"master narrative" of patriarchy. Suzanne Gossett examines the treatment of rape in Jacobean drama. She argues that before 1616 the female victims of such assaults invariably died (often at their own hands) out of grief for their besmirched honour, thereby succumbing not just to their attacker but to the patriarchal value system. After 1616, however, the treatment of rape changed radically, even permitting "happy" endings in which the rape itself ceased to be a heinous felony and became little more than a sexual impulse, often resolved by a marriage between rapist and victim. Gossett is on to something here, and it is a pity that she chooses to tie her interesting argument to the tired old cliché of the "decadent" Jacobean court. The question of the "stability" of the relationship between the sexes (which historians and anthropologists have come to realize was more complex than the writings of male contemporaries would have us believe) are among the most exciting issues in this volume, and the essays of Gossett and Newman are rounded off by Mary Beth Rose's examination of the place of apparel in the *Hic Mulier/Haec Vir* controversy of 1620 and its connection with the outstanding early Jacobean example of dramatic transvestism, Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*, in which audiences watched a male actor play a woman playing a man.

On balance, this is a useful collection, though not every essay in it will be to everyone's taste – hardly a terrible thing to say about a book. Like much modern literary criticism, its authors attempt to embrace history with some success, while at the same time casting their discussions in a vocabulary that is likely to scare off most historians. This is really too bad. Yet the fact that it is now possible to have such a wide variety of views on Renaissance literature within the same covers is testimony to the extraordinary influence the New Historicism has achieved in a relatively short period of time.

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R. Po-chia Hsia. *The Myth of Ritual Murder. Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988. Pp. vii, 248.

The Jews, to their frequent dismay, have found themselves at various times in history involuntary actors in a play they neither wrote nor controlled. One of these times was the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Caught up in a web of Christian lay-piety and fundamental changes in the political and social structure of towns and cities, the Jews in German lands were widely suspected by their neighbours of practising the ritual murder of Christian children in order to mock the Christian religion and in order to utilize their blood in a variety of magical rituals. Related to this were suspicions that Jews were wont to desecrate the host as a part of their conspiracy against Christ and the Church.

As Professor Hsia writes in the introduction to this book, it is all too tempting to engage in a refutation of these charges. For though they have been convincingly

repudiated, time and again, the myth is still not dead. Fortunately, the author has decided not to reinvent the wheel but rather to engage in another sort of dialogue with the past. His book is an attempt to understand how it was that German Christians in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries constructed their reality in such a way that a missing or murdered child was almost inevitably blamed upon malevolent Jewish action and not other things.

In doing so, Hsia analyzes the documents relating to the arrest, judicial torture, conviction and execution on these charges of numerous Jews of the Holy Roman Empire. He also pursues this subject in terms of its repercussions in the popular culture of the time, literate and non-literate.

As a historian of late Medieval and early Modern Germany, Hsia has done a good job of placing the myth of ritual murder in its social, political, religious, and legal context. Thus, for example, it becomes clear that the Jews and their guilt or innocence became an issue in the struggle by various German cities for juridical independence from the imperial system of justice. Indeed, as Hsia sees it, it is largely the strengthening and, above all, the professionalization of justice in the Holy Roman Empire which ultimately caused the gradual cessation of ritual murder charges in Germany.

Professor Hsia is at his best where he is most at home in the legal and political archives of early Modern Germany. He is less at home with the Jewish sources and has had to content himself with the available translations and secondary literature on the subject. This almost inevitably leads to a few minor inaccuracies which do not, however, detract from the authority of the book as a whole. For, ultimately, the story of the ritual murder legend is not a Jewish story, though the Jews play an involuntary lead role. It was not the Jew of flesh and blood who practised ritual murder; it was the mythical demonic Jew who would perpetrate such a crime. In his largely successful attempt to understand the way German Christians constructed reality in consonance with the myth of the demonic Jew, he has given the reader an important insight into the religious and social reality of late Medieval and early Modern Europe.

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Massimo Miglio, Francesca Niutta, Diego Quagliani and Concetta Ranieri, eds. *Un pontificato ed una città: Sisto IV (1471–1484). Atti del convegno: Roma, 3–7 dicembre 1984*. Vatican City: Scuola vaticana di paleografia, diplomatica e archivistica, 1986. Pp. xv, 826.

Here we have a volume of work in progress. What unites it is not only the time and subject, the reign of Sixtus IV and the culture of court and city, but also a shared endeavour, for many of the writers have trained together or are jointly engaged in