

## Picturing Maternal Anxiety in the Miracle of the Jew of Bourges\*

Carlee A. Bradbury

**D**URING THE MIDDLE AGES, one of the most popular and most frequently illustrated Miracles of the Virgin Mary was the Miracle of the Jew of Bourges. According to the text of the miracle, the Virgin saves a young Jewish boy after his father throws him into a fiery oven upon learning he attended a Christian mass. Though representations of this miracle appear in a variety of media, late medieval books of hours and illustrated miracle texts from England hold the most complex examples.

Artists frequently visualized the boy's father, the Jew of Bourges, using the full vocabulary of medieval anti-Semitism. For example, in an image from the Bohun Hours he is hunched over, his face, shown in profile, dominated by a sharply hooked nose (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Using both his appearance and his violence against his son, artists could vilify this father figure through purely visual devices. The Jew of Bourges belongs to a widespread tradition of visualizing medieval Christians' irrational, yet pervasive fears of Jews in terms of a singular or group of male figures, found in a variety of media and in subjects ranging from traditional Passion imagery to unique marginal grotesques.<sup>2</sup> These exaggerated and imaginary figures are visual counterparts to Jeremy Cohen's "hermeneutical Jew," existing in English imaginations long before, and remaining after, the real population of Jews was expelled from the country in 1290.<sup>3</sup>

Artists had many choices to make when illustrating this miracle. For instance, in another image of the miracle, from the Hours of Mary de Bohun, the artist adds an extra scene (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> In the center of the image a crowd of figures acts as a bridge from the instance where the boy takes communion to the moment when the Jew of Bourges puts his son into the oven. A woman stands in the front of the crowd and points anxiously



Figure 1. The Miracle of the Jew of Bourges, *The Bohun Hours*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct.D.4.4, fol. 203v.



Figure 2. The Miracle of the Jew of Bourges, *The Hours of Mary de Bohun*, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 547, fol. 14v.

to both scenes. She is the boy's mother and though she appears briefly in only a few of the miracle texts, her role is pivotal.

A handful of images of this miracle include the boy's mother, and in each, the violence of the tale is interpreted and illustrated through her anxious reaction to it. Investigating the visual power of the boy's mother in late medieval manuscript images provides us an opportunity to question the visualization and uses for the non-biblical Jewish woman in medieval art. Through analysis of key examples from English books of hours and illustrated miracle texts, it will become apparent that both female and male audiences could read the Jewish mother as a new type of anti-Semitic visual device. She is a woman whose role of mother ultimately exceeds and overwhelms her identity as a Jew, her spiritual fluidity furthering the visual alienation of her husband. Artists could engineer and employ this Jewish mother to complicate the existing visual vocabulary of anti-Semitism by creating a complementary character whose visual normalcy and accessibility to Christian audiences further defined the male Jew as an immutable, almost inhuman monster.

The Bohun images provide the opportunity to examine the dramatic impact of the mother as well as the mechanics of key miracle texts, all within the frame of two manuscripts made for the same reader, Mary de Bohun.<sup>5</sup> The Miracle of the Jew of Bourges appears at the opening of the hour of terce in the Bohun Hours, now in Oxford (fig. 1). This image maps out the key plot points: a Jewish boy attends a Christian mass and, singled out by the Virgin with her pointing gesture, he takes communion with a mouth wide open. When his father, peeking into the church, discovers what his son has done, he is enraged and shoves the boy into a burning oven. Luckily, the Virgin immediately appears to save the boy, whom she pulls from the oven with the fabric of her robes no worse for the wear. There is very little visual drama in this image; the artist presents only the essentials: the boy takes the host, the father puts the boy into the oven, and the Virgin saves the boy, end of story.

At the opening of the hour of prime, the same miracle is illustrated in the Hours of Mary de Bohun (fig. 2). Here the artist provides a bit more information to express more subtle details of the miracle narrative. The tale takes place in three scenes instead of two, the additional scene showing the father actually pushing his son into the oven. The basic elements

that begin and end the miracle are the same: the boy takes communion in the church and then he appears happily sitting in the oven in the end. The middle scene adds complexity to the chain of events. Illustrating the father, wearing bright red robes, pushing his son head first into the oven, the artist negates any sense of the boy's terror. The reader cannot see the boy's face. What is apparent in this middle scene is the anxiety conveyed through the crowd of five people surrounding the oven. They cower and frown, clutching their robes; in front is the boy's mother. Pointing anxiously to her husband as well as the final scene, this female figure alerts the viewer of the terror of the scene.

Through nuanced control of space, gesture, and costume, the Bohun artist exploits the instant when the mother cries out and accuses her husband of the terrible act. The heavy twisted folds of her white wimple echo her tightly crossed arms. She points one finger at her husband and with the other, she summons a crowd led by a bearded man who acknowledges the scene with an extended forefinger. She stands between the oven and the crowd, between the space of her home and the public sphere. Her pink dress draws attention to her transitional nature, mirroring the costume of the Virgin and the boys in church as well as the drapery defining the space of the church. Through visual means, the artist associates her with everyone in the visual narrative except her husband.

Considering the folio as a whole, the reader follows the interrelated red-robed figures from the Jew of Bourges in the *bas de page* to Joseph in the initial showing the Nativity to one of the shepherds in the upper marginal image of the Annunciation to the shepherds (fig. 3). Purely visual devices, not the very standard prayer text, link these three figures. Joseph and the Jew of Bourges are visually identified by their bright red clothing, grey wrinkled faces, long beards, and covered heads. Their visual similarity draws attention to their association as inverses of each other, the good father versus the bad father, opposed just as the Virgin and the Jew of Bourges are.

Recognizing and reading the Virgin on this folio, Mary de Bohun must have recalled the images that opened the hour of matins in her book (fig. 4).<sup>6</sup> Opening her little book to pray, she saw an image of herself with her book just outside a larger initial showing the Annunciation.





Figure 3. Prime, The Hours of Mary de Bohun, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 547, fol. 14v.



Figure 4. The Annunciation and Mary de Bohun, The Hours of Mary de Bohun, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 547, fol. 1r.



Turning the pages of her book, Mary could follow the Virgin, conveniently always in a similar costume, from the events of the Infancy and the Passion in the initials that open each hour to the more “real world” scenes of the miracles found along the *bas de page*. Returning to folio 14v, Mary saw the Virgin as the ideal mother in action, not only caring for her son in the Nativity but also saving the Jewish boy in the miracle, enfolding him in her voluminous robes as she pulls him from the oven. Though centrally located in this illustration of the Miracle of the Jew of Bourges, the boy’s mother fits a new role outside of this tight nexus between the Virgin as model and the Jew as anti-model. The Jewish mother is a unique and important figure in terms of both the narrative of the miracle and also the reader’s interpretation of it.

In popular miracle collections that were likely available to readers like Mary de Bohun, such as the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus da Voragine, the mother screams and draws a crowd to witness the miracle itself.<sup>7</sup> In the *Miracles de Nostre Dame* by Gautier de Coinci, after the mother discovers what has happened to her son she cries, tears her hair, and then runs out into the street screaming, “Help! Help! Come soon, she said, this tyrant killed [him my son].”<sup>8</sup> The moment she recognizes that her son is in physical danger at the hands of his father, her husband, the mother cries out for help and separates herself from both his violent actions and her home. After the boy is safely retrieved from the oven and tells of the Virgin who kept him safe, the townspeople put the father into the hot oven while both mother and son receive baptism.

Both Miri Rubin and Denise Despres read the mother in the text of this miracle as a figure of “pathos,” helplessly watching as her son, whom they see as a metaphor for the Eucharistic host, is placed in harm’s way.<sup>9</sup> This reading of the boy as host is sound, yet the role and power of the mother merits further examination. Though she is an emotion-driven character, her placement in this image and other English examples complements her role in the text. She is an important transitional figure, marking the moment when the private Jewish act enters the realm of the Christian public.

She is also an example of a rarity among medieval representations of Jews. This female Jew is an example of an uncommon type, identified by Lisa Lampert as “the post-Crucifixion Jewess.” Unrelated to the

Old Testament matriarchs and the allegorical figure of Synagogue, she scarcely appears in medieval English culture until Shakespeare's character of Jessica, Shylock's daughter, in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-98).<sup>10</sup> In a recent study of the Escorial manuscript of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Sara Lipton also questions the "non-iconography" of the Jewish woman in late medieval art. She argues, "the Jewess's female-ness trumped her Jewishness."<sup>11</sup> This makes sense recalling the Jew of Bourges as visual counterpart to Cohen's "hermeneutical Jew." However, the mother in the Miracle of the Jew of Bourges is of a different visual sphere; as such she was designed to play a new role.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of the English examples I discuss here, her identity as a mother is paramount and the only constant in the nature of her character. The boy's mother in illustrations of this miracle, especially with her rather ordinary visual appearance, was part of a visual system dependent on the Christian reader's ability to identify with this female Jew. Artists insured this visual connection by constructing a conservatively dressed woman, without overt sexualization, who was neither a physical nor a spiritual threat. Creating a bond between Christian reader and Jewish woman as subject, artists exploited both her physical accessibility and her husband's perceived physical and spiritual difference. That artists could manufacture and audiences could identify this mother as a character who moves in and out of her Jewishness as she crosses the boundary from her home to the public street reflects contemporary medieval Christian views about Jewish women. In her study of the host desecration myth, Miri Rubin locates the consistent villain in the tale, and many others, as necessarily the male Jew because medieval Christians believed Jewish women to have a "pliant and impressionable" nature making them ripe candidates for conversion.<sup>13</sup>

In this miracle, both the Virgin and the boy's mother operate as mediatrix figures. Without the Virgin's intercession the boy would be burned in the oven, and without his mother's screams the act would have presumably gone unnoticed in the private sphere of the domestic Jewish space and her husband unpunished. Even though the boy relies on both his mother and the Virgin for his salvation, artists had a choice to make when illustrating this miracle, whether or not to include the mother. Not all manuscript illuminations include visualizations of this



loaded character.<sup>14</sup> In the key images where she is present, such as the Hours of Mary de Bohun and three other examples (from the Vernon Manuscript, the Neville of Hornby Hours, and the Smithfield Decretals), her response to the violent abuse done to her son moves the scene from a pat recounting of a story to a terrifying narrative.

In the Vernon Manuscript, a unique and extensive compilation of religious texts including the Marian Miracles dating to ca. 1390-1400, the mother plays a similar pivotal role to that found in the Hours of Mary de Bohun (fig. 5).<sup>15</sup> Exact patronage for this manuscript is not certain, but/though most scholars agree that it was made for use at a communal religious institution.<sup>16</sup> Here, text and image are directly related; the miniature introduces a long Anglo-Norman account of the miracle.

Visualization of the miracle unfolds in a swirling chain of narrative events beginning with the Jew of Bourges towering over his son outside of a church. Though his face does not appear particularly malicious, a



Figure 5. The Miracle of the Jew of Bourges, The Vernon Manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng.poet.a.1, fol. 125r.

downturned mouth surrounded by a long curly beard, his massive body dominates the image space, his head almost reaching the top of the frame as he raises a grass broom over his son whom he pulls from the church by his hand. A second figuration of the father, literally back to back with the first, marks the second scene when he pushes his son, head first, into the oven. The oven, revealing only the boy's feet, emits bright orange flames that seem almost to lick the Jew's face, perhaps an allusion to his punishment in the text.

The Virgin Mary never physically appears in the image. Here the boy's mother is the intercessor as well as the witness. In the final scene, she sits outside the oven looking at one of the town officials who addresses her with a raised hand. She conveys the incident to him with one hand pointing to her son, who smiles with hands clasped in prayer and surrounded by a mandorla of bright flames, the other gesturing to the action performed by her husband above in the first scene. Here the mother is the rescuer of her son, calling the town officials and kneeling outside the oven as if at prayer herself.

The Jewish mother occupies an interesting position in both the visual and textual narrative of this folio. Space becomes questionable as the action is collapsed. Just looking at the image one wonders, has she actually witnessed the horrific event? According to the text, the mother saw her husband put their son in the oven:

She acted as if frightened into a frenzy  
For woe she went as waxen as wood.  
Ever hollering out, she tore her hair  
In every street of that city  
Now in, now out, so everywhere  
Men wondered on her and had pity.<sup>17</sup>

The description of her emotional state is so dramatic, yet she appears calm and collected in the miniature as she addresses the official to show that her son is all right. Returning to the text, we learn that after causing such a frenzy, the mayor and bailiffs of the city arrested her and when she stopped crying she told them what had happened. This is the moment the artist chose to illustrate. Instead of emotionally screaming

and pulling her hair, we see a mother advocating for her son's well being. Her story is heartfelt but her words seem measured and poised:

Sirs, you have this city to keep,  
As Lord's hand to lead the law.  
Allas, Allas, I am shamed,  
And help of you must be due me.  
I ask you for just judgment:  
My case I shall before you prove.  
My husband has my child burnt,  
I stopped him in a glowing oven.  
Go see, Sirs, go quickly,  
And I shall give you gold to glove.<sup>18</sup>

The artist placed this woman literally at the feet of her husband, yet her placement signifies her spiritual fluidity and potential for conversion. The lines marking the shape of the oven continue, creating a feeling of cause (son in the oven) and effect (son saved). The upper and lower scenes are unified by the family group which is about to splinter. The father does the terrible deed, and the mother is the savior. Only the mayor is completely outside, literally, the frame of the miniature, which here serves as a boundary marking the domestic, private, Jewish space. Looking closely at the boy's mother, one sees her tenuously balanced between the two spheres, connected to every part of the image as well as the space beyond as her knee is actually on the frame itself.<sup>19</sup> Picturing her on the edge of the frame, teetering between Christian and Jewish space, the artist alludes to the outcome of the text; the mother converts to Christianity.

A different artist exploits the same spatial boundary tensions in imagining the Jewish mother in a historiated initial from the Neville of Hornby Hours, made ca. 1340-1350 for Isabel de Byron the wife of Robert I de Neville of Hornby (fig. 6).<sup>20</sup> Here the artist pushes the mother into the curve of the initial *O* beginning a prayer of intercession, *O domina clemetissima virgo maria*. She does not cry or scream; instead she mirrors the Virgin, looking away from her husband and the oven. Instead of calling for help from the city officials or other townsfolk, as we have





Figure 6. The Miracle of the Jew of Bourges, The Neville of Hornby Hours, London, British Library, MS Egerton, 2781, fol. 24r. © British Library Board, [www.imagesonline.bl.uk](http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk).



seen in the images from the Hours of Mary de Bohun and the Vernon Manuscript, here she seems to be calling outside the image for help. Looking to the adjacent prayer text, the mother's hand reaches directly to the word *clemetissima* (mercy) appealing directly to the Virgin for help. The Virgin answers her prayers by preventing the father from putting his son into the hot oven. The father, with his grotesquely caricatured profile, struggles with the boy and thrusts his hand under the boy's tunic. He does not seem to notice that the Virgin's long open sleeve shields the boy from the oven.

Though this book was made for Isabel de Byron rather late in her life, this particular folio bears specific importance to future female readers as young mothers.<sup>21</sup> Below the prayer text begging the Virgin's intercession, and the image begging the same result, there is a short rubric, identified and transcribed by Kathryn A. Smith, advising the reader to say the prayer if "milk leaks from her breasts during pregnancy."<sup>22</sup> In addition to preparing the future reader for pregnancy with rather specific and practical advice, this one folio could also teach women how to be good Christian mothers. The nourishing power of motherhood is further reiterated when one turns the folio to find an image of the Virgin's milk healing a monk in a historiated initial.<sup>23</sup>

In the Smithfield Decretals a series of five images illustrates the miracle in the space of the *bas de page*.<sup>24</sup> This manuscript comprises the Decretals of Pope Gregory IX with a continuous gloss by Bernard of Parma. Though written in Italy for use in Paris, it was illustrated in England around 1340 under the patronage of John Batayle who was a canon at Smithfield Priory, which was to be the home of this massive book by the 1370s.<sup>25</sup> The mother appears in three of the miniatures from the miracle cycle. In her first appearance, she stands expressionless with hands folded and quietly watches her husband lead the boy to the oven (fig. 7). Missing from the image where the boy is put into the oven, she reappears to witness the Virgin block the boy from the flames, protecting him with her long, open sleeve (fig. 8). In the final scene, she acknowledges the retrieval of her son from the oven by a tonsured cleric as she kneels with raised hands (fig. 9).

In the Smithfield images the artist shifts the focus to the Virgin and a new character entirely, the cleric who removes the boy from the oven.



Figure 7. The Miracle of the Jew of Bourges, The Smithfield Decretals, London, British Library, Royal MS 10.E.IV, fol. 211v. © British Library Board, [www.imagesonline.bl.uk](http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk).



Figure 8. The Miracle of the Jew of Bourges, The Smithfield Decretals, London, British Library, Royal MS 10.E.IV, fol. 212v. © British Library Board, [www.imagesonline.bl.uk](http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk).



Figure 9. The Miracle of Jew of Bourges, The Smithfield Decretals, London, British Library, Royal MS 10.E.IV, fol. 213. © British Library Board, [www.imagesonline.bl.uk](http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk).

This shift from Jewish mother to cleric points directly to the importance of patronage and audience in the mechanics of the image. Despite this inclusion of the new character of the cleric rescuer, the Jewish mother's role remains an important aspect of the visual narrative.

Through the three images in the Smithfield Decretals, the mother serves as a foil to her husband, becoming more separate from his actions and religion as the images progress. In the first scene, she stands squarely between two trees and a bell tower, alluding to the Church where the boy took communion; while the father pulls the boy's arm leading him to the oven. The boy, though mirroring his father's gait, is framed against the base of the bell tower, the visual connection furthered by his blue tunic echoing the blue bell. The mother wrings her folded hands in isolation. When she reappears, she is a witness to the Virgin saving her son, here her tensely wrung hands replaced with hands folded in prayer, mirroring her son's praying hands as he is saved by the Virgin and visually signifying her own conversion to Christianity. In the final scene, she raises her hands in acknowledgement of the cleric's pulling the boy from the oven. Here, for the first time in the cycle, two male bystanders, who serve as confirming witnesses, mirror her actions. Though she does not actively summon townsfolk or even the adjacent text for help, the Smithfield artist relies on the mother's presence as witness to cement and ultimately communicate the dramatic tension of the scene.

In these distinct images from four unique manuscripts, the rich character of the Jewish mother in the Miracle of the Jew of Bourges identifies and crosses boundaries that mark Christian and Jewish space. The oven marks the space of the Jewish home defined by the husband's livelihood. In most texts of the miracle, the Jew of Bourges is a glass-blower, explaining the need for such a large oven just outside the family home. In the Hours of Mary de Bohun, the mother stands next to the oven as she summons the crowd. She marks the boundary between the Jewish space of the home and the Christian space of the city, yet she stares out of the image as if to beckon the viewer for help. The converse is true for two other manuscripts in this study. In the Vernon Manuscript, the artist balances the mother on the edge of the frame as she addresses the mayor, while in the Neville of Hornby Hours the mother marks the edge of the initial and begs for mercy from the prayer text.

In the Smithfield Decretals, her acknowledgement, with raised hands, of her son's rescue draws an audience of two men to confirm the miracle she witnessed. In each image, her response to the abuse befalling her son is to look beyond the comfortable space of the image, of her home and her community, to the outside, Christian world for help. Whether she implores the viewer, the mayor, or the prayer text, anxiety and fear for her son's well being drive this character to separate herself from the environment that marks her Jewish identity.

Further heightening the fluidity of the mother's Jewishness is the constancy of the boy's inherent Christianity, visualized by artists in terms of the space of the church and his gesture of prayer. In these images there is seldom any doubt as to the visual Christianity of the Jewish boy, who is not affected by the same signifiers of difference that mark and define his father. This tension between father and son as Jew and Christian highlights the appeal of the mother for Christian audiences. Mirroring the Virgin Mary, the mother's devotion to her son ultimately usurps her Jewish identity

Even though the mother in this miracle is an example of an uncommon type in the realm of Jews constructed by medieval imaginations, she can be an important figure in the spiritual lives of medieval Christian men and women. She is unique, yet designed to be completely accessible to the Christian reader. As such, she operates outside the realm of Old Testament heroines and queens, the allegorical figure of Synagogue, and separately even from the few images of Jewish mothers eating their children found in depictions of the Siege of Jerusalem. As well, she is almost antithetical to the blatantly stereotyped male Jews shown in grotesque caricature commonly found in Passion imagery. Instead of relying on these established visual types, artists constructed this new character out of a series of norms. In all of the images in this paper, these mothers wear simple clothes and plain wimples, typical costume for all medieval women. Imparting to them a sense of visual accessibility, artists diffused their perceived inherent difference, their Jewishness, for the medieval Christian reader.

Yet visualizations of this character are still part of the general presence of anti-Semitism in medieval English culture long after the Jews were physically expelled from the country in 1290. Her success in this



Christian narrative lies in visualizations of her as an inherently good mother through which she avoids the common signs and symbols used to demonize Jews. Her forced participation in this blatantly anti-Semitic narrative ultimately strengthens the mythology of the male Jew as enemy to Christianity and its members, especially children. There is no doubt that images like these reinforced the already rampant fears inspired by the many accusations of ritual murder prevalent in medieval England.<sup>26</sup> That the Jewish mother could appeal so effectively to the Christian reader could make the male Jew seem even more alien and imaginary in post-expulsion England. Juxtaposing the evil Jewish father with the accessible, ultimately Christian, mother propagated, using purely visual devices, anti-Semitism for a population of English Christians for whom Jews were always imaginary.

*Radford University*

#### END NOTES

\*I presented earlier versions of this project at the Medieval-Renaissance Conference at the University of Virginia's College at Wise in 2007 and the Southeastern Medieval Association Conference in St. Louis in 2008. I am grateful to the staff at the British Library in London, the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the Fitzwilliam Museum Library in Cambridge, and the Kongelige Bibliotek in Copenhagen for allowing me access to the manuscripts discussed here during the summers of 2005 and 2006. This project also benefited greatly from the comments made by the anonymous reviewer. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

1. The Bohun Hours, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct.D.4.4, fol. 203v.
2. Recent interdisciplinary scholarship on the visual dehumanization of the Jew by Debra Higgs Strickland, Sara Lipton, and Anthony Bale builds on the foundations laid in classic works by Ruth Mellinkoff, Heinz Schreckenberg, and Bernard Blumenkranz. Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of the Jews and Judaism in the Bible moralisée* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art from the later Middle Ages*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1996); Bernard Blumenkranz, *Le Juif médiéval au miroir de l'art Chrétien* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966).

3. The events leading to the Expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290 have been widely studied. Key foundational work on the history of the Jews in England by Cecil Roth, including *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941); *The Jews of Medieval Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1950); and *The Intellectual Activities of the Medieval English Jewry*, British Academy Supplemental Papers; no. 8 (London: The British Academy, 1948) and Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England* (New York, 1893) have been supplemented by recent interdisciplinary studies by Robert C. Stacey. Stacey's relevant publications include the "From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration: Jews and the Body of Christ," *Jewish History* 12 (1998): 11-28; "The Conversion of the Jews to Christianity in Thirteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 67 (1992): 263-83; and "Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century England: Some Dynamics of a Changing Relationship," in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. M. A. Signer and J. Van Engen (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 340-54, among others. Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), suggests that Christians responded to Jews and Judaism by creating their own unique Jews whom they used to define their own collective beliefs and identity. Recent work on the "presence" of Jews in English imaginations, as manifested in popular culture, especially literature, after the Expulsion can be found in: Sylvia Tomasch, "Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew," in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: Palgrave Press 2000), 243-60 and Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference: From Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

4. The Hours of Mary de Bohun, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 547, fol. 14v.

5. Both books were made sometime around 1380 by artists working for the Bohun family at their main residence in or near Pleshey Castle in Essex. The leading authority on the Bohun manuscripts, Lucy Freeman Sandler, discusses the intricate relationship the Bohun family had with manuscripts that were made, by family sponsored artists, for their own consumption in her most recent work, *The Lichenthall Psalter and the Manuscript Patronage of the Bohun Family* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2004).

A full codicological analysis and online facsimile of the Hours of Mary de Bohun was prepared in 2002 by Erik Drigsdahl, (founder of the Center for Håndskriftstudier i Danmark (CHD), and can be found at [http://www.chd.dk/gui/thott547\\_HV\\_gui.html](http://www.chd.dk/gui/thott547_HV_gui.html).

6. The Hours of Mary de Bohun, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 547, fol. 1r. Now the beginning of matins is the start of the volume, but the book must have contained a calendar or some other prefatory pages that are unfortunately now lost.

7. In the miracle as written in the *Golden Legend*, after the father throws his son into the oven, his mother's cries attract the crowd of onlookers. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 87-88.

The only manuscripts specifically linked to Mary are those made to celebrate her marriage around 1380. However, there were significant collections of books available to her at both Pleshey Castle and Walden Abbey in Essex. The variety of these volumes in the locations where Mary spent her childhood and the early years of her marriage is evident in two documents. An inventory of goods, from 1397, at Pleshey Castle in Essex lists a *Miracles de Nostre Dame* under the category of *Livres de Diversis Rymances et Estories* (Books of Diverse Romances and Histories). In her 1399 will, Mary's sister Eleanor bequeaths, "*Item liure beal et bien eluminesde legenda aurea en Fraunçais*" (Item a well illuminated book of the golden legend in French) to her daughter Anne. Susan H. Cavanaugh, "A Study of Books Privately Owned in England: 1300-1450" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1980), 110, 847.

8. "Hareu! Hareu! A ce tirant car acorez, fait ele, tost!" Gautier de Coinci, *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame*, vol. 2 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1961), 97.

9. Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 13-15. Denise Despres, "Mary of the Eucharist: Cultic Anti-Judaism in Some Fourteenth-Century English Devotional Manuscripts," in *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 385-86.

This reading is more suited to the often published and unique illustration of the miracle from a Parisian manuscript of the *Miracles de Nostre Dame* (Paris, BN, NAF.24541, fol. 35) associated with Jean Pucelle. In this little image, the mother is inside the house, screaming and pulling her long hair in grief, while her husband puts the boy in the oven outside. Though

she appears to be moving outside the house, and frame of the image, she is trapped.

10. Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference*, 143-45.

11. Sara Lipton, "Where are the Gothic Jewish women? On the non-iconography of the Jewess in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*," *Jewish History* 22 (2008): 158.

12. Though outside the scope of this project three other instances of the non-biblical woman in English medieval art merit further examination in later studies.

The first is from the rich realm of marginal images on the Exchequer rolls now in the Public Record Office in London. A complex image showing three Jews, identifiable by name, from Norwich at the top of a Jewish receipt roll from 1233 includes the striking figure of Avegaye, a female moneylender, in addition to Isaac of Norwich and Moses Mokke. The three figures are arranged in the presence of devils, one of which points to the exaggerated noses of Moses Mokke and Avegaye. Yet, Avegaye's costume appears conservative and unremarkable, whereas Moses Mokke wears an elaborate pointed hat. The earliest reproduction is in Luke Owen Pike, *History of Crime in England*, vol. 1 (London, 1873). The most recent discussion of the work is Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, 78. The most thorough examination of Avegaye is in Michael Adler, *The Jews of Medieval England* (London: Edward Goldston Limited, 1939), 15-46.

The second instance is the character of the Jewish mother, Mary of Bethesubu, in Book 14: 202-13 of Josephus's *Jewish War*, who, driven by starvation, kills, cooks, and eats her son. Illustrations of this scene are rare in England but appear in images of the Siege of Jerusalem. Kathryn A. Smith examines such imagery in *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and their Books of Hours* (London: British Library Publications, 2003), plate 8, 131-39. See also Kathryn A. Smith, "The Destruction of Jerusalem: Miniatures in the Neville of Hornby Hours and Their Visual, Literary, and Devotional Contexts," *Journal of Jewish Art* 23/24 (1997/1998): 179-202.

The third source is the Miracles of the Virgin. The Miracle of the Jew of Bourges offers the richest imagery for this study, but other miracles could be mined for further examples of the non-biblical Jewish woman. Evelyn Faye Wilson, *The Stella Maris of John of Garland* (Cambridge: The Medieval Academy of America, 1946), 189-90 comprises a useful list.

13. Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 71.



14. In addition to the Bohun Hours in Oxford, there are two other English manuscript illuminations of the Miracle of the Jew of Bourges that do not contain visualizations of the boy's mother. Instead, both contain two *bas de page* images to recount the miracle: the first shows the boy taking communion in the church, and the second illustrates a physical struggle, resembling a tug of war, between the Virgin and the Jew. The Carew-Poyntz Hours, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 48, fol. 188v-189r. The Queen Mary Psalter, London, British Library, Royal MS 2.B.VII, fol. 207v-208r.

There are five illustrations of the miracle in the public sphere of English medieval art: wall paintings in the Lady Chapel at Winchester Cathedral and in the Eton College Chapel Choir; a stained glass window from Lincoln Cathedral; a boss in the cloister of Norwich Cathedral; and a much damaged carving from the Lady Chapel at Ely Cathedral. None of these examples includes the boy's mother.

15. The Vernon Manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng.poet.a.1, fol. 125r.

16. Kathleen L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390-1490* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1996), 23, suggests a religious community, "possibly Cistercian," while Carol M. Meale, "The Miracles of the Our Lady: Context and Interpretation," in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 1990), 135, further suggests that the manuscript was made for a group of nuns or laywomen associated with a monastic institution.

17. Beverly Boyd, *The Middle English Miracles of the Virgin* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1964), 95.

As frayed in frenesye heo ferde;  
For wo heo wente as waxen wood.  
Ever hotyng out, heo tar hire her  
In everi stret of that cite,  
Nou in, nou out, so everywhere:  
Men wondret on hire and hedde pite.

18. Ibid.

Sires, ye han this cite to kepe,  
As lordus han to lede the lawe.  
Allas, allas, I am ischent,  
And help of ow me mot bihoven.  
I prey ow of just juggement:  
Mi cause I scahl before you proven.

Mi hosebonde hath my child ibrent,  
Istopped him in a glouwyng hoven.  
Goth seoth, Sires, bi on assent,  
And I schal yive ow gold to gloven.

19. Looking across the page opening to folio 124v, one finds two miniatures, the Miracle of the Child Slain by Jews and the Miracle of the Harlot of Rome. In both, a woman sits on the edge of the frame to address a figure in the corner of the image. In the Miracle of the Harlot of Rome, the converted prostitute prays to the Virgin, kneeling and turning her back, literally, on her old ways. The Miracle of the Child Slain by Jews, a precursor to Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale," recounts the story of a Christian boy in Paris who sings the *Alma Redemptoris Mater* through the streets of the Paris Jewry. Hearing the boy's song the Jews kill him, but he keeps singing, so they then throw him into a *gonge-put* (privy pit). Searching for her son, the boy's mother hears his voice coming from the Jew's house and implores the mayor and bailiffs to investigate. In a swirling and compact narrative, the boy's mother addresses the town officials with one hand and refers to the murder of her son with the other. She is poised between the past action done to her son and the present when she begs for help, all the while sitting just outside the frame, marking the beginning words of the miracle, "Whoever loves well Our Lady" (*Wose loveth wel Ure Ladi*).

Comparing these two images with the miniature illustrating the Miracle of the Jew of Bourges, we see a strong connection and emphasis placed on the female protagonist. In the two miracles that involve children the Virgin is not present in the miniatures; instead the mothers (Christian and Jewish) balance on the frame of the image to advocate for their children, imploring the town officials to help. Readers could connect the Jewish mother and the Christian mother in these miracles by both action and appearance. They could also make a connection between the conversion of the Jewish mother and the conversion of the harlot. Over the course of these two pages, the Jewish mother fits in a larger context of imagery that focused on the saving power of motherhood.

The Vernon Manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng.poet.a.1, fol. 124v. For a transcription of the miracles see Boyd, *The Middle English Miracles*, 33-37.

20. The Neville of Hornby Hours, London, British Library, MS Egerton, 2781, fol. 24r.

21. There is an image of Isabel de Byron, between her family crests,

wearing a widow's hood in an elaborate miniature showing the Siege of Jerusalem on folio 190r. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion*, plate 8, 34, 267.

22. Ibid., 316.

23. Ibid., fig. 128.

24. The Smithfield Decretals, London, British Library, Royal MS 10.E.IV, fol. 210v-213v.

25. Lucy Freeman Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts 1285-1385*, vol. 1 (London: Harvery Miller, 1986), 111; Alixe Bovey, "A Pictorial Ex Libris in the Smithfield Decretals: John Batayle, Canon of St Bartholomew's, and his Illuminated Law Book" in *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700: Decoration and Illustration in Medieval English Manuscripts*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (London: British Library, 2002), 67-91. Andrew Taylor *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 138.

26. The first of the allegations of ritual murder made again the Jews in England was a case involving the death of William of Norwich in 1144. This incident set a precedent that inspired and influenced several other accusations into the thirteenth century. Memory of these events persisted and developed in English culture well into the later Middle Ages. Gavin I. Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," *Speculum* 59 (1984): 820-46; Joe Hillaby, "The Ritual-Child-Murder Accusation: Its Dissemination and Harold of Gloucester," *Jewish Historical Studies* 34 (1994-1996): 69-109; John McCullough, "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth," *Speculum* 72 (1997): 698-740; Emily Rose, *The Cult of William of Norwich and the Accusation of Ritual Murder in Anglo-Norman England* (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2001).