanhoe* narrates the tale of twelfth century England, when Richard Lion Heart returns from his Crusade in Palestine. Wilfred of Ivanhoe, a disinherited noble Saxon knight, is the main character. He has also just returned from the quest for Jerusalem, and discovers a country split apart by strife and petty struggles, led by the egotistical Prince John. Wilfred of Ivanhoe, mainly called Ivanhoe throughout the novel, interacts with Saxon and Norman nobles, serfs, outlaws,

yeoman and Jews. His quest in the book is not only to aid Richard Lion Heart, but to regain his father's trust and the hand of the noble Saxon maiden Rowena.

The character Isaac of York is first introduced in the fifth chapter of the story. Scott opens the chapter with a quote from *The Merchant of Venice*. This quote shows Shylock's famous lines of his self-comparison to Christians in which he tries to gain some sympathy from the listeners,

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? (III.i.59-64).

The evident intent is to make a direct intertextual connection between the characters of Isaac and Shylock. The first remark made about Isaac is said by the Templar Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, in which he berates the audacity of the “dog Jew” (62), to approach a “defender of the holy Sepulchre” (62). The allusion to the perfidy of the dog trope to Jews has been discussed priorly in the section regarding Shylock, and the association of the Jew as unclean, unwanted, and mongrel-raced is unsurprisingly applied to Isaac. Isaac is continuously referred to as “dog of a Jew” throughout the novel by various characters: by Gurth the swineherd (122), by Athelstane the Saxon scion (192), by Fronte-de-Boeuf the Norman baron (216), by the Friar Tuck (325) and by the Grand Master of the Templars (358). The canine similes are “akin to animals by virtue of mental deficiency, unspirituality and immoralism...which stress 'Jewish' mental deficiency and spiritual blindness” (Livak 40). Jewish inferiority can be thus avowed, as in Shylock's case, by the recurrent use of the dog simile in relation to Isaac.

In chapter V, in reply to the Templar's spiteful comments about Isaac, the Saxon Cedric

casually comments that all Jews are “...stiff-necked unbelievers” (63), and that although he will allow Isaac to partake of his board and food, none of the present need to feel obliged to “...converse or to feed with him” (63). He then decides that he will sit Isaac next to Wamba the jester, where “...the fool and the knave will be well met” (63). Wamba replies that he will raise a “bulwark” against the knave, followed by Cedric's hushing during the arrival of Isaac. Isaac's first physical description bears great weight with the association to the negativity which is associated with the Jewish persona stereotype, and merits full citation,

Introduced with little ceremony, advancing with fear and hesitation, and many a bow of deep humility, a tall thin old man, who, however, had lost by the habit of stooping much of his actual height, approached the lower end of the board. His features, keen and regular, with an aquiline nose and piercing black eyes, his high wrinkled forehead, and long grey hair and beard, would have been considered as handsome, had they not been the marks of a physiognomy peculiar to a race which, during those dark ages, was alike detested by the credulous and prejudiced vulgar, and persecuted by the greedy and rapacious nobility, and who, perhaps, owing to that very hatred and persecution, had adopted a national character, in which there was much, to say the least, mean and unamiable (63).

As Isaac crosses the hall, all the Christians present regard him with loathing, despise and horror, crossing themselves in order to ward off whatever evil the Jew may carry. He is referred to in the text as “son of a rejected people” (64), ensuring the association with the stranger, the alien foreigner. Excluded and unwanted, Isaac Jewishness immediately sets him apart. Given place by the condescending *Ivanhoe* in disguise to sit near the fire, Isaac is described as a “withered form [who] would have formed no bad emblematical personification of the Winter season” (64-5). The comparison to the barren season, to the cold death of winter, again sets the Jew apart as an odd and

undesirable pariah.

Isaac first speaks when the disguised Ivanhoe counsels him to flee the castle, and offers his protection until Isaac is able to leave hostile lands. Isaac's first line inevitably refer to the money-lending trope. He is suspicious of Ivanhoe's offered aid; he is avaricious and does not wish to part from his money, and falsely lies and pleads that he is an impoverished Jew, with no monies to spare (76). When he offers Ivanhoe a token of his gratitude, he does so twisting in his saddle, "...like a man fit of the colic; but his better feelings predominated over those which were most familiar to him" (83). The Jewish persona, through Isaac, is portrayed once again as a greedy, money-loving character, one that is loathe to part with a bit of his money even in payment for a great favor done. When he is among the merry men in the woods, and is attempting to negotiate with the Christian Prior for a letter of safe passage, which will enable him to attempt to rescue his kidnapped daughter, he is berated for trying to negotiate the price of the favor

Indeed, preceding this episode is another quotation from *The Merchant of Venice*, "O my daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!" (II.iii.17-20). Shylock's apparent indecision to which was the greater loss, his daughter or his coins, is reflected in Isaac's bargaining for his daughter's life. In reply to this, the leader of the merry men band exclaims "Good Jew- good beast- good earthworm...an dost go on to put thy filthy lucrein in the balance with thy daughter's life and honour, by Heaven, I will strip thee of every maravedi thou hast in the world before three days are out!" (338). In another instance, after the tourney among knights is over, Isaac is lamenting to his daughter Rebecca how Prince John unfairly took his money, and is wondering how his gift of armor and horse to Ivanhoe have faired. In anger because of his financial losses Isaac bemoans "O daughter, disinherited and wandering as we are, the worst evil which befalls our race is, that when we are wronged and plundered all the world laughs around, and we are compelled to suppress our sense of injury, and to smile tamely when we would revenge bravely" (120-1). These lines are

highly reminiscent of Shylock's complaints that he is wronged for being a Jew and of his desires of vengeance, denoting the stereotyped Jewish traits in full force: the hatred of Jews towards Christians and their never-ending desire for revenge and harm against the same. Shylock's inhumanity, when accused by the fool in the play of having the soul of a wolf, is also mirrored in *Ivanhoe* when Gurth, the swineherd simpleton, says to Isaac "What, Isaac! Thou must bear a conscience, though it be a Jewish one!" (123). A Christian's soul is again regarded as of a higher value than that of a Jewish one. This ideological superiority is repeated and redundantly reinforced throughout the novel. The trope of usury is also used within the novel by Christian characters in order to justify their ill-treatment of Isaac. Gurth observes that "To suffer a Jew to pay himself...would be unchristian, since it would be plundering a believer to enrich an infidel"(119). This can be seen as another valid argument in favor of the superiority of the Christian truth, since it justifies taking advantage of a Jew (Livak 41).

Later on the narrative, the vilification of Jews repeats the same motifs, imagery and symbols which have been extensively repeated in Shakespeare's play. While Isaac is a prisoner of the bloody baron Fronte-de-Boeuf, he is offended by the same with phrases such as "Most accursed dog of an accursed race" (216), "unbelieving carcass" (216), and "more shame to their folly those who have suffered thee to grow grey in usury and knavery. Feeble thou mayst be, for when had a Jew either heart or hand. But rich is well known thou art" (216). These accusation summarize not only the traditional hatred of usury and Jewish greed, but objectify Isaac by stating his inability to act and his lack of heart. The reference to the heart recalls the wasp's nest in "The Prioress's Tale" and the Jewish evil wolf-heart in *The Merchant of Venice*. When Isaac asks the baron about his daughter, Front-de-Boeuf shows surprise about Isaac's concerning, replying that he had always thought that Isaac's "race loved nothing more save their money-bags" (220).

The next chapter that brings Isaac forth is when he rescued from Front-de-Boeuf's ruined castle

by Friar Tuck. Here the idea of the proselyte Jew, the forced conversion, is central to Isaac's fate. Friar Tuck drags Isaac into the merry men's camp by leading him by a halter fastened to his neck. The halter symbolizes the enslavement and debasement of the Jews, overpowered and conquered by the superior Christians. The words used by the holy man, Friar Tuck, are filled with the enslavement motif; he claims Isaac is his prisoner and his captive. He also uses the expression "dog of a Jew," alluding not only to the previously discussed meanings but, in this case, to the humiliating leading of Isaac around by a leash-like halter, like the master leading his cur. Isaac's supposed forced conversion is a farcical episode, in which the drunk Friar Tuck drags him around, while Isaac helplessly denies the friar's words. Isaac's figure, prostrate and defenseless on the ground, paints the picture of Christian superiority, visually dichotomizes the inferior position of the Jews. Adding one more typification of the Jew, the friar bellows that he has saved Isaac from Sathanas, and dare Isaac go back on his word he will roast him like a suckling pig (325). Michael Ragussis, in his article "Writing Nationalist History: England, the Conversion of the Jews, and Ivanhoe" (1993), comments on the forced conversion episode, by stating that "Friar Tuck's inauthentic conversion of Isaac can be read as a mixture of medieval history and the politics of contemporary religious controversy" (184). Further on, when Isaac is debating with the imprisoned Prior Aymer, the latter berates him as cursed and inferior in this passage,

And what else should be the lot of thy accursed race...for what saith the Holy Writ, *verbum Domini projecerunt, et sapientia est nulla in eis*- they have cast forth from the Word of the Lord, and there is no wisdom in them- *propterea dabo mulieres eorum exteris*- I will give their women to strangers, that is to the Templar, as in the present matter- *et thesauros eorum hereditibus alienis*- and in their treasures to others, as in the present case to these honest gentlemen (336).

This condemning sentences spoken by the Prior are steeped in the theological discourse of the

militant church against the Jews in the middle ages. In fact, the prior's lines echo all precepts drawn out in the Fourth Lateran Council; that the Jews had been forsaken by God and were infidels; that they were inferior and therefore not allowed to establish bonds with Christians, (hence the Templar's abduction of Rebecca to make her into his illicit paramour), and finally that usury was an evil sin that only proved the extent of the Jew's vileness and corruption, therefore warranting their necessary destruction. The references of the Jews as Devil are also present in narrative. When Ivanhoe decides to show compassion in his first meeting with Isaac by helping him escape, their interaction ends with Isaac wishing to bestow gratitude upon his Saviour. He inquires of Ivanhoe, who will not take money as a token of gratitude, if he would be satisfied with an armor and horse. Ivanhoe promptly retorts "What fiend prompted that guess?" (82), indicating that Ivanhoe was stunned by Isaac's unnatural guessing powers. Isaac makes haste to reply that he deduced that information from listening to the conversation Ivanhoe had the night before, hurriedly quelling any association with possible demonic powers.

Isaac's last appearance in the novel occurs after Rebecca's deliverance by Ivanhoe. After embracing his daughter and suggesting they express their gratitude to Ivanhoe, he agrees to their immediate departure upon Rebecca's request. His last lines concern the usury trope; he does not wish to interact with King Richard the Lion Heart, fearing that he has returned impoverished from Palestine and will, like his brother Prince John, unfairly demand money of Isaac (457). His character is only alluded to later by Rebecca, who informs Rowena that she and her father are departing for Spain. The disappearance of Isaac and his uncertain future depicts the motif of the wandering Jew. Limor's views on the trope of the wandering Jew, the Jew who disappears and leaves no trace, who neither converts to Christianity nor is he punished, is, according to Limor, the "most dangerous" (66), of all "Jewish" solutions suggested in her text. The conversion and punishment that were discussed in this the chapter on "The Prioress's Tale" and the character of Shylock do not apply to Isaac, since he epitomizes the unconverted and unpunished wandering Jew.

Limor connects the idea of this trope to another Jew-related Marian miracle demonstrated in her text, the myth of the portrait of Mary. This myth was supposedly related by Arculf, a bishop of Gaul, who returned from his travels East around the year 670. It narrates how an unbelieving Jew took a painting of the Holy Mother and in hate cast it down a public cesspool, then defecating on it and leaving the place to an unknown fate. A Christian finds the portrait, cleans it, and hangs it in his house, where it begins to emit anointing oil (Limor 64). This narrative attests to the antagonist parallel between Jews and Christians and again associates the Jewish body with filth and impurity, in contrast to the wholesomeness and holiness of the Virgin Mary. The uncertain conclusion to the offending Jew stereotypes, in Limor's arguments, is the dangerous wandering Jew, whom she claims was likely to reappear at any moment in order to profane Christian rituals, dogmas, and beliefs. Limor argues that,

This was the Jew who reappeared all through the Middle Ages, portrayed time and again as the Jewish arch-criminal and sinner, present nowhere and everywhere, constantly plotting to sacraments and to Christians themselves: he would despoil icons and crosses, desecrate the Host and kill Christian children, all in the name of a world conspiracy to destroy Christianity (66).

The Marian tale Limor uses to exemplify the wandering Jew has direct association to the motifs of uncleanness, impurity, Christian hatred, and supposedly inherent Jewish evilness. The miracle also directly links with "The Prioress's Tale" by juxtaposing the Christian Virgin Mary with Jewish feces and filthiness. The "escape" of the Jewish offender in the narrative is highly significant of Christian fears of Jews. Without the solutions of destruction or assimilation, Jews, such as those present in the tale of Mary's Icon and Isaac of York are latent dangers that can attack Christianity at any given time. In fact, historical measures of forced conversion, which were largely ineffective, led to the attempted isolation and and conclusive expulsion of Jews from most countries in Europe

(Delumeau, 442-450), starting with England in 1290. Therefore, Isaac's and his daughter's retirement from England symbolically foreshadows the incident, since *Ivanhoe* is set a century before. But their departure also symbolizes that the countries to which English Jews fled to, in Isaac's and Rebecca's case, Spain, were scenarios of a higher, if not more aggressive and violent, stage for anti-Semitism. Even though the Jewish characters in *Ivanhoe* leave England, assuming the role of wandering Jews, they will still suffer Christian hatred, antagonism and persecution. Ragussis emphasizes the departure of the Jews as not only an anticipation of the forced expulsion of Jews from England in 1290, but "...as a direct consequence of the new nationalism in late medieval England, and the failure of English policy to convert the Jews" (203). The image of the dangerous wandering Jew can then be associated with the vengeance motif, in which the eternally obstinate alien who will never convert will always be skulking in shadows, ready to strike at the heart of Christianity. Dislocated and unassimilated, the unconverted Jew will, with his waspish, wolfish, Satanic heart, also be a poisonous thorn on the Christian's side. Ready to defile Christian symbols and sacraments, murder Christian children, and steal Christian money through usury, the wandering Jew justifies the ideology of Jewish destruction. Christians must strike before these dangerous Jews acts, wiped away like a dirty smudge on humanity. Above all accusations, the shadow of deicide is always upon Jewish heads, and that, if nothing else, warrants their extinction. Unassimilated Jews are ideologically anti-Christian and consequently Satanic.

The Minority Within the Minority

i. Introduction

In the beginning of the Middle Ages, especially in Western Europe, the dramatic intensification of anti-Semitism coincided with the beginning of the Christian witch hunts. Similarly to the Jews, women were considered as agents of Satan (Delumeau, 462). I argue that the characters of Jewish women, representative of both minorities, were therefore doubly stigmatized due to their minority conditions. Already viewed as foreign and incomprehensible to their religion, Jewish women suffered not only the demonization associated to their Jewishness but also were allegorized through all the tropes connecting with the demonization of women in general. Traditionally linked to deicide through their religion, Jewish women were also historically blamed for with the fall of man and original sin. With Judas and Eve as prominent figures to condemn Jewish women, as well as all women, their demonization was guaranteed through a variety of different tropes and motifs. Both Jews and women were accused by church authorities of using magic, spells, and witchcraft (Delumeau, 449, 524-76). The holy Jewish Sabbath was demonized to signify the antithesis of Christian rituals—the member of the Sabbath supposedly weaved spells by engaging in interaction with animals, (like kissing a frog's or a black cat's arse), worshiped Satan, practised nefarious sexual acts, and on the day they received the Eucharist spat Christ's body in the filth (Delumeau 524). On the Sabbath, which was the unholy inversion of the mass, black rituals were carried out, the clergy and the nobles were mocked, Jesus was denied, an altar was erected in Satan's honor and the devil's bride danced around it to glorify him. (Delumeau 549).

There was, however, an alternative to be cleansed of both the taint of Jewishness and witchcraft: conversion. Specifically in relation to Jewish women, the act of conversion deemed as a positive redemption through association with the Virgin Mary, an association which, when

connected to Jewish men, was usually replete with themes of violence, punishment and aggression. The connection of Jewish women to Mary is a proselyte, Christian positive way in discussed in both Limor's and Despre's articles.

In Limor's views, "Mary's worst enemy is the male Jew who profanes her innocence by word and touch. Jewish women are seen as possible allies, "Like Mary they are sometimes virgins...sometimes mothers"(66). This is exemplified through the myth of the the Jewish woman who converts to Christianity with her son who escapes death at the furnace through Mary's divine intervention. Limor cites another narrative (66), which was described in more details in Despres's "Immaculate Flesh and the Social Body: Mary and the Jews" (58). This Marian myth narrates how a Jewish woman, suffering the pangs of labor, calls upon Mary's aid and bears her son without any pain. Despres comments that,

Like Mary, the Jewish woman thus converts at the moment of childbirth, her own spiritual rebirth signaled by the remission of Eve's curse in a stunning act of Marian imitation. The most famous Marian miracle to make their way into Middle English manuscripts, *The Chorister* (an analogue to 'The Prioress's Tale') and the Jew of Bourges, also feature maternal anxiety over the loss of a child, sacrificially murdered by the Jews. Mary responds immediately to such a grief and either saves the child, restoring him to his mother, or heals his body and releases his spirit (as is the case in 'The Prioress's Tale) (58).

Both authors conclude their articles with relevant observations about the figure of Jewish women. Limor states that theological discourse is a male one, and that the Marian tales that contain Jewish women reflect the anxieties of both Christian and Jewish men towards both the figure of Mary and Jewish women (68). Despres holds that the "ever-present," "ever-absent" figure of the

Jew, when associated to Jewish women, “constitutes one category of otherness apart from Christian” (63).

I argue that, in accordance with this view of otherness associated with the figure of Jewish women, construed upon a Jewish-Christian male point of view, the trope of conversion can be applied as a double-edged blade. The first conclusion is the successful conversion of the Jewess character and her full assimilation into the Christian community and all its positive and negative consequences. The converted Jewess's identity is thus subjected to stand at an eternal shifting middle ground between Jewishness and Christianity. The second outcome is the intensified demonization and exclusion within Christian community of the Jewess character if she refuses conversion. In spite of her rejection, the Jewess who rejects conversion is able to maintain her original identity. These claims will be used to discuss a case of successful conversion; the character Jessica, from the *Merchant of Venice*, and the failed conversion of the character Rebecca from *Ivanhoe*.

i. Jessica

Jessica's conversion implicates her in a series of consequences which duly represent, as Michael Ragussis suggests, in his essay “The Birth of a Nation in Victorian Culture: The Spanish Inquisition, the Converted Daughter, and the Secret 'Race'” (1994), the literary trope of the converted daughter (478). The conversion trope is apparent from the first scene with Jessica, for she is distinguished in opposition to her father, Shylock. Mary Janell Metzger, in her article “‘Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew’: Jessica, The Merchant of Venice, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity” (1998), discusses the dichotomy of Jewish father and daughter. The duality presented in contrasting the father and daughter serves two purposes; to show that Jessica was, in spite of her Jewishness, from the beginning of the play, a Christian at heart. Jessica is as a

dubious and “multiplicitous (Metzger, 53)” character, and that Jessica is simultaneously a “latent Christian” and a “racialized and thus unintegrable Jew” (Metzger, 52). Moreover, Metzger claims that “discourses of gender, class and religion in Shakespeare's representation of Jessica” (53) are central to the discussion of conversion in *The Merchant of Venice*. This touches upon a central feature in Metzger's article concerning the interpretation of the conversion trope in the play, the “concepts of the English subject and of its requisite other, the alien” (55).

Drawing instigating comparisons of the Jewish minority with the black minority, in which through association the Jews carry the same stigma given to the blacks, Metzger shows that “blackness [was associated] with sin and evil...[and] was adopted by the Christians and overlaid with a narrative of salvation and damnation: white became the color of the saved, black of the damned” (55). Applying this supposition to Jessica, Metzger demonstrates how she immediately establishes her “latent” Christianity as she describes her father “...as a countryman '[t]o Tubal and to Chus (III.ii.285)', for the first is a Jew and the second the mythical originary black African” (55). Shylock's blackened skin is supposedly akin to his blackened heart, and thus Metzger claims that Jessica must establish her differences in order to validate her inherently Christian heart (56). The motif then is clear; the black Jewishness must be countered by the white, or, in Jessica's case, fair, Christianity. When Lorenzo receives Jessica's letter setting the date and time for their elopement, he says, “I know the hand; in faith, 'tis a fair hand, And whiter than the paper it writ on Is the fair hand that writ” (II.iv.12-40).

Fair, which was used simultaneously to represent both aspects of color and beauty, asserts Jessica's worth and the justification for Lorenzo to steal her away and “honor” her by marrying her and making her a “good” Christian (Metzger, 57). Marriage of a Jewish woman to a white Christian would effectively convert Jessica. To Lancelot's taunting remark, “the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children” (III.v.1-2), Jessica replies “I shall be saved by my husband. He hath made

me a Christian” (III.v.19-20), implying that she is worthy enough, or, in Metzger's view, white enough to become a Christian in spite of her Jewish ancestry (57). Metzger argues that both her whiteness and femaleness allow her “reproduction as a Christian” (57), and that “Jessica's marriage reconstitutes her body, for according to Christian ecclesiastical and legal authorities, a woman was incorporated into the body of her husband in marriage, becoming one with and subject to him” (57). Lorenzo extends his Christian blessing and protection to Jessica, allowing her Christian heart to blossom in opposition to the depiction of Shylock's wolfish heart. Jessica is not only seen as “visually white (Metzger, 57),” but is also seen as anti-Jewish for being a “good, white” Christian who is a direct antithesis to Shylock's Jewishness. Metzger claims that Jessica's conversion from dark infidel to fair Christian is required by the play's ideology of order through marriage. As Jessica argues early in the play, becoming one with the body of Christ requires not only her marriage to a Christian but also the conversion of her body in distinctly racial and gendered terms” (57). This notion is corroborated by two views. The first is the perception of Jewish women as inherently Christian and possible allies of Christianity. The second point is the ritual of purification needed by Christianity, in which an active pollutant is present and it needs to be purged and cleansed to uphold Christianity. Hence, when Shylock exhorts “I say my daughter is my flesh and blood” (III.i.37), and the Christian Solanio returns “There is more difference between thy flesh and hers that between jet and ivory, more between your bloods that there is between red wine and Rhenish” (III.i.39-42), the effective binary dichotomy is traced distinguishing father and daughter (Metzger 58).

In the article “Her Father's Blood: Race, Conversion and Nation in *The Merchant of Venice* (2003),” by Janet Adelman, the opposition of the pair gains further insight when the daughter viciously reports her father to a Christian audience,

When I was with him I have heard him swear,
To Tubal and to Cush, his countrymen,

That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
 Than twenty times the value of the sum (III.ii.283-6).

Adelman claims that Jessica is not only trying to cause a rupture between her father and his countryman (which also implies a denial of her father's blackness), but also of his religion (7). Jessica clearly sees herself as apart from her cultural and religious heritage, and tries to act accordingly. In accordance with the Jewish woman with a Christian heart theory, Jessica is described at the beginning of the play “gentle,” as Gratiano comments, a “gentle /a gentile and no Jew” (Adelman 7-8, Metzger 52). This causes an aporia in Jessica's Jewishness, since gentiles is a term defined traditionally as “a marker of those races and nations that are not Jewish” (Adelman 8). Adelman argues that, although Jessica wishes for the transformation from Jew to Christian, Gratiano's lines distort her view by implying that, in order to shed her Jewishness, she would have to become a gentile; therefore racializing the idea of conversion— for Jessica *is* of Jewish origin and not even her conversion will transform her into a gentile (Adelman, 8). Lorenzo's own view on the subject of Jessica's “gentleness/gentileness” (Adelman 8), is that of racializing her by referring to her inescapable Jewish heritage. In the lines,

If e'er the Jew her father come to Heaven
 It will be for his gentle daughter's sake:
 And never dare misfortune cross her foot
 Unless she do it under this excuse:
 That she is issue to a faithless Jew. (II.iv.33-7).

Hence, Lorenzo concludes that, after all, whether converted to Christianity or not, Jessica is her father's issue and she is inseparable from him. Fair looks and of skin, gentle of heart, the gentile Jew is nevertheless a Jew, and conversion to Christianity will not fully redeem her by Venetian and

Christian standards. The racialization of her Jewishness is admitted by Jessica in the lines,

Alas, what heinous sin is in me
 To be ashamed to be my father's child!
 But though I am daughter to his blood... (II.iii.16-20).

The darkness motif associated with Shylock's skin, character and Jewishness do not leave Jessica unscathed. In the scene in which she cross-dresses and aids Lorenzo in stealing her father's riches for their escape, the dubiousness of light and dark symbols overshadow Jessica's character. After Lorenzo receives her letter he comments that she shall be his torchbearer. Jessica replies that

What, must I hold a candle to my shames?
 They in themselves, good-sooth, are too light.
 And I should be obscured. (II.vi.41-2).

Jessica's protest of holding the light to herself can be interpreted as more a bashfulness of her beau seeing her in a page's clothes. Her shame can be read as also not only a betrayal of Shylock but of her own identity; by taking away what Shylock's values most, both his daughter and his ducats, she is annihilating her own Jewishness by giving up her identity and past. Her desires to be in the dark might reflect the own darkness within her own heart; the denial of her father and herself metaphorized by her obscurity. Hence, she will not subject her Jewish "darkness" to Lorenzo's Christian "light," in terms of equality; she is allowed, for her gentle heart, to be a mere torchbearer--an inferior being who will bask in the light of her husband, the true Christian. She is suited to be the "bearer," the "boy," the white Jew married to a Christian. Furthermore, after they steal Shylock's riches, Jessica insists they go on their way in the lines "What, are thou come? On gentlemen; away! Our masking mates by this time for us stay!" (II.vi.58-9). Thus the allusion to masks is another

reference to Jessica's inferiority; she leaves her father's manor with masked friends. Her dual nature can be symbolized by the mask; in order to hide her Jewishness, Jessica must hide herself and mask her true identity.

In Act III, the clown Lancelot Gobbo's dialogue with Jessica is enlightening of the eternal prejudice against her Jewishness, by quoting the Scriptural passage where the child inherits the sins of the father (Exodus 20.5). When she reports the exchange to Lorenzo, he replies that Lancelot has impregnated a Moor, and therefore he suggests the idea that Jessica is more worthy than the Moor. Once again the juxtaposition of blackness and whiteness is made— but Lorenzo's comparison of Jessica and the Moor only serves to point out that she is just white enough to be cast above a black woman—never once is she compared as being superior to any other white, Christian woman. In fact, even after she elopes with Lorenzo, rejecting her Jewish father, she is identified as a non-Christian, demonstrated by Gratiano's comment “who comes here? Lorenzo and his infidel!” (III.ii.317), (Adelman 6). Therefore, Jessica's “conversion from dark infidel to fair Christian... [is essential to]...the conversion of her body in distinctly racial and gendered terms” (Metzger 57). Unlike Lancelot and his Moor, Jessica and Lorenzo “will not differ bodily from the normative white Christian subject” (Metzger 57). But the problem of Jessica's Jewish heart still persists, as shown in Act five. Metzger claims that,

the Jessica of Act 5 *may* be read not as an alternative and fully integrated Jew but as a homeless figure that suggests the dangers of consummating a relationship across such differences. In this reading she becomes an emblem of postcoital regret, ruining not her patriarchal authority but the terms of her new commitment to it and the meager possibilities for unalienated pleasures they provide (59).

Boehrer adds to this view by stating that Jessica's marriage defined her identity through the

surrender of her patrimony and that her new role is actually a “...step down in the world for her, a fact we may read as emblematic of her new relationship to Lorenzo” (160). Moreover, Boehrer claims that, although Jessica is superficially enfranchised by her matrimony, her future happiness has been “resolutely” and “rightly” suspected by critics (169). Jessica's conversion is not played out on stage, and this is highly significant to the persistent view of her as a Jew (Adelman, 7). In fact, in her last lines, she says “I am never merry when I hear sweet music” (V.i.68). The word merry recalls of Shylock's “merry bond,” the bond of flesh, effectively linking Jessica with her father's bloodlust and evilness. The contrast of sadness to sweet music is also conjoined with Shylock's image, for an allusion is made to when she was in his “hellish house” where she was not allowed to “make merry” with music or festivities. Her lines demonstrate not only the sadness of remembrance but her guilt in leaving her father. As “hellish” and “unmerry” as Shylock's house was, there one didn't need to wear any masks— she could show her true identity and her Jewishness while she had been under her father's protection.

Finally, the episode in which Jessica trades her mother's ring for a monkey is also highly significant of not only her rupture with Shylock and her Jewishness but also of her attack on Shylock's symbol of humanity-- on the only goodness alluded to in his blackened Jewish heart. The article “In Defense of Jessica: The Runaway Daughter In *The Merchant of Venice*” (1980), by Camille Slights, compares Jessica's use of the heirloom to “a self-awarded dowry, a ring whose loss renders Shylock most humanly vulnerable” (360). Boehrer views the exchange of the ring for a pet monkey as a repudiation to “a particular symbolic investment that Shylock holds dear, for it transforms the Jew's turquoise ring, the enduring emblem of his dead wife's love, into a purely economic commodity, significant only with respect to its exchange value” (158). The exchange of ring for a monkey can be viewed as a symbolic disintegration of the Jewish family, to further denote the superiority of Christian community above all else. Boehrer claims that exchange of the ring for the monkey “serves as a parodic diminution of the family connections that Jessica has abandoned in

eloping with Lorenzo” (158). Additionally, the rejection of her bond with her dead mother allows Jessica to be further stigmatized as a Christian at heart, in accordance with Limor's view of Jewish women inherently linked to the Virgin Mary. By exchanging the symbol that stood for her mother for an insignificant pet, Jessica is symbolizing her aporia with her father's value of thrift and profit, shedding her Jewishness in the act. The inconsequential spending of her father's ducats and stones also symbolizes her transition to Christianity, for she is opposed to Shylock as generous and therefore pro-Christian (Smith, 197). Even the negative theft of Shylock and her betrayal of him is viewed by some critics as a necessary shift from her Jewishness to Christianity. Slights argues that “When Jessica robs Shylock, she parallels the daughter of the Israelites and neatly fits a thematic pattern by liberating Shylock's ill-gotten wealth for human use in love and marriage” (Slights, 360). Jessica's thievery of her father's wealth is alluded to as a Christian blessing, in which she once more proves her gentile, Christian nature. Jessica does indeed live up to Limor's Jewess with a inherent Christian heart, and by denying all of her Jewishness and embracing Christianity, with all the benefits and disadvantages she is subjected to, successfully erases her racial identity. Her alabaster skin and her femaleness guarantee her partial endowment within Christian society. The other part of that society, which will forever see her as an infidel, is sure to make Jessica eternally aware that she is not a full Christian; that her identity is not fully integrated into theirs, but because of her humiliation and subjection to her “good” Christian husband, who was pious enough to honor her by marriage, she is allowed to sit in Christendom's shadows and play the part of the converted daughter.

iii. Rebecca

Rebecca's first appearance in *Ivanhoe* is highly symbolic and meaningful in both details and imagery, and merits, like her father Isaac, full quotation:

The figure of Rebecca might indeed have compared with the proudest beauties of England...Her form was exquisitely symmetrical, and was shown to advantage by a sort of Eastern dress, which she wore according to the fashion of the females of her nation. Her turban of yellow silk suited well with the darkness of her complexion. The brilliancy of her eyes, the superb arch of her eyebrows, her well-formed aquiline nose, her teeth as white as pearl, and the profusion of her sable tresses, which, each arranged in its own little spire of twisted curls, fell down upon as much of a lovely neck and bosom as a simarre of the richest Persian silk, exhibiting flowers in their natural colors embossed upon a purple ground- permitted to be visible- all these constituted a combination of loveliness which yielded not to the most beautiful maidens who surrounded her. It is true, of the golden and pearl-studded clasp which closed her vest from the throat to the waist, the three uppermost were left unfastened on account of the heat, which something enlarged the prospect to which we allude. A diamond necklace, with pendants of inestimable value. Were by this also made more conspicuous. The feather of an ostrich. Fastened in her turban by an agaffe set with brilliants, was another distinction of the beautiful Jewess, scoffed and sneered at by the proud dames who sat above her, but secretly envied by those who affected to deride them (91).

Rebecca is here allegorized in various different ways. She is the very image of the beautiful Eastern seductress. Decadent in Persian silk, lavish jewelry and exotic feathers, her three uppermost

clasps were left opened to expose her bosom— highly inappropriate for any woman in a medieval context. Aside from that, Rebecca is contrasted with the Christian “maidens”— this is significant due to the fact that the word “maiden” is traditionally associated with “virgin,” therefore showing Rebecca as a sexualized woman. Prince John's appraisal of Rebecca is implied to be in a lewd manner, for the prince was a “shrewd connoisseur” (91) of such matters. The prince refers to Rebecca as the “Bride of Canticles,” (92) and the Prior replies that she is the “Rose of Sharon” (92) and the “Lily of the Valley”(92) but she is still a Jewess (92). The references to Jewish terms and the posterior observation of her Jewishness serve to cast Rebecca apart from the Christians. In the same way that she is sneered at by the Christian maidens, her dark Jewish beauty is also viewed with both desire and contempt by Christian men. Prince John's remarks continue to objectify Rebecca when he queries Isaac about his relationship with the beautiful Jewess; he wonders if she is wife or daughter, and compares her to a treasure casket (92). He then continues in his derogatory discourse by stating “Saxon or Jew, dog or hog. What matters it! I say, name Rebecca” (96) while implying that Rebecca should be the honored “Queen of Beauty and Love,” which represented an honorific given to a maiden by a knight at tournaments. By comparing Rebecca to a dog, he is effectively bestializing and denigrating Rebecca much as Shylock and Isaac previously were. When he compares her to a hog, he is again reminiscing on the motif of uncleanness and impurity historically associated with Jews. Rebecca is, in her introduction in the narrative, already stigmatized with various negative tropes and essentialisms and is further stereotyped as the tempting seductress. Furthermore, her description alludes to her darkness, which is another negative trait associated with Jews. Unlike fair Jessica, whose heart was Christian, Rebecca is inwardly and outwardly a Jew.

Rebecca's association from Jewish seductress to witchcraft is done in a swift and predictable continuum. When she and her traveling companions are captured by the cruel Norman baron Front-de-Boeuf and the ruthless templar Bois-Guilbert, Rebecca is thrown into a turret within Front-de-

Boeuf's castle. There she meets Urfried, a Saxon hag-like character, who swears by demon's names and is called old house-fiend by the pages (229). Her speech is filled with devilish themes, such as when first speaking to Rebecca, "What devil's deed have they done now" (229). She demands to know if Rebecca is a Saracen or Egyptian (230), thus again stereotyped Rebecca's identity. Avoiding Rebecca's questions, she leaves with the warning that, be Rebecca a "Jew or Gentile" (230), her fate will be the same. Urfried states this after telling her own story-- she was a Saxon noble heiress whose family was slaughtered by Normans and she was taken and abused by Front-de-Boeuf's father. After Rebecca abases herself by begging Urfried to stay, "stay, though it be to curse and to revile me; thy presence is yet some protection" (231). Rebecca's plea clearly demonstrates the discourse of Jewish inferiority, for in her concession in being offended and reviled in order to gain some measure of protection from a Christian, a woman that received the same treatment that awaits her, she reveals weakness and fear. In response to Rebecca's appeals to Heaven, Urfried states "The presence of the mother of God were no protection...There she stands...see if she can avert the fate that awaits thee" (231). Urfried is referring to a "rude" image of the Virgin Mary within the room. Urfried's crude comments are a foreshadowing of Rebecca's denied conversion— symbolically, since Rebecca is not going to become a Christian, the Holy Mother could offer her no help since she refuses the truth of Christianity. Going against Limor's proposal of the Jewess with a Christian heart, Rebecca endangers her position as an unassimilated character and therefore causes an aporia in the narrative by breaking with the traditional outcome.

Ragussis view Urfried's story as the "most potent and most condensed narrative illustration...of conversion and genocide" (193). It is pertinent to point out that Urfried's real Saxon name was Ulrica— she adopts Urfried after her family's murder. Urfried means "slave," symbolically representing Ulrica's status after her loss of identity caused by her "conversion" from Saxon to Norman subject. Ragussis parallels the stories of Ulrica, Rebecca and the Saxon noble Rowena, in which he compares the idea of conversion to rape; conversion is as once both a "sexual

transgression” and “social erasure” (193). This is significant for the narrative in the next passage, in which Bois-Guilbert seeks Rebecca with clear sexual intent upon his mind.

After Urfried/Ulrica leaves, Bois-Guilbert enters the tower room. His persuasive arguments are filled with the Christian superiority and Jewish inferiority theology, and he claims that although he would never stoop as low as marrying a Jewess, it would be in Rebecca's best interest to become his lover (233-39). Ragussis views the atheistic Templar's attempt to seduce Rebecca as an alternative to the “Jewish question,” and whether “atheistical France” would be the nation to restore Jews to their homeland (201). Rebecca's response to the Templar's advances are the threat of suicide-- she opens the latticed window and leans her body out, telling Bois-Guilbert,

Remain where thou art, proud Templar, or at thy choice advance!-one foot nearer, and I plunge myself from the precipice; my body shall be crushed out of the very form of humanity upon the stones of the courtyard ere it become the victim of thy brutality! (235-6).

Ragussis also points out that Rebecca's stance was “a choice many medieval Jews made, an alternative to forced conversion” (201). One of Ragussis' footnotes describes this phenomena of failed conversions whose consequences led to Jewish suicides by detailing a shocking and dark episode of the Middle Ages:

It is perhaps no accident that the most famous example of Jewish mass suicide in English history occurred soon after the coronation of Richard I in 1189- that is, during the period Scott describes in *Ivanhoe*. It is a scene that is described time and again by English writers...the famous scene at York, when “baptism or death was the only alternative”: [Jewish] men took a sharp knife, and first cutting the throats of

their wives and children, they then cut their own...[the writer] Thomas Witherby marks the scene at York as “the first remarkable persecution of the Jews I am aware of in this land” (214).

Rebecca's and Bois-Guilbert's exchange is filled with innuendo about dominance, which characterizes the binaries Jewish/ Christian and female /male. Rebecca offers the templar her jewelry in an attempt to free herself and her father, and Bois-Guilbert answers by typifying Rebecca as “Rose of Sharon” (233), “Fair flower of Palestine” (233), and stating that he prefers “..beauty to wealth” (233). He also refers to Rebecca as “Ecclesiastica” (234), metaphorically linking her to the *Book of Wisdom* from the Apocrypha which discusses at length female virtue and moral conduct. He also names her “Queen of Sheba” (234), referring to the biblical passage in which the queen offers precious gifts to King Solomon (Kings: 10. 1-13). Allegorizing Rebecca through Jewish female stereotypes, Bois-Guilbert is openly stating his superiority as Christian and man and justifying his need of dominance over her. He subsequently alludes to himself using various imagery connective to phallic, empowered male symbols; he is “...best lance of the Templars” (235), he is the “conqueror” (235) and Rebecca is the “captive” of his “...bow and spear; subject to [his] will by the laws of all nations...” (235). When Rebecca understands that all her rationalization and pleading will be to no avail in impeding her imminent assault, she then claims that she will “proclaim” his “villainy” throughout Europe. Interestingly, she claims that, although she is aware that sins against a Jewish woman may be discarded as worthless, the fact that the Templar would have sexual connections with a Jewess would be what ultimately would ruin his reputation for having willingly associated with a heathen (235).

Facing the choice of losing Rebecca to suicide, Bois-Guilbert momentarily relents but does not end his pursuit in dominating her. He states “Rebecca! She ho could prefer death to dishonor must have a proud and powerful soul. Mine thou must be!” (238). He then proceed in trying to

seduce Rebecca with claims of military power and sovereignty above kings, above even the “reign of your vainly-expected Messiah” (238). He tempts “her with a vision of her queenly return to Palestine” (Ragussis 201), demanding not only her conversion to Christianity but associating the act of conversion to rape (Ragussis 200-1).

Rebecca's denial of both conversion and rape are then carefully linked with her skills in healing— transforming her medical arts into a dark, strange and feared magic. In the passage in which she takes the wounded Ivanhoe from the joust tourney and treats him, the narrative speculates about the Jews' historical ability in the medical sciences. Views such as,

general belief prevailed among Christians the Jewish rabbis were deeply acquainted with the occult sciences, and particularly with the cabalistic art, which had its name and origin in the studies of Israel...A Jewish magician might be subject of equal abhorrence with a Jewish usurer, but he could not be equally despised (273).

This association of Jewish healing power with the occult and the demonic has a notorious historical outcome in Elizabethan times. Roderigo Lopez, a converted Portuguese Jew, Queen Elizabeth's chief physician, was executed after having been accused of trying to poison the Queen through occult and cabbalistic practices (Ragussis, 194). Though the Queen delayed his execution for some weeks, raising suspicions about her real attitude towards Jews, she eventually began to employ the term “Jew” as a negative stereotype and allowed Lopez's execution. Paradoxically, she showed her favor of Lopez by granting land to “his survivors” on at least two occasions (Smith 194).

Rebecca as healer is then seen as part benefactress and part witch. When she rescues a wounded Ivanhoe, after his tryst at the jousting tourney, her healing skills are explained. She had

acquired a mastery “beyond her years, her sex and even the age in which she lived” (274). This line denotes the strangeness of Rebecca's skill, casting them in the light of suspicion. Her teacher was an “aged Jewess...[who] communicated to her [Rebecca] secrets” (274), effectively denoting the secrecy and strangeness of such practices. Most importantly, Rebecca's teacher Miriam was executed under the accusation of witchcraft, foreshadowing the trials of her pupil.

Hence, as Rebecca “thus endowed with knowledge as with beauty, was universally revered and admired by her own tribe, who almost regarded her as one of those gifted women mentioned in sacred history” (274). It is relevant to point out that, while Rebecca was considered blessed by the Jewish people, *her* people, the Christians viewed her as a demonic seductress and carrier of strange and unnatural powers. Even Ivanhoe, who is cured by Rebecca's skills and her secret “healing balsam” taught to her by Miriam, views Rebecca as a foreign and alien entity. When he regains conscience, after Rebecca's ministrations, he gazes upon Rebecca's strange turbaned and caftaned figure and begins to speak Arabic, assuming she is of Eastern origin. Rebecca laughs and informs Ivanhoe and answers “I am of England, Sir Knight, and speak the English tongue, although my dress and lineage belong to another climate” (277). Although Ivanhoe regards Rebecca's beauty, who is compared to “an evening star darting through a bower of jessamine” (277), with obvious desire, the narrative immediately subdues such tendencies by stating that “Ivanhoe was too good a Catholic to retain the same class of feelings towards a Jewess” (277). Furthermore, Rebecca notices when Ivanhoe's open glance of admiration is exchanged by a cold gratefulness “from one of an inferior race” (277). When Ivanhoe disdainfully inquires how long his convalescence will take, and Rebecca answers that no Christian healer would be able to cure him as fast as she would in the span of eight days, Ivanhoe replies with an invocation of “Our Blessed Lady,” as if to ward himself not only from Rebecca's strange medical prowess but from the seduction of her beauty as well. When he finally acquiesces to Rebecca's healing, he disdainfully refers to her as his “kind leech” (279), alluding to the long stated prejudice of Jewish desire for Christian blood and inverting Rebecca's

healing blessings into an act of violence and desecration. He then inverts his own apparent desire for Rebecca into an attempted seduction of her, by asking about the Saxon Rowena, who he is hesitant to name in front of the Jewess as if her mere presence might taint Rowena. Ivanhoe's clashing feelings are further exposed when, after some days of receiving Rebecca's healing treatments, he refers to her as “gentle maiden” and thanks her by calling her “dear Rebecca” (284). When they are both in captivity in Front-de-Boeuf's castle, when Rebecca offers to stand at the lattice and describe the on-going siege to Ivanhoe, he exclaims that she is not to expose herself to arrows and warns her to stay away from the apertures—revealing, again, contrasting feelings to his initial despise. When, later, the castle burns, Ivanhoe exhorts Rebecca to save herself and, when she is seized by Bois-Guilbert and taken away, Ivanhoe in fury shouts and defies the Templar, “Hound of the Temple— stain to thine order— set free the damsel! Traitor of Bois-Guilbert, it is Ivanhoe that commands thee! Villain, I will have thy heart's blood!” (310).

Ivanhoe's shift in discourse towards Rebecca is significant in the portrayal of Christianity's own repressed emotion and desires towards Jewish women— while initially despised and ostracized as devils and inferiors, Jewish women are nonetheless an object of extreme desire and suffering for Christian men. While Bois-Guilbert represents the corrupted Christian, Ivanhoe is the opposed “good” Christian. But for all of Ivanhoe's latent desire and craving for the Jewess Rebecca, he in the end chooses the Saxon Rowena. A “good” Christian could never truly associate with a Jew, woman or not.

The second attempt to convert Rebecca is seen by Ragussis as a “critique of Catholic treatment of the Jews” (201). Rebecca undergoes a trial for witchcraft, and Ragussis argues that “the fanaticism of priestcraft is put on trial...on the superstition and xenophobia that guide the investigation of the Jew” (201). Rebecca refuses, and, like the “Saxon witch Ulrica” (201), who through herself in the fires of Front-de-Bouef's burning castle, proves that she “will die to preserve

her racial identity” (201).

During the trial Rebecca is referred by the Templars as “Jewish sorceress” (364), and through the lines of the Grand Master, “this Rebecca, the daughter of the wretched usurer Isaac of York, and the pupil of the foul witch Miriam” (364), is defined by important negative tropes associated to both her religion and sex: usury and witchcraft. When the Grand Master is informed that Rebecca is within the precept, he claims “St. Magdalene and ten thousand virgins forbid!” (365), effectively stereotyping Rebecca as a seductress and deviantly sexual in opposition to his not one, but ten thousand virgins. He then proceeds to offend her racially by stating that,

The blood of these accursed dogs...shall be a sweet and acceptable offering to the saints and angles whom they despise and blaspheme; and with their aid will we counteract the spells and charms with which our brother is entwined as in a net. He shall burst the bands of this Delilah as Sampson burst the two new cords with which the Philistines had bound him, and shall slaughter the infidels, even heaps upon heaps. But concerning this foul witch, who hath flung her enchantments over a brother of the holy Temple, assuredly she shall die the death (365).

The reference to Delilah is clearly connected to the evil disempowerment of men by women's dangerous and diabolical charms, and the Grand Master, like the holy man in “The Prioress's Tale,” claims execution as a solution to the “Jewish problem” through execution. Rebecca is continuously demonized by the Templars, being called “enchantress” (368), of a race “possessed” by the devil (366) and “daughter of an accursed race” (370).

Space in Rebecca's trial is also symbolic of Christian male superiority in contrast to her Jewish femaleness. Her Templar judges are all seated on an elevated dais, while she stands alone in

the center of the hall, object to everyone's scrutiny and disdain (372). Reminiscent of a sermon exempla, the Grand Master uses Latin to vituperate and justify Rebecca's supposed villainy;

*Quod nullus juxta propriam voluntatem incedat...*He hath held communication with an excommunicated person...*Ut fratres non participant cum excommunicatis*, and therefore has a portion in *Anathema Miranda*...He hath conversed with strange women, contrary to the capital...*Ut fratres non conversentur cum extraneis mulieribus*...He hath not avoided, nay, he hath, it is to be feared, solicited, the kiss of a woman, by which, saith the last rule of our renowned order, *Ut fugiantur ocula*, the soldiers of the Cross are brought into a snare (374).

Bois-Guilbert, although initially considered guilty of his interaction with Rebecca, is relieved of any guilt due to Rebecca's supposed sorcery. Witnesses are brought forth to relay how Bois-Guilbert carelessly risked his life while protecting Rebecca in their flight through battle (375-7). Another supposed spell was enacted, affirming to have cured an invalid peasant with a mysterious unguent and then later presented him with a box inscribed with Hebrew letters stating "The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath conquered" (378). The Grand Master describes the inscription as "Strange powers of Sathanas...which can convert Scripture into blasphemy..." (378), reminiscent of Antonio's accusation against Shylock's diabolical quotation of the Bible. Other Templars accuse Rebecca of saving a soldier from imminent death by murmuring strange words and of having taken the shape of a white swan and flown around Front-de-Boeuf's castle three times before again reassuming the form of a woman (380-1). Jessica counteracts with the lines,

To invoke your pity...would, I am aware, be as useless as I should hold it mean. To state, that to relieve the sick and wounded of another religion cannot be displeasing to the acknowledged Father of both our faiths, were also unavailing; to plead, that

which many things which these men— whom may Heaven pardon!— have spoken against me are impossible, would avail me but little, since you believe in their possibility; and still less would it advantage me to explain that the peculiarities of my dress, language, and manners are those of my people— I had wellnigh said of my country, but alas! We have no country. Nor will I vindicate myself at the expense of my oppressor, [Bois-Guilbert] who stands there listening to these fictions and surmises which seem to convert the tyrant into victim (381-2).

Rebecca then commands Bois-Guilbert to speak and deny her accusations, who cannot publicly contest the accusations made against her. He does, however, tell her to read the scroll he handed her before the beginning of the trial, which presents Rebecca with a solution; to claim for the privilege of trial by combat. This is when the Grand Master exhorts Rebecca to repent and convert, and is met with her firm denial. Her champion is, of course, Ivanhoe, who comes to Rebecca's rescue and righteously fulfills his role of the great Christian hero. Having dealt with Bois-Guilbert's previous offer of intentionally losing the trial in exchange for their elopement, Rebecca risks her life and is awarded with the protection of Ivanhoe. As a Jew and a woman, Rebecca needs to resort not to the protection of her father or her people, but has only the possibility to claim the protection of two Christian men; the apostate Templar who will act on his desires and the “good” Christian Ivanhoe who will not. Thus, Rebecca's boon is to place her safety in the hands of the stronger, superior men.

The third and final attempt to convert Rebecca comes through different means than the previous ones, but is no less manipulative and calculating. This episode is narrated in the last chapter of the novel, in which Rebecca visits Rowena after her marriage to Ivanhoe. Rowena appeals to Rebecca's common sense, and suggests that Rebecca could convert and be integrated into the Christian community. Ragussis views this episode as an anti-climax to the novel, in which

Ivanhoe's and Rebecca's union, supposedly the highlight of a traditional novel, is subverted by the last scene carried out with only Rebecca and Rowena. Ragussis reads Rebecca's arrival at Rowena's room as an "intrusion," for she asks all attendants to leave the room and insists that Rowena removes her veil, leaving Rowena "...in some sense defenseless" (202). Furthermore, this physical intrusion is seen by Ragussis as a "psychic intrusion," in which Rebecca not only invades the "consciousness of her romantic rival...but more importantly, ...the consciousness of England" (202). More than being "the erotic power that neither Rowena nor Ivanhoe can exorcise" (202), Rebecca represents "the religious and racial question that England cannot solve" (202). Rebecca is the power of

irrepressible guilt, come to expose two myths that surfaced during the two earlier attempts to convert her-- the myth of Christianity, which she exploded during her ironic questioning of Bois-Guilbert's Christian principles, and the myth of England, which she satirized in the masked irony of her invocation of "merry England, the hospitable, the generous the free"...during her trial for witchcraft (Ragussis, 202).

Rebecca further exposes Christian prejudices by making a gift of the diamond earrings and necklaces, stored within a silver casket. Inverting the traditionally distorted views of Jewish culture, by which the Jewish father values his daughter as much as his ducats and this same daughter steals from her father, Ragussis claims that the gift of the casket "represents the Jew, [and] not the Christian, as the teacher of value" (203-4). Rebecca admonishes Rowena's initial refusal of the diamonds by deconstructing the Shylockian stereotype in these lines,

Think ye that I prize these sparkling fragments of stone above my liberty? Or that my father values them in comparison to the honor of his only child? Accept them, lady-- to me they are valueless. I will never wear jewels anymore (463).

In response to this, Rowena patronizingly claims that Rebecca is unhappy, and offers her sisterhood in return for Rebecca's conversion (463). Rebecca's denial makes it "clear that Judaism is worth more than the silver casket" (Ragussis, 204) and transfers the "sign of material value which stereotypically marked her as a Jew" (Ragussis, 204) to Christianity by her gift to Rowena. The inversion of the "traditional literary topos of the converted Jewish woman, exemplified in Shakespeare's Jessica" (Ragussis, 205) is carried out through Rebecca's faithfulness to her Jewishness. But, according to this view, Rebecca is also seducing Rowena in a bargain in which she transfers the demonic association of material values, connected to money-lending, to Rowena. When Rebecca detects, as Ragussis point out, "a tinge of the world's pride or vanities" (463), as she metaphorically unveils herself, Rebecca sees a chance of using that to her advantage. She "seduces" Rowena by offering her precious jewels, and her adamant accusation of Christendom's faults can be seen as connected to the vengeful spirit attributed to Jews. Furthermore, her symbolic transfer of the "stain" of material goods to Rowena can be seen as an allusion to a Satanic seduction and pact, in which the diabolical Jewess "taints" a "good" Christian soul. Rebecca is not only contaminating Rowena— she is also responsible for including Ivanhoe in her taint— for through marriage Rowena is a part of Ivanhoe. Therefore, Rebecca subverts the ideal of protection through Christian marriage by showing that through this view, where the Christian woman is effectively a part of her husband, one of the holiest Christian sacraments can also be profaned by a Jew. As a being of vengeance, the Jewish character, instead of showing her connection to Christendom by the supposed similarity to Holy Mary, is using the weak link in her female Christian counterpart— Rowena, to strike at Christendom's heart.

Her disenfranchisement within Christian society through her denial of conversion establishes Rebecca in the same role of her father; the unconverted and unpunished wandering Jew. Rebecca's flight of England, rather than seen under the light of her "kindness" and "piousness" (traditional characteristics associated with converted and nearly converted Jewish women), can be seen as both

an act of defiance and malevolence, in which Rebecca shall fulfill the stereotype of the dangerous, unexpected, and deceitful wandering Jew, who lurks in the shadows awaiting his/her turn to attack Christendom. Her ultimate revenge is carried out by her everlasting presence within the Christian couple's minds, for in the last paragraphs of *Ivanhoe*, it is stated that, although Wilfred of Ivanhoe lived "long and happily with Rowena...[it] would be inquiring too curiously to ask whether the recollection of Rebecca's beauty and magnanimity did not recur to his mind much more frequently than the fair descendant of Alfred [Rowena] might altogether have approved" (464). Rebecca, having avenged herself of her cruel treatment in the novel, because, like Shylock, she is a Jew, has fulfilled more tenaciously than any of the other characters her role of dangerous Jew; she is not only a wandering Jew, but a beautiful, female and bewitching wandering Jew.

CONCLUSION

In the Middle Ages, the belief that diabolical action would raise an army of evil angels, who would obey their master Satan, (just as the army of holy angels obeyed the Christian God), permeated all levels of European Christian society and left its populace in fear and awe of demonic powers. The numbers of these agents of Satan were so great that they threatened to overcome Christians in a wave of corruption and evilness. *Da Praestigiis Daemonum* (1564), by Jean Wier, calculated that there were precisely seven billion, four hundred and nine million, one hundred and twenty-seven demons who served seventy nine infernal princes. The anonymous work *Le Cabinet Du Roy de France* (1581), argued that the demons added up to about four million less than the previous number, and that they were bonded to seventy-two demon princes. Calvin believed that for each born man, there would be a reciprocal demon who would tempt him throughout all his life. All of these evil agents obviously served Satan (Delumeau 381-3).

The Book of Egidius (1553), an exorcism manual written by an unnamed dean of Tournai, warns its users of the high risk and danger of interrogating Satan. Armed with direct and extremely naive queries, the exorcist, with the holy support of the Catholic Church, seeks to understand the ghostly mysteries of the alien spiritual world, particularly of Hell and its denizen's powers. The exorcist must be extremely careful in this process, preparing himself methodically and with great care; after all, he will not only be awaiting answers but will also ask for counsel and try to be tutored by Satan. After he asks for permission to conduct the exorcism from his superiors, he must pray devoutly, purify his heart, and arm himself with the cross. Then, he shall proceed to the questioning (Delumeau 383).

The first question is “What's your name?” (Delumeau 383) This answer could be given as: “Shylock, Isaac, Jessica and Rebecca. In “The Prioress's Tale” we may be called legion.” The

second question consists of “What is thy wish and why do you harass this place more than others?” (Delumeau 383). To this query, the reply would be that the above cited characters are from their respective cities. Although they have probably lived there for generations, they are still viewed as alien and foreign, like Ivanhoe's assumption of Jessica's non-Englishness. The third question is “Why do you assume different forms?” (Delumeau 383). Well, in this case, the correct answer would be that Jews may repugnantly be dark, like Shylock, beautifully dark, like Rebecca, Christianity white, like Jessica, or that they may be diabolically faceless like the Jewish collectivity in “The Prioress's Tale.” Proceeding to the next question, “Why do you prefer some forms over others?” (Delumeau 383). Shylock could argue that he sometimes is seen as a dog, which may or may not bear fangs. In Jessica's case, she could reply that in a witch trial she was accused of assuming the form of a white swan. Following with the next two queries, “Do you act to terrorize the local population and members of this town? Do you act viewing their destruction? Or is it for their instruction?” and “Do you bear more hostility to the people from this town in relation to others, or is it less or about the same amount?” (Delumeau 383). The Jewish community in “The Prioress's Tale” would answer that they bore a particular grudge to their English town for having annoying Christian singing boys, but they would gladly extend their practise of blood libel all throughout “merry” Christian England. Shylock could answer that his usury needed to be applied to Christians, and therefore, since he hated the Christian Antonio in particular his discontent could be extended to all of Christian Venice. Jessica could answer that all she wanted was to marry a Christian man, being tired of getting questioned like a devil. Isaac would timidly state that he agrees with Shylock's views, but that he would prefer a good leg of mutton over Christian flesh. Finally, Rebecca would reply that she wanted to marry a Christian in particular, but since he chose the Saxon maiden, she would content herself with contaminating their marriage with her eternal remembrance and in the meantime would practise her healing arts on all willing subjects, even those Christians who could later accuse her of witchcraft.

Let us proceed to the the last of the four questions, for the intermittent ones are highly repetitive of the ones stated above. Question fifteen poses queries about “...women considered fatal,” ergo witches; “...are they diabolical” (Delumeau, 384)? Jessica would immediately answer that she is converted and was always a Christian at heart. Rebecca would sigh and reply that she is only trying to heal people and that she doesn't hold any biases against religious differences. Lastly, questions sixteen to eighteen ask if the Lord Jesus may expel these demons so that they will not harm human beings, if they may be expelled to a place where there are no human beings, what they should do to make it so and how they would know that the demons were no longer tormenting their localities (Delumeau, 384). The appropriate answer would be simple: conversion.

Conversion is an essential trope applied to the “Jewish problem.” Conversion viewed as rape (Ragussis) is crucially significant to Jewish characters within the analyzed corpus. Rebecca's character suffers not only attempted rape by an apostate Templar, but her identity is continuously threatened with rape through forced conversion. Shylock is effectively raped by his conversion, to which he has no resources to forfeit his imposed condition. Jessica is a willing subject to forced conversion. Even Isaac, in his comic episode with Friar Tuck, is forced to contemplate conversion while he is humiliated and dragged with a halter like an animal.

When Lancelot and Jessica are debating her salvation through conversion, the “merry devil” Lancelot affirms “Marry, you may partly hope that your father got you not, that you are not the Jew's daughter” (V.iii.10-12). Jessica's reply is “That were a bastard hope indeed: so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me” (V.iii.13-14). A false hope is what is in store in exchange for a bastard conversion. Concerning the passage cited above, Adelman states that “Though we might expect her to convert in order to marry, the rhetorical weight of this speech moves in the opposite direction, suggesting that she would marry in order to convert” (5). Ignored by Bassanio and Portia in Act Five (Adelman 6), her presence is only recognized by the fool Gratiano, who exclaims “cheer yon stranger. Bid her welcome” (III.ii.236). Adelman observes that Gratiano was the character who

had previously called Jessica an infidel, and that his lines cited above are significant of Jessica's status not only of a stranger in the sense of "alien," but that "yon" is a term that "...only makes sense if she is standing at some distance from the others who are welcomed into Belmont, and that 'cheer' suggests that she is the need of cheering" (Adelman 6-7). Moreover, Gratiano was already acquainted with Jessica before Act Five, so that his form of address is even more indicative of her "foreignness by blood or nation rather than simply through lack recognition" (Adelman 7). These terms of reference effectively link Jessica to her father, such as in the passage where Antonio calls him a "stranger cur" (I.iii.114) to denote his estrangement from the local Christian community (Adelman 7).

Thus, Shylock's imposed conversion, if viewed through the trope of conversion as rape, duly "uncircumscises him." Circumcision, being a masculine physical trait, could be directly connected to the stereotyped view of Jews throughout the Middle Ages. Adelman states the previously mentioned ideas which were associated to Jews, "red or black curly hair, large noses, dark skin, and the infamous *faetor judaicus*..." (10). Regarding the feature of circumcision as a negative Jewish characteristic, Adelman mentions a notorious episode in medieval England; "a deacon married a Jew, was circumcised, and was burned for his apostasy" (11). This condemnation was carried out by the English bishop Stephen Langton, whose council in Oxford in 1222 endeavored to carry out the premises established by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Aside from the execution of the apostate deacon, one of Langton's main measures was to force Jews to wear the yellow circle badge, apparently drawn from a conclusion that although Jews carried all of the physical traits described above, they were not yet different enough (Adelman 10-11).

Although some of the physical signs of a Jew might disappear-- for example, the *faetor judaicus* was allegedly exorcized through baptism-- Adelman affirms that "not every Christian would greet this news with joy; despite the promises of a universalizing Christianity, the difference

between Christian and Jew was too important...to be given up lightly” (11). Additionally, Adelman point out that Jews, “...already too different a too much the same, Jews were a contradiction that conversion-- particularly State-enforced conversion-- turned into a crisis” (11).

This conversion crisis, the need to assimilate the Jew into Christianity but nonetheless paradoxically set them apart, may be considered within conversion as a rape trope. In Shylock's case, although he is converted and denied his Jewishness, he is still contrasted to Jessica as much more of a Jew than his daughter. This is done through his obstinacy throughout all the play to be as “Jewish” as he can in his greed, vengefulness and evilness. He is also, as a descendant of Chus and relative of Tubal, dark-skinned, in opposition to Jessica's fairness.

The dark motif associated with Jewishness is also present in the description of Ivanhoe's Jews. As mentioned before, Rebecca is clearly painted as having Oriental looks, which imply dark skin, and so is her father Isaac is also described as having a dark complexion. Interestingly enough, the word “fair” as beautiful is used throughout the novel to describe Rebecca much the same as it is used to describe Jessica. Fair as an adjective for Rebecca is always implied as excluding of the meaning of “white” with only one exception. In the episode in which Rebecca interacts with Urfried/Ulrica, the Saxon hag refers to Rebecca as an “Egyptian” or a “Saracen” (230). Antagonistically, Urfried also describes Rebecca as having “Bright eyes, black locks and a skin like paper” (230). Hence a doubt arises-- is Jessica really physically dark, as implied that Shylock is, or is she more similar in looks to Jessica, who has “fair” skin? Rebecca's antagonistic features might be representative of the conversion crisis, illustrating in a Jewish character the paradox of assimilation and rejection desired by Christendom. Refusing conversion as rape, Rebecca, assuming the role of the wandering Jew, embodies the Christian paradox-- they failed to convert her and thus have spurned her, but she will always be present in Christendom's collective imagination as she is always present in Ivanhoe's and Rowena's imagination.

In another significant antagonism, Rebecca is simultaneously connected and opposed to the figure of the Virgin Mary. Being a Jewess, she would fit within Limor's interpretation of Jewish women's intimate association with the Holy Mother. In "Immaculate Flesh and the Social Body: Mary and the Jews," Despres shows that Mary was as a "redemptrix" and holy "mediatrix" "...contrasts ritual Crucifixion and Host desecration with...sacramental feeling [and elided] Biblical with Medieval (contemporary) times" (55). Mary heals sick monks, and Despres views as one of her most important holy functions to "heal and guard the flesh" (55). Rebecca's healing arts can therefore be added as another possible facet that associates her with the Virgin. Mary's powers of restoring bodies or rescuing spirits of Christians bear a parallel with Rebecca's uncanny healing prowess and her "magical" herb salve. Mary's connection with "...bodily illness, mutilation and fragmentation places her decidedly in the realm of female experience as mother and healer, her thaumaturgic power applied to heal the bodies of the most undeserving sinners as well as physically and mentally hampered" (Despres 58). This is highly reminiscent of Rebecca's disregard for the religion of her patients, whether Christian or Jew, she endeavors to heal whomever is in need.

Mary's purported blessings did not, however, conclude with the healing of unbelievers As noted by Despres, Apocalyptic Mariology often linked Marian miracles to the destruction of Christendom's enemies (57-60). A relevant example is that of the night of the Saint Bartholomew's massacre (1572), where Protestant cadavers were desecrated by stripping, pelting with dung, beheading, castration, and burning. The next day and a half a withered tree "burst into flowers" as a result of Mary's image placed in front of it (Despres 59). I would claim that this association of the Marian motif to destruction is the one that is portrayed in Rebecca's character. Although she presents traits that are analogous to the figure of the Virgin Mary, she denies conversion and therefore her healing skills are demonized— inverting the trope of Mary's thaumaturgic powers. What could have been a holy Marian and Christian gift is turned Satanic through her denial of

conversion. The consideration the Jewish community had of Rebecca's near holiness is subverted into a demonic trait— Rebecca's cured patients are tainted with the Devil's touch. Therefore, Ivanhoe, the “good” Christian hero, by accepting Rebecca's satanic healing, is corrupted by the Jewess's touch. Instead of receiving the Christian blessing and having her identity raped and erased, Rebecca is vilified through her Jewishness and “stiff-necked” obstinacy to remain in an unaccepted and excluded minority. Refusing to bow to the Christian truth, Rebecca and Isaac are cast out of England, answering the exorcist's last queries about demonic presence and powers. Isaac's and Rebecca's dialogue on the negative consequences that meeting with Ricard the Lion-Heart might entail for them allude to the pogrom which happened on the day of his coronation.

The denial of insertion into Christian community, even a partial one like Jessica's, literally means obliteration. Although Rebecca and Isaac, the wandering Jews, flee unconverted to Spain, their escape is symbolic of only temporary protection— for in the near future Spain's wave of anti-Semitism will be one of the most xenophobic and violent acts in recorded history— a fact that holds no surprise since it was at this historical moment that the Inquisition rises up as Christendom's vengeful arm. The idea that ultimately Jews merit annihilation is recurrent throughout history— although occurring in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Iberian Peninsula, which had its counterpart in thirteenth-century England, as shown in “The Prioress's Tale.” The demonization and collective massacre of Jewish communities is the main story not only for literary narratives but for historical ones as well.

The expulsion of Jews from England clearly did not interfere with the anti-Semitic views within English literature. As shown in this study, centuries had already gone by, but the demonic Jew was still very much present in English narratives. As Despres states,

Cultic or ritual anti-Judaism could survive the absence of the Jews, but to give

meaning to the ritual of purification, definition or exclusion that underpinned the Fourth Lateran's teaching program and thus helped to shape the Christian community, the historical and symbolic presence of the Jews (like that of the heretics) had to be continuously reinvoked (Cultic Anti-Judaism 414).

Christianity was always willing to condemn Jews and rejoiced in their punishment. Whether a collective judgment with no trial, as in "The Prioress's Tale," or a detailed, tortuous and public trial like Shylock's in *The Merchant of Venice*, Christian precepts are always shown as superior to Jewishness and all its negative tropes. In the article "Biblical Allusion and Allegory in *The Merchant of Venice*" (1962), by Barbara K. Lewalski, Shylock's trial is analyzed as the triumph of Christianity over Judaism. Lewalski notes that there are "...several references during the trial to Shylock as the Devil (Iv.i.213, 283)" (339), and that the trial is similar in theme to the *Processus Belial*, "in which the Devil claims by justice the souls of mankind due him under the law, and the Virgin Mary intercedes for man by appealing to the Mercy of God" (339).

While Rebecca's witch trial is unsuccessful in relation to her conversion, it is also highly significant that she was only able to be saved by a Christian. Although she retains her Jewish identity at the end of the tale, being championed by Ivanhoe symbolizes her fragility not only as a woman but as a Jew. Even if she does not embrace Christianity, she is metaphorically Christianized by Ivanhoe's intervention, conceding to the superior Christian who symbolically "saves" her from the torture and death to which her Jewishness had "condemned" her to.

All of the Jewish characters are in one or another way constantly tested and deemed inferior according to Christian precepts. Rebecca undergoes attempted rape, kidnapping, a witch trial and in the end has to flee her homeland. Isaac leaves England with Rebecca, and is constantly harassed, offended and humiliated throughout *Ivanhoe*. Shylock suffers from the same epithets used to

denigrate Isaac and is punished, ironically for his own well-being, with conversion. Jessica willingly converts but is still considered Jew and is berated for her blood heritage. All the members of the Jewish community in “The Prioress's Tale” are dismembered and hanged. Torture and conversion go hand in hand when applied to Jewish characters, where they exist symbiotically; the refusal of the first conclusion invariably leads to the second.

If all of a culture can be seen as a text, then, in a wider ideological view, all texts are cultural representations (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 26). Within this concept, Delumeau's statement about the demonization of the Jews is crucial for understanding the cultural representations of the selected corpus-- he stands by the affirmation that, before the fourteenth century, anti-Judaism had occurred locally, diversely, and spontaneously. In the following centuries, the previous characteristics were replaced by a unified, theoreticized, and generalized anti-Semitism, spearheaded by the Catholic Church. “The Prioress's Tale” was written in the last decade of the fourteenth century, and *The Merchant of Venice* in the last decade of the sixteenth century. The cultural representations of anti-Semitism present in these texts were reflective of the tandem historical occurrences of these times; the expulsion of the Jew, beginning in England and spreading like a fire throughout Europe; the forced conversions that originated during the First Crusade and reached their climax with the Inquisition in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; the consequent problems of the New Christians who were problematically dealt with in all the Middle Ages. *Ivanhoe* mirrors the anti-Semitic motifs present in Chaucer's and Shakespeare's texts. Written in 1819, during a time where the “Jewish problem” was being discussed at large, the forced conversion, bewitching Jewess, and greedy Shylockian father figure preeminently in the narrative. The exterminated Jew became either the raped and converted Jew, the Christian-at-heart Jewess, or the rejected wandering Jew. These viable options for the “Jewish problem” were again replaced, both in history and literature, by the exterminated Jew. The inquisitorial “convert or perish” theme has been adopted and readopted, where a never ending cycle of prejudices, bigotries, and hatreds are reproduced within the social

context of historical and contemporary times. Readers of cultural texts, whenever given the opportunity to read an impressive example, must feel simultaneously expelled out of their own time and culture and returned to it with redoubled impact. It would be too condescending to assume that readers and authors of the past did not undergo similar experiences (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 28).

Like the intertextuality of Ucello's predella and Gent's panel, Chaucer's anecdote, Shakespeare's play and Scott's novel are interchangeable in their symbols and representations. This exchange is done through the exclusions and allusions that each work contains (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 109). In Ucello's predella, like in "The Prioress's Tale," Jewishness is inseparable from Jewish bodies-- therefore they must all be destroyed (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 109). In Gent's panel, as in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Ivanhoe*, Jewishness may or may not be discarded as a random "accident," and the Jew's soul may be redeemed (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 109). The exchange amongst the works is carried out not only in formal, theoretical terms, but also within social levels, which may lead to coercion and violence (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 109-10). In both paintings, as in all three texts, the narrative is cognizant of rupture and aporia, which increases the dynamic metahistory, intertextuality and cooperation (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 110). The conspiratorial Jewish menace to Christendom in Ucello's work is narrated again in the textual corpus, especially in the blood-libel and Child-as-bleeding-Host motif in "The Prioress's Tale." The possibility of conversion and salvation in Gent's panel mirrors Shylock, Rebecca and *Ivanhoe* as Judas (the unconverted, evil, stiff-necked Jew) and Jessica (the enlightened New Christian). The doctrinal ideologies of Eucharism, Nativity and the Real Presence contrasted to evil Jewishness links all works in the interchangeable flux. The aporia in Ucello's *Corpus Domini*, is the image of the bleeding Host, inciting the viewers to suspend reality and believe in something that they would probably never witness themselves-- leading to innumerable doubts about whether or not the visual representation resulted in a real or imagined interpretation (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 127). The counter-historical aporias in the analyzed corpus are the tropes and stereotification of the Jews-- they incite not only

the possibility of belief in the alleged evilness of these characters but also a questioning of why the Jew were demonized, to what institutions and individuals were these ideals convenient to propagate and reproduce? The study of the Jewish demonization issues in the “The Prioress's Tale,” *The Merchant of Venice* and *Ivanhoe* is an aporia which allows for a rupture—rupture which allows for energies, desires and repressions to flow into the world (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 127); the world of historical and literary past, present and future.

Works Cited

- Adelman, Janet. "Her Father's Blood: Race, Conversion and Nation in *The Merchant of Venice*." *Representations* 81.1 (2003): 4-30. Web. Jan 2011.
- Amossy, Ruth, and Therese Heidingsfeld. "Stereotypes and Representation in Fiction." *Poetics Today* 5.4 (1984): 689-700. Web. 24 Nov 2009.
- Archer, John. "The Structure of Anti-Semitism in 'The Prioress's Tale.'" *The Chaucer Review* 19.1 (1984): 46-54. Web. 01 Dec 2009.
- Biberman, Matthew. "His stones, his daughter, and his ducats: the Jew-Devil, the Jew-Sissy and the Theo-Sexual Matrix." *Masculinity, Anti-Semitism and Early English Literature* 7-48. Web. 18 May 2009.
- Boehrer, Bruce. "Shylock and the Rise of the Household Pet." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50.2 (1999): 152-70. Web. 22 Nov 2009.
- Bronstein, Herbert. "Shakespeare, the Jews, and *The Merchant of Venice*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 20:1 (1969): 3-10. Web. 20 March 2009.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Penguin Classics, 2005. Print.
- Chaucer Meta Page*. Ed. Joseph Wittig. 2008. Web. 6 April, 2009

- Critchley, Simon; McCarthy, Tom. "Universal Shylockery: Money and Morality in *The Merchant of Venice*." *Diacritics* 34.1 (2004): 3-17. Web. 20 March 2009
- Cohen, D.M. "The Jew and Shylock." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 31.1 (1980): 53-63. Web. 23 Nov 2009.
- . *Under the Crescent and the Cross: The Jew in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994.
- Cohen, Walter. "The Merchant of Venice and the Possibilities of Historical Criticism." *ELH* 49.4 (1982): 765-89. Web. Dec 1, 2009.
- Cooper, John R. "Shylock's Humanity." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 21.2 (1970): 117-24. Web. 22 Nov 2009
- Daschlager, E.L. "Teaching Literary Anti-Semitism." *College English* 39.3 (1977): 315-25. Web. 22 Nov 2009.
- Delaney, Sheila ed. *Chaucer and the Jews*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Despres, Denise L. "Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer's Litel Clergeon." *Modern Philology* 91.4 (1994): 413-37. Web. Jan, 2010.
- . "Immaculate Flesh and the Social Body: Mary and the Jews." *Jewish History* 12.1 (1998): 47-69. Web. Jan 2011.

Dundes, Alan. *Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore*. University of Wisconsin, 1991.

Delumeau, Jean. *A História do Medo no Ocidente (1300-1800): Uma Cidade Sitiada*.

Trans. Maria Lúcia Machado. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2009. Print.

Engle, Lars. "Thrift Is Blessing': Exchange and Explanation in *The Merchant of Venice*."

Shakespeare Quarterly 37.1 (1986): 20-37. Web. Jan 2011.

Frasseto, Michael. "Heretics and Jews in the Writings of Ademar of Chabannes and the Origins of

Medieval Anti-Semitism." *Church History* 71.1 (2002): 1-15. Web. 10 May, 2009.

Gallagher, Catherine and Stephen Greenblatt. *Practising New Historicism*. Chicago: U of

Chicago P, 2000. Print.

Garber, Marjorie B. "A Question of Intention." *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. New York:

Pantheon Books, 2008. Print. 124-51.

Greenblatt, Stephen. "Marlowe, Marx, and anti-Semitism." *Critical Inquiry* 5.2 (1978):291-307.

Web. 23 Nov, 2009.

Harris, Jonathan Gil. "Public Enemas: the Disjunctions of the Excremental Jewish

Pharmakon." *Foreign Bodies and Body Politics: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early*

Modern England. Cambridge UP, 2008. Print.

Hyamson, Albert Montefiore. *A History of the Jews in England*. Forgotten Books, 2009.

Print.

Internet Medieval Sourcebook. Ed. Paul Halsall. Web. 6 Apr, 2009

Katz, David S. "Shylock's Gender: Jewish Male Menstruation in Early England."

The Review of English Studies 50.200 (1999): 440-62. Web. 5 May, 2009.

Korhonen, Kuisma Ed. *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the History/Literature*

Debate. New York: Editions Rodopi, 2006. Print.

Limor, Ora. "Mary and the Jews: Story, Controversy and Ceremony." *Historiein* 6 (2006): 55-71.

Web. Jan 2011.

Livak, Leonard. *The Jewish Persona in European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature*.

Stanford: Stanford UP. 2010. Print.

Lukács, Georg. *The Historical Novel*. Boston: U of Nebraska P, 1982. Print.

Mabon, Charles B. "The Jew in English Poetry and Drama." *The Jewish Quarterly*

Review 11.3 (1999): 411-30. Web. 8 Mar 2009.

Marcus, Jacob Ryder. *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook 315- 1791*. Hebrew

Union College P, 2000.

McCulloh, Jonh. "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth and the Early Dissemination of the Myth." *Speculum* 32 (1997): 698-740. Web. May 2010.

Metzger, Mary Janell. "'Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew': Jessica, *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity." *PMLA* 113.1 (1998): 52-63. Web. 21 May 2009.

Modder, Montagu F. *The Jew in the Literature of England*. Varda Books, 2001. Print.

Montrose, Louis. "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. 777-85 Blackwell, 1998. Print.

Price, Merral Llewelyn. "Sadism And Sentimentality: Absorbing Antisemitism in Chaucer's Prioress." *The Chaucer Review* 43.2 (2008): 197-214. Web. 20 Mar, 2009.

Poliakov, Leon. *The History of Anti-Semitism*. Vol. 1. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vanguard, 1965.

Ragussis, Michael. "Writing Nationalist History: England, the Conversion of the Jews, and *Ivanhoe*." *English Literary History* 60 (1993) 181-215. Web. 8 March 2009.

---. "The Birth of a Nation in Victorian Culture: The Spanish Inquisition, the Converted Daughter, and the 'Secret Race.'" *Critical Inquiry* 20.3 (1994): 447-508. Web. 24 Nov, 2009.

Rainbow, Paul Ed. *Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. Print.

Rothblath, Sheldon. "Jewish life in the Eighteenth Century." *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 21.1 (1997): 123-33. Web. 20 March, 2009.

Roth, Cecil. *A History of the Jews in England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964.

Rubin, Miri. *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. Print.

Scott, Sir Walter. *Ivanhoe*. Barnes and Nobles Classics, 2005. Print.

Shapiro, James. *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print.

Smith, Warren D. "Shakesperare's Shylock." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15.3 (1964): 193-9. Web. 22 Nov. 2009.

Smith, David Norman. "The Social Construction of Enemies: Jews and the Representation of Evil." *Sociological Theory* 14.3 (1996): 203-40. Web. 24 Nov 2009.

Slights, Camille. "In Defense of Jessica, the Runaway Daughter." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 31.3 (1980): 357-68. Web. Jan 2009.

The Harvard Chaucer Page. Ed. Kevin Psonac. 2006. Web. 14 April 2009.

Tovey, Barbara. "The Golden Casket: An Interpretation of Merchant of Venice." *Shakespeare as Political Thinker*. Eds. John Alvis and Thomas G. West. 261-87. Intercollegiate Studies

Institute, 200. Print.

Trachtenberg, Joshua. *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism*. Jewish Publications Society, 2002. Print.

Veesser, Harold Ed. *The New Historicism*. Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc, 1989. Print.

Yuval, Israel J. "Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation: From Jewish Martyrdom to Blood Libel Accusations." *Zion* 55.1 (1993): 33-90. Web. Jan 2011.

Wainwright, Benjamin B. "Chaucer's Prioress Again: An Interpretive Note." *Modern Language Notes* 48.1 (1933): 34-7. Web. 8 Mar, 2009.

White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1985. Print.

---. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*.

Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1973. Print.

---. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1990. Print.

---. "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact." *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure and Frames*. Ed. Brian Richardson. 1-23. Ohio UP, 2002. Print.

