INTRODUCTION

THE TRUTH of the dictum that the present shapes the past is nowhere more evident than in the effects of World War II on historical writing about European minorities.¹ Before that war and its attendant horrors, Jewish history was by and large outside the mainstream of the historical profession, written by Jews and ignored by others (as in some ways it still is).² When mainstream historians did touch upon the history of Jews and other minorities, it was as part of confessional history. Protestants especially wrote about medieval violence and intolerance toward minorities (heretics, Moriscos, Jews, lepers, witches) in order to claim that Catholicism had benighted Europe and made its people brutal in the period between the fall of Rome and the birth of Luther.³ For the most part, however, the study of “Medieval Society” writ large seldom intersected with the study of its minorities.

Since the Holocaust such a position has become untenable. Few today would argue, for example, that the study of Jews and attitudes toward Jews in Germany tells us little about the formation of modern German cultural and national identities. Nor, in the wake of current attacks on Muslims in the former Yugoslavia, on “foreigners” (often Muslim) in Germany, France, and Italy, or on Jews in Russia, is it possible to argue that episodes of violence against minorities are part of a primitive European past which modern societies have left behind. The study of medieval minorities has therefore acquired a new urgency, and it has been transformed by some into a search for the roots of modern evils. “When did Europe go wrong?” is a question that has been asked more and more frequently over the past fifty years.

A frequent answer, it seems, is “in the Middle Ages.” As Norman Cohn put it in his book Warrant for Genocide,

As I see it, the deadliest kind of antisemitism, the kind that results in massacre and attempted genocide, has little to do with real conflicts of interest between living people, or even with racial prejudice as such. At its heart lies the belief that Jews—all Jews everywhere—form a conspiratorial body set on ruining and then dominating the

¹Cf. M. Bloch, The Historian’s Craft (New York, 1953), pp. 43–47. Bloch wrote these words in hiding shortly before he himself was killed by the Nazis. I do not doubt that their articulation was itself a product of the war.
³G. G. Coulton is a salient example, most blatantly in his historical novel The Friar’s Lantern (London, 1906). Such Protestant–Catholic polemics were particularly important in the early historiography on Muslims and Moriscos in the Iberian Peninsula.
rest of mankind. And this belief is simply a modernized, secularized version of the popular medieval view.4

The implications of Cohn’s thesis are clear: the most dangerous attitudes toward minorities, or at least toward Jews, do not draw their strength from the interactions of individuals and groups within a society, but from collective beliefs, beliefs formed in the Middle Ages and transmitted to the present day.5 Hence medievalists have written books like Cohn’s Europe’s Inner Demons, Robert Moore’s The Formation of a Persecuting Society, and Carlo Ginzburg’s Ecstasies6—books that are exercises in psychoanalysis, attempts to understand an assumed collective unconscious of modern Europeans.

There are different opinions, of course, as to when a “tolerant” European Middle Ages turned bad. Historians of Jews, Muslims, heretics, gay people, and lepers have all placed the shift at different dates, ranging from the First Crusade (which provoked a good deal of violence against European Jews) forward. Most recently Carlo Ginzburg has argued for a later date, claiming that there emerged in the first half of the fourteenth century (the period covered in the present work) an irrational fear of conspiracy which had previously been repressed in the European mentality: a belief that certain groups, whether Jews, lepers, or witches, were conspiring to destroy society. It was this irrational mentality, Ginzburg believes, that led to pogroms against the Jews, to accusations of well poisoning and ritual murder, and to the great witch hunts of the early modern period.

Regardless of their different periodizations, all these quests for the origins of European intolerance have much in common. All take the long view, seeking to establish a continuity between the hatreds of long ago and those of the here and now. This focus on the longue durée means that events are read less within their local contexts than according to a teleology leading, more or less explicitly,


5There are, of course, historians with the opposite view. B. Blumenkranz, for example, writes that “the struggle of Christianity against Judaism is not inevitable, necessary, nor essential. Rather it is a product of general conditions emerging out of internal and external politics and sociological facts. In short, it is only contingent.” Such pleas for contingency have had limited influence even upon those who quote them. Thus A. Cutler and H. Cutler, whose translation of Blumenkranz was just quoted, “could not agree more with these sentiments” but proceed on the same page to argue that “Anti-Muslimism was the primary...factor in the revival of anti-Semitism during the High Middle Ages (1000–1300), the effects of which have been felt in all subsequent centuries, including our own.” The Jew as Ally of the Muslim: Medieval Roots of Anti-Semitism (Notre Dame, IN, 1986), p. 2, quoting from Le juif medieval au miroir de l’art chrétien (Paris, 1966), p. 136.

to the Holocaust. Similarly, instead of emphasizing local or even individual opinions about minorities, they focus on collective images, representations, and stereotypes of the “other.” The actions of groups or individuals are ignored in favor of structures of thought that are believed to govern those actions.7 Historians therefore act as geologists, tracing the ancient processes by which collective anxieties accreted into a persecutory landscape that has changed little over the past millennium. The refutation of this widespread notion that we can best understand intolerance by stressing the fundamental continuity between collective systems of thought across historical time, or in this case across one thousand years, is an overarching goal of the present work.

The emphasis on continuity and collective systems of thought can be called “structuralist” without too much violence to that word.8 Within the structuralist consensus in the historiography of persecution there are different methodologies. Two are especially common. The first links the rise of persecuting mentalities to other secular processes: the creation of a monetary economy or the rise of centralized monarchies, for example.9 Exponents of this approach, such as Robert Moore, emphasize processes of historical change up to a point. They allow contingency during the gestation of intolerance, but after its birth the persecuting mentality seems to transcend particularities of time and place. The second methodology traces the pedigree of stereotypes and beliefs in order to establish the existence of a “discourse” about the “other” and fix its origins. It treats intolerance entirely as a problem in the migratory history of ideas, ignoring social, economic, political, or cultural variables. Thus Ginzburg follows the folkloric roots of the witches’ Sabbath from eighth-century B.C. central Asia to Essex, England, 1645; while the author of another recent work traces the demonization and dehumanization of Jews from Alexandrian Egypt to high medieval Passion plays in order to understand “the daydreams of monks, the sermons of the preachers, the imagination of the artists, and the anxious psyche of Everyman.”10

7These are, of course, relatives of very ancient dichotomies currently at the heart of theoretical debate about textual interpretation: subjectivism/objectivism, structure/agency, langue/parole, among others. Put most briefly and abstractly, the debate is over the degree of autonomy individuals have within the collective rules and institutions that structure their society. In the case of langue/parole, for example, langue refers to the background of rules by which language functions (the linguistics, so to speak), while parole refers to usage, to the ways in which individuals speak.


6 INTRODUCTION

"Everyman" makes out badly in such works. Often "irrational," at best the receptacle of external, inherited ideologies passively and uncritically absorbed, medieval people are presented as dominated by discourse, not as active participants in its shaping. I am not arguing that negative discourses about Jews, Muslims, women, or lepers did not exist, but that any inherited discourse about minorities acquired force only when people chose to find it meaningful and useful, and was itself reshaped by these choices. Briefly, discourse and agency gain meaning only in relation to each other. Even thus delimited, the notion of a "persecuting discourse" requires qualification. Such a discourse about minorities was but one of those available, and its invocation in a given situation did not ensure its success or acceptance. The choice of language was an active one, made in order to achieve something, made within contexts of conflict and structures of domination, and often contested. Thus when medieval people made statements about the consequences of religious difference, they were making claims, not expressing accomplished reality, and these claims were subject to barter and negotiation before they could achieve real force in any given situation. This book is about these processes of barter and negotiation, not about the creation of a "persecuting discourse."

My approach also challenges the current emphasis on the longue durée in the periodization of the persecution of minorities. By showing how structures are transformed by the actions and choices of people working within them, it more readily explains change over time while relying less on an appeal to the irrational. We need no longer insist on continuities of meaning in claims about minorities wherever we find continuities in form, since we can see how the


12 A point made forcefully by S. Feierman, Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania (Madison, WI, 1990), esp. pp. 1–35. The same can be said of the textual records of such choices, on which see G. Prakash, Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India (Cambridge, 1990), p. 39; R. Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford, 1977), pp. 36–42. This abstract point has practical implications for the medievalist. Compare M. Kriigel's claim—that royal documentation is compromised by interests, while municipal documentation represents "the reality of the perception of the Jew"—with my position that we have no disinterested sources, only sources with conflicting interests. For Kriigel, see his "Un trait de psychologie sociale dans les pays méditerranéens du bas moyen age: le juif comme intouchable," Annales: ESC 31 (1976): 326–330, here p. 327.

meanings of existing forms are altered by the work that they are asked to do, and by the uses to which they are put. This means that we can be more critical than we have previously been about attempts to link medieval and modern mentalities, medieval ritual murder accusations and modern genocide.

The problem of periodization is central in this attempt to disrupt a now almost orthodox view of the steady march of European intolerance across the centuries. Historians have assembled that view in large part by stringing together episodes of large-scale violence against minorities. In Jewish historiography, for example, scholars have drawn a line of mounting intolerance from the Rhineland massacres of the First Crusade, through the expulsions and massacres of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, through German ritual murder trials and Russian pogroms, to Kristallnacht and the concentration camps. The first half of the present work challenges this view by choosing two massacres (of Jews, lepers, and Muslims) used in teleological narratives and placing them within their local social, political, and cultural contexts. The more we restore to those outbreaks of violence their own particularities, the less easy it is to assimilate them to our own concerns, as homogeneity and teleology are replaced by difference and contingency. The second half presents a very different, perhaps more provocative, criticism of the teleological model. Its argument is that by focusing on moments of cataclysmic violence and reading them with post-Holocaust eyes, the teleological model has overlooked the fundamental interdependence of violence and tolerance in the Middle Ages.

This last point may be the most controversial of my argument, in part because it is largely based on sources that come from a particular geographic area: the south of France and especially the Crown of Aragon (see chap. 1, n. 5). This will pose problems for some readers, since traditionally the history of minorities (especially Jews) to the south of the Pyrenees (i.e., in present-day Spain) has been treated as distinct from that to the north.14 Such a distinction does not seem tenable to me, at least not in the fourteenth century, and not when applied to the lands of the Crown of Aragon, which moved as much in a Mediterranean orbit as in an Iberian one. Recent work, particularly that of Maurice Kriege, has demonstrated that for the purposes of Jewish history the Crown of Aragon and the south of France can be treated as a coherent unit.15 Each chapter in this

14See most recently K. Stow, Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe (Cambridge, MA, 1992), p. 1: “Most often, this history [of Spanish Jews] is a distinct one, as is the history of medieval Spain as a whole; it should be, and traditionally has been, treated as such.”

book provides further evidence for this view, either because the events discussed occurred on both sides of the Pyrenees, or because, as in the case of Holy Week riots, they have analogues elsewhere in the Mediterranean. At a more abstract level, questions of periodization, of the continuity between past and present, of the relationship between violence and tolerance are all of broad (European, at least) relevance.

It is true, however, that reliance on Iberian documentation, and especially on an accompanying Iberian historiography even more sharply dichotomized about poles of violence and tolerance than is generally the case, has had the effect of heightening my perception of the need for synthesis. It is difficult to write about minorities in any of the regions that now constitute Spain without inserting oneself into long-standing debates within Spanish and Jewish history, particularly the debate over convivencia, a Spanish word meaning “living together” and one of the most contentious terms in Spanish historical writing. The term was coined by the philologist Américo Castro in his discussion of the effects upon Spanish culture of the coexistence of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Iberian Peninsula. Though there is no reason why convivencia need designate only harmonious coexistence, it has in fact acquired this meaning among certain historians who have romanticized the concept. These historians present the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula as uniquely tolerant of religious minorities until the expulsion of 1492. They minimize periods of violence and persecution, stress cultural cooperation, and talk frequently of a “golden age” of Jewish culture.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are certain schools of Jewish historical interpretation, particularly the so-called lachrymose and Jerusalem schools. The

Jewish cultural circles between Iberian and northern French communities, see B. Septimus, Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah (Cambridge, MA, 1982).


18Perhaps the most extremely optimistic of these historians is N. Roth, who does “not like to talk about a particular ‘golden age’ of Jewish culture in medieval Spain, for the whole history of that civilization was a golden age for the Jews.” The quotation is from his “The Jews in Spain at the Time of Maimonides,” in Moses Maimonides and His Times, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 19, ed. E. L. Ormsby (Washington, DC, 1989), pp. 1–20, here pp. 1–2. Roth has also defended Ferdinand and Isabel, the issuers of the edict of expulsion, from charges of intolerance and has argued that Christian religious attitudes were “rarely if ever” hostile to Jews (as opposed to the Jewish religion) in the Middle Ages. See, in addition to “The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492,” his “1992 and Its Mythology: A Warning,” Jewish Spectator 55, no. 4 (Spring 1991): 26–30, here p. 26; and most recently, Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict (Leiden, 1994), p. 2: “The true story [of convivencia] is nothing short of amazing.”
lachrymose school, which dates back to medieval chronicle traditions, sees the history of Judaism since the fall of Jerusalem as a vale of tears, a progression of tragedies. It is in part an eschatological vision, with each disaster increasing in magnitude until the last and greatest disaster precipitates the coming of the Messiah and redemption. The Jerusalem school of Jewish history is in some ways a post-Holocaust, secularized version of the lachrymose school. Though its messianism is more muted, it shares with its predecessor a teleological vision in which each incident of persecution foreshadows greater persecutions to come. Within the field of Sephardic Jewish studies the Jerusalem school has been very influential, owing in large part to the work of Yitzhak Baer, whose two-volume *History of the Jews in Christian Spain* remains the standard reference.19

The present work argues against both these positions, against a rose-tinted haven of tolerance and a darkening valley of tears, but it also borrows from both. For example, it agrees with the lachrymose school in recognizing the existence of long-standing vocabularies of hatred, although it rejects the lachrymose interpretation of the meaning, function, or virulence of these vocabularies. In this it agrees with the “optimists,” and yet it questions the very existence of an age of peaceful and idyllic convivencia, whether long or short. Far from arguing for peaceful convivencia, Part Two of this book demonstrates that violence was a central and systemic aspect of the coexistence of majority and minorities in medieval Spain, and even suggests that coexistence was in part predicated on such violence.

This dependence is more important than it seems. The central dichotomy in modern studies of the treatment of medieval minorities is that between tolerance and intolerance.20 Thus polarized, violence, hostility, and competition can be seen only as destructive breakdowns of social relations, the antithesis of associative action. The identification of a constructive relationship between conflict and coexistence suggests that such a dichotomy is untenable. We should not be surprised that such a constructive relationship does exist: it is virtually a commonplace of post-Enlightenment political philosophy that violence and aggres-

19 (Philadelphia, 1978). It is worth noting that the same polarization between “golden age” and vale of tears occurs in Italian Jewish historiography, on which see R. Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley, 1994), pp. 6–9. For more on Baer’s position, see below, end of chap. 3. On the Jerusalem school in general, see D. Myers, “‘From Zion will go forth Torah’: Jewish Scholarship and the Zionist Return to History” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1991). For Myers’s treatment of Baer, see pp. 219–258.

10 INTRODUCTION

As a historian, I am not equipped to represent this empirically inseparable fusion of polarities with the analytical clarity of a philosopher or the revelatory opacity of a speaker of proverbs. Instead, I have tried to build it into the structure of the book by writing across sources (e.g., administrative and cultural), topics (e.g., Muslim, Jews, lepers; sex, markets, liturgy), analytical categories (e.g., violence and tolerance), and theoretical positions (e.g., structuralist and subjectivist) that are normally kept separate or posed against one another. The result is that the two parts of this book, and indeed each of the chapters themselves, are heterogeneous. In that each attacks a different aspect of the role of violence in the medieval toleration of minorities, they can be read individually and stand alone. Their full effect, however, is intended to be cumulative, and it is only in aggregate that they sustain the larger claims presented in these prefatory pages.

Chapter 1, “The Historical Background,” is meant as a general introduction to the place of minorities and of violence in fourteenth-century Europe and particularly in the Crown. It is explicitly comparative, contrasting the differing places Jews and Muslims occupied in Christian society, and the different kinds of violence each group was subject to. Because several later arguments depend

21 See, as one example among many, Kant’s “Ideas for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” seventh proposition (ed. H. Reiss, in Kant’s Political Writings [Cambridge, 1970], pp. 41–53, here p. 47): “Nature has thus again employed the unsociableness of men, and even of the large societies and states which human beings construct, as a means of arriving at a condition of calm and security through their inevitable antagonism” (emphasis in original). See also his “On the Common Saying: ‘This May Be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice,’” in ibid., pp. 61–92, here p. 91; and, for the trust that must exist in all wars except those of extermination, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” in ibid., pp. 93–130, here p. 96.


23 Muslims and Jews living in Christian lands are rarely treated in comparative perspective. For pioneering efforts in this regard, see E. Lourie, “Anatomy of Ambivalence: Muslims under the Crown of Aragon in the Late Thirteenth Century,” in her Crusade and Colonisation: Muslims, Christians and Jews in Medieval Aragon, Variorum Collected Studies 317 (Aldershot, 1990); and M. Meyerson, “Comparative Perspectives on Muslims and Jews in Christian Spain” (paper presented at the Midwest Medieval History Conference, Ohio State University, October 1990).
on an understanding of these differences, its principal aim is to be descriptive. Its conclusions are unsurprising, though too easily forgotten: the types of violence and articulations of hatred minority groups are subject to are not independent of the roles those groups play in society.

The critique of the teleological treatment of violence begins in earnest with chapters 2, 3, and 4, which constitute Part One. These chapters focus on two collective and cataclysmic acts of violence by Christians against Jews, lepers, and Muslims: the “Shepherds’ Crusade” of 1320, which began as a Crusade against Islam but quickly focused instead on Jews; and what one chronicler later called the “Cowherds’ Crusade,” which began by attacking lepers in 1321 but also came to encompass Jews and Muslims. These events have been chosen because they are frequently invoked in support of the circular argument that the steady decline of European tolerance for minorities was mirrored by outbreaks of violence which grew progressively more brutal. Each of these events began in France before crossing into the Crown of Aragon, and each took very different forms on either side of the Pyrenees. This fact in itself forces a comparative approach, even when the comparison is between a place that experienced extensive violence (e.g., France in 1320) and another that did not (the Crown of Aragon in the same year).24 Such comparisons have one considerable value: they make us ask why two areas that share a common stock of stereotypes and attitudes toward minorities nevertheless respond so differently to accusations drawn from that stock. In short, they force us to move from the collective to the local and back again.

Chapter 2, “France, Source of the Troubles,” has two broad goals. First, because the violence of 1320 and 1321 spread from France to the Crown of Aragon, the chapter provides necessary French background and a useful point of comparison to events in the Crown. Its second aim is to situate attacks on Jews and lepers within the context of conflicts over taxation, the proper role of kings, and the health of the body politic in order to argue that violence against minorities cannot be understood in isolation from the political, economic, and cultural structures within which it occurs. It emphasizes (as does each of the other chapters in the book) that violence against minorities is not only about minorities. By providing these attacks with multiple senses and contexts, it highlights the price we pay in loss of meaning when we categorize them only as “irrational” and restrict their interpretation to a persecutory longue durée.

The two remaining chapters of Part One engage as well in the search for local context and plural meaning, though differences in the sources available for Aragon result in differences in the questions asked.25 Chapter 3, “Crusade and

24E. P. Thompson recently urged this type of comparison. See “The Moral Economy Revisited,” in his Customs in Common (London, 1991), pp. 262–263: “Comparative study of food riots has been, inevitably, into the history of nations which had riots” (emphasis in original).

25Much less material survives from France: most of it has been published, more of the sources are narrative (e.g., chronicles), and fewer are royal. In Aragon, on the other hand, the events of 1320–
Massacre in Aragon," for example, contrasts several competing narratives of one massacre that occurred in the mountain village of Montclus: those of villagers, royal bureaucrats, sixteenth-century Jewish chroniclers, and modern historians, each with their own agenda and their own version of history. It shows how royal bureaucrats put together accounts of violence in order to justify extortionate fiscality, and discusses the role these bureaucratic narratives played in creating the violence they claimed merely to describe. For contemporaries, administrative representations of violence against minorities gave such violence new motives, meanings, and potential uses. For modern historians, they have provided a deceivingly univocal source for analysis. The chapter ends by tracing the creation of a narrative about the Shepherds' Crusade in one strand of a later Jewish historiographical tradition, a tradition that sought for prophetic prefigurations of more recent acts of violence in medieval ones.

Chapter 4, "Lepers, Jews, Muslims, and Poison in the Crown," describes the struggle that took place among people throughout the Crown (including the king), all of whom sought to gain control of a new "persecutory discourse" of poisoning in order to make it meet their own particular needs. It is as concerned as the previous chapters with the interplay between languages of hate and local contexts, but its rhetorical focus is slightly different. More explicitly than its predecessors, it confronts the argument that Europe grew progressively more intolerant because its people were increasingly governed by an irrational and paranoid "collective unconscious," a shift manifested in outbreaks of violence. By emphasizing the degree to which people in the Crown of Aragon manipulated the accusations against lepers, Jews, and Muslims in 1321, the chapter shows the limitations of the irrational in illuminating how cognitive structures affected the actions of individuals toward minorities. And by studying the past and the future of these accusations, it challenges progressive models of intolerance.

The explicit juxtaposition of case studies with different outcomes on either side of the Pyrenees suggests a rather obvious, though neglected, conclusion: that ideas about minorities function within and are contingent upon a host of other structures and ideas, many of which have quite local meanings (ideas about monarchy, fiscality, the body, or the weather, to name some of those put forth in these chapters). The study of these local meanings, their historicization, contextualizes any broader discourse about minorities and challenges attempts to impose teleologies. This does not mean that in our attempt to understand collective violence we should replace structural or teleological history with local history, or embrace a naive rationalism in our haste to escape the irrational.

1321 are less studied, and the surviving (primarily royal and fiscal) documentation is extensive but almost entirely unpublished. Even more important, there is for France the historiography necessary for a cultural contextualization of these events (for example, on the ideology of kingship or the place of lepers in society). In the Crown of Aragon, this historiography is lacking. There is virtually no work on lepers and leper houses, studies of royal fiscality are only just beginning to appear, and the theory and theology of kingship is practically unstudied.
Such an approach would have its own dangers, as the current debate in Germany over *Alltagsgeschichte* (history of the everyday) and the history of the Holocaust makes clear. But it does suggest that this polarization of methodologies is itself impoverishing, and it reinforces the importance of a more integrated approach.

An unintended consequence of this attempt to identify agency in the face of cataclysm is that the constraining effects of rules and culture are minimized, so that actors sometimes float weightlessly in a world without the gravity of history. Part One stresses the contingent because it seeks to question the centrality of collective mentalities and cataclysmic events in existing historical narratives about tolerance for minorities. Part Two moves in the opposite direction. It focuses not on rare moments of mass murder, but on more common types of violence emerging from competition between groups. Each chapter in this latter half arbitrates between the rules (cultural, religious, social, and economic) that structured conflict and the ability of individuals to manipulate and change these. It is through such arbitration, I suggest, that we can best understand how violence stabilized relations between groups and why, when mass violence occurred, it took the forms that it did.

There were many ways in which individuals could invoke collective anxieties in order to attack minorities with whom they found themselves in conflict. Chapter 5, “Sex and Violence between Majority and Minority,” studies one of particular resonance for North American readers: accusations and violence caused by allegations of sexual interaction between members of different religious groups. Because (as they have in many multiethnic societies) claims about group difference in the Crown of Aragon clustered in specific ways around issues of miscegenation, the study of violence caused by allegations of sexual liaisons provides an entry into contemporary ideas about religion and race, gender and group identity, acculturation and social purity at the collective level. But arguments about miscegenation served a multitude of strategic purposes as well and were marshaled by individuals to further their interests in a wide variety of day-to-day situations. Within religious communities such arguments and the violence they legitimized could reinforce communal boundaries; within

---

26 *Alltagsgeschichte* has been criticized as trivializing the Nazi past and ignoring structural explanations for the actions of the Third Reich. The debate is part of the broader *Hitlerkrise* controversy that erupted in Germany in 1986. On this controversy, see *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians’ Debate*, ed. P. Baldwin (Boston, 1990). For the *Alltagsgeschichte* debate in particular, see M. Broszat et al., *Alltagsgeschichte der NS-Zeit: Neue Perspektive oder Trivialisierung?* (Munich, 1984). Martin Jay has suggested that *Alltagsgeschichte* be pursued not as an antithesis to structuralist historiography, but as its dialectical complement, a position that I would take. See his “Force Fields. Songs of Experience: Reflections on the Debate over *Alltagsgeschichte*,” *Salmagundi* 81 (1989): 29–41.
families they could be used to support or to challenge male control of women; and at an individual level they could play an important role in countless situations, ranging from extortion to conversion. By exploring the relationship between the collective and the strategic in the particular case of violence arising from sexual interaction, the chapter demonstrates both the range and the limits of negotiation in medieval social relations.

Chapter 5 moves from an anxiety arising at a particular religious boundary, in this case the sexual one, to the strategic deployment of that anxiety in a competitive world and shows how this interaction between discourse and context limits the potential of miscegenation anxiety to provoke violence. Chapter 6, “Minorities Confront Each Other,” takes the opposite tack, asking how particular and contingent historical situations encourage the emergence of “intolerant” religious discourses and give them strength, a question approached in this case through the study of Muslim-Jewish relations in the Crown. Muslims and Jews not only acted and argued out their conflicts in their own religious languages but also sought access to explicitly Christian discourses. Their competitive interactions were structured by Christian institutions (economic, political, judicial, and the like) and the religious ideologies that supported these. The need to function within such institutions forced non-Christians to participate in their logic and to adopt those modes of argument that were most effective within them. To demonstrate this, the chapter begins with structural situations of Muslim-Jewish conflict (moneylending, meat markets, sex) and ends with the violent consequences of Muslim accusations that the Jews were the killers of Christ.

This charge of deicide against the Jews has often been invoked as the clearest example of the destructive powers of persecutory narratives. For this reason, chapter 7, “The Two Faces of Sacred Violence,” studies the explicitly religious annual riots against Jews during Holy Week. These riots, largely ignored by modern historians, were in fact ancient rituals carried out by clerics and children that reenacted through stylized violence the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. Contemporaries described these actions as a “divine office” and performed them as ritual sacrifice, a sacrifice that, once a year, reemphasized the boundary between Christian and Jew. These were complex rituals whose manifold meanings bear on a number of arguments. For example, the ways in which Holy Week riots represented notions of the divide between secular and clerical power through battles between clerics and local secular elites served to criticize the distribution of power within the Crown. For this reason their analysis has implications that reach beyond questions of tolerance and minorities and toward what the French call historical political anthropology. But it is in terms of the narrower question of the relationship between violence and tolerance that these riots are most significant. As regular calendrical events they suggest an episodic model of religious intolerance, not a continuous or evolutionary one.  

27 Of course calendrical rites are also partly linear: they are performed at a particular historical moment and draw meaning from contemporary events. But at the same time, they impose rhythm
more important, these violent rituals reiterated a discourse legitimating the presence of Jews in Christian society at the same time that they challenged it. Within their particular recounting of sacred history, their violence was simultaneously a gesture of inclusion and one of seclusion. We are nowhere closer to the marriage of enemies.

The epilogue, "The Black Death and Beyond," recounts the advent of the plague and the so-called pogroms of 1348, not because these are the end of any story, but because it is here, at the earliest moment when fears about social purity emerge with startling and ferocious clarity in the Crown of Aragon, that we can best see how tightly cataclysm and massacre are related to the more systemic and stabilizing violences of the everyday. By focusing on a discrete event of extraordinary brutality, while analyzing it within the context of a variety of types of strategic and ritualized violence, the conclusion integrates the themes and methodologies of the two parts of the book. In the process, it represents an effort to express (at least metaphorically) the difficulties involved in narrating in a continuous fashion a history punctuated by events so violent that they seem to bear no immediate relation to their future or their past.

In this work I situate myself of necessity in minority historiography, but I want to reiterate that I am nevertheless not writing a history of minorities or marginal groups. My aim is not to reconstruct the experiences of Jews, lepers, or Muslims as they encountered violence (though at times I do so), but to explore the functions and meanings of such violence within medieval societies, even when this requires an emphasis on the view of the victimizers rather than of the victimized. Paradoxical as it may seem, this approach maximizes the importance of ideas about minorities within medieval culture and calls into question the notion of their marginality.

The importance of ideas about minorities is heightened through a demonstration of their relationship to issues conventionally regarded as more central to medieval society: kingship, fiscal, money, disease, sex, and theology, to name some of those discussed in the pages that follow. Others could easily be added. Feudalism, for example, was deeply influenced in the Crown of Aragon by notions about the differences between Muslim and Christian. The mythical origins of certain types of lordship like the ius maltractandi, the "right to abuse" serfs in Catalonia, were predicated on such differences. Lords argued that the peasants had incurred such servidom because their ancestors had refused to help Charlemagne repel the Muslim invaders and had instead apostasized to Islam. The penalty for such cowardice was perpetual servitude.


For general queries, contact webmaster@press.princeton.edu
INTRODUCTION

But feudalism could be resisted, as well as legitimated, by arguments about religious difference. A particularly delightful example is the claim by Catalan serfs that they were descended from Muslims. Their ancestors were not apostates, they argued, but converts to Christianity from Islam, and should not therefore be punished by servitude.28 The claim may have been purely strategic, but it is nevertheless astounding to watch Christian peasants ascribe to themselves a status so insulting that its imputation by anyone else would have demanded vengeance.29 Armed rebellion against the seigneurial order could also be justified with arguments about minorities. In Valencia, for example, the Germanías (brotherhoods) revolted against the fiscal and judicial administration of their lords by using Crusade ideology and rumors of Turkish invasion to justify attacks on Muslims, who made up an important part of the seigneurial labor force and of seigneurial private armies.30

The point, in short, is that the study of minorities and attitudes toward them is not the study of society’s margins, and that the terms “margin” and “center” are of little relevance in the effort to understand the place of minorities in medieval society. This will not be surprising for historians in disciplines where it has become increasingly difficult to conceive of political, social, or cultural histories that pay no attention to questions of race, class, or gender. Some medievalists, however, still resist such a view, as Norman Cantor made clear in his recent polemical survey of the field.31 One of the goals of this work, therefore, is to demonstrate the importance of minorities in the construction of medieval worlds.

It is never easy to think or write about violence, however meaningful one believes it to be. Throughout the writing of this book I have tried to find sense in horrors, to place acts of violence in cultural and social contexts that would give them meanings beyond the literal ones which emerge with such visceral force. To some readers this search for context may seem to trivialize or mini-


29 Calling a Christian “Saracen” or “son of a Saracen” was an insult punishable by law. See chap. 4, n. 32.


mize the violence that is its subject matter.32 Nothing could be further from my intent. The midsummer killing of 337 Jews in the castle of Montclus may have been symbolically meaningful, but none of these meanings attenuates the brutality of the event, and the same is true of the other acts of violence described in the pages that follow.33 I hope that readers will not find violence against persons, past or present, less appalling for having read this book, even as they leave it with a sense of how rare and strange a similarity the nightmares of a distant past bear to our own.

32 See, for example, n. 26 above, for some criticisms of Alltagsgeschichte on these grounds.
33 I am reacting here to the position sometimes taken vis-à-vis the Holocaust. See, for example, B. Lang’s call for a literal language in his Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide (Chicago, 1990), pp. 144–145; and the critique of Lang’s position (to my mind convincing on this point) in H. White, “Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth,” in Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,” ed. S. Friedlander (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 37–53, here 43–49.