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

projects. There are thirty-six articles, of which one is in English, one in French, and the rest in Italian. The authors, however, number only twenty-nine, for many of them appear more than once, or even twice, often as co-authors. Interestingly, despite male hegemony in the Italian professorate, we have here almost twice as many female *romanisti* as male.

The very virtue of the book, the freshness of work still only partly done, is also its greatest vice; well rounded conclusions and clear statements of problems are scarce. Furthermore, those there are often pop up at unexpected moments, for these Italian scholars seldom share the Anglo-Saxon love for structured argument. Against what can often be an irritating vagueness, antiquarian narrowness or unwillingness to dare or to conclude much, we can throw into the other pan of our scales not only zest, but also technical skill. The book rests on good archival work and paleography, energetic compilation, and wide reading. The footnotes, which must take up half the text, are thus a fine hunting ground for any Romanist.

A few topics dominate the book. Of these, most belong to the history of literary high culture: books, libraries, printers, the university, inscriptions, chronicles. With only one article on music and one on sculpture, there is much less on the arts than on letters. At the same time, there is some social history, including three articles on the Jews and one quite skilled one on the evolution of a single Roman family, the Porcari. Furthermore, much of the end of the book is given to reports from a team of scholars who are studying one of the city's districts, *Rione Parione*, using the protocols of its notaries to reconstruct patterns of residence, labour, commerce, and devotion. Among these papers is a particularly interesting piece by Giovanna Curcio on the swift change in the city's houses as rents and population both rose rapidly, clogging alleys and crowding out the old gardens.

Rome is not an easy city to study. Unlike Venice and Florence, which had one elite and one government, Rome was a many-headed monster. There were two great poles, the Vatican and the Campidoglio, the seat of the waning commune. But there were myriad other centres of power: baronial fortresses, royal embassies, and the households of great cardinals. To make matters worse, the inevitable mortality of every regime, fated to vanish with each passing pontiff, gave the social and political scene and extraordinary lability. And no other Italian town was so full of mobile foreigners. So it has never been easy to write Roman history; there are still no great synthetic works like those on other cities.

In the face of such problems, the articles in this volume strive to weave lines of association, placing scholars in networks of papal politics, linking monastic libraries with skeins of neighborly patronage, sitting the evolution of inscriptions in the movement of papal politics, tunneling through the notarial records to reconstruct the evolution of a family's enterprises. It is as if those many poles of power in the city were draped in webs of influence, patronage and loyalty. We cannot see these whole, but we glimpse them everywhere. In this volume, as a kind of *leitmotiv*, we find again and again the tension between the two strongest of these poles, the papal court and the old civic order, for Sixtus IV was a durable centralizer. His pontificate

marks the final eclipse of civic aspirations and a swifter movement toward statism. The Romanizing inscriptions, the ambitious new Vatican Library, the new bridge and streets, the papal hospital of Santo Spirito, the transferal of the market from Campidoglio to Campo di Fiori all bear witness to a movement which sucked both culture and society into its wake.

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Fernand HALLYN, *La structure poétique du monde: Copernic, Kepler*, Paris, Seuil, 1987, 316 pp.

On sait gré à l'auteur, dans son *Introduction*, de présenter l'objet de sa démarche avec toute la clarté désirable et de l'avoir délimité de façon précise comme recherche de la *poétique* de l'hypothèse scientifique, c'est-à-dire comme recherche et mise en lumière de ce moment où l'oeuvre est d'abord rêvée et pensée comme seulement possible, avant de prendre forme. Les catégories fondamentales de la problématique abordée sont mises dans leur juste perspective culturelle. Le corps de l'ouvrage est bien articulé, chaque chapitre se ventilant en plusieurs sections brèves, qui apporte chacune, sans redondance, le supplément d'information attendu et nécessaire. La matière, évidemment abstraite, s'en trouve allégée et le livre, d'arduo qu'il aurait pu être, est, sans concession à la facilité, de lecture agréable. L'ensemble repose sur une documentation et une information solides et parfaitement intégrées.

On peut regretter l'absence de bibliographie, mais cette lacune se trouve partiellement compensée par l'abondance des notes et références, regroupées section par section. Un double index des noms cités complète l'ouvrage, et une table des matières, suffisamment détaillée, peut pallier l'absence d'un *index rerum*. La présentation typographique est bonne et les coquilles, s'il en est, sont certainement rares. Signalons cependant une formulation erronée de la deuxième loi de Kepler (p. 229) et relevons au passage ce "préjudice" en lieu et place de "préjugé" (p. 133), anglicisme étonnant sous cette plume.

Par la problématique abordée, par les nombreuses perspectives qu'il dégage, par les remarques et annotations pertinentes qui l'émaillent, comme par ses qualités formelles, le livre de F. Hallyn provoque l'intérêt de son lecteur, et cet intérêt ne se dément à aucun moment. C'est pourquoi il incite à la discussion, discussion dont on regrette de ne pouvoir ici donner qu'une ébauche.

Distinguant la spécificité de son enquête de celle de l'épistémologue comme de celle de l'historien des sciences, Fernand Hallyn évoque le cadre culturel de ses protagonistes, leur insertion dans ce cadre et leurs réactions face aux valeurs qui y sont véhiculées. Il retrace avec bonheur les corrélations, convergences et correspondances multiples qui relient, de façon souvent inattendue, les expressions culturelles les plus diverses, qui vont de l'architecture à la peinture, des sym-