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**The Wandering Jew as a synecdoche of anti-Jewish construction:  
A psychoanalytic perspective**

**Anthony David (Tony) Stroobant**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Theology  
The University of Auckland, 2006**

## **Abstract**

### **The Wandering Jew as a synecdoche of anti-Jewish construction: A psychoanalytic perspective**

After around half a century of progress, Jewish-Christian relations seem to have reached a plateau. Among many possible reasons, it appears that good intentions at “official” church levels continue to be subverted by traditional Christian supersessionism, especially as manifest in the “performed” life of the church, and in relation to Jews and Judaism.

The research generates a psychoanalytical understanding of Christian anti-Jewishness complementary to those from other fields, to try to understand more comprehensively its aetiology and why it manifests in such particular ways. The theoretical approach begins with Freud and the British Object Relations school, but includes perspectives from other streams of psychoanalysis, and from contemporary cognitive theory.

Utilising an “applied” psychoanalytic reading of The Wandering Jew as a synecdoche of Christian anti-Jewishness, the research argues that performance of the church’s sacred texts (traditionally interpreted in anti-Jewish ways) connects, via unconscious association, with latent primal fears and anxieties of worshippers. It is this regular, uncritical performance of such texts that keeps a largely unconscious, affect-laden, contemporary anti-Jewishness alive.

Understanding that “bodies” can bear powerful meanings, the research investigates the person of The Wandering Jew as a Christian anti-Jewish construction, and uncovers a number of psychoanalytically significant themes which closely relate to issues of human development. All of this, taken together, helps explain why Christian anti-Jewishness is often so passionately irrational, palpably incarnate, deep-rooted and difficult to educate against.

The research concludes with two theoretical reflections. The first explores whether the idea of the analytic third might help towards a better understanding of the potency of Christian anti-Jewish fantasy. The second is a discussion of whether it is helpful, given anti-Jewishness is no longer generally understood as “psychopathological”, to think instead of Christian anti-Jewish construction as taking place on neurotic islands having cultures of narcissism and paranoia.

The main implication of the research is that the church needs to take responsibility for its own anti-Jewishness which is what, in essence, is currently subverting better Jewish-Christian relations.

*The aim of man is to search  
for the cause and meaning of things*  
\* Rabbi Moses Isserles-Lazarus  
(the Rema)

*Heaven is the state where  
we see each other face to face*  
\* Saint Anthony

## **Dedication**

**In memory of Rev Dr J.J. Lewis, late Fellow and Principal of Trinity Methodist Theological College (Auckland) who opened a door for me to a Jewish world I hardly knew existed. *Shalom.***

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# Chapter One—Introduction

*I believe there is nothing new under the sun but that it is always possible to view something old in a fresh and original way. (Thomas H. Ogden)*

## 1.1 Title

“The Wandering Jew” as a synecdoche of Christian anti-Jewish construction: A psychoanalytic perspective.

## 1.2 Aim of the research

Arguing that a covert, ongoing Christian anti-Jewishness<sup>1</sup> is one significant reason why Jewish-Christian relations are currently “stuck”, the aim of this research is to make an original contribution to the understanding, from a psychoanalytic perspective, of the origins and nature of Christian anti-Jewishness as it continues to manifest itself in the life of the contemporary western church.

## 1.3 Key research question

Using the legend of The Wandering Jew as a “window” into the problem, this research asks to what extent might some aspects of current psychoanalytic<sup>2</sup> theory<sup>3</sup> and method (a) enrich

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<sup>1</sup> See section 1.5 (of this chapter) for a discussion of terms such as anti-Judaism, antisemitism and anti-Jewishness.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to around the 1980s it was common to use the term “psychodynamic” when discussing unconscious mental processes which were not strictly Freudian (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, pp. 57f.). Over recent years, the term “psychoanalytic” has come to be understood as both a “theory of mental structure and function” (Colman, 2001, p. 598) and a method of therapy. In the literature of the last 20 years “psychoanalytic” predominates over “psychodynamic” by a ratio of around 5:1, and seems to have become the preferred catch-all term. Nancy McWilliams (following Westen and Gabbard) chooses not to differentiate between the two terms—especially, she says, “when discussing theory rather than technique” (1994, p. 3). There is a similar tendency to use terminology such as therapist, psychotherapist, analyst and psychoanalyst interchangeably these days (Denman, 1993, p. 346).

<sup>3</sup> How theory is understood has been evolving, especially over recent decades. Sheila Greeve Davaney’s feminist perspective could usefully apply to psychoanalytic theory. In the following, I have substituted psychoanalytic for feminist:

Theoretical reflections and the frameworks within and through which they are articulated no longer appear as grand schemes with universalistic pretensions. Instead, theory has come to be interpreted as a heuristic device that clarifies presuppositions, gives a better grasp of the issues involved in [psychoanalytic] debates, locates [psychoanalytic] thought in relation to other theoretical proposals, and explores the repercussions of varying [psychoanalytical] frameworks. Theories and the assumptions that underlie them are thus contingent hypotheses, constructed not found, that need to be tested and continually revised. (Davaney, 1997b, p. 3)

our descriptions of Jews psychically constructed as “other” by Christians, and (b) help us better understand the aetiology of such constructions?

## **1.4 Delineating the problem**

One of the intended outcomes of this research is that it should be relevant to contemporary Jewish-Christian relations.<sup>4</sup> To that end, this section picks up what many perceive to be a significant and somewhat perplexing problem in contemporary Jewish-Christian relations—that progress has come to halt for some reason—and looks at some of the wide variety of opinion on why this problem exists. One particular avenue seems to suggest itself for further investigation, partly because it is one that appears to have been overlooked to date, but also because it may well facilitate a psychoanalytical approach to the problem—the intended hermeneutic of this research. What emerges is the possibility that behind stalled Jewish-Christian relations is—in essence—a covert Christian anti-Jewishness which is constantly subverting the relationship. To test this theory, the second half of this section (1.4) continues the process of peeling back some of the layers of meaning which, in the psychoanalytic view, typically underlie a problem such as Christian anti-Jewishness.

### **1.4.1 Have Jewish-Christian relations got “stuck”?**

The year 2005 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council (E. J. Fisher & Klenicki, 1990, pp. 27-8). As far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, it has come to be regarded as a “Magna Carta of...change” (Senior, 2003, p. 20), marking the beginning of a new era in inter-religious relations (International

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<sup>4</sup> Use of terms such as “Christian”, “Jew”, and “Jewish-Christian relations” raises the question of who are under discussion. Historical references will be quite specific—e.g., “the Jews of western Europe in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century”. In the contemporary context, I generally mean the Christians, Jews and Jewish-Christian relations of western Europe, Great Britain and those places that, broadly speaking, derive their cultural and religious traditions from Europe, such as North America, Australia and New Zealand. In using these terms I do so in a similar way to (for example, and in those four contexts respectively) Sartre (1948), Braybrooke (2000), Pawlikowski (2003), or Ryan (2004). I specifically do not include Orthodox Christians in my discussions, as, generally speaking, Orthodox-Jewish relations are in a very different place from those in the west (see, e.g., Papademetriou, 1990). The question has been raised with me: of what possible relevance is the subject of Jewish-Christian relations in a country like New Zealand with such a small Jewish population (c. 5000)? As many writers point out (e.g., Langmuir, 1990; Ostow, 1996; Rosenman, 2001; Sartre, 1948), Jews are not required to be present in order for antisemitism to flourish. Given that the antisemitically-constructed Jew is mostly a figment of the Christian imagination, “real Jews” are actually not wanted, as they might tend to disconfirm the antisemite’s fantasy.

Council of Christians and Jews, 2005), and is still regarded by many—both Christians and Jews—as a watershed in modern Jewish-Christian relations (e.g., E. J. Fisher & Klenicki, 1990; Rosen, 2005; Ryan, 2004).<sup>5</sup> While other churches have issued statements both before and since, *Nostra Aetate* represents what was only the start of a notably sustained effort on the part of the Catholic Church to keep Jewish-Christian relations on the church's agenda.<sup>6</sup>

Long before *Nostra Aetate* there were individuals—James Parkes, for example (Braybrooke, 1991; Everett, 1993; Kushner & Valman, 2004; Parkes, 1969)—who understood that there is a deep anti-Judaism endemic to Christianity, and who worked both within the church to raise awareness of this, and with Jews to begin building a new type of relationship. But this was by no means mainline Christian theology—Parkes, for example, often felt himself an outsider (Braybrooke, 1991, p. 13). It was the Holocaust that finally galvanised the churches (at an institutional level) to reflect upon what, at the very least, the French Roman Catholic bishops have called the “ecclesiastical docility” of the church during that catastrophe (Secretariat for Ecumenical and Religious Affairs, 1998, pp. 31-37), and everything that underpinned it: nearly two millennia of what Jules Isaac termed the Christian “teaching of contempt” towards Jews (Isaac, 1964), and what the Catholic bishops of the Netherlands subsequently called their own church's “catechesis of vilification” (Secretariat for Ecumenical and Religious Affairs, 1998, pp. 21-24).

“The Ten Points of Seelisberg” of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCCJ) in 1947, and part of the Report of the First Assembly of World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 (Brockway, van Buren, & Schoon, 1988) were the beginning of an international movement (at least at “official” church level) that continues to this day to radically re-define Jewish-Christian relations. More recently, scholars like A. Roy Eckardt,

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<sup>5</sup> 40 years on, there could be an impression that *Nostra Aetate* “simply appeared”, along with the many other reforms of Vatican II, because its time had come. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was finally approved after a two-year struggle, and then only in “watered-down” form because of intense pressure from church conservatives, and Arab political opposition (R. M. Brown, 1967, pp. 258-269).

<sup>6</sup> Around every ten years, the Roman Catholic Church has issued a fresh statement, which has had the effect of re-stimulating discussion about Jewish-Christian relations among (and between) both Christians and Jews (or at least those who are interested). The following is a list of Vatican documents; there are numerous additional statements from local bishops' conferences. Chronologically, significant Vatican statements have been: Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions [*Nostra Aetate*] (1965); Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (1974); Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church (1985); We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah (1998); Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past (1999); Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible (2003).

John Pawlikowski and Mary Boys are among those offering Christian theologies in which Jews and Judaism are included as sources of blessing (Ochs & Sandmel, 2001, p. 452), rather than being made objects of derision.

Few would dispute the progress of the past five decades or so. But there has been a feeling for some time—at least among those concerned for Jewish-Christian relations—that, in the words of Marcus Braybrooke, the process “has got stuck”, that there is a sense of “treading water”, that “Jews and Christians have climbed a long way in the last fifty years but they seem to have reached a plateau” (2000, p. 4). From personal experience, this finds expression at local level<sup>7</sup> in vague feelings of discontent that, after all this time, we seem unable to get beyond discussing the same sorts of things—like Jewish and Christian religious festivals, and “our father Abraham”—over and over. On the larger stage, there is concern that, after the post-war burst of enthusiasm, many of the mainline protestant churches, apparently in sympathy with Palestinians over against Israelis in the ongoing conflict in that region (although it may go deeper than that), seem long since to have “gone off” the subject of Jewish-Christian relations (Braybrooke, 2000, p. 7; Kessler, 2002).<sup>8</sup> There are also concerns (detailed shortly) that the “mixed messages” the Roman Catholic Church seems to be sending lately might be signalling a shift into “reverse gear” of that church’s Jewish-Christian relations policy (Bron, 2001, p. 5).

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<sup>7</sup> I refer to my involvement with the Auckland Council of Christians and Jews—a Jewish-Christian dialogue group of some 20 years’ standing (Carley & Paynter, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> The nature of the relationship (even that there *is* a relationship) between anti-Israel attitudes, (secular-modern) antisemitism, and traditional Christian anti-Judaism is hotly debated. Subsequent to publicity surrounding the arrest of alleged Israeli spies in New Zealand in 2004 there was desecration of Jewish graveyards in and around Wellington (Boyes, 2004, August 9; NZPA, 2004) and yet, in a television interview at the time, the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, hotly denied any connection between the two. In February 2005, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches called on member churches to seriously consider ways of not participating in “illegal activities related to the Israeli occupation” (Clancy, 2005). In February 2006, The General Synod of the Church of England overwhelmingly backed calls to follow in the American Presbyterian church’s footsteps and consider “divesting itself” from Israel (Lancaster, 2005, August 19; Misguided Anglicans, 2004; Petre, 2006). Some, such as Ed Kessler (2002) and Melanie Phillips (2002), are deeply concerned that these church attitudes are anti-Israeli and motivated not only by political concerns, but by an “anti-Judaism rooted deep in Christian theology.” Others are concerned at the apparent lack of balance (Petre, 2006), or even-handedness (Clancy, 2005), in the church’s criticism and proposed punishment of Israel; that, especially since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the behaviour of Israel and of the Palestinian Authority appear to be judged according to different criteria.

### 1.4.2 *Why might Jewish-Christian relations be stuck?*

This perception (that Jewish-Christian relations are in some sort of trouble) seems to be widespread, if the number of commentators offering an opinion as to why this may be so is anything to go by. Some reasons are seen to be historical. Paul Morris notes (2006, p. 10) that, while Jewish-Christian relations are largely understood as a post-Holocaust phenomenon, they began long before, as part of “the West’s passionate interest in the other”, initiated “almost exclusively by Christians, interested in converting others or learning from others or both.” After more than a century, Morris wonders what has been achieved (2006, p. 10). One possible inference—returned to shortly—is that Jewish-Christian relations remains fatally tainted by this sort of Christian imperialism. Peter Ochs and David Sandmel point out that changes to millennia-old Christian attitudes towards Jews are still actively resisted in some circles, and that “missionary activity and anti-Jewish rhetoric are still integral to sectors of the Christian community” (2001, pp. 452-3).<sup>9</sup>

Looked at in the current context, there are those who believe the heart of the problem is that the whole idea of Jewish-Christian relations is fundamentally flawed. Don Cupitt asks whether, in an era of globalisation, it is “too late to be talking Jewish-Christian dialogue” (1999, p. 285), and Neville Symington, in a similar vein, says, “the time has come for...a major revolution in consciousness...for rooting ourselves in a universal perspective” (2004b, p. 209). But most take a less extreme approach than either Cupitt or Symington. Braybrooke acknowledges that religion does indeed find itself in a very different world today, but suggests another reason for the plateau is that both Jews and Christians may have more important things on their minds nowadays (compared with the middle of last century)—such as the numerical decline of congregants in many places (2000, pp. 4-5). Scott Bader-Saye (2004, p. 24), reviewing a recent collection of essays on Jewish-Christian relations (Frymer-Kensky, Novak, Ochs, Sandmel, & Signer, 2000), identifies concern over a “growing secularism that trivializes religion”, and “internal disagreements on many central issues of faith and practice” as two further sources of distraction these days for both Jews and

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<sup>9</sup> Marc A. Krell points that, still, Jews face opposition from (what he regards as) both ends of the Christian spectrum:

On the one hand, right wing white supremacists, neo-Nazis and the KKK view Jews as the demonic minority with financial and political control over the majority Christian culture. On the other hand [i.e., from a leftist perspective], Jews have been associated with the...white European “Judeo-Christian” majority that has colonized minority cultures and is responsible for patriarchy. (Krell, 2001, p. 481)

Christians (see also Whaling, 1999, p. 106). Braybrooke continues by saying that less interest, overall, in relations with Jews among Christians may be due to the growing influence of African, Asian and South American churches, most of which are theologically conservative, have had little or nothing to do with Jews, and are generally pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli. All of this tends, nowadays, to marginalise concern about both anti-Judaism and antisemitism, where both were once high on the agenda of international ecumenical bodies, such as the World Council of Churches (Braybrooke, 2000, pp. 6-7).

Michael L. Cook believes there has been too much attention on what divides, and suggests both faiths focus on the main concern they have in common: justice. “Can Jews and Christians agree that it is more important to be doers of God’s will than mere hearers?” he asks (2003, p. 114). Morris’s experience is that such things are easier said than done. Despite the best of intentions, he says, Jews and Christians still often talk past each other. For Christians to “endlessly” ask “what Jews believe”, and for Jews to consider a person is Christian because he or she grew up in a Christian family, is for both groups to misunderstand two fundamentally different concepts of community, he says (1997, p. 4).

Some commentators think the reason dialogue has bogged down is theological. Braybrooke talks in terms of a reluctance on the part of members of both faiths to work out a positive theology, “to work out a theology of the other” (2000, pp. 7-8). Tony Bayfield (1999) and Michael Barnes (1999) think similarly, but in terms of a need to give the other “theological space”. Randi Rashkover explains that, to date, Jewish-Christian relations have been largely apologetic:

Bound by prescriptive definitions of their own religious identity, Jews and Christians remained guarded in their discussions with each other, as interested in protecting the essentials of their own faith as in venturing forth in dialogue with the other. (Rashkover, 2001, p. 435)

Rashkover believes that, at the start of the third millennium, less essentialist trends in religious thinking “permit the development of a riskier and more active approach to Jewish-Christian relations” (Rashkover, 2001, p. 435). The current theoretical environment may, indeed, be conducive to more liberal approaches but, as already noted, there are also potent conservative forces at work in the church today that will resist radically redefining the church’s relationship to people of other faiths, including—and probably especially—Jews.

If all this seems rather negative, it is worth reiterating what was said near the beginning: that in many ways there have been significant improvements in Jewish-Christian relations, especially at “official” levels. However, it is common in dialogue circles to hear about the difficulty of getting changes in attitude to “trickle down” from “official” levels of the church to the average congregant (Braybrooke, 2000, p. 1; Morris, 2006, p. 10; Sandmel, 2000, p. 369; Senior, 2003, p. 20). Melanie Wright argues that what lies behind the difficulty in getting “top level” changes to filter down may be out-of-date, hierarchical models of religious life where “authority rests with a relatively small number of specialists, whose role is to disseminate authoritative teaching to the ordinary member” (2002, p. 245). Specialists, she notes, who are predominantly white, male, middle-class and theologically trained (2002, pp. 246, 250), who tend to engage in cerebral exercises about texts, and produce institutional documents (2002, pp. 248-9). Morris adds that, in his experience, such people can get so caught up in inter-faith activities that they often become “highly marginal to their own [faith] communities” (2006, p. 10) and lose touch with what the average congregant believes. What needs addressing, Wright suggests (2002, p. 245), is the more radical problem of how institutional hierarchies inhibit democratic dialogue, rather than on how to accelerate the “trickle-down” of new theology within existing structures. “Religious change happens when we call for that change in a context that is willing to hear and respond to that call,” say Helen Fry, Rachel Montagu and Lynne Scholefield (2005, p. 217).

As an aside (though an important one), it needs to be said that this thesis enquires almost exclusively into what it might be on the *Christian* side of things that could be impeding better Jewish-Christian relations. This is where my experience lies. But, of course, as in any relationship, there is another side to the story. John Pawlikowski is only one among many who believes there are some “Jewish attitudes”, also, that need to be “challenged” (1990).<sup>10</sup> Why do Jews, including Jewish educators, show little interest in deepening their knowledge of fundamental Christian beliefs, he asks. There is a raft of reasons, historical and theological, as Pawlikowski acknowledges. But, still, he goes on, “Jews should not glibly maintain, as many do, that Christianity makes no difference for their

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<sup>10</sup> Hans Ucko (2005), at the 2005 ICCJ conference in Chicago, called the Jewish-Christian dialogue a “one-way-street”. Jewish reflections reconsidering Christianity are few, he says. Dabru Emet, a Jewish statement on Christians and Christianity, “seems not to have gained much support”. Christianity’s listening and learning from Judaism “in a one-way-direction” cannot become permanent, Ucko opines, “Otherwise there is a risk the dialogue itself will become anaemic.”

own faith perspective” (1990, pp. 36-7),<sup>11</sup> and he offers a list of questions about the relationship between contemporary Judaism and Christianity that he believes “Jewish thinkers” should at least consider (1990, pp. 37-8). Some in the Jewish community would, by and large, agree with Pawlikowski (1990, p. 39), and the discussion about “who should be trying to do what” is far from a completely one-sided sort of Christian handwringing, as the range of papers—both Jewish and Christian—on the ICCJ website (for example) illustrates.<sup>12</sup> However, as such material seems to suggest, the issues Jews have to grapple with are very different from those that Christians have to face up to. The concern of this thesis—as, indeed, I believe the concern of the church should be—is the latter: that is, the role of the church in the breakdown of Jewish-Christian relations, because it is nowadays generally understood that improvement in any relationship rests upon a willingness to understand where one has contributed, oneself, to any breakdown, and being prepared to change oneself if necessary, rather than demanding or expecting some change in the other.

In summary, there may well be a multitude of reasons why Jewish-Christian relations seems currently to be stuck on some sort of plateau. But what this research is looking for is some dimension to the problem which has been largely overlooked thus far, and which might help explain why many have found it, for some time now, so difficult an issue to get to grips with. Morris, it has been noted (above), understands Jewish-Christian relations to have been initiated by Christians for largely imperialistic reasons. That so little has actually changed in the relationship seems to imply that neither have Christian motives changed significantly. And yet, at least “officially”, many of the mainline churches—most conspicuously the Roman Catholic Church—have eschewed anti-Jewishness, have published clear statements to that effect, and disseminated teaching material to guide the faithful. If, despite the church’s best intentions, it is still anti-Jewish, then it is so in covert ways, perhaps in ways that it does not even, itself, understand. To use a psychoanalytic analogy, it may well be largely unconscious: so seamlessly a part of the culture of the church for so long, and so deeply ingrained, that most do not even see it. But it is there, continuing to shape Christian attitudes towards Jews and thus, largely out of awareness, Jewish-

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<sup>11</sup> Jacob Neusner, for example, sees little value in dialogue. “The two religions,” he says, “standing before one God, have, in fact, nothing in common—at least nothing in common that matters very much” (Greeley & Neusner, 1990, p. 278).

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.jcrelations.net>

Christian relations. The following section argues that—for those who have eyes to see—it may, however, be seen in what the church does, rather than what it says.

### **1.4.3 The church's orthodoxy versus its orthopraxis**

My contention is that what tends to constantly subvert “official” church intentions regarding reformed Christian attitudes towards Jews is the anti-Jewishness that is subtly—and often not so subtly—reinforced in the regular, “performed” life of the church, Sunday by Sunday, and Easter by Easter. This dissonance between what the church officially believes and what it actually does is what E. Byron Anderson calls “the tension between *orthodoxia* and *orthopraxis*” in the ongoing life of the churches (2003, p. 58). Traditionally, and for the sorts of reasons relating to hierarchy and authority in the church that Wright discusses (see above), the theology of the church has been understood as represented in its official statements, more than in its daily (i.e., worship) life. But it is to the latter we should look, argues Donald E. Saliers, if we want to know what is the actual “working” theology of the church, because “Worship in all its social-cultural idioms is a *theological* act.” “In fact”, he emphasises, “it is ‘primary theology’” (1994, p. 15). In worship, adds Anderson, the means by which the faith community enacts a theological narrative and grammar, in a sort of “liturgical catechesis”, is also the means by which the community appropriates that narrative and grammar (2003, p. 192). Similarly with the sacred texts of the church, says Bader-Saye, “Our readings are inevitably shaped by the social and political commitments of the reading community” (2001, pp. 458-9). “If there is truth to be found, it will be *in* and *through* the performed matrix of words and sign-acts” (Saliers, 1994, p. 141, author's emphases). The central issue, he goes on to say,

is not “what are the theological truths contained and stated in the texts?” but “what is being said and done in the liturgical action with the use of these words?” This latter question cannot be answered by recounting the earliest version of the liturgical texts under study, or by analyzing the language of the prayers as such. Rather, the actual performance of the language is done by a community. The “hermeneutics” of the assembly’s social, economic, and political/ethical energies and patterns are central. (Saliers, 1994, p. 141)

“We must recognise that texts do not do anything in themselves,” says D. Andrew Kille (2004, p. 56). “It is only in dynamic encounter between the text and a specific reader, in a

specific community, in a particular historical and cultural context that individuals engage, interpret, internalize and ultimately act on those texts.”

Two things need emphasising: first, that—generally speaking—neither the ritual nor the liturgy of mainline churches is nowadays overtly anti-Jewish. One of the main contentions of this thesis is that the church’s anti-Jewishness is to be found “down” at some other level (to use a psychoanalytic metaphor). Nevertheless—and this is the second point—worship (where ritual and liturgy are performed) provides the context, week by week, Advent by Advent, Easter by Easter, in which the unconscious anti-Jewishness of the church is sustained. Most Christian worship is not overtly anti-Jewish, but its contribution to anti-Jewishness in terms of context is continual and unrelenting. Thus, while Christian worship, per se, is not of primary interest in this research—rather, the unconscious mental processes evoked and informed by worship—throughout this thesis there is a constant reminder that it is *during worship* that whatever good intentions the church has for better attitudes towards Jews are constantly undone.

#### **1.4.4 The “Jewish trial of Jesus”**

As a prime example of how official changes in attitude towards Jews are constantly subverted by what happens “on the ground” in the life of the church, consider the “unlikely set of narratives” (Tyson, 2005, p. 44) constituting the so-called “Jewish trial of Jesus”,<sup>13</sup> enacted in one way or another as part of the church’s annual Easter celebrations.<sup>14</sup> Haim Cohen lists six significant ways in which the New Testament account is at odds with well-established provisions of Jewish law (1972, p. 98). Louis Waller adds, “Such wholesale violation of all the rules of law and procedure is not only highly improbable, but in view of the rigorous and formalistic exactitude for which the Pharisees<sup>15</sup> were of course notorious, rather inconceivable” (1996, p. 3). John Dominic Crossan argues that “It is not just the *content* of the trial(s) but the very *fact* of the trial(s) that I consider to be unhistorical”, mainly on the grounds that “a peasant nuisance nobody like Jesus” could not credibly have

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<sup>13</sup> Mt 26: 57-68; Mk 14: 53-65; Lk 22: 54-55, 66-71; Jn 18: 13-14, 19-24.

<sup>14</sup> The Revised Common Lectionary, by which many of the mainstream churches, internationally, order public reading of passages of the *Bible* has this story read twice annually around Easter: one of the synoptic gospel versions is read every Palm/Passion Sunday (Sunday before Easter) and the Johannine version is read every Good Friday (Friday before Easter) (Consultation On Common Texts, 1992, pp. 122-4).

<sup>15</sup> The Biblical account has it that it was the “chief priests and teachers of the law” who arrested Jesus (Mk 14: 1), rather than the Pharisees, although this does not detract from Waller’s point.

warranted such attention (1991, p. 117, author's emphases). Rather, what we have in this gospel story, Crossan explains:

is not a core of memory recalling what happened to Jesus under trial but a core of prophecy replacing memory's absence. The trial narrative was created from Psalm 2, and that prophecy's historicization, actualization, and popularization gave us the stories we now have in all five gospels. (Crossan, 1991, p. 117)

As many Biblical commentaries point out these days, the Passion narratives (of which the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus is part), like the rest of the gospels, were influenced by the rift that took place between Judaism and Christianity in the first two centuries of the common era (CE), and the polemic that subsequently developed. The politics that helped shape the gospel accounts were complex, and are comprehensively covered elsewhere (e.g., Braybrooke, 2000; Dacy, 2004; Dunn, 1999; Flannery, 1985; Kille, 2005; Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2003; Wistrich, 1991).<sup>16</sup> However, while the significance of the context that produced a story like the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus is well understood by some Biblical scholars<sup>17</sup> and those church leaders who are interested, this perspective is largely lost to “ordinary” congregations who hear it read out loud twice every Easter, year after year (Fleischner, 2005, p. 12). Or, worse, they get to see some “sword and sandal” version of the Easter story enacted in church, to a script cobbled together out of verses from here and there

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<sup>16</sup> While Christological polemic “is central and essential to Christianity itself,” says D. Andrew Kille, Christological polemic is more closely identified as being anti-Jewish (compared with, say, Hindus or Muslims) because Christianity itself began as a movement within Judaism and draws so much on its language, symbols and stories. This, however, is not the real issue, he says.

The question of antisemitism in the New Testament is not really an exegetical or historical question as it is a hermeneutical question. Let's restate the issue to make it clearer. The question is not so much “is the New Testament antisemitic?” as it is “what is there in the New Testament that so easily gives rise to antisemitic interpretations?” (2005, pp. 292-3).

What is there, as we have seen, is a story like the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus. And what causes it to be interpreted antisemitically, Kille goes on (drawing upon Theodore Rubin), is the “symbolic gap” that opened up when Christianity was torn from its Jewish roots. “Under the powerful influence of the psychological dynamics of splitting, idealization, and projection, what began as a family feud progressively becomes a struggle between good and evil, a cosmic battle for the whole world” (2005pp. 296-7). Kathleen Biddick (2003), as we shall see (below), believes the problem is another layer down: the fantasy that Christianity was discontinuous with Judaism early on became a typological trope (with supersession at its heart), and still shapes the way the church looks at its relationship with Jews and Judaism.

<sup>17</sup> That the Jewish trial may well be an anti-Jewish construction rather than historical fact is by no means universally agreed, even in recent, mainstream scholarship. Peter J. Tomson for example, in yet another analysis of how the biblical accounts of the death of Jesus contributed to anti-Jewish sentiment in the early church and beyond, after reviewing some of the anomalies comes to the view that “the radical conclusion that there was no valid trial... conflicts with the general impression gained from all the sources” (2005, p. 69). Tomson acknowledges that the story has a tendency to blame the Jewish authorities, but that *the existence of the account at all* might be part of the anti-Jewishness Tomson discusses is apparently not considered.

in the *Bible*, or, worse still, something like Mel Gibson's movie version of the Passion,<sup>18</sup> uncritically assembled out of the four gospel accounts, blaming "the Jews" for the torment and death of Jesus, which Gibson graphically and emotionally makes the focus of his movie, apparently to ram home Jewish culpability for these crimes (Meacham, February 14-15, 2004).

As an aside, in my experience as a worshipper in many places and over many years, the passion with which ordinary churchgoers enter into the role of "the Jews" denouncing Jesus in their annual Passion performance has to be seen to be believed, and one has to wonder where it is all coming from.<sup>19</sup> But even if not dramatised, and only read as the lessons for the day, I have never yet heard the Passion narratives accompanied by any sort of helpful critical comment, or contextualised, either by a reader or worship leader. Perhaps in deference to the time of year, or their status, the texts seem always to be left to "speak for themselves", with the preacher seldom contributing anything more than an imaginative interpolation to the *Bible* readings. Separated from its first century context, and with no information to the contrary, what Christian worshippers have confirmed, every Easter, all their lives, is that it was "the Jews" who were first to establish Jesus' "guilt", and send him down the road to crucifixion.

Almost all the evidence points to the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus being primarily anti-Jewish polemic, with little or no historical reliability or credibility. If this is accepted, then it is fraudulent—Paul Pruyser goes so far as to call it an "accusatory lie"—for the church (the "body of Christ") to pretend, every Easter, to have been the victim of "the Jews", when in fact for nearly two millennia it has been the other way around, and it has been Jewish bodies that have been made victim of church vilification, and Christian violence (Pruyser, 1977/1991, pp. 61-2). In psychoanalytic terms, it is a form of projection to falsely attribute intolerable thoughts, feelings or behaviour to others, when they belong to oneself (Colman, 2001, p. 588) and, since Freud (1911), it is understood to be one of the defining

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<sup>18</sup> *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

<sup>19</sup> Wistrich comments:

Clearly, the powerful emotions released by this tradition of Christian antisemitism (even before it became a raging fever under the Nazis) must reflect deep unconscious fears which have profound symbolic significance. Historians have often overlooked this psychological dimension, preferring to deal with the supposedly more "objective" economic, social, and political factors on the surface. Yet we cannot afford to ignore unconscious factors and more hidden sources if we are to come closer to understanding the riddle of antisemitism. (Wistrich, 1999a, pp. 5-6)

features of a paranoid style of mental organisation (Meissner, 1978, p. 99; D. Shapiro, 1965, p. 68).<sup>20</sup> In straightforward terms, it is disingenuous for Christians to continue to believe, and for the church to continue to reinforce the idea, that “the Jews” were primarily responsible for the death of Jesus, when over a century of critical scholarship has established that such an idea is quite inadequate for understanding the roots of the church’s relations with Jews. And yet, by and large, such simplistic notions persist.

At least at some levels, the church is well aware of all this, and “official” church and inter-faith statements have long exhorted Christians to use the Passion narratives with care. One of “The Ten Points of Seelisburg” in part says, “Avoid presenting the Passion in such a way as to bring the odium of killing Jesus upon all Jews or Jews alone” (International Council of Christians and Jews, 1947). Nearly half a century later, the Pontifical Biblical Commission is still saying that: “attempts to pin responsibility for Jesus’ death on the Jewish people is erroneous. Such an interpretation...has had disastrous consequences throughout history” (2003, ¶ 72). “To avoid mistakes of this kind, it must be kept in mind that the New Testament polemical texts...have to do with concrete historical contexts and are never meant to be applied to Jews of all times and places merely because they are Jews” (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2003, ¶ 87). Spelling out some of the practical implications of *Nostra Aetate*, Eugene Fisher says, “The passion accounts should never be read from the pulpit or in the classroom without an adequate catechesis and preparation” (E. J. Fisher, 1993, p. 80). In 1988, The Conference of United States Catholic Bishops published extensive guidelines for presentation of the Passion, noting that passion plays in various forms, particularly, evidence “a painful ignorance of the history and traditions of Judaism, of which only negative aspects and often caricature seem to form part of the stock ideas of many Christians” (National Conference of United States Bishops, 1988/2004, pp. 230-1).

And yet, in spite of all the directives and teaching, at the popular level, little changes. For many churches, the Easter pageant is still one of the highlights of the liturgical year, unintentionally (perhaps), but observably inflaming the sorts of anti-Judaic passions that, as recently as the middle of last century in some parts of Europe, had Christians on the streets

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<sup>20</sup> See chapter five for a discussion of paranoid styles of mental organisation in relation to Christian anti-Jewishness.

directly after Easter worship hunting down, beating and killing Jews (Finder, 1994; Flannery, 1985, p. 63; Wiesel, 1996, p. 23).

When confronted, churchgoers I have spoken with might concede that parts of the Passion narratives are, indeed, anti-Jewish but (it is said) there is little that can be done because it is there in the *Bible*, simply part of the “historical facts”. A worship leader might have a more sophisticated understanding, but responses have often implied that my concerns are “trivial”, that Easter worshippers (especially a church full of visitors) would “only want to hear the story”, or (indignantly) that these readings are “in the Lectionary”—the apparent assumption being that the church has provided some sort of canon within the canon, and that further thought about how edifying a particular text might or might not be is not required.<sup>21</sup> Robert W. Bullock’s assessment of how Jews and Judaism, still, are depicted in Christian worship is sobering:

Millions go to churches every Sunday. They enter a sacred environment of word, song, prayer and art. How Jews and Judaism are depicted in this environment, in the lectionary, hymns, prayers, and art is highly problematic. In the liturgical environment, supersession is endemic. (Bullock, 2001, pp. 73-4)

#### **1.4.5 Anti-Jewishness and Christian fantasy**

As has already been noted, Bader-Saye believes that these sorts of inconsistencies—between the *orthodoxia* and the *orthopraxis* of the church—are not due to oversight, or carelessness or indifference. The church’s real belief, its true theology, is revealed and passed on from generation to generation in its performed life—in what it actually does, during public worship, during the annual round of Christian festivals. It is this largely unconscious, ongoing anti-Jewishness, I am suggesting, that at least in part is what subverts the church’s best intentions towards more enlightened attitudes towards Jews, and what, on the Christian side, might be inhibiting Jewish-Christian relations from moving on from the present plateau to the sort of more significant theological discussions advocated by Braybrooke and others.

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<sup>21</sup> Great care is definitely required. Despite the readings given in the *Revised Common Lectionary* covering only a fraction of all that is in both testaments, Norman A. Beck finds at least 25 texts of “defamatory anti-Jewish polemic” (Beck, 2005). Among those included is the well-known vilification of the Pharisees (Mt 23: 1-14; Year A, Proper 23)—one of the key texts upon which the idea is based that God’s new covenant in Christ supersedes the old covenant with Israel (Heb 10:9; Year C, Advent 4)—this in spite of the claim of editors to have paid attention, in the Lectionary’s 1992 revision, “to the tragic history of the abuse of biblical materials to support Christian anti-Semitism. The need to avoid such abuse is one of the basic principles of this lectionary” (Consultation On Common Texts, 1992, pp. 78-9). See John H. Merkle (2005) for a more general discussion of what is still excluded, and included, in Christian worship to the detriment of Jews and Judaism.

Bader-Saye takes this line of thinking one step further by asking what it might be that lies behind this apparent reluctance of worshipping Christians to let go of their anti-Jewishness. What there might be, he suggests, are ongoing, grandiose fantasies of power and domination.

For too long the practices of Christendom have bent our interpretations to serve the reproduction and confirmation of Christian cultural and political dominance. Until this lingering lust for domination is addressed and challenged in the post-Christendom church, we will continue to foster...interpretations of scripture that serve to underwrite Christian power. (Bader-Saye, 2001, pp. 458-9)

What Bader-Saye terms “Christian cultural and political dominance” has predominantly found expression in the church’s supersessionist, or replacement, theology.<sup>22</sup> This, says Kathleen Biddick (2003), is much more than just one among many theological ideas of the church. Paul’s new theology of circumcision—the Christian “circumcision of the heart”, over against the Jewish circumcision of the flesh (Romans 2: 28-29)—became, from late antiquity onwards, a typological (or figural) way of thinking which has shaped how the church looks at history—and its relationship with Jews and Judaism, in particular—ever since (2003, pp. 5, 12). At the core of this typological thinking, Biddick contends, is what Pruyser calls an “untutored fantasy” (1977/1991, p. 52) of supersession, and unconsciously-operating supportive practices that the church has not yet acknowledged (Biddick, 2003, pp. 1-2).

A number of commentators find the ongoing, covert imperialism of the church, and its underlying fantasies of supersession, disquieting. Catholic theologian Luke Timothy Johnson notes that while *Nostra Aetate* deplores antisemitism “at any time and from any source”, it conspicuously fails to acknowledge the church as one of those sources, and that “the same combination of contrition and obtuseness has often characterized subsequent Vatican statements and gestures” (2003, p. 17).<sup>23</sup> Johnson sees a covert imperialism also lying behind “the Vatican’s obtuseness in pursuing the canonization of Pius IX, Pius XII, and Edith Stein” (2003, p. 15).<sup>24</sup> Others wonder at the establishment of a Carmelite convent

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<sup>22</sup> Supersessionist or replacement theology is the Christian claim that, because of their rejection of Christ, the previous covenant relationship between God and the Jewish people has been replaced, or superseded, by God’s relationship with the church and Christians (Braybrooke, 2000, chap. 9; Kessler, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> The Vatican document *We Remember* is often cited as a prime example.

<sup>24</sup> It is frustration at the “continuing denials, obfuscations and subtle (he would say specious) distinctions made by Catholic defenders of Pius XII than by the actual behavior of the pope” that Johnson believes lies behind the

in Auschwitz in the 1980s, and the canonisation of Polish Catholic priest Maximillian Kolbe, who may have opposed the Nazis, but also was founder of a viciously antisemitic newspaper in pre-war Poland (Wistrich, 1999b). Notwithstanding the consistent personal involvement of John Paul II in fostering better relations with Jews, and the documents published in the same connection during his pontificate, Michal Bron finds himself “bewildered” at examples like these, and that they seem evidence of an apparent shift into “reverse gear” in Jewish-Christian relations (2001, p. 5). Johnson finds a worryingly patronising attitude towards Jews still evident in the Vatican’s recent statement *Dominus Iesus* (2000). Addressing (then) Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Johnson says (inter alia), “Certainly Jews don’t need a Vatican functionary explaining their place in God’s plan” (2002, p. 8). Even the public self-negation of those Christian historians and theologians “who seem willing to eviscerate Christianity altogether” (for its sponsorship of antisemitism and its complicity in the Holocaust), says Johnson, “simply continues the pattern of Christian grandiosity” (2003, p. 17).<sup>25</sup> The central thrust of Johnson’s (and others’) argument is that what primarily needs to happen to further Jewish-Christian relations is that Christians need to change. And to do that they need to understand that, at some deep level, the church is still wedded to imperialistic fantasies of omnipotence, especially in relation to Jews. “Can Christians be really Christian without being triumphalist towards Jews?” R. Kendall Soulen asks. For him, this is one of many perplexing questions, arising out of the church’s considering anew its relation to the God of Israel in the aftermath of the Holocaust, that the church has hardly begun to get to grips with yet (1996, p. x). Johnson is quite certain what needs to happen: “Christians need to do more than make symbolic gestures or eloquent apologies... Christians need to change in fundamental ways. But they need to change as Christians” (2003, pp. 16-17). “A genuine recognition of this [past Christian failure and Christian contribution to the Holocaust]”, says William S. Campbell, “means an end to all Christian triumphalism” (1999, p. 233).

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“rhetorical overkill” that characterises much of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s writing on this particular subject (Goldhagen, 1996; 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Johnson cites Clark Williamson’s *A Guest in the House of Israel*, A. Roy Eckhart’s *Jews and Christians*, and Rosemary Radford Reuther’s *Faith and Fratricide* as examples of a desire to atone for the past by throwing oneself on one’s sword. What is really needed, contends Johnson, is “the suicide of Christian truth claims” (2003, p. 17).

Johnson goes on to give the church a considerable amount of practical advice on how to go about getting over its triumphalism. But what I am interested in is what might lie, in turn, behind the church's stubborn, grandiose fantasies. A widely accepted psychological insight is to understand that what commonly underlies fantasies of omnipotence are fears and insecurities of some sort, especially where the dominant psychological organisation is paranoiac.<sup>26</sup> It is not difficult to see what these might have been during the first centuries of the common era. Until Christianity became the state religion under Constantine, it was a period of high anxiety for the early church. Within, the major task was to try to forge its own identity over against Judaism, with which (to make matters even more difficult) it at first had so much in common. Without, it was often ferociously persecuted by the Romans. What Johnson calls "the primal trauma" (2003, p. 15) experienced by the first Christians as a result of all this, it is generally understood nowadays, was the background against which much of the New Testament and the writings of the early church were set down, especially those parts which are understood to be, if not intrinsically anti-Jewish, then readily interpreted as such (see discussion above).

However, after nearly two millennia of Christendom, such fears and anxieties clearly no longer directly drive the ongoing anti-Jewishness of the church. "These days are past," says Campbell, "and it should now no longer be necessary to continue to define ourselves negatively in opposition to each other" (1999, p. 233). And yet the church still does so. Pruyser (1977/1991, pp. 60-1) suggests it is a way of coping to which the church has become habituated long beyond the time it was originally needed in an erstwhile stressful situation.

But habit alone does not come anywhere near to explaining the passionate endurance of Christian anti-Jewishness. So if not habit, and if the Christian fears and anxieties of two thousand years ago have long since been inapplicable—at least in any literal sense—where *now* lies the wellspring of the fear and anxiety that appear, somehow, to be driving a largely unconscious, often passionate, ongoing anti-Jewishness, that proves so stubbornly difficult to educate against? Chapter four of this thesis addresses this question. Then, what is the link between the fears and anxieties lying behind New Testament stories such as the so-called

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<sup>26</sup> What paranoid people suffer overwhelmingly from is fear, says McWilliams (1994, p. 208). "Even the most grandiose paranoid person lives with the terror of harm from others and monitors each human reaction with extreme vigilance."

Jewish trial of Jesus, and the fears and anxieties lying behind the ongoing anti-Jewishness of the contemporary church? There is no straight-line connection between the two because, as has already been said, the context into which the early church, and its texts, came into existence has long gone. Yet, evidently, there *is* some sort of connection because, as has also already been noted, it is at least to some extent through the performance of these New Testament texts in church that contemporary anti-Jewishness is kept alive. If there is no overt connection, one could suspect it might be covert. But, if so, in what way does it work? Chapter three of this thesis responds to this question.

#### **1.4.6 Psychoanalysis as one of many possible hermeneutical lenses**

Reflecting upon the cluster of ideas that come together in this last paragraph suggests to me that psychoanalysis might have something to offer towards better understanding how and why Christians continue to construct Jews (anti-Jewishly) as other, and it is this possibility that is the main theme of this thesis. However, it needs to be acknowledged at the outset that there are those whose reaction would likely be to emphatically resist such an approach.

First, while it has long been generally understood that psychoanalysis has become an enduring part of modern culture (Ricoeur, 1970), it is still the conventional psychoanalytic wisdom that there is a need for a clear distinction between clinical psychoanalysis and the “applied” variety. “The further one moves from the individual patient,” says Paul Gordon, “the less purchase psychoanalytic ideas can have” (2001, p. 27). Donald Spence similarly warns that not maintaining a proper distinction between “clinical happenings and general truths”, potentially fails to do justice to either (1982, p. 33). This is a methodological concern that needs to be addressed early in the next chapter.

Gordon also has a rather more radical criticism of applied psychoanalysis. It is a “politics of defeat”, he argues, to abandon critical social-political (by which he basically means Marxist) analysis in favour of psychoanalytic approaches. One of the earliest Marxist critiques of Freud’s theories, Gordon says, was Freud’s “rendering individual what was irredeemably social” (2001, p. 26).<sup>27</sup> Even though Freud knew first hand of the persecution

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<sup>27</sup> Contrary to the impression Gordon might convey, Freud was well acquainted with Marx’s theories, and argued that “psychological factors” need at least to be considered alongside (and are perhaps even determinative of) economic conditions:

The strength of Marxism clearly lies...in its sagacious indication of the decisive influence which the economic circumstances of men have upon their intellectual, ethical and artistic attitudes. A number

of Jews in central Europe, Gordon contends he had “nothing of substance” to say on the subject of racism<sup>28</sup> (2001, p. 19), as have few of his followers (2001, p. 22).<sup>29</sup> With the advent of postmodernism, continues Gordon, psychoanalysis, “by stepping into the vacuum left by the abandonment of all metanarrative, has tended to put mind over society” (2001, pp. 22-23), the irony being that:

in their move from politics to the academy, and the world of ‘discourse’, the postmodernists may have simply exchanged one grand narrative, historical materialism, for another, psychoanalysis...And the claimed radicalism of psychoanalysis, in the hands of the postmodernists at least, is not a radicalism at all but a prescription for a politics of quietism, fatalism and defeat.  
(P. Gordon, 2001, p. 31)<sup>30</sup>

At first glance, Gordon appears to want to totally demolish the idea that contemporary psychoanalysis might have anything relevant to say about a social-institutional problem like anti-Jewishness—that, indeed, psychoanalytic approaches throw a smokescreen across such problems, rather than leading to any better understanding. But a closer reading reveals that Gordon is not quite so unequivocal. What he is objecting to is what he sees as a contemporary British school that says nothing else really matters except unconscious mental processes, and the kind of fatalistic position this leads to, and solutions

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of connections and implications were thus uncovered, which had previously been almost totally overlooked...[But] it is altogether incomprehensible how psychological factors can be overlooked where what is in question are the reactions of living human beings; for not only were these reactions concerned in establishing the social conditions, but even under the domination of those conditions men can only bring their original impulses into play—their self-preservative instinct, their aggressiveness, their need to be loved, their drive towards obtaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure. (Freud, 1932-36b, p. 178)

Slavoj Žižek observes that the problem with earlier psychoanalytic accounts of racism was, first, an “abstract-psychologistic approach” that seemed to disregard concrete social and cultural conditions and, secondly, an “all too hasty pseudoconcrete application of specific clinical categories (paranoia, compulsive neurosis, etc.)” (1998, p. 154).

<sup>28</sup> “Racism” and anti-Jewishness are not synonymous, but are close enough to be discussed together at this point. Discussion of terms such as anti-Judaism, antisemitism and racism follows in the next major section of this chapter.

<sup>29</sup> Gordon cites Frantz Fanon as one of the few to discuss racism from a psychoanalytic perspective, although he adds, “it has to be stressed that his psychoanalysis is a highly idiosyncratic one.” “It is somewhat galling, therefore, to witness attempts at the incorporation and accommodation of this radical spirit and revolutionary man into a psychoanalytic canon, even an ‘alternative’ one, or his incarnation as some kind of progenitor of ‘cultural studies’” (2001, pp. 21-22).

<sup>30</sup> David James Fisher puts the giving away of Marxist socio-economic analysis to psychoanalytic interpretations somewhat earlier than Gordon, in the immediate post-war years. Especially in America (where, for example, many of the Frankfurt School ended up) there was “a marked shift away from politics toward peaceful reforms and educational concerns...Franklin D. Roosevelt is quoted instead of Marx...” (2004, p. 70).

this school proposes that Gordon, at least, finds laughable (2001, p. 29).<sup>31</sup> The question is not, Gordon goes on:

whether or not racism operates at an unconscious level. There is clearly too much evidence to deny this. The question is, rather, how important is this unconscious working? Should it be, can it be, the focus of anti-racist strategy?  
(P. Gordon, 2001, p. 29)

This thesis does not intend to argue that Christian anti-Jewishness can only be understood, or even can be better understood, through the lens of psychoanalysis. As a review of the literature shows (1.6 in this chapter), there is currently a majority view that something like Christian anti-Jewishness is brought into being and shaped by too many factors (in psychoanalytic terms, is “overdetermined”)<sup>32</sup> to be understood in only one way. One of the assumptions (broadly speaking) of this research is that a psychoanalytical view of where Christian anti-Jewishness comes from, and why it manifests in the ways it does, might be laid *alongside* the large number of other analyses of the same subject (historical, sociological, theological, etc.) in order that the problem might be *more comprehensively* understood. This does not imply criticism of other approaches, although a number of commentators believe that “something” seems to have been missing in most approaches to date.<sup>33</sup> Gavin I. Langmuir notes that when researchers into prejudice focus on purely cognitive explanations, neglecting the psychological, “part of the phenomenon escapes them” (1990, p. 324). Rustin (1991), Clark (2003, p. 26), and Hinshelwood (2004, p. 16) all say that, while sociology and political studies can offer a very good understanding, the reason it seems to be partial is because the irrational mental processes, the hopes, fears and emotions that uphold oppressive structures need to be “recognized and confronted as such” (Rustin, 1991, p. 71). Ackerman and Jahoda similarly observe:

anti-Semitism must be observed as both a social and as a psychological phenomenon. Every attempt to seek its determinants at one level while neglecting the other must

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<sup>31</sup> Gordon writes in the British context. Jerry Gold (2002), although writing about another time, another place, and another dynamic, has a similar concern in the United States over “the failure of successive generations of analysts” to “continue the pursuit of a socially conscious” psychoanalytical theory and practice as propounded by Harry Stack Sullivan and Erich Fromm around the middle of last century. The reasons are complex, but Gold’s main contention is that Sullivan and Fromm were marginalised at the time by the psychoanalytic establishment. “As a group, analysts in mid-century were white, male, middle-class and authoritarian. Such demographics did not lend themselves to courageous protest or to taking a serious look into the abyss of ‘otherness’ willingly” (2002, p. 152).

<sup>32</sup> See footnote 59.

<sup>33</sup> The apparent gap in the literature (psychoanalytic perspectives on anti-Jewishness) is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

fall short of a sufficient explanation. All forms of interpersonal behavior—including anti-Semitism—are the result of a continuous interplay between intrapsychic needs and social factors. (Ackerman & Jahoda, 1950, p. 73)

Nor, as Elaine Wainwright observes, is the solution only better education. Christian understandings of Judaism might be becoming more informed, she says, but “the profound anti-Judaizing of the psyche yet remains intact for much longer” (Farley et al., 2004, p. 121).

Wainwright continues:

De-constructing the anti-Jewish Christian psyche is...a task that will involve collaboration among people with a wide range of skills beyond biblical scholarship, as well as a call to each Christian to a journey of deep conversion. (Farley et al., 2004, p. 125)

#### **1.4.7 Summary**

This research is relevant to the task of improving contemporary Jewish-Christian relations in that it endeavours to get behind some of the reasons why Jewish-Christian relations currently seem to be stuck. One reason is that an entrenched, covert, often passionate, anti-Jewishness (seen most clearly in the performed life of the church) constantly subverts intentions at “official” levels for any radically new understanding of the relationship between the church, and Jews and Judaism. One of the significant factors lying behind this anti-Jewishness is an enduring, imperialistic Christian fantasy of supersession, especially in relation to Jews and Judaism, which lies almost entirely outside of the church’s awareness. This may well mask some sort of fear or anxiety. But given the church is now so far removed from its fraught beginnings, what are the contemporary fears and anxieties that performance of New Testament texts appears to activate, and by what psychological process(es) are the two connected across the millennia? Chapters three and four of this thesis address these issues.

When the problem is analysed and articulated in these terms, it suggests that psychoanalysis might have a useful perspective to offer. However, such use of “applied” psychoanalysis, while widely accepted since Freud, needs to be undertaken with care (see chapter two), and not in the sense of critiquing other approaches, but that it might fill an apparent gap in the research to date, and lie alongside understandings arising from other disciplines, to give a more comprehensive picture of the aetiology of ongoing Christian anti-

Jewishness which, from the Christian side at least, contributes significantly to the apparent current lack of progress in Jewish-Christian relations.

## **1.5 Excursus on terminology**

To recollect, because my interest is in Jewish-Christian relations, the primary intention of this thesis is to understand more comprehensively how and why what I have so far termed the “anti-Jewishness” one sees in the performed life of the contemporary church continues to manifest itself as it does. “Anti-Jewishness”, at least as I use it, is something of a catch-all term. It is more usual to talk of “anti-Judaism” when referring to traditional church beliefs and attitudes, and to “antisemitism” when discussing more recent and secular phenomena. The relationship between these two, however, is complex, and still vigorously debated. For the sake of clarity during the substantive discussions in the rest of this thesis, an excursus is required to consider anti-Judaism, antisemitism, anti-Jewishness, and related matters.

### **1.5.1 Anti-Judaism and antisemitism**

Like *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican statement *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* had a long, fraught gestation, finally appearing in what, again, some felt was “watered down” form in 1998 (Bron, 2001, p. 10). While most Jewish responses were appreciative of the church’s preparedness to engage with as sensitive a matter as the Holocaust, disappointment in the detail was almost universal—not only in the Jewish community (e.g., International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, 1998), but also among many Catholic clergy and theologians (Bron, 2001, p. 11). Of the many criticisms, one of the most trenchant was of the way the church had produced a document opposing (traditional, religious) anti-Judaism and (secular-modern) antisemitism, in a way which “seems to minimize the responsibility of the Catholic Church [in connection with the Holocaust] and its influence on education throughout Catholic Europe” (Bron, 2001, p. 12).

The Catholic church, for its own reasons, chose to join one side of what is still a controversial question (Flannery, 1985, p. 289): namely, the relationship between anti-Judaism and antisemitism. Wistrich cites portions of *We Remember* as evidence that the Vatican understands antisemitism to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century mutation of an anti-Judaism formerly based in religion, “into a set of prejudices whose origins were sociological, political, springing from a ‘false and exacerbated nationalism’ and... certain ‘pseudoscientific’ ideas

about superior and inferior people” (Wistrich, 1999b, p. 22). Wistrich (and others) interpret *We Remember* as understanding that antisemitism is something quite apart from the church. Then, at the other end of the spectrum, there are those who regard Christianity as essentially, and almost irredeemably, antisemitic because it came into existence, and built its self-identity, primarily by defining itself over against Judaism.<sup>34</sup> These, then, are the two poles of the argument, says D. Andrew Kille (2005, p. 292). “Some consider antisemitism to be an aberration or distortion of Christianity, while others believe that antisemitism is deeply ingrained in the Christian message itself and inherent in the foundational documents of the tradition—the Christian scriptures.”

Most commentators, however, understand the relationship between anti-Judaism and antisemitism to be too complex to simply dichotomise the argument in this way.

Antisemitism “has synchronic and diachronic dimensions,” says Robert Chazan, “and must be understood in terms of both contemporary societal patternings and prior ideational legacy” (1997, p. x). Flannery explains:

Ontologically considered (in essence), Christian and modern racist antisemitism are radically different and opposed; historically they form a continuum. Modern racist antisemitism, as exemplified in its purist culture by the Nazi regime, would not have been possible without centuries of anti-Judaic and antisemitic precedents. (Flannery, 1985, p. 290)

While clearly no consensus exists, the majority opinion nowadays is that anti-Judaism and antisemitism segue into each other, and that it is hardly possible to discuss the sort of anti-Jewishness seen in the performed life of the church discussed above, without considering both.

As with anti-Judaism, a detailed discussion of antisemitism, per se, is beyond the scope of this thesis. The subject is, in any case, well covered elsewhere—at least as it is conventionally understood (e.g., Flannery, 1985; Langmuir, 1990; Wistrich, 1991). In summary, the term was coined as a euphemism for a non-religious (“racial”) type of Jew-hatred by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wistrich, 1991, p. 252), although oppression of Jews based on ideas of “bad blood” (Wistrich, 1991, p. 36)—that is, on grounds of familial descent rather than religion—dates back to late 15<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Catholicism, when the church wanted a rationale for continuing to discriminate

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<sup>34</sup> See footnote 16.

against Jews who had converted (A. Davies, 1975, p. 571). The antisemitism of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe is often attributed to pseudo-scientific ideas of race generated by the new fields of anthropology and biology, but there are arguments that it goes back further. Davies (1975, pp. 571-2) places the roots of antisemitism in two things: first, as the result of the awakening of a “terrible fear in the breasts of everyone” who stood to lose politically from the liberalism and emancipatory tendencies of the Enlightenment and, secondly, in the *Weltanschauung* of the Age of Reason itself which, despite its cosmopolitan pretensions, was ethnocentrically white, and western European (see also Garb, 1995, p. 24).<sup>35, 36</sup> Lawrence Rose (1990) notes how these sorts of influences in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century German culture transmuted Christian anti-Judaism in Germany, first, into “enlightened” philosophical antisemitism, then into atheistic social radicalism, and thence into extreme racism. Kille, however, locates the origins of antisemitism much further back—somewhere in the late-New Testament/early-church period. “While early Christian anti-Judaism was essentially *theological*,” he says (2005, p. 299, author's emphasis), “the process of dissociation and projection expanded the image of ‘the Jew’ far beyond theological considerations.” Kille goes on to catalogue the anti-Jewish perceptions that emerged out of each new social context (e.g., the mediaeval blood libel),<sup>37</sup> and concludes, “We must acknowledge that these group mechanisms had their origins in the Christian struggle for identity over against Judaism, but they have moved far beyond the influence of the church” (2005, p. 300). Biddick takes Kille’s argument one step further. To recollect, she identifies a supersessionist, “before/after”, typology underlying the way the church has understood itself (particularly in relation to Jews and Judaism) since the time of Paul. This form of thinking has found its way, typologically, even into secular modernity, Biddick contends (2003, p. 1), in discussions just like this, for example, which she sees as “anxious strategies to periodize or not to periodize Jewish-Christian relations” (2003, p. 10).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> In a similar vein, Clarke (2003, p. 12) notes the argument that “with the demise of slavery some people sought new justifications for maintaining the subordination of those who had earlier been exploited by being counted as property.”

<sup>36</sup> Zygmunt Bauman argues that it was modernity that not only made racism possible, but also created the demand for racism (see footnote 42 below).

<sup>37</sup> See footnote 54.

<sup>38</sup> It is this that Biddick believes historians need to work through in order to transform the way we think about Jewish-Christian relations, then and now, because it hides at its core, even in its secular-modern incarnation, Christian supersessionary fantasies (2003, 12).

What both Kille and Biddick advocate is an understanding that antisemitism has its origins in, or a little after, New Testament times, rather than only a century or two ago, as has commonly been understood for some time. Kille argues that Christian anti-Judaism—manifest in what would nowadays be called the “official” Jewish-Christian relations policy of the church<sup>39</sup>—ran on a parallel path alongside Christian antisemitism (expressions of Christian anti-Jewishness deriving more from some later context than the New Testament). Biddick argues for letting go of such distinctions, and focusing instead on the supersessionist fantasy that, from Paul to the present, has underlain Christian anti-Jewishness. Either way, the contemporary church inherits a complex of anti-Jewishness. During worship the Christian mind and heart may, yet again, be stirred up against Jews and Judaism *primarily* by performance of the Biblical text. But some form of antisemitism is very likely lurking in the wings, informed only indirectly (following Biddick, *typologically*) by the Biblical tradition. It may be seen, for example, in the late-classical period in the way the Church Fathers developed a hermeneutical framework of the “two Israels” (Ruether, 1974, chap. 3); in the middle ages, the way the “Old” and New Testaments were laid out relative to each other in some manuscript versions of the Bible (Biddick, 2003, pp. 3-4); and in the late-mediaeval/early-modern period, the legend of The Wandering Jew. All, following Biddick’s argument, are examples of Christian antisemitism. By way of comparison, the Holocaust last century is an example of secular-modern antisemitism, as is, some would argue, the treatment today of Israel by some of the churches (e.g., Lancaster, 2005, August 19).

To summarise, my position from this point onwards is to understand that, generally speaking, from post-New Testament times until the present day, Christian anti-Jewishness is not informed by *either* anti-Judaism *or* antisemitism (as both these terms are conventionally understood), but by some combination of the two. This implies that, along with the likes of Kille and Biddick, I am breaking from what is probably still the mainstream understanding

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<sup>39</sup> The practical outworking of the church’s supersessionist theology regarding Jews and Judaism was what Biddick calls the “Augustinian contract”, in which the church discriminated against Jews, but at the same time protected Jews “as witnesses of the incomplete nature of redemption” (2003, p. 9). Of course, contrary to church policy, some clergy frequently roused their congregations to murderous violence against Jews. But equally, there were bishops and clergy who offered sanctuary to Jews from mob actions—for example, during the First Crusade (Flannery, 1985, p. 92).

of antisemitism as having emerged sometime in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as a feature of secular modernity.

The particular combination of anti-Judaism and antisemitism I am interested in is the sort that lies beneath the hostility against Jews I see stirred up all the time in the performed life of the church, which I understand to be primarily informed by the New Testament stories (anti-Judaism), and only secondarily (although not necessarily insignificantly) by antisemitism. As I have already said, it is this combination of the two that I call “anti-Jewishness”. And, as I have already argued, it is such anti-Jewishness which remains close to the Christian tradition, but is not exclusively so, that I believe needs to be better understood as covertly subversive—from the Christian side—of the possibility of better Jewish-Christian relations.

### **1.5.2 A caveat**

Finally within this excursus, a discussion is required of some of the difficulties with terminology such as anti-Judaism, antisemitism, and suchlike. To take what is perhaps the least problematic first, the anti-Judaism espoused by the church for nearly two millennia focuses on undermining the claims of Judaism at a *religious* level. This found expression theologically in the church’s understanding that Christianity had superseded Judaism (as discussed above). And while Jews were, indeed, discriminated against to varying degrees by the church, there were limits, and such discrimination had a theological rationale (see footnote 39). It may seem like splitting hairs, and it surely was of no comfort to Jews, but their persecution—at least “officially”—was *primarily* because of their religion (Judaism), not because of who they were as individuals or a community, and hence the term: the “anti-Judaism” of the church. In practice, as already discussed above, beyond the first few centuries of the common era, Jews were subjected to a combination of anti-Judaism and Christian antisemitism, the first as a result of the official policies of the church, and the second as a result of the culture of Christendom.

There is no such parallel meaning with the term “antisemitism”, or even “anti-Semitism”, as it is often spelled. “Semitic” may have any number of legitimate meanings—describing, for example, a language group including Hebrew and Arabic (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003, p. 1606). But the term antisemitic does not refer to some sort of aversion

to these languages, nor does it apply to Arabs (who are “semitic”, according to some nosologies).<sup>40</sup> It applies only to Jews and—as already mentioned—originated as a 19<sup>th</sup> century euphemism for Jew-hatred.<sup>41</sup>

Terms like “antisemitism” and “racism” are understood by many theorists to have no essential reality but, rather, to be ideological—that is, to be a rationalisation for behaving in certain ways.<sup>42</sup> This, usually, is organised as a politics of exclusion and repression (Wistrich, 1999a, p. 2) behind which, Clarke says, lies psychological need:

The word “race” has been, and still is, associated with ideas of inferiority, superiority, hierarchy and persecution. “Race” evolved out of pseudo-scientific Darwinist theories in the nineteenth century stressing that biological and natural difference was inherent and unalterable... “Race” is a product of scientific enquiry, a fictitious construction, a category projected onto “others” in order to classify and therefore control. “Race” is therefore a *container* or more specifically a *containment* of our fear of difference, of a particular kind, or specific “other”. (Clarke, 2003, p. 38, author's emphases)

Similarly, Langmuir understands “antisemitism”, like racism, to be empty of any essential meaning, because “the Aryan myth on which it depended is now recognized as obviously false” (1990, p. 311).

But more than this, Langmuir goes on to say, the very idea of antisemitism “impedes rather than aids understanding of hostility against Jews”, because it implies that antisemitism is a reaction of non-Jews “to some unique and unchanging...real characteristics of Jews” (1990, pp. 314-5). This discussion could equally be about the church’s anti-Judaism, or the combination of anti-Judaism and antisemitism I have called anti-Jewishness. The fundamental problem with a term like antisemitism, as it is commonly employed, Langmuir argues, is the idea that there is something unique and enduring about antisemitism that does not apply to other types of ethnocentric or religious hostility. This in turn rests upon a value judgement about Jews which is not based upon anything empirical. “Objectively it is

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<sup>40</sup> Bauman notes that the Nazis grew increasingly cool towards the term because it was ostensibly targeted against some of the most devoted German allies as well as Jews (1989, p. 34).

<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this terminology see Almog (1989) and Wistrich (1991, p. xvi).

<sup>42</sup> Sander L. Gilman makes the point that while there may be “real” (i.e., shared) genetic distinctions within and between groups, what are more significant by far are the *meanings* associated with these differences, which become central to any understanding of the implications of race (1994, p. 368). Bauman is quite clear that racism is strictly an artifact of modernity.

Modernity made racism possible. It also created the demand for racism; an era that declared achievement to be the only measure of human worth needed a theory of ascription to redeem boundary-drawing and boundary-guarding concerns under new conditions which made boundary-crossing easier than ever before. (Bauman, 1989, p. 62)

therefore meaningless or platitudinous,” Langmuir concludes (1990, p. 351).<sup>43</sup> Even when use of such terminology is intended to clarify, and to help develop social theory, contends Gold (2002, p. 155), it “allows us covertly to continue to marginalize those groups of people, to invest them with ‘otherness’ while overtly seeming to be respectful and inclusive.”

Because terms like “racism” and “antisemitism” are nowadays understood—at least within parts of academia—to be devoid of essential meaning, there has been a move (that Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (1998a, pp. 1-3) identify as “political correctness”) “to exclude from view any text which is deemed to reinforce oppressive stereotypes.” This, they go on to say, is to:

moralize racism as a peculiar evil which is beyond rational discussion. This rather crude debate, we believe, merely reproduces the complacent self-image of a civilizing western modernity which considers racists or antisemites to be pathological; fanatics who are, in turn, banished to the margins of society. (Cheyette & Marcus, 1998a, p. 3)

These are “new orthodoxies”, they conclude, “which themselves need to be unsettled” (1998a, p. 3). The problem with this “never-never land of individuals with personal but no social characteristics” where “any evaluation of people’s conduct as members of social collectivities is impossible or illegitimate”, says Langmuir, is that it becomes “useless for analyzing the social reality with which everyone, including social scientists, must deal” (1990, p. 320). Clarke puts it more grittily: that while the ideas at the heart of racism and antisemitism are understood to be essentially meaningless, “racism hurts, racism is painful, racism is in your face, and racism effects the ordinary person in the street in a concrete way” (2003, p. 27).

Things like racism, antisemitism, and anti-Judaism still need to be discussed. But, as Gilman warns, “it is clear that a great deal of sensitivity must be used in employing the very idea of ‘race’” (1994, p. 368). And of all the things we need to be mindful of, the literature suggests, it is that the locus of something like anti-Jewishness is neither Jews nor Judaism,

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<sup>43</sup> Rustin asks how is it that a categorisation like racism that is so empty and arbitrary can nevertheless give rise to such powerful, oppressive, and even catastrophic social effects (1991, p. 59). It is the paradox of the power of racism “that it is the fact that this category means nothing in itself that makes it able to bear so much meaning—mostly psychologically primitive in character—with so little innate resistance from the conscious mind” (1991, p. 63).

but elsewhere entirely—in the minds of Jew-haters. Jean-Paul Sartre (1948) emphasises that, for the antisemite, it is this *idea* (i.e., the mental fantasy) of who the Jew is that is important. Antisemitism is “a *passion*” (i.e., irrational), Sartre says; it is this hate-filled passion the antisemite loves,<sup>44</sup> and “if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him” (1948, p. 13).<sup>45</sup> Sartre makes it quite clear who he includes among those who construct such anti-Jewish fantasies: “To know what the contemporary Jew is, we must ask the Christian conscience. And we must ask, not “What is a Jew?” but “*What have you made of the Jews?*” (1948, p. 69, author's emphasis). Sartre does not write explicitly in psychoanalytic mode, but his *Anti-Semite and Jew* is full of psychoanalytic insight (Clarke, 2003, pp. 103-4). The intention (albeit largely unconscious) to create the fantasy that is the Christian, anti-Jewish “other” is discussed in terms of “projective identification” in chapter five of this thesis.

### 1.5.3 Summary

While there are some who still wish to understand anti-Judaism and antisemitism as very different entities, many commentators—especially more recently—understand that, while the relationship is complex, one segues into the other. There is a trend to understanding that antisemitism reaches further back than the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the term was coined, even as far as early New Testament times, and that ever since, Christian anti-Jewishness has been informed by some sort of combination of both Christian anti-Judaism and (either Christian, or secular-modern) antisemitism. The particular combination of interest in this study is the one I believe lies behind what currently covertly subverts the possibility of better Jewish-Christian relations: what I call an “anti-Jewishness” that is primarily informed by the New Testament and Christian interpretations of the “Old” Testament (anti-Judaism), and secondarily (though not insignificantly) by antisemitism.

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<sup>44</sup> Langmuir calls this fantasy a “chimerical assertion”, but diverges from Sartre in his understanding of its purpose. Sartre seems to say the antisemite loves the fantasy mainly because it absolves the antisemite from having to think, and having their set position disturbed. But Langmuir (following Ackerman & Jahoda, 1950, p. 63) suggests it functions psychically “to relieve...tension—the anger, fear, or guilt—by expressing its existence openly in a socially acceptable form, by presenting the interior conflict as a social problem, a struggle between the ingroup and its acknowledged enemies” (1990, p. 338).

<sup>45</sup> Ostow amplifies a little:

Antisemitism doesn't require Jews. The Jew of the antisemite is a myth. The real Jew is an inconvenient evidence to the contrary. For the antisemite, the caricature of the Jew in theatre, passion play, and propaganda supersedes the image of the Jew encountered in the real world. Both images are registered mentally, but for antisemites, the primary process Jew prevails. (Ostow, 1996, p. 137)

The use of terms such as racism and antisemitism does, however, raise both theoretical and ethical difficulties, because they are nowadays understood to be essentially meaningless beyond perpetuating existing hegemonies, to the point where, in some academic circles, they are considered beyond rational discussion. But the effects of something like anti-Jewishness are still real, and ongoing discussion is essential, although it needs to be done with care, bearing in mind especially that a particular category of hatred and discrimination—“antisemitism”, for example—does not imply something unique and enduring about Jews themselves. The locus of Jew-hatred is, rather, in the minds of Jew-haters themselves, including Christians.

## **1.6 The current literature**

### **1.6.1 Introduction**

To recap, the discussion to this point could be likened to an archaeological dig. What appears on the surface, it has been said, is a problem: that Jewish-Christian relations seem to have become stuck. One can, of course, go down in any number of directions to the next underlying layer. But what was identified as at least part of the problem is an entrenched, covert anti-Jewishness. One thing (among many possibilities) that lies beneath this, is an equally unacknowledged fantasy of Christian imperialism resting, in turn, upon supersessionist notions (especially towards Jews and Judaism), which early on became a typological filter that still colours the way the church views both itself and its relationships. Such grandiose fantasies, it is commonly understood (psychologically), may well cover yet another layer, deeper down: fear and anxiety. But of what, given the church is now so far removed from the primal fears associated with its birth? There is evidently some sort of connection, but what is the aetiology of the unconscious, irrational and emotionally charged anti-Jewishness, which seems so deep-rooted, and appears to subvert the church’s conscious efforts towards better Jewish-Christian relations? When the question is put in those terms, it was suggested, psychoanalysis may well have something to offer in better understanding the problem.

The next question is: to what extent have such ideas been explored already? What is the research to date looking at anti-Jewishness via what, as commentators point out, might be any one of a wide range of psychoanalytical approaches (Minsky, 1998, p. viii; Mitchell

& Black, 1995, p. 207)? The following review addresses this question more or less historically, and focuses on anti-Jewishness (as defined above). One consequence of this, as will become immediately obvious, is the exclusion (generally speaking) of the body of extant literature on research into (secular-modern) antisemitism, in favour of a rather smaller body of literature that attempts a better understanding, from a psychoanalytical perspective, of the sort of anti-Jewishness still to be seen in the performed life of the church (i.e., informed to some significant extent by the New Testament tradition).

### **1.6.2 Freud, Judaism, Christianity and antisemitism**

What Freud had to say about Christianity and its relationship to Judaism needs to be put—at least fleetingly—into some sort of context. Even as a nominally secular, “assimilated” Jewish professional in fin-de-siècle Vienna, antisemitism was part of everyday life for Freud, his family, and associates. “At the simplest sociological level,” says Frosh, “anti-Semitism constructed psychoanalysis through enforcing a collective consciousness among the set of Jewish intellectuals and doctors surrounding Freud” (2004, p. 311). At the same time, it has to be said that the founders of psychoanalysis “showed little interest in applying the psychoanalytic method to the problem” (Ostow, 1996, p. 4). Gilman (1993, p. 154), for example, notes that nowhere in Freud’s examination of the Daniel Paul Schreber case (Freud, 1911; Schreber, 1903/1955) does he comment on the anti-Jewish rhetoric pervading Schreber’s autobiography. This may have been due to the antisemitism of Freud and his associates—what Gilman terms the “Jewish self-hatred” of many middle-class Jews towards other, conspicuously unassimilated Jews from eastern Europe.<sup>46</sup> But if early psychoanalysis had little to say about antisemitism per se, as will be seen shortly, there were attempts to describe Jewish-Christian relations in psychoanalytic terms.

Freud’s view of Jewishness is ambiguous. In what have now become classics on the subject, Sander Gilman (1986; 1993) argues that Freud’s now infamous misogyny<sup>47</sup> was a defensive displacement of the discourses of antisemitism that permeated Freud’s world—

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<sup>46</sup> For example, David James Fisher points out Erik H. Erikson’s ambivalence to his own Jewish identity in Erikson’s discussion of “two Jewish types”, one of which he characterised as “the Orthodox, not influential, anachronistic type” (2004, p. 66).

<sup>47</sup> What many of Freud’s critics tend to overlook is “the indigenous misogyny of European scientific culture” at the time (Geller, 1997, p. 324), and that unlike most of his medical colleagues, Freud was prepared to take the mental health needs of women seriously, and that all his life “he encouraged women towards professional achievement and intellectual equality” (McWilliams, 1994, p. 304, footnote).

both what he himself experienced, and his own antisemitism. But, despite this—or perhaps because of it—Freud seems to have counted it an advantage to be born a Jew. On one occasion he advised a (Jewish) friend to raise his son a Jew, otherwise, “You will deprive him of those sources of energy which cannot be replaced by anything else” (Graf, 1942, p. 473). Jay Geller comments that, “Freud evidently continued to believe in his characterization of a Jew’s fate as a virile struggle” (1999, p. 362).<sup>48</sup> But, as Geller’s review (1997) of a still burgeoning range of biographies of “Jewish Freuds” attests, Freud’s Jewishness is no simple matter, either for him then, or for researchers today.

Freud’s attitude towards Judaism is equally equivocal. Geller characterises Gay’s (1988) Freud as an “atheist Jew” (1997, p. 324). Another of Freud’s biographers (Clark, 1980) adds that Freud regarded all religions as a later “covering over of the truth”, which it was the function of science to reveal. “He had no preferences for any religion,” an associate is reported to have said, adding wryly, “He could discern no trace of sanctity in any of them” (Clark, 1980, p. 523). While this may have been true of Freud’s view of religion in general, and Christianity in particular, he was hardly indifferent to Judaism. He had an early fascination with the Bible (Geller, 1997, p. 323). His last major work, “Moses and Monotheism” (1939), may have been even more eclectic than many of his works typically were, but its central theme is Biblical and, says Geller (1997, p. 326), “bears the scars of the compulsiveness that drove Freud to this project.”

In comparison with Jewishness and Judaism, Freud was “not much impressed with Christianity”, says Stephen Frosh, calling it “a regression” from Judaism (2004, p. 326). Freud found Christians “even less convincing” than their religion. Despite the Christian claim to have superseded Judaism, Freud saw evidence (in the behaviour of Nazi Christians, in particular) that Christianity is mostly a “thin veneer” over a “barbarous polytheism” (Freud, 1939, p. 91). What, then, did Freud make, psychoanalytically, of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, Jews and Christians?

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<sup>48</sup> This stance probably relates to the oft-told tale of Freud’s shame at his father’s “unheroic” response when assaulted by a gentile lout (inter alia, Clark, 1980, p. 12). Less well known is Freud’s son’s memory of his father charging a hostile crowd, which was blocking their way and heckling Freud and his family with antisemitic abuse (Geller, 1999, p. 362).

First, Freud invoked his oedipal theory<sup>49</sup>—at least by implication—in his discussion of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in “Moses and Monotheism” (Freud, 1939, pp. 86-92). It was an idea picked up and developed by (inter alia) E. Isaac-Edersheim (1941), and again a decade later by Rudolph Loewenstein (1951, pp. 40-42). In essence, the theory is that Christians identify with Christ, the punished son, associate Jews with the distant, punishing father-God of the Jewish scriptures, and hate Jews as father figures with a displaced hostility resulting from unresolved oedipal conflict (Bergmann, 1988a; Langmuir, 1990, p. 322; Ostow, 1996, p. 99). In Isaac-Edersheim’s version, the father-God is psychologically split<sup>50</sup> into the Christian father-God (whom one can—perhaps must—love), while the Wandering Jew (who, as we shall see, was for Christians a fantasised symbol of all Jews) is the quasi-religious father figure one can hate and abuse. More recently, Leon S. Sheleff (2004) has offered a variation on the oedipal theme (based upon what he calls the “Rostum Complex”) which attributes the early success of Christianity (and subsequent emergence of anti-Jewishness) to the popular appeal of father/son sacrificial theology, resonating as it does with other well-known, typologically similar stories, such as the *Akedah* (Genesis 22:1-19).

Elaborating on an earlier idea, Freud (1924a) introduced the idea of the “super-ego” as “heir of the oedipus complex” (Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 110), of which the “ego-ideal” is a key component (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 15). Christians, Freud says:

have not got over the grudge against the new religion which was imposed on them; but they have displaced the grudge on to the source from which Christianity reached them. The fact that the Gospels tell a story which is set among Jews, and in fact deals only with Jews, has made this displacement easy for them. Their hatred of Jews is at bottom a hatred of Christians, and we need not be surprised that in the German Nationalist-Socialist revolution this intimate relation between the two monotheist religions finds such a clear expression in the hostile treatment of both of them. (Freud, 1939, p. 91)<sup>51</sup>

Christian antisemitism, explains Flannery, is an unconscious hatred of Christ, “a rebellion against the Christian ‘yoke’ no longer found sweet (Mat. 11:30).” “Incapable of hating

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<sup>49</sup> According to Coleman (2001, p. 506), Freud introduced the term in *A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men* (1910b, p. 171). Also see Mitchell & Black (1995, pp. 15-16) and Monte & Sollod (2003, pp. 53-57).

<sup>50</sup> See my chapter 4 for a discussion of the idea of psychological splitting.

<sup>51</sup> Flannery calls Hitler’s antisemitism in its ultimate essence “nomophobia”, a “revolt against the divinely sanctioned moral law or, religiously speaking, a revolt against God” (1985, p. 292).

Christianity consciously, the Christian antisemite, by an unconscious displacement of affect, diverts his Animus to the Jews, kinsmen of its Founder” (1985, pp. 292-3). Ironically perhaps, and with an ambivalence typical of anti-Jewishness,<sup>52</sup> Jews also came to represent the repressed id of fin-de-siècle European culture, particularly in sexual fantasies of Jews as debauched seducers and rapists “contaminating the ‘blood purity’ of innocent Christian maidens” (Wistrich, 1999a, p. 7). The nation state is the secular heir to the church that teaches one is not free to do absolutely as one wants, adds Neville Symington (2004a, p. 207). Present-day civil and criminal law descend from the Ten Commandments, and hatred of the Jews can be understood, at least in part, as a displacement of anger and frustration over having to conform to the law.

Secondly, and to return to Freud’s oedipal theory, one of its cornerstones is the theory of “castration anxiety” (Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 54). In the popular and medical fantasy of the day, the circumcision of Jewish males was equivalent to castration, an idea which provoked fear and abhorrence (Frosh, 2004, p. 311). “For many of Freud’s non-Jewish contemporaries, that a people would ritually practice genital mutilation was no historical accident: it suggested something perverse in their essential being” (Geller, 1997, p. 327). As Gilman (1993) explicates at length, in antisemitic rhetoric, Jew equates to emasculated (or “feminised”) man. The religious connection has already been noted (p. 15, above)—that is, Paul’s circumcision metaphor (the circumcised body versus the circumcised heart), which Biddick argues has run like an invisible template for Jewish-Christian relations for the last two millennia. It follows that the ongoing practice of circumcision in the Jewish community continues to reinforce supersessionist fantasies for Christians, and powerfully so, as the very idea (in the Christian imagination) of circumcision/castration is heavily freighted with all manner of (inter alia) sexually-charged affect.

Freud introduced the idea of the castration complex in “On the Sexual Theories of Children” (Freud, 1908), and seems to have first mentioned the unconscious root of anti-Jewishness in the castration complex and circumcision in a footnote to his “Little Hans” case history (1909, p. 36), then in a footnote to his study of Leonardo (1910a, pp. 95-96), and finally in “Moses and Monotheism” (1939, p. 91). Some empirical research seems to show evidence of castration anxiety (Sarnoff & Corwin, 1978), but Gary Taylor finds the

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<sup>52</sup> See my chapter 4 for a discussion of the idea of psychological ambivalence.

theory “obviously mistaken about both history and anatomy” (2000, p. 16). Monte and Sollod wonder (2003, p. 54) whether theories revolving around male anxiety about the penis—such as the oedipus complex—can have as much credibility today as it had in sexually repressed fin-de-siècle Vienna. Certainly, except among the strictly psychoanalytically orthodox, since Freud, oedipal theory has “changed remarkably” and “has been vastly broadened to include an array of different kinds of motivations and various constellations of family dynamics” (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 16). Perhaps for such reasons, nowadays an oedipal approach to understanding Jewish-Christian relations seems largely of historical interest.

Thirdly, in “Moses and Monotheism”, Freud employs another psychological (if not distinctively psychoanalytical) image from family dynamics to describe Jewish-Christian relations: sibling rivalry (1939, p. 91). “I venture to assert that jealousy of the people which declared itself the first-born, favourite child of God the Father, has not yet been surmounted among [Christians today]” (Freud, 1939, p. 91).<sup>53</sup> Jacob Arlow (1994) utilises a psychoanalytic interpretation of sibling rivalry (which, he contends, is associated with a high degree of orally-fixated hostility) to try to understand the peculiarities of the Christian, anti-Jewish blood libel accusation.<sup>54</sup> As a model for contemporary Jewish-Christian relations, the sibling image was picked up by those such as Roy Eckhardt (1973), and Jewish theologians Hayim Perelmuter (1989) and Alan Segal (1986) which, at the time showed more promise, says John Pawlikowski (2003), than earlier single-covenant and double-covenant theories. But as an idea, it seems to have been largely left behind, in favour of, for example, a “partners in waiting” model which is seen as a more open image. “It lacks the emphasis on inherent bonding contained in the ‘sibling’ model,” Pawlikowski concludes, “but it does

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<sup>53</sup> Yosef Yerushalmi, in an imaginary dialogue with Freud (1991, p. 92), asks: if this sibling rivalry is to be taken into account, whose affection are they competing for? Yes, God the father, he acknowledges, but also “the Torah which in Hebrew is grammatically feminine and which is midrashically compared to a bride.” Certainly, the New Testament is rife with arguments about if, and to what extent, Christians are expected to adhere to the Jewish Law. But once the church had moved on to the point where the New Testament had achieved canonical status, and was understood to have superseded the Torah, the question becomes irrelevant.

<sup>54</sup> The blood libel accusation was (and, in places, still is) a Christian fantasy that Jews murder Christians (usually young boys) and drain their blood to make matzo. Arlo argues that, especially in mediaeval times when food was short, this was a kind of transference. Jews evoked “deep seated, primitive, unresolved hostilities directed originally against younger sibling figures...encroaching upon what they might regard as their rightful, proprietary domain” (1994, p. 291).

imply some linkage in terms of future hope. There is also a sense of common witness to the world” (2003, p. 6).

Oedipal theory, and theories of sibling rivalry and castration anxiety continue to have currency in some quarters, but the Jewish-Christian relations literature of the last ten years or so suggests that in this context all three of these Freudian themes have more or less run out like streams in the desert. At the same time, however, there are those who plead that Freudian, body-focused ways of understanding should not be abandoned for a “less abstract way of knowing”, and that there needs to be an honouring of the sometimes *disturbing*, “potentially ‘smelly’” aspects of human living which, it can be argued, says Minsky, “have been made conceptually fragrant through the mediation of the sweet (intellectualized) scent of signifiers, making them less threatening and more ‘thinkable’” (1998, pp. 12, 16, 17, 219f, author's emphasis). While Freudian understandings of the psychodynamics of Jewish-Christian relations have largely been abandoned, there is a need for research to stay connected with something more rooted in biology and experience, something “thicker”,<sup>55</sup> something better reflecting the lives of “full-blooded, emotionally-driven and conflicted people” (Epstein, 1994, p. 710), with what Kihlstrom calls the Freudian “hot and wet” (1999, p. 430),<sup>56</sup> and consonant with what some understand to be a postmodern interest in locating meaning in the particular and the concrete, rather than universalities and abstractions (e.g., Davaney, 1997b).<sup>57</sup> This suggestion that such “embodied” types of meaning still have something to offer to a better understanding of Jewish-Christian relations is taken up in the next chapter.

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<sup>55</sup> “Thick” descriptions—a term coined by ethnographer Clifford Geertz—refers to a method that “privileges sensitivity to detail and multiple significations that an activity, event, or symbol may bear. It implies not merely description but also the interpretation of relationship between symbol and context on a potentially large number of levels” (Oxford Reference Online (Dictionary of the Social Sciences), 2002).

<sup>56</sup> One can read a thousand pages of the best social-cognitive work on personality,” observe Drew Westen and Glen Gabbard (1999, pp. 78-9), “and never know that people have genitals—or for that matter that they have bodies—let alone fantasies.”

<sup>57</sup> See, however, Hillman and Mazzio who contend that embodied particularities were of deep interest to “early moderns no less than postmoderns” (1997, p. xii). This is discussed further in my following chapter.

### 1.6.3 Post Freud

After Freud, and taking another tack entirely, a cluster of writers through the second half of last century considered, from a psychoanalytic perspective, whether or not anti-Jewishness is psychopathological. It might seem an odd approach, but it is understandable, given their post-Holocaust context. Were the antisemites that perpetrated such horrors somehow “mentally abnormal”? The likes of Otto Fenichel, Ernst Simmel, Erik H. Erikson, Bruno Bettelheim, Rudolph Loewenstein, and Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School (Inwood, 2004), all tried to make sense of what had happened from a variety of psychological perspectives. Adorno’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) is one from that era still cited in the literature, although with reservations (Clarke, 2003, pp. 93-5; Winter & Barenbaum, 1999, p. 18). David James Fisher says much of the literature from then reflects the strengths and limitations of the state of psychoanalytic theory at the time in stressing the pathologising aspects of antisemitism (2004, p. 69). Another reason for this particular approach may be that many of these practitioners (in the European and North American tradition) were physicians as well as psychoanalysts—for example, Ernest Rappaport (1975) and Theodore Rubin (1990), both of whom, though published later, were roughly contemporary with the post-Freudians named above, and basically take the same approach in pathologising anti-Jewishness. Rubin calls it “a malignant emotional illness” and “a psychiatric illness” (p. 17). Rappaport is even more emphatic: “I depict the anti-Jew as a person with a disease which is extremely harmful to him. It is a mental illness which I first evaluate by its symptoms and then diagnose...” (p. 282). It is an “endemic chronic disease”, he says, given to “epidemic outbreaks” (p. i).

Most have little to say about Christianity, except in connection with its pre-modern contribution to the problem (as that is conventionally understood). Rappaport is one of the few to consider what role Christianity plays in “pathological” antisemitism. While he asserts he is not making a wholesale accusation against Christians, it is clear where he lays most of the blame. The apostle Paul he calls “The Traveling Salesman of anti-Judaism” (pp. 18f), Augustine a “psychomaniac” (pp. 37f.) and Martin Luther a “mad monk” (pp. 116f.). Rappaport is no less kind to the church in general:

Dealing with the madness of anti-Judaism and the associated madness of warmongers, treatment naturally belongs to the field of mental hygiene. However, the numerous mental health organizations cannot be protected from the intrusions of the Church which had completely dominated mental health until approximately a hundred years ago and still watches with jealous scrutiny for any signs of effective improvement of mental health which might weaken the power of the Church. (Rappaport, 1975, p. 297)

Unfortunately, the enthusiasm of Rappaport's rhetoric is not matched by a scholarship that might shed any light on anti-Jewishness as psychopathology, as he clearly wants to assert it to be.

Loewenstein, though belonging to the group of post-Freudians referred to above, comes out at rather a different place. While he finds that there are "evident analogies between the reactions of anti-Semites and the reactions of psychotics", nevertheless, "there does not seem to be sufficient justification for putting them on the same plane" (1951, pp. 16-17). He then goes on to consider whether antisemitism might be a "group psychopathology" (1951, pp. 43f.), but concludes that "overdetermination"<sup>58</sup> is particularly marked in anti-Semitism" (1951, p. 65), the implication being that it would be just as difficult to justify calling it a social psychopathology as personal one. Loewenstein's conclusions represent the majority viewpoint in the current literature: namely, that the evidence is not strong enough to support the idea that anti-Jewishness is any sort of psychopathology (see also Ackerman & Jahoda, 1950; Fenichel, 1946; Orr, 1946; Ostow, 1996)<sup>59</sup> and that, indeed, as has already been suggested above, psychological factors alone are insufficient to account for anti-Jewishness; historical, religious and cultural factors (among others) have to be taken into account, along with the way it is all put together—"mythologised", as Ostow puts it (1996, chaps. 3-5). If, then, it is not appropriate to characterise Christian anti-Jewishness as psychopathological, neither is it healthy. So how is it to be discussed? This is a matter to be returned to in chapter five.

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<sup>58</sup> "Overdetermined" was originally a psychoanalytic term signifying the characteristic of psychological phenomena (dreams, symptoms, etc.) to manifest their causative factor more than once (Colman, 2001, p. 522), but has come to be used also in a broader sense (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003, p. 1254). Loewenstein uses it in the latter sense when he lists political, xenophobic, economic and religious antisemitism as among the interacting, motivating factors involved in antisemitism as a psychological phenomenon (Loewenstein, 1951, pp. 64-5).

<sup>59</sup> This perhaps explains the recent republication (2001, in French only, as *Psychanalyse de L'Antisémitisme*) of so early a work on the subject.

In yet another approach, two recent volumes attempt to understand what might have been going on from a psychoanalytical perspective for those who were involved at the time in the formation of the early church (Meissner, 2000), and what the psychodynamics were that contributed to sowing the seeds of anti-Jewishness in the process (Davis, 2003). William Meissner, a psychoanalyst, has long had a particular interest in paranoid styles of mental processes (Meissner, 1978). Meissner understands paranoia to be of prime significance in what he calls the “cultic process” (2000, p. xii) of a new group’s emergence from a previously existing one (in this particular case, Christianity out of Judaism).<sup>60</sup> Meissner’s is a useful contribution, in that it gives a psychoanalytical perspective (to parallel all the many other perspectives) on why Jewish-Christian relations got off on the particular footing they did at the time. Understandably (given the vastly different context), except in very general terms, Meissner attempts no connections with the anti-Jewishness of today.

Similarly, without referring to contemporary anti-Jewishness, Frederick B. Davis tries to understand the aetiology of first-century Christian antisemitism (the idea of the “deicidic Jew”, in particular) in psychoanalytically-informed, developmental terms. Broadly speaking, he follows the likes of Michael St Clair (1994), James W. Jones (2002) and Stanley Rosenman (2001; 2002), all of whom—in their different ways—posit connections between childhood development, and later religious images and behaviour. Like Meissner, Davis identifies splitting and projection as key mechanisms, as do many others writing in this area—for example, Clarke (2003), and Ackerman and Jahoda (1950). But, unfortunately, comments Kille (2005, p. 295), Davis locates these dynamics in the psyches of the disciples themselves, rather than in the life of the early church, apparently not acquainted with “basic issues like the synoptic problem and the literary development of the gospels.”

#### **1.6.4 Summary**

As the recent literature on psychoanalytical perspectives on Christian anti-Jewishness attests, the images introduced by Freud, and taken up by post-war Freudians that characterise Jewish-Christian relations in terms of unresolved oedipal conflict, or sibling

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<sup>60</sup> McWilliams (1994, p. 215) also notes a raft of literature linking paranoid mental processes with the origins of Nazism.

rivalry, or informed by a Christian horror of Jewish circumcision/castration, have lost their currency, although there are those who are concerned at how sanitised much post-Freudian research appears, and argue for it to stay connected with “thick” descriptions of Freudian “hot and wet” understandings of human motivation, as well as the sorts of concrete particularities of interest to (inter alia) postmodernists.

Considerable research has gone into the question of whether antisemitism (including Christian anti-Jewishness) is psychopathological. While by almost any estimate it is not mentally healthy, a clear consensus has emerged that it is not helpful to understand anti-Jewishness that way, the main reason being that it is far too overdetermined to diagnose so narrowly. How anti-Jewishness might, then, be thought of in broad psychoanalytic terms currently appears largely unexamined, and is discussed in chapter five.

A cluster of recent researchers appears to be circling what I understand to be the psychoanalytical heart of the apparent contradiction of the existence of ongoing Christian anti-Jewishness despite a desire for matters to be otherwise (at least at some “official” church levels). First, St Clair, Jones and Rosenman offer psychoanalytical insights into the relationship between childhood experience, and religious beliefs and behaviour in later life. Secondly, Davis and Meissner offer two perspectives on the psychodynamics at work that produced the anti-Judaism of the early church as it broke from Judaism. Kille (2005, p. 300) asserts that these first-century dynamics “easily hook into similar dynamics in later communities and readers”, but he does not say how. Thirdly, the irrationality (and the passion with which it is expressed) of antisemitism, and the chimerical “constructedness” of the Jew of the antisemitic imagination, have been long been understood (Sartre), and remain very much part of the current discussions (Langmuir, Ostow, Kille). Fourthly, there are common themes running through much of this—splitting and projection (Meissner, Davis, Clarke), and grandiose, supersessionist fantasies (Biddick). But nobody, yet, seems to have made the connections between all of this—that, in some developmentally-related way, the anti-Jewish fears and anxieties intrinsic to the New Testament stories are re-activated all the time as Christians perform those stories during worship, thus subverting the church’s best intentions for better Jewish-Christian relations.

My theoretical proposal is that the fears and anxieties associated with the emergence of the church out of Judaism in the context of Roman occupation found expression in what

at the very least is implied anti-Judaism in parts of the New Testament. When such texts are performed in the life of the contemporary church, they connect via largely affective, unconscious association with unconsciously-stored residues of infant and childhood fears and anxieties common to all, to reinforce the verisimilitude of the anti-Jewishness either explicit in, or traditionally associated with, those texts. To put it another way, the anti-Jewishness of the contemporary church can be understood as analogous to the transference in an analytic situation (Colman, 2001, p. 752), in which, in a form of displacement, fears and anxieties (attitudes and emotions) associated with infant and childhood relationships are redirected to the Jewish-Christian relationship by the constant “stirring up” of powerful unconscious thoughts and feeling when implicitly anti-Judaic texts are performed in church—texts which were, themselves, particularly heavily freighted with covert fear and anxiety when they were constructed. It is the purpose of this thesis to test this theory and, if successful, to finally make some of the connections that current research seems so close to, and to thus bring to light what is really going on from a psychoanalytic perspective, and what—on the Christian side at least—is causing progress towards better Jewish-Christian relations to be stuck. As the thesis title indicates, *The Wandering Jew*—discussed at length in the next chapter—will be used as a “doorway” into these discussions.

## 1.7 Composing myself

David Paré observes that how we understand how we come to know the world has been evolving for the past century:

from a focus on the observed world as object, to a focus on the observing person as subject, to a focus on the place between subject and object, that is, the intersubjective domain where interpretation occurs in community with others. (Paré, 1995, p. 3)<sup>61</sup>

Consonant with this, one of the significant shifts within psychoanalysis since Freud has been away from the idea of the analyst as objective and uninvolved, to the psychoanalytic significance of what happens to the client *and* the analyst in the analytic encounter.<sup>62</sup> There has, for example, been a re-valuing of the counter-transference.<sup>63</sup> Previously, it was regarded

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<sup>61</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the evolution of critical method over the past century or so, see Denzin and Lincoln (1998).

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., Hinshelwood (1999) for a detailed history of how this came about.

<sup>63</sup> Counter-transference is experienced by the analyst as the “mirror image of the patient’s transference”, and is the result of displacement of feelings from the *analyst’s* past into the analytic situation” (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 244, authors' emphasis).

as an obstacle, and an intrusion into the analytic situation but, more recently, many therapists find their own counter-transference response to be one of the best vehicles for understanding their clients (Eagle, 2000; McWilliams, 1994, p. 32; Mitchell & Black, 1995, pp. 244-250; Sandler, Holder, & Dare, 1970, p. 85; Schore, 2002a, p. 23). For the analyst, this includes cultivating an awareness not only of thoughts and feelings evoked by the transference, but also at the level of bodily sensations, and even to distinguish between, and make meaning of, a variety of sensations in different areas (throat, solar plexus, abdomen, etc.) when interacting with different people (Halling & Goldfarb, 1991, p. 321). Such a style of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy, initially associated with names such as Hans Kohut and Robert Stolorow (Mitchell & Black, 1995, pp. 167-9), is known variously as “intersubjective”, “interpersonal” or “relational” (often with no great clarity of distinction),<sup>64</sup> of which Stephen Mitchell’s two-person model is currently one of the most influential (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 72).

Taking an intersubjective perspective, like the clinician, the researcher who uses psychoanalysis as his or her prime paradigm can no longer credibly assume a privileged or dispassionate position, or claim to speak with an omniscient, auctorial voice. Meaning is created dialogically with his or her material, and the subjectivity of the researcher becomes part of the discourse he or she is creating, just as the counter-transference of the therapist is nowadays understood to be a legitimate, even essential, component of the analysis. Methodologically, this implies that my investigations are not just a one-way street. There should be something dialogical about the process. I need to be open to the texts somehow “examining me”, “addressing me”. And not just intellectually; I need to become aware of how the material I encounter affects me emotionally, and the way my body reacts. Similarly, as I write, I need to be aware of what I might be feeling, as well as thinking. And what is my body telling me?

Intersubjective styles of psychoanalysis have also raised radical questions about the relationship between analyst and analysand. “The deconstruction of power”, says Glen Lerner (1999, p. 39), “is coincidental to the concerns of both contemporary psychotherapy and recent deconstructive philosophy.” Lerner situates his discussions of power in

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<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., Cohen and Schermer who repeatedly pair “relational and intersubjective” with no explanation (2004).

psychotherapy within the writings of Jacques Derrida (see Rötzer's 1986/1995 interview with Derrida, p. 49; see also Wicks, 2003, chap. 12), saying that, "For Derrida, a critique of power as justice and ethics *is* deconstruction" (1999, p. 39, author's emphasis). The purpose of deconstructing power in psychotherapy, Larner continues, is "in order to let the other have a voice, to be empowered" (1999, p. 40). An ethical relationship (in Derridean terms) requires others to be recognised as subjects in their own right, and not merely as a construction or an idea in the therapist's own image (1999, p. 47). It seems to me that there is an imperative for the theoretical researcher, as well as the therapist, not to form prior opinions before encountering the other, be that other a person or a text. "The ethical relation requires humility before the otherness of the other," says Larner (1999, p. 48), "as the basis on which dialogue can proceed." It requires, as Mary Boys says, being open to the other, not just as other, but—potentially at least—as "strangely other", as "both mystery and challenge" (1997, p. 3).

The dilemma for deconstruction, says Larner (following Derrida), is that taking such a position—indeed, the act of taking any position—involves "a violence that founds or positions" (Derrida, 1992, p. 47; Larner, 1999, p. 40). And yet, to *not* take a position is itself an act of violence, implicitly condoning the status quo. For the therapist (or theorist) to take a position, she or he silences the voice of the other (be it client or text), yet if she or he does *not* give the subject a voice, the already silent voice of the other remains silent and marginalised (1999, p. 48). As a therapist or a theorist, being sensitive to power relationships, it seems to me, requires living on a raft of paradoxes: for example, being knowing, and not-knowing (and knowing one is not-knowing). These are paradoxes that cannot totally be grasped through reason and language, says Larner, they are to be lived (1999, p. 40). Note, adds Larner (1999, pp. 49-50), that "Derrida does not renounce knowledge, power and structure but links them to responsibility." "The deconstruction of power does not require its dissolution, which would be an abnegation of responsibility, but its humane and just exercise." In the following, I have substituted "researcher" where Larner originally uses "therapist":

The deconstructing [researcher] is a [researcher] in deconstruction, with an attitude of openness, enquiry, doubleness, responsibility to others, and a learning to live with ghosts and traditions. (Larner, 1999, p. 49)

To work as a theorist who is informed by a relational style of psychoanalytical theory which, in turn, is shaped by a Derridean, post-modern deconstructionism means not only accepting that I, personally, am intimately involved with reading and writing the texts that are part of my research, but also taking personal responsibility for how they are read and written. Part of the “taking responsibility” is to make as transparent to myself as possible that some of “who I am” shapes (inter alia) my choice of thesis topic, and how I am choosing to go about it. Why have I had a three-decade interest in Jews and Judaism, and in psychoanalysis? Why the involvement in Jewish-Christian relations for almost as long? Acutely aware that, as Freud has said, we have an almost infinite capacity for self-deception, I will now lay out what seem to me to be some of the relevant parts of my life story.<sup>65</sup>

I grew up as an only child in a comfortably-off family in Auckland, New Zealand, during the 1950s and 60s. My late father was depressed for as long as I can remember. My mother was—and still is—emotionally distant. One of the strongest memories from my childhood is a feeling of, somehow, being responsible for all the family unhappiness. I could not wait to get married which, with the benefit of hindsight, was a longing for intimacy and love. Nearly four decades on, I have three adult children, and have been divorced for around ten years. Much to everyone’s surprise (including my own), in my early 30s I was accepted as a candidate for the Methodist ministry. During training, I was introduced to, and became fascinated by, Freudian theory, and the world of (what was then called) the Old Testament.

Allen Wheelis would not have been surprised at any of this. Among others, ministers of religion, and psychoanalysts, he contends, are similarly drawn to their profession by the promise of an “alleviation of inner conflict”, often set up by just the sort of family dynamics described above (1958, pp. 206-7). By way of parenthesis, Wheelis adds that the promise generally turns out to be illusory. Research shows, says Frank Stalfa (1994), that the style of caring of those in church ministry is “characterized by over-responsibility for others and lack of care for self”, showing that inner needs are not met simply by choosing a “caring” profession. The likely result is a midlife vocational crisis, or “a more subtle but persistent doubt about one’s work” (1994, p. 371). What a surprise.

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<sup>65</sup> Apart from the issue of “transparency”, these autobiographical details have relevance in discussions of my counter-transference reactions to *The Wandering Jew* in chapter 3.

To return to the main story, it turned out that there was an ambivalence to my fascination with “all things Jewish”. The local rabbi came to preach at the theological college on one occasion, and I remember to this day (and to my very great shame) the thought that popped, apparently out of nowhere, into my consciousness: “Smart little Jew-boy!” Where did that come from? I do not recollect ever hearing anything antisemitic at home, or at school, or among my friends. Ostow’s team had a similar question about their research subjects, and concluded: “There was no question but that in every case, the patient’s individual antisemitism was congruent with that of the community to which he belonged” (1996, p. 39). Anti-Jewishness is evidently present, covertly at least, within the Auckland community, and within me.

All this (and much, much more that I am both aware of, and unaware of) shapes not only how I conduct my research, but why I am doing it at all. As a Christian, I understand anti-Jewishness to be the church’s problem, and that it is the church’s responsibility to do something about it. As a clergyman—someone charged at ordination with pastoral and pedagogical responsibilities within the life of the church—I feel an ethical imperative to take some sort of initiative. To offer something towards a better understanding of the psychological roots of the church’s anti-Jewishness is, I believe, a useful contribution at the present point in Jewish-Christian relations.

Given my family history, I probably unconsciously identify (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 135-8) with Jews who have been unjustly landed with all the projected mental garbage of almost everyone else for millennia, and the particular research I am doing is as much for my own benefit as for anyone else. Certainly, over the years, my admiration has continued to grow for Jews, and their history, and their down-to-earth, robust spirituality, alongside which so much of Christianity now seems to me to be intellectually flabby and sentimental. That said, underneath my philosemitism, evidently there is an unconscious anti-Jewishness. Either way it is something I need to be aware of as I read and write because, as Bauman (1998) observes, these are two sides of the same coin—what he calls “allosemitism”<sup>66</sup>—and, theoretically at least, as bad as each other, because both treat Jews as “other”. It seems ironic, in a way, that the very thing I want to elucidate—the Christian “othering” of Jews—should be as close as right inside me.

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<sup>66</sup> See chapter 4 for a discussion of this term.

## 1.8 Summary conclusion

Although there has been much progress towards better Jewish-Christian relations over the past half-century, the process now seems to be stuck. Among the many possible reasons on the Christian side, there appears to be an entrenched, covert anti-Jewishness in the church that constantly subverts “official” desire for change. A mostly unconscious, triumphalistic, Christian fantasy of supersession appears to be driving this anti-Jewishness, which may well mask some sort of fear or anxiety, which appears to be activated by the regular performance of covertly, perhaps overtly, anti-Jewish texts. When the problem is put like this, it suggests that psychoanalytic theory might have a useful perspective to offer on anti-Jewishness, alongside those of other disciplines, although there are methodological concerns about “applying” psychoanalysis in such a way that need to be addressed.

A recent trend is to understand Christian anti-Jewishness as having been informed by both anti-Judaism and (either Christian, or secular-modern) antisemitism, which have run alongside of each other since New Testament times. The relationship is complex, and even the terminology (“antisemitism”, “anti-Judaism”) problematizes discussion as, on the one hand, such terms are understood to be almost meaningless and, on the other, they imply that some supposedly essential qualities of Jews and Judaism lie elsewhere than in the imagination of antisemites.

Recent literature with psychoanalytical perspectives on Christian anti-Jewishness shows that the main theories of last century—oedipal, sibling rivalry, circumcision/castration complex, and understanding anti-Jewishness to be psychopathological—are, for a variety of reasons, no longer very useful in understanding the problem. But a cluster of recent ideas appears to be gathering around a new possibility that the fears and anxieties that created the anti-Judaism of the New Testament, via performance during worship of some of the sacred texts from that period, unconsciously connect with life in the contemporary church to keep anti-Jewishness alive, constantly subverting the possibility of better Jewish-Christian relations. However, it appears this particular complex of connections has not yet been explored. It is the purpose of this thesis to test such a theory.

Reflecting on both my research to this point, and how “who I am” inexorably shapes how I engage with the texts I read and the texts I write, alerts me to a number of methodological imperatives that need to be borne in mind. First, a psychoanalytic

perspective that honours the Freudian tradition will be sensitive to latent as well as manifest meanings, and will attend to meanings associated with concrete particularities, with bodies, and with affect at least equally with the cerebral, all of which implies “thick” descriptions. Secondly, a perspective that takes seriously the intersubjective nature of psychoanalysis will carry with it an understanding that a position of “academic disinterest” is no longer tenable, and that engagement with “texts” (either literally or more broadly understood) needs, rather, to be dialogical, and (from a postmodern, deconstructionist perspective) open to the possibility of being unsettled. From a postmodern perspective, some sense of humility and responsibility towards others are also required of the researcher. Care is also needed with the use of terminology such as “antisemitism”, so that it does not tend to perpetuate old shibboleths at the same time as it attempts to subvert them. Finally, I need to be mindful that, given my personal history, my motives for this research are mixed, and that Christian anti-Jewishness is, evidently, as much covertly present within myself as it is within the contemporary church.

This introduction has sharpened the main thesis question into a number of specific matters to be addressed in the following chapters. The next chapter deals with two main methodological issues: the use of psychoanalysis as an interpretive paradigm, and the use of the legend of The Wandering Jew as an entry-point, when trying to understand Christian anti-Jewishness more comprehensively than in the past. Other methodological issues (already identified, but gathered here for convenience) include a concern that, when using a term like “antisemitism”, it should remain abundantly clear that the locus of the idea is in anti-Jewish minds, not in some supposed essential quality of Jews or Judaism. There is also a methodological concern that descriptions should, for preference, be “thick”, particular, concrete, and embodied, rather than “thin” and abstract, and also that the research process should be organised to attend to latent as well as manifest meanings, and (to honour concerns about power relations) be as dialogical as possible.

Chapter three responds to the question: What might be the psychological mechanism that rouses largely unconscious anti-Jewishness in contemporary congregations when texts such as the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus are performed in church?

Chapter four addresses two issues that belong hand in hand: given the church is no longer situated in the first couple of centuries of the common era, what might be the

aetiology of the fear and anxiety that apparently drive contemporary anti-Jewishness, and why does it have the particular and peculiar features it does?

Chapter five contains theoretical reflections resulting from the analytic encounters in the previous two chapters, including the question: If the extant literature suggests it is not appropriate to characterise contemporary anti-Jewishness as psychopathological, how then might it helpfully be understood psychoanalytically?

## Chapter two—Methodology

*Psychoanalysis is not an arbitrarily chosen intertext for literary analysis but rather a particularly insistent and demanding intertext, in that mapping across the boundaries from one territory to the other both confirms and complicates our understanding of how mind reformulates the real, how it constructs the necessary fictions by which we dream, desire, interpret, indeed by which we constitute ourselves as human subjects. (Peter Brooks)*

### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss appropriate ways of responding to the specific issues raised by the thesis question (summarised at the end of the last chapter). As already discussed, the form these issues emerged in suggests that psychoanalysis might provide a useful hermeneutical lens for understanding them better. By this I mean both psychoanalytic *theory* and *method*. However, also as already indicated in the introduction, there are some methodological concerns associated with the idea of “applying” psychoanalysis to another field, such as Jewish-Christian relations. These are addressed first in this chapter.

As the key research question at the start of this thesis signals, the intention is to use The Wandering Jew (both the legend and the character) as a synecdoche<sup>67</sup> of Christian anti-Jewish construction as a way into the substantive discussions beginning in the next chapter. This invites a prior question: why adopt a narratological approach, in particular, as a methodology? Discussion of this constitutes the second main section of this chapter.

Thirdly, after a somewhat lengthy excursus explaining what the legend is, and what others have made of it to date, there is a discussion of why this legend, in particular, has been chosen. What, for the purposes of this research, are its significant features? How representative is it of the sort of anti-Jewishness that was discussed in the introduction?

Finally, there are considerations about how best to bring these two together (i.e., examine The Wandering Jew “psychoanalytically”), in order to illuminate the two specific issues about the anti-Jewishness of the church summarised at the end of the last chapter, which become the main topics of the following two chapters.

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<sup>67</sup> The term synecdoche is borrowed from literary theory. It is a figure of speech in which a part stands for the whole (Cuddon, 1999, p. 890). For example, “Give us this day *our daily bread*.”

## 2.2 Psychoanalysis

### 2.2.1 Introduction

A discussion of psychoanalysis, per se, is beyond the scope of this thesis. The historical literature on psychoanalysis, and its evolution into what is now a wide range of psychoanalytical approaches is simply vast (e.g., Freud, 1932-36a; Mitchell & Black, 1995). While the whole idea of psychoanalysis, as ever, has its critics (e.g., Goode, 2004; Grünbaum, 1979), the contemporary literature seems more vigorous than ever, with practitioners keen to share up-to-date insights into effective practice (e.g., McWilliams, 1994, 2004), and a seemingly inexhaustible enthusiasm on the part of both practitioners and theorists to relate psychoanalysis to (for example) contemporary culture (e.g., Minsky, 1998; Rustin, 1991), various theories of the self and personality (e.g., Monte & Sollod, 2003; Westen & Gabbard, 1999), human development (e.g., Stern, 1985), the biological sciences (e.g., Schore, 2002b), and the social sciences (e.g., Clarke, 2003; Elliott, 1996). The year 2006 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. He has been in and out of fashion over the years but, as noted in the previous chapter, a still burgeoning literature suggests that he fascinates his biographers as much as ever.

As a point of reference in what could otherwise be a morass of theory and terminology, Westen and Gabbard offer the following working definition of what might, broadly speaking, constitute a psychoanalytic perspective. They (and I) understand it to be prototypical, rather than definitive:<sup>68</sup>

Psychoanalytic approaches are those that take as axiomatic the importance of unconscious cognitive, affective, and motivational processes; conflicting mental processes; compromises among competing psychological tendencies that may be negotiated unconsciously; defense and self-deception; the influence of the past on current functioning; the enduring effects of interpersonal patterns laid down in childhood; and the role of sexual, aggressive, and other wishes and fears (such as the need for self-esteem and the need for relatedness to others) in consciously and

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<sup>68</sup> Those taking a narratological approach to psychoanalysis (for example), without disowning Westen and Gabbard's offering, would probably prefer to frame such a statement rather differently. Robert S. Wallerstein, for example, in the introduction to Donald Spence's *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth*, talks in terms of "a whole series of transformations of our usual analytic thought conventions":

of reconstruction into (new) construction, of acts of discovery into acts of creation, of historical truth into narrative fit, of pattern finding into pattern making, of veridical interpretation into creative interpretation, of all interpretation into a species of (more or less) inexact interpretation, of analysis essentially as a science of recovery of the past into a science of choice and of creation in the present and future, and of psychoanalyst as poet, artist, and aestheticist. (Spence, 1982, p. 12)

unconsciously influencing thought, feeling and behavior. (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 58)

### 2.2.2 “Applied” psychoanalysis

As can be seen from the list of examples above, psychoanalysis has long since made its way out of the consulting room. However, as noted in the previous chapter, the very idea of “applied” psychoanalysis is still regarded with great suspicion by many practitioners and theorists—as “a poor relative of clinical analysis and something of a freeloader,” Roy Schafer puts it (1992, p. 169). The conventional psychoanalytic wisdom regarding the distinction between clinical psychoanalysis and the applied variety, says Aaron H. Esman, is still that:

psychoanalysis in its pure form finds its place in the clinical psychoanalytic situation where analyst and patient are engaged in what Ernst Kris (1947) called the “psychoanalytic interview”... The analytic situation—the recumbent adult neurotic patient seen four or five times a week, the analyst listening to his or her free associations with even-hovering attention—this is the crucible in which the “pure gold” of psychoanalysis is forged. (Esman, 1998, pp. 741-2)

The corollary to this position is that all psychoanalytically-informed activities that do not follow this model fall into the category of “applied” psychoanalysis.

Esman (inter alia), however, believes that this is a false dichotomy (1998, p. 242). On the one hand, in the sense that much significant theory did not come out of the clinical situation at all, psychoanalysis was “applied” from the beginning. Freud’s seminal *Interpretation of Dreams* uses as its data Freud’s own dreams, not those of patients. His *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (Freud, 1901) similarly draws on his own experiences. He developed his ideas about the unconscious roots of paranoia, which he later applied clinically, by studying notes on the Schreber case (Freud, 1911).

Then, on the other hand, clinical papers based on psychoanalytic data gathered in the consulting room is nowadays understood not to be as pristine as some, at least, seem to have imagined. This is because, says Spence, following Freud, analysts “tend to conceive of clinical papers as being quasi-literary efforts in which form and style are just as important as content.”

Because the raw data have no secure place in this tradition, they tend to be left out; and as we will see in later chapters, streamlined case reports have tended to take the place of the original data, and our basic observations, until very recently, have

tended to disappear once they were uttered. As a result, the path from observation to theory can never be retraced; thus we have no way to confirm or disconfirm an observation, much less combine old observations in a new formulation. (Spence, 1982, p. 23)

What all this comes down to these days, says Esman, is that it has to be recognised that “there are no principled distinctions between the application of psychoanalysis to the products of culture and its application to the treatment of patients” (1998, p. 749). Schafer sums up similarly:

If we do not let ourselves be coerced by tradition in attending only to differences, if we focus on sameness as well as difference, we see that clinical and applied analysis have in common co-creation and interpenetration of interpretable texts or of texts-as-interpretation. Clinical and applied analysis emerge as versions of one psychoanalysis, with no clear-cut parasitic relationship of one to the other. Both amount to the same work carried out under varied conditions. Clinical and applied psychoanalysis sink or swim together. (Schafer, 1992, p. 186)

At the heart of the anxiety about applied psychoanalysis, says Esman, is not scepticism so much as “a profound ambivalence—an intense fascination, an eager regard for the insights it may offer, tempered with a concern for its possible abuse” (1998, p. 744). The main concern about applied psychoanalysis is that analysts are free to make what they will of whatever is under examination, and that there is no one else there to check the interpretation with, as does an analyst with a client (Baudry, 1984, p. 551). But in reality, says Esman, it is *applied* psychoanalysis which is conducted in the public domain, and subject to peer review, and correction or rejection, whereas—as Spence observes (above)—correction, rejection or revision of the analyst’s interpretations and constructions by the patient are rarely reported in the clinical literature (see also Berman, 2003, p. 121; Esman, 1998, pp. 744-5; Wheelis, 1958, p. 157). More to the point, as Schafer observes (above), any correction or rejection from the patient is very likely never accepted by the analyst, simply becoming more grist to the analytic mill.<sup>69</sup>

The other criticism of applied psychoanalysis—at least historically—is that it has often been “reductionist”. “Generations of psychoanalysts treated literary characters as patients seeking treatment, and analyzing their pathologies and dynamics,” says Emanuel Berman (1993, p. 2). “This has led at times to shallow, defensive, anti-analytic readings,

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<sup>69</sup> This, says Freud (tongue in cheek), is “the famous principle of ‘Heads I win, tails you lose’.” Freud goes on to say that a “yes” from the patient is no less ambiguous than a “no”, and that any particular utterance only gains meaning in the context of on-going analysis (1937, pp. 257, 262, 265).

narrowly focused on manifest content while avoiding what is beneath the surface, and outlawing the personal context in which the work was created. Both sides were impoverished by the confrontation” (2003, p. 120). In addition, psychoanalysts “often come with the agenda of showing artists their pathology”, says Berman (2003, p. 127). “More than a few psychoanalysts do that,” adds Schafer (1992, p. 169), “in a way that is evidently insecure, just plain flashy, or intimidating in its intellectual omnivorousness and anal-retentiveness—or is it phallic exhibitionism or grandiosity?” Little wonder that applied psychoanalysis has too often aroused defensiveness and antagonism among those in the arts (see also Brooks, 1987, p. 1).

Despite the use, still, of the present tense by both Berman and Schafer, Heinz Kohut believes the reproach of “psychoanalytic reductionism” is no longer justified (1960, p. 572). Such paternalistic attitudes were an outgrowth of attitudes and assumptions in psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice present at the time, says Berman (1993, p. 6).<sup>70</sup> “If there is one thing that [recent] criticism has most usefully taught us, it is the suspicion of [appearing to claim the last word and the final hermeneutic power] in the interpretive process and history, the refusal of any privileged position in analysis” (Brooks, 1987, p. 3). Berman continues: “The potential for becoming partners in a true interdisciplinary dialogue about fiction or painting, theatre or film will increase—I conclude—when we diminish the pretence of objective knowledge and authoritative understanding of ‘true deep meaning’.” “If we more often come with a curious openness to the unique contribution of the other, a more trusting transference may develop, with a potential for richer joint listening, and mutual fruitful contact” (2003, p. 127).

For all its past shortcomings, applied psychoanalysis has a rich heritage. As Esman (1998, p. 744) notes, a number of analysts—enthusiastic advocates of applied psychoanalysis—have felt called upon to address methodological problems in the field and suggest guidelines so that charges of reductionist and what Kohut calls “wild” analyses (Kohut, 1960, p. 585) might be avoided. The first of these, as Berman says, is to approach the subject with an attitude of “curious openness”, rather than some supposed authority. Interpretations are appropriately offered conjecturally, in a way that implies that there are alternatives, and that revised possibilities of interpretation are possible (Schafer, 1992, p.

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<sup>70</sup> Berman is discussing the period roughly prior to the 1970s, and Kohut somewhat earlier.

182). Berman also talks about the need for a sense of mutuality in the engagement. This, suggests Bennett Simon, is where the very term “applied” psychoanalysis is somewhat unhelpful, in that “it implies that psychoanalysis is the master discipline being applied to another discipline, and misses out on the rich possibilities of a fuller interaction between disciplines” (1992, p. 1200). This interdisciplinary dialogue Shoshana Felman terms “interimplication”. Here she discusses literary criticism, but her comments could also apply to where psychoanalysis meets with other fields:

Since psychoanalytic theory and the literary text mutually inform—and displace—each other; since the very position of the interpreter—of the analyst—turns out to be not outside, but inside the text, there is no longer a clear-cut opposition or a well-defined border between literature and psychoanalysis: psychoanalysis could be intraliterary as much as literature is intrapsychanalytic. The methodological stake is no longer that of the application of psychoanalysis to literature, but rather, of their interimplication in each other. (Felman, 1988, pp. 152-3)<sup>71</sup>

An example of interimplication arises later in this thesis. To recollect, the declared intention of this research (broadly speaking) is to see to what extent psychoanalysis might shed light on problems in Jewish-Christian relations. But, in chapter five of this thesis, it will be seen that there is also pressure the other way: Jewish-Christian relations, in effect, challenges psychoanalytic theory to continue pushing the boundaries of its idea of the “analytic third”, so that potentially more engaging, and more helpful, descriptions of the anti-Jewish constructed other might emerge.

Much of the advice offered to those undertaking applied psychoanalysis is just plain common sense. From the beginning, Freud made it clear that for the client to speak in a mode of free association, and for the analyst to listen with evenly suspended attention, was not the start and end of analysis; some hard thinking was also required (1912b, p. 114). This bimodal swing of attention was amplified upon by Sándor Ferenczi (1926), and later dubbed an “*oscillation...from intuition to understanding*” by Otto Fenichel, who was most disparaging of analysts content to float upon a sea of their client’s unconscious fragments, simply reflecting back what they heard, unanalysed (1941, p. 5). Steven H. Cooper makes an

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<sup>71</sup> While not making this same point exactly, Roy Schafer (1980/1993, pp. 342-5) understands psychoanalysis to be an interaction between one of the psychoanalytical narratives (according to, e.g., Freud, Klein or Kohut) and some other narrative, be it someone’s life story told in therapy, or anything else with a recognisably narrative structure. All analysis, in this view, is in effect “applied”: one narrative encountering and shaping the other. Ruth Parkin-Gounelas takes the discussion a step further, suggesting that the conjunction of two discourses does not merely change the status of each individually, but produces a new discourse she calls (following Julia Kristeva) “intertextual” (2001, p. xvi). This thesis could be understood as an example of this.

obvious suggestion: namely, to maintain an eclectic approach, even within psychoanalysis. Thus, he says, “Our body of theory, we hope, acts as a kind of check and balance system regarding what has been overemphasized or minimized within a particular method of formulation” (1996, p. 270). My drawing in Schafer’s narratological approach (above) alongside the traditional Freudian has been, in part, a strategy for not getting locked into too narrow a psychoanalytical view. With the same thing in mind, chapter four of this thesis draws on (inter alia) psychoanalytic object relations theory, and chapter five, interpersonal theory.

Mitchell and Black draw a parallel with doing “good history” (1995, p. 227). “As with good history, good psychoanalytic interpretations must also make sense, pull together as much of the known data as possible, provide a coherent and persuasive account, and also facilitate personal growth.” William A. Frosch (1996, p. 506), Francis Baudry (1984) and David Carlson (2002, p. 746) all have similar lists. Along with Spence (1982, p. 29), Frosch and Baudry add the importance of understanding the context of the work,<sup>72</sup> and Baudry of “anchoring it to the mental life of the author”, and (“possibly”) that an analytic interpretation should “add to our enjoyment of the work” (1984, pp. 576, 578). Bennett Simon says there also needs to be “a recognition of the role of convention and genre” in whatever is under investigation, as well as “the particulars of any historical setting” (1992, p. 1202).

Finally, in the endeavour to generate more satisfactory (i.e., academically rigorous) analyses, the challenge is not only to find answers to such a wide range of critical questions (that the psychoanalyst may well find difficult if they lie outside his or her main area of expertise). As Berman points out (quoting a colleague), it is also how it is all brought together that makes a “good” analysis or not:

It’s the delicacy of balance, the admissibility of all relevancies and the artful capacity to weigh and prioritise that leads to interpretations that in turn contribute to ongoing discussions, whether in the clinical situation or in public discussion of aesthetics. (Berman, 2003, p. 122)

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<sup>72</sup> Frosch gives as an example that “gentlemen” frequently drank themselves into a stupor on social occasions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but that this was distinguished from alcoholism. The inference, presumably, is that such a distinction would be less likely today, and that interpretations are shaped at least to some extent by social norms.

### 2.2.3 Summary

Psychoanalysis since Freud—in both its theory and practice—has evolved into a wide range of clinical and theoretical approaches which, nevertheless, retain much in common. The contemporary literature is vigorous, no more so than at the interface of psychoanalysis and culture (“applied” psychoanalysis). The wish of some, still, to distinguish clinical psychoanalysis from “applied” is increasingly understood to be a false dichotomy, with the theoretical yield of clinical analysis not as pristine as some once imagined, and some theorists arguing that most psychoanalysis (including clinical) was “applied” from the beginning.

Applied psychoanalysis is nowadays seen as being more open to peer review than clinical practice. Nevertheless, it is still regarded with suspicion in many places, the heart of the problem apparently being an ongoing concern that there are often “wild” and reductive analyses, conducted in a spirit of professional, narcissistic grandiosity.

A range of methodological guidelines has been proposed to make the process academically more robust. First, an attitude on the part of the analyst which is inquisitive, and open to dialogue emerging from the encounter between the two fields, and the possibility that both narratives might be shifted, and/or that a third narrative might emerge. Secondly, that whatever analysis emerges is understood to be one among other possibilities, and subject to future revision. Thirdly, taking as eclectic, and as common-sense, an approach as possible, not only within psychoanalysis, but correlating the interpretation (where possible) with such things as the context of the subject, and the conventions of the time. Finally, the analysis should all “hang together”, and (some would add) should seem to lead somewhere, and contribute to the appreciation and enjoyment of whatever is under study.

## 2.3 “Telling tales”—why a narratological approach?

Of the many ways Christian anti-Jewishness might be discussed, I am choosing to start with a story from the Christian tradition: namely, the legend of The Wandering Jew. I do so because, with psychoanalysis nominated as my main theoretical platform, logically the research approach should be consonant with psychoanalytic *method* as well as theory (and psychoanalytic method, it will be argued shortly, can be understood as fundamentally narrative). Secondly, as discussed in the introduction, the research approach should, for

preference, aim for “thick” descriptions—multi-layered and concrete—rather than “thin” and abstract. A narratological approach, it will be contended, supports those sorts of priorities. Finally, it needs to be noted that a narratological approach is by no means novel: Roy Schafer, for example, uses the story of Snow White as a point of entry into discussing different psychoanalytic approaches to the same text (1992, pp. 167-171).

### 2.3.1 Narration and psychoanalysis

Once upon a time, a text like the legend of The Wandering Jew was likely to be dismissed, or trivialised, as “just a story.” Jean-François Lyotard characterises the scientific view of narrative statements as:

belonging to a different mentality: savage, primitive, underdeveloped, backward, alienated, composed of opinions, customs, authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology. Narratives are fables, myths, legends, fit only for women and children.  
(Lyotard, 1984, p. 27)

Nevertheless, as almost any relevant bibliography shows, the final third of last century saw an explosion of interest in the narratological—for example, Paul Ricoeur’s magisterial *Time and Narrative* (1984-88). Looking at narrative from a psychological perspective, Jerome Bruner asserts that: “There is no such thing psychologically as ‘life itself’.” “In the end it is a narrative achievement.” “Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative,” and, “In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we ‘tell about’ our lives” (1987, pp. 13, 15, 31, author’s emphasis). Bruner’s understanding that our life stories are contiguous with our lives echoes earlier thinking of Stephen Crites (1971). Story-telling is not something that happens by accident, Crites says, nor is it a product of culture. In form, it is one of the marks of being human (1971, p. 291). All this potentially turns on its head the way we commonly think about experience: “Perhaps events are not the raw materials from which we construct stories, but the reverse...events may be abstractions from narrative” (Allen & Laird, 1991, p. 83).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> A counter-view needs to be noted: Galen Strawson maintains that there are “variations in psychological time-style”, and that while many people are naturally ‘Diachronic’ (take narrative self-experience for granted), others are ‘Episodic’”. “There are deeply non-Narrative people,” she says, “and there are good ways to live that are deeply non-Narrative” (Strawson, 2004). But it is still the case that most postmodern writers stress “the central role of narrative in organising, maintaining and circulating knowledge of ourselves and our worlds” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 30).

None of this is unfamiliar to psychoanalysis. Historically, psychoanalytic method—the “talking cure”,<sup>74</sup> as it was known almost from the beginning—can be understood, in large part, as a more or less interactive process of one party telling a story to another, the other interpreting what is heard back again, and so forth. Running alongside the development of narrative theory in other fields (outlined above), some contemporary strands of psychoanalysis have elaborated this traditional understanding, making the narratological dimensions of psychoanalysis more overt, and (as has been seen) arguing that all analysis—both clinical and “applied”—is essentially narrative in nature.

These narrative directions within psychoanalysis over the past four decades are associated with names like Roy Schafer and Donald Spence (Mitchell & Black, 1995, pp. 180-4, 227-8).<sup>75</sup> In this approach, psychoanalysis is understood to be not so much an act of archaeology, or recovering the past (Spence, 1982, p. 11), but as “an act of mutual story-making in which patient and analyst construct a compelling narrative which provides the patient with an integrated view of his or her history that helps explain seemingly inexplicable aspects of the patient’s life” (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 70). Schafer explains his viewpoint:

Psychoanalyzing is not necessarily breaking anything down into its parts. Nor is it necessarily going below the surface. Whole and parts, like surface and depth, are merely narrative terms; that is, they are ways of giving an account of an event. Psychoanalysis is depth psychology *if and only if* one is using a spatially organised narrative of the mind. One may, after all, theorize about the mind non-spatially... The account one gives of psychoanalysis is always a function of the kind of story one wants to tell about it. (Schafer, 1981, p. 13, author's emphasis)

The departure of narrative approaches from the traditionally Freudian is not without its critics. Is the therapist-client dyad purely making its own intersubjective meanings, asks Jody Messler Davies (1996, p. 190), and how does this relate—if at all—to the client’s past or present realities, psychic or otherwise? Donna Orange also points out that to reduce a patient’s experience purely to a hermeneutic, to a category of expressive fiction, is as much an oversimplification, and an abstraction from the whole, as any positivistic approach (2003, p. 479). For many analysts, to characterise psychoanalysis primarily as a hermeneutic

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<sup>74</sup> A term often attributed to Freud and, although used by him, was coined by “Anna O” (Bertha Pappenheim), a patient of Josef Breuer, Freud’s early mentor (Gay, 1988, p. 65; Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 25).

<sup>75</sup> For a useful history of narrative approaches to psychotherapy, see Robert Shaw (2004, p. 53f.).

trivialises it, say Westen and Gabbard, “and ignores many of its factual assertions... which can and should be tested” (1999, p. 70).<sup>76</sup>

At the same time, Westen and Gabbard (and others) recognise that older dichotomised categories of “scientific fact” versus interpretation are no longer tenable: “The intermingling of reality with the observer’s own cognitive structure is... true of all science and all cognition”, they say (1999, p. 70). Nor does an understanding that psychoanalysis is fundamentally a narrative process necessarily imply that interpretations will be “random, relative, or fictional” (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 227). *All* psychoanalytic interpretation, it is now being argued in some circles (see above), needs to correlate—in often just plain, common sense ways—with as much other information as possible (e.g., context).

Schafer’s narratological approach to psychoanalysis sometimes seems to imply that the interest of traditional psychoanalysis in how present subjectivity can be profoundly—sometimes distressingly—shaped by unconscious memory, is a “giving in” to some sort of fatalism (1981, p. 2). Such a view is a caricature, I believe.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, narratological approaches to psychoanalysis have highlighted the importance of not getting “locked into” ideas of the significance of events of the past. Understanding unconscious encounters as a return to moments in the past is helpful only to the extent that it allows us—in Celia Brickman’s engaging expression—to “de-sediment the identifications that have contributed to subjectivity” (2003, p. 207). In the course of this study, connections are made between the

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<sup>76</sup> For early examples of empirical testing of Freudian theory, see the study of castration anxiety previously referred to (Sarnoff & Corwin, 1978), and Paul Cameron’s study of sexual symbolism (1967). More recently, some of what is commonly called “cognitive” research (Hassin, Uleman, & Bargh, 2005)—in the scientific, rather than philosophic sense of that word (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, pp. 11-12)—is investigating the correlation between psychoneurological processes and Freudian theory. See, for example, Russell Meares on implicit (unconscious) memory (Meares, 2000), Alan N. Schore on implicit (unconscious) affective mental processes (Schore, 1997, 1999, 2002b), and Drew Westen (1991; 1999) for a more general treatment. See also critiques of the supposed connection between Freudian and cognitive theories—Orange (2003) from a therapist’s perspective, and Khilstrom (1999) theoretically.

<sup>77</sup> Wheelis articulates what I understand to be a traditional psychoanalytic understanding of the relationship between past and present, and the purpose of analysis. It is a position that does not engender for me the pessimism that it apparently does for Schafer.

Psychoanalysis attempts to locate full responsibility in the patient. This is not a matter of principle or of justice, but of function. It is simply of no avail to blame the parents. Nothing happens. Parents cannot undo their ancient mistakes, and society will not adapt itself to an individual. If the patient cannot change himself, the problem will persist; and he cannot even begin to change himself according to plan until he assumes responsibility for his troubles. Psychoanalysis delves into childhood only in order that the patient may understand how his neurotic patterns originated, and may thereby perceive that his reactions are not consonant with current reality but are the senseless repetition of ancient modes. This understanding facilitates the substitution of choice for the state of being blindly driven. (Wheelis, 1958, pp. 169-70)

anti-Jewishness of the church today and the anti-Jewishness of the early church, and also between the performed anti-Jewishness of Christians in church today and unconscious memories of infancy and childhood common to most of us. The interplay of all this, it will be argued (chapter three), helps towards a better understanding of some of the origins of something otherwise as baffling as anti-Jewishness. One of the perspectives of a *narratological* approach to a psychoanalytic interpretation of what might be going on, is that while the past is important, there is a need to see past and present as a continuous, dynamic whole, that the past is not necessarily and inexorably determinative of the future, and that the present is probably better thought of as a new creation constructed from a host of contemporary factors, rather than as some sort of simple repetition of the past (Schafer, 1981, pp. 24, 47). This is a change of emphasis rather than a radical break from traditional Freudianism. Nevertheless it has possible implications for the future of Jewish-Christian relations, which are discussed in the final chapter of this thesis, in terms of the church needing to take responsibility in the here and now for its anti-Jewishness.

Finally, the decision to privilege a narratological approach is not, at the same time, to become captured by implicit ideas of continuity and coherence. From the beginning, psychoanalysis has had a particular interest in what Schafer terms “implausible tidiness” in analytic narrations (1981, p. 45), and in the *parapraxes*—things apparently forgotten, and “accidentally” let slip, not only during analysis but in everyday life (Freud, 1901). In contemporary socio-literary theory there is similar interest not only in how significant stories hang together, but also in what is omitted and what remains untold in life stories (Bruner, 1987, p. 14; Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 32). In chapter four, there is discussion of The Wandering Jew’s “feet”, for example, which can be understood as surreptitious reference to Christian fantasies about Jewish sexuality—a matter which, for various reasons, does not typically find overt expression for around another two centuries.

### 2.3.2 Narration and “thick” descriptions

Narrative descriptions are commonly understood to be more “thick”<sup>78</sup> than the sorts of abstractions Lyotard characterises as typical of scientific knowledge. Wicks says that, in Lyotard’s view, narrative is understood to be descriptively more thick because it is:

more comprehensive insofar as it includes all kinds of utterances—interrogative and evaluative as well as denotative. Moreover, narrative knowledge is more vital to the social fabric than is scientific knowledge, since narrative is used to constitute societal bonds. In sum, Lyotard’s analysis is that knowledge expressed in the form of narrative is richer and more socially fundamental than scientific knowledge. (2003, pp. 283-4)

So in the context of this research, one of the things a narratological approach might accomplish is to go some way towards allaying one of the concerns raised in the previous chapter: namely, that discussions about Christian anti-Jewishness, rather than being done at arm’s length via abstractions—made “conceptually fragrant through the mediation of the sweet (intellectualized) scent of signifiers”, as Minsky (1998) puts it—need to be conducted in a way that is “earthed” in human living, and connected with the often passionate exigencies of human motivation and relationships. A narratological understanding of the legend of The Wandering Jew (for example) implies that its form bears meaning as well as its content, which suggests that something like the legend is not to be regarded merely as a collection of truths (say, about Christian attitudes towards Jews) wrapped up in a story for some functional purpose—for example, to make it more memorable, or to entertain as well as inform. Its narrative form may well do both of these but, as has yet to be discussed (chapters three and four), there is a multitude of elements present in the story, and there are layers of meaning, and there are implied horizontal connections to other narratives (part of the social fabric, as Lyotard puts it), the “thickness” (Geertz) or “richness” (Lyotard) of

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<sup>78</sup> “Thick” descriptions (refer back to footnote 55) may be contrasted with “thin”, which consider “only the external behavioral aspect of action” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 95). In a similar vein, Jerome Bruner talks about “shallow” and “deep” self-narrations (1987, p. 14). Even apparently thin descriptions are implicitly thick, argues Lacan, who, says Wicks, was just one of the first postmodern theorists “to appreciate how literalistic, theoretical verbiage is embedded in the rich context of a multidimensional linguistic structure, and within the similarly complicated mental states of any person who uses language to express an abstract theory” (2003, p. 159).

The idea that meaning is multi-layered is also finding its way into the sciences as well the humanities.

Philosophers of science have come to appreciate that the edifices of scientific knowledge do not rely on single observational pillars. On the contrary, they are networks of interlocked and interdependent theories, supported by observational data at many different points. (Rustin, 1991, pp. 120-1)

which would probably be absent in a series of abstract propositions about Christians and Jews. These elements, far from being incidental, are host to a range of rich, detailed and subtle meanings that warrant close scrutiny because, as I shall argue in the next two chapters, they often given clues as to where Christian anti-Jewishness comes from psychologically, and why it expresses itself as distinctively as it does. I have not headed this section “Telling Tales” facetiously. Something like the legend is, in one sense, simply a tale, told. But by its complexity, as will be seen, it is also “tell-tale” in the sense that it reveals, indicates, or betrays things that some might think were better not told (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003, p. 1814). That the legend might contain new clues about the aetiology and nature of anti-Jewishness when viewed in such a way appears unexamined in the literature to date.

### **2.3.3 Summary**

The main reason for adopting a narratological approach is so that the research methodology is consonant with psychoanalytic method, as well as theory. Psychoanalytic method can be understood as having been narratively organised from the beginning, and more overtly so over recent decades with narrative elaborations in psychoanalysis associated with names such as Schafer and Spence (paralleling developments in narrative theory in other fields also). In this perspective, analysis is less an archaeological expedition into the unconscious to make connections with the present than the (co-) creation of a more meaningful story, by better integrating into the present both overt and covert subjectivities, from past, present and future.

Some have critical questions about psychoanalysis understood as purely hermeneutical but, with some of the common sense methodological safeguards previously discussed in this chapter, it appears to offer a new perspective on the relationship between past and present events, which may have helpful implications for Jewish-Christian relations. One of the caveats concerning a narrative approach is not to become captured by implicit ideas of continuity, coherence and narrative tidiness; there is also meaning to be found in the parapraxes, and the things that are barely hinted at, or left untold, in life stories.

Finally, narrative can support complex and subtle descriptions, offering layers of meaning and connections with other narratives constituting the social fabric. The narrative

form of The Wandering Jew is not incidental; its complexity may well accommodate all manner of meaning largely unexamined in the extant literature.

## 2.4 The legend of The Wandering Jew

As already indicated, the particular story to be engaged with, as a “way in” to discussing Christian anti-Jewishness, is the legend of The Wandering Jew. There needs to be a discussion of just why this legend, in particular, has been chosen. But before this, in order to be quite clear about what is being talked about, something of a major excursus is required to outline what the legend is, and what others have made of it up until now.

### 2.4.1 The legend

The Wandering Jew is the usual English title of a Christian legend that enjoyed wide popularity in western Europe from around the early 17<sup>th</sup> through to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the purposes of discussion, it would be useful to have before us some “standard” version of the legend. But which one? What is recognised today as the legend of The Wandering Jew has innumerable antecedents and variants, including collections of stories that some interpret as “Wandering-Jew-like” (e.g., Edwards, 1998). There have been attempts at putting one “definitive” version together from the wealth of extant material, but with no great success. Frank Felsenstein takes George K. Anderson—author of what is still the definitive work on the subject (G. K. Anderson, 1970)—to task for his apparent assumption that some “true”, “pure” core to the legend can be retrieved in an “uncontaminated” state. Felsenstein argues that Anderson makes a fundamental mistake in not recognising that the strength of the story lies in its “striking plasticity” and ability to “propagate itself through time in so many motley forms” (1995, pp. 61-2).

That said, there is a version published as a pamphlet in Germany in 1602 under the title *Kurze Beschreibung und Erzählung von einem Juden mit Namen Ahasverus* (A Short Description of a Jew named Ahasuerus)<sup>79</sup> which Anderson regards as “perhaps the most

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<sup>79</sup> The reason for the name “Ahasuerus” has been much debated (Baron, 1967, p. 179), but at least two sources think it likely that Ahasuerus was, at the time, a cant term for Jews, because of its association with the Biblical book of *Esther*. The irony is that Ahasuerus, the king in the story of Esther, was supposedly Persian, not Jewish. But this inversion fits with the contemporary Christian interpretation of the Jewish festival of Purim (for which *Esther* is the script), which was commonly believed to be a Jewish expression of anti-gentile racial and religious hatred (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 50; Roth, 1972, p. 261).

important single milestone in the legend.” He continues: “Had it not been for this pamphlet, it is altogether likely that the Legend, like many another legend of extrascriptural origins, would have trickled out into a sandy desert” (1970, p. 42). As it was, it quickly impressed itself upon the popular imagination, with forty editions in German before the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and numerous editions in Dutch, Flemish, English, Danish, Swedish and Estonian shortly thereafter (Jacobs, 2002; Roth, 1972). Salo Baron counts 188 editions in ten languages before 1930 (Baron, 1967, p. 181). Generally speaking, the legend was known by its eponymous subject: in German-speaking countries *Der Ewige Jude* (usually rendered in English as “The Immortal Jew”, sometimes “The Eternal Jew”), and in French, *Le Juif Errant*. The common English form “The Wandering Jew” seems to derive directly from the French (Jacobs, 2002). While the legend was undoubtedly well known in Britain (Felsenstein, 1995, chap. 4), there seems not to have been enough interest for a local version to evolve from what came over from the Continent. Anderson (1970, p. 94) wonders if this was because of Puritan influence that prevailed from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Cross & Livingstone, 1974, p. 1146). Certainly there was a “fear and hatred” of Catholicism (Tomalin, 2002, p. 313), which included anything like the legend with a whiff of “popish” superstition about it.

The 1602 pamphlet version is important for another reason because, while prior to this date the legend had only indirect connections with Jews, in this version “Ahasuerus appears as a fully fledged personification of the Jewish people” (Baron, 1967, pp. 177-9; Roth, 1972, p. 262).<sup>80</sup> That is, the legend appears, apparently for the first time, in the form of what seems intended primarily to be Christian, anti-Jewish propaganda. The representative nature of the legend is a matter I return to shortly (2.4.3.2, below).

Where the pamphlet was first printed cannot be ascertained, beyond being somewhere in northern Germany. Some evidence suggests the northwest, but other indications are much further east, in the city of Danzig<sup>81</sup> (Jacobs, 2002). Most of the evidence is confusing, and some of it clearly disingenuous, which in the context of the times is not surprising, as a vague provenance added to the mystery, increasing, rather than detracting from, the credibility of such a story (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 44).

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<sup>80</sup> Although, as noted elsewhere, this interpretation is not found in print for another century.

<sup>81</sup> Present day Gdańsk.

In a nutshell, the story is the account of a Jerusalem Jew who met Christ on the way to his crucifixion. When the Jew heartlessly told Christ to “move along”, he was told that he (the Jew) was the one who would have to walk on until the end of time. And so the Jew wanders the earth, “undead” and without hope, a symbol of the incomplete nature of the Christian redemption of the world, until Judgement Day, when he will be a witness to all the earth of the Passion of Christ. The authenticity of this story is supposedly confirmed over and over again by the many reported sightings, across the centuries, of The Wandering Jew in his various guises.

As a legend, The Wandering Jew was part of the unofficial Christian literary canon for around four centuries. At times there were surges of renewed interest, such as during the “Romantic” period of English literature<sup>82</sup> (late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), and in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century—for example, the series of engravings by Gustave Doré, illustrating a version of the legend published in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hasan-Rokem & Dundes, 1986, appendix) which were, says Anderson, the most distinguished non-literary representation of the legend of that century, and did much to make the image of The Wandering Jew as popular as it was for the following hundred years (1970, pp. 259-60).

The beginning of the end for the popular appeal of the legend was the rise of pseudo-scientific ideas of race belonging to secular modernity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Leschnitzer, 1971). These replaced the supernatural stories of Christendom (such as The Wandering Jew) with an allegedly more credible basis for much the same set of anti-Jewish prejudices. So, for example, the earlier idea of The Wandering Jew morphed into the anthropological idea of the unique power of the Jewish race to adapt to conditions in every corner of the globe (Goldstein, 1985, p. 526), which became, in due course, the Nazi stereotype of the Jew as the “rootless cosmopolitan” (Maccoby, 1972, p. 252). After the fin de siècle, the treatment of the legend “in the main falls off in both quantity and quality,” says Anderson (1970, p. 352), a contention supported by examination of bibliographies on the subject, which show a marked decrease in the literature from this time onwards (see, e.g., Jacobs, 2002). For many, the last vestiges of romanticism finally died in places like Ypres and the Somme. As Anderson says (1970, p. 354), it was a new world after 1918, and from this point onwards

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<sup>82</sup> “Works in literature, music and the visual arts that exalt the subjective, emotional, irrational, fantastic, grotesque, horrific or transcendental are characterized as ‘romantic’” (Belchem & Price, 1994, p. 534).

The Wandering Jew would be either the traditional, Christian anti-Jewish figure of the past, or a new, almost completely secularised, antisemitic creation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 2.4.2 Extant interpretations

Scholarly, interpretive comment on the legend is surprisingly scant and recent. There appears to be nothing specific, for example, on how representative the legend was, in its published form, of anti-Jewishness at any “popular” level.<sup>83</sup> It used to be thought that things like popular broadsheets and chapbooks, and remnants of “oral culture”—poetry, ballads, legends—provided unmediated access to popular thought. But, says Robert Scribner, “even after the most careful analysis, we are forced to recognise that they provide only indirect access to the ‘popular’, and may tell more about the producers than about the consumers of these cultural products” (2001b, p. 31). Similarly, there seems have been no effort to situate the legend in its time anywhere within the spectrum of “official and unofficial religion” (see e.g., Scribner, 2001b, pp. 62-66).

As well as failing to situate the legend within its context, except in the most bare-bones sort of way, few commentators offer at any depth what it might have meant, then. Anderson (1970), for example, has done a monumental job gathering material together about the legend, but nowhere does he explicitly identify the legend as antisemitic, and such interpretation as he does venture seems jejune by the standards of his own scholarship: “Do not blaspheme. For if you do you may suffer the most soul-piercing of punishments” (1970, p. 10). Dana Edward’s interpretation of her collection of North American folk tales (1998), which she takes to be contiguous with the legend of The Wandering Jew, also makes no connection with antisemitism, and appears equally naïve:

Perhaps you have seen him. The person on the street seeking a handout, the lone hitchhiker... may not be an ordinary man, but the Wandering Jew. For this reason it pays to be kind to strangers and to offer a helping hand to those in need.  
(Edwards, 1998, pp. 16-17)

Isaac-Eidersheim’s interpretation (mentioned in the previous chapter) of The Wandering Jew as a hated oedipal father-figure is one of the few examples of a hermeneutical treatment of the legend from the first half of last century (1941). Three

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<sup>83</sup> For a discussion of the difficulties of the idea of “popular culture” in late-mediaeval/early-modern Germany, see Scribner (2001b, chap. 1).

decades later, Leschnitzer (1971, pp. 230-2) gathered together what are nowadays some of the generally accepted—if not widely discussed—interpretations of the legend, and Frank Felsenstein does the same thing another twenty years on (1995, pp. 64-71). In these essentially theological interpretations, The Wandering Jew is seen as personifying many popular beliefs within the church about Jews. In particular, the “immortality” of The Wandering Jew explains to the church the ongoing life of the Jewish community. His status as a wanderer both explains and justifies the rootlessness of the Jewish community. And the tragic appearance of The Wandering Jew was seen as living proof of God’s punishment of Jews for their rejection of Christ. Maccoby contends that the satisfaction Christians get from the suffering and exile of Jews (as personified in The Wandering Jew) is not simply sadistic or triumphalist; the real, hidden satisfaction is that Jewish suffering shows that “they, and only they, had to pay for the guilt of performing the indispensable sacrifice [the death of Christ]” (Maccoby, 1972, p. 246). The author makes a compelling case—Norman Solomon calls it an interpretive tour de force (Solomon, 1987)—although it has to be said that, generally speaking, the idea has not endured. Taking a psychoanalytic slant, Felsenstein sums up: “The Wandering Jew as Other, it is now generally recognised, is primarily a projection of Christian beliefs and values” (1995, p. 61). His “now” tends to confirm my own observation that this interpretation—indeed, any sort of interpretation—is relatively recent, and the “generally” acknowledges, perhaps, that the essentially anti-Jewish nature of the legend would still not be universally recognised.

Important themes associated with the legend appear to be, as yet, entirely unaddressed. Just how The Wandering Jew came to be identified with the whole Jewish race in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Rose, 1990, p. 24, footnote 3) seems to have received no critical investigation. Nor has the apparently obvious question of how the vengeful Christ of the legend might be reconciled with the Christ of the gospels.<sup>84</sup> My interest in The Wandering Jew, as will become clear, is not in the legend per se, but in its main character as a synecdoche of Christian, anti-Jewish construction. While I intend to address some aspects of the legend that I regard as being of psychological significance, clearly there is yet a huge

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<sup>84</sup> At least until the middle of last century, this was a vexed issue for Franciscans resident in Jerusalem who were plagued by Christians wanting to be shown where the alleged incident of Christ cursing the Jew occurred. The Franciscans struggled (unsuccessfully) to have the legend banned (Bagatti, 1949).

amount of research to be done on the legend of The Wandering Jew and associated topics, the bulk of which lies outside the scope of this thesis.

### **2.4.3 Why this legend, in particular?**

#### **2.4.3.1 Focus on a character**

The main reason this particular legend has been chosen is because the focus of the story is on a person, its main character. This, compared with (for example) two other well-known anti-Jewish narratives: the blood libel accusation (mentioned in the previous chapter), or well-poisoning accusations (Flannery, 1985, pp. 109-111; Wistrich, 1991, pp. 32-33). Both these libels revolve around Christian ideas of what Jews did, rather than some central character. For completeness' sake, it should be added that The Wandering Jew is not the only literary incarnation of Christian anti-Jewishness. Judas Iscariot, widely understood to be a construction of the early church that blames Jews for the “betrayal” and death of Jesus,<sup>85</sup> is a possible alternative, but since descriptions—especially physical—are scant compared with The Wandering Jew, the latter is still to be preferred.

A character-centred approach, which concentrates on how anti-Jewishness is “embodied”, is preferred because it addresses methodological concerns highlighted earlier that (generally speaking) there is nowadays a preference for a concrete, rather than abstract, style of discussion of something like anti-Jewishness. For example, and as Sheila Davaney (1997a; 1997b) says, some contemporary feminist theorists prefer to discuss women’s lives in terms of “historicized subjectivity”, rather than what they see as the “unified essentialist selves of modernity” or the “curiously similar disconnected subjects of much postmodern lore.” That is, there is nowadays an interest in the often complex interplay of inheritance, context, relationships and personal agency that “results in historically particular identities and experience” (Davaney, 1997b, p. 12). The significance of this shift in focus has a

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<sup>85</sup> While much of the literature picks up a common theme in the Judas Iscariot story of Christian, anti-Jewish blaming, there are differences in the detail of various interpretations. Hyam Maccoby, for example, has it that “the story of betrayal by Judas Iscariot is a legend or myth that grew by accretion, that it fulfilled a need in a societal strategy for the exorcism and transfer of guilt, and that it can be paralleled in the mythologies of other societies in a similar context of guilt for a necessary and atoning murder” (1992, p. 141). James Veitch regards “the character of Judas Iscariot and the role he plays as a literary construction...If any blame is to be assigned [for the decision to execute Jesus] it is not attributed to Pontius Pilate, but to Jews through Judas the betrayer, a created literary character” (1996, p. 370). William Klassen (1996) advocates rehabilitating Judas Iscariot’s memory, and re-locating the many deliberate slanders where they properly belong—in the church, rather than among Jews.

potential parallel in the context of discussions about Jewish-Christian relations: just as assumptions about the common character of women's experience, while emancipatory in intention, has tended to conceal as much as to reveal (Davaney, 1997a, pp. 200-3), so discussions of "Christian anti-Jewishness" in general, abstract terms have sometimes tended to miss significant points. By focusing on The Wandering Jew in particular, I believe there are important aspects of Christian anti-Jewishness to be brought to light that have been largely overlooked until now.

It is not just the Wandering Jew as a highly particular character who might be of interest in better understanding Christian constructions of anti-Jewishness, but also *the body* of The Wandering Jew. As far back as Freud, psychoanalysis has always taken considerable account of the relationship between the mental and the physical, and that humans tend to "embody" their history, difficulties, and conflicts (Douglas, 1973/1996, p. 70; Halling & Goldfarb, 1991, pp. 325-6). For example, in an early case that helped shape the foundations of psychoanalytic theory, Freud came to understand that Fraülein Ilona Weiss's leg pains were an unconscious "conversion" of painfully conflicting emotions into a bodily manifestation (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 36-7).<sup>86</sup> A trend among some psychotherapists to understand themselves as psychosomatically involved in the client-therapist dyad, rather than as a so-called disinterested observer and commentator, could also be understood as a recent expression of the same fundamental understanding of the mind-body link.<sup>87</sup>

This connection applies not only in therapy, say Halling and Goldfarb (1991, p. 313): "Everyday life provides compelling evidence of the importance the body plays in our search for understanding." Extensive research from the cognitive sciences is providing an increasingly comprehensive picture that as thinking, feeling, communicating human beings we exist in a "psychobiological" state; we are "mind-bodies" (Schore, 2002a, p. 4).<sup>88</sup> In the past, say Halling and Goldfarb (1991, pp. 316-320), the body has been devalued as a bearer

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<sup>86</sup> Freud refers to "conversion" of the emotional into the physical in two of his papers (Freud, 1894, p. 49; 1908-9).

<sup>87</sup> See, e.g., *The Embodied Psychotherapist* (Shaw, 2004). This is discussed further in chapter five in connection with the idea of the "analytic third".

<sup>88</sup> This connects with psychoanalytically-informed developmental theory, such as that of Margaret Mahler, to be discussed in chapter four.

of meaning. But Merleau-Ponty's oft-quoted expression, "I am my body"<sup>89</sup> reflects what Lakoff and Johnson see as a need to thoroughly rethink most popular current approaches to philosophy (1999, p. 3). "Reason is not disembodied, as the tradition has largely held," they say. "Reason is not, in any way, a transcendent feature of the universe, or of disembodied mind...but arises from the nature of our brains, bodies, and bodily experience" (1999, p. 4).

In summary, there appears nowadays to be a confluence of argument coming from the social sciences (supported by historical evidence from periods of interest in this research),<sup>90</sup> from psychoanalysis, from research in the cognitive sciences, and from phenomenological strands of philosophy (represented by, e.g., Merleau-Ponty), all saying that meaning is not constructed in some purely mental, abstract fashion but in an embodied way. And so there are compelling reasons for doing something that appears not to have been undertaken to date: to focus on the body of The Wandering Jew in particular, to see if the ways in which it is constructed in the legend might yield up fresh clues as to the nature of Christian anti-Jewishness.

#### **2.4.3.2 A classic anti-Jewish text**

The second reason why this particular legend has been chosen is because it fits the model of anti-Jewishness discussed in the introduction to this thesis—that is, it is made up of some combination of anti-Judaism and antisemitism, running side by side (rather than, as commonly understood, the latter following on from the former). The legend of The Wandering Jew fits this sort of definition because it contains one element that is obviously derived from the Christian religious tradition, and another which is clearly contemporary with the period it emerged in.

First, there are clear First Testament echoes in the legend. There is, for example, a typological connection with the Biblical story of Cain (Pollefeyt, 2002).<sup>91</sup> Cain is condemned by God to be a wanderer after committing his terrible crime, and yet, eventually, an ascetic, nomadic way of life is commended by God, even over against mainstream

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<sup>89</sup> "*Je suis mon corps*" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 175). Stephen Priest says Merleau-Ponty argues that "being human is prior to being either mental or physical or both." "It is the reflective act of judgement, especially philosophical judgement, which produces the appearance of mind-body dualism" (1998, p. 67).

<sup>90</sup> See section 2.4.3.3 below.

<sup>91</sup> Gen 4:1-16.

Judaism.<sup>92</sup> Maccoby notes roots possibly even further back in the Genesis account: in Adam's crime against God, his being thrust out of his true home, and of his being saved from death by the grace of God (1972, pp. 242-3).

While there is a strong New Testament connection, it is indirect, via two post-Biblical (though early) legends—the Legend of Malchus, and the Legend of St John. The Legend of Malchus has its roots in the gospel of John. According to this, during Jesus' arrest, one of his disciples, Simon Peter, struck at a servant of the High Priest, Malchus, and cut off his ear (John 18: 4-10). Later, during his interrogation, Jesus was struck by one of the officers (John 18: 20-22). The two men became one in the new story (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 12). In time, perhaps after Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire (4<sup>th</sup> century) and was in a position to exact punishment, the Legend of Malchus became a story of punishment of the offender of Christ. From this, says Anderson, it can be inferred that the origin of this legend is Christian (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 12). The earliest surviving written version of this story dates from around the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and is a tale full of weeping, in which the narrator claims to have met this Malchus, clad in rags, who has somehow survived the 500 years since Christ's death. There is, however, no obvious element of anti-Jewishness about it.

The Legend of St John also has its roots in John's gospel (John 21: 20-23; see also Matthew 26: 28). If the conditional "if" is removed from the beginning of John 21: 22, it could be inferred that the disciple John was to tarry on earth until Christ's return. By modern standards, it seems extraordinary that the meaning of the original could be almost totally inverted in such a way. And yet the evidence is that this had already happened, even before John's gospel was set down, as the following verse (23) specifically disabuses the hearer/reader of such an interpretation. But to no avail; the Legend of St John had, apparently, already been born. Extra-Biblically, there is evidence of its existence as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 15). In this tradition, John died at a great age, but his grave "would not be still" and, when opened, was found to be empty. He dutifully waits and wanders, so the legend has it, preaching and combating heresies in infidel places until the final coming of Christ (G. K. Anderson, 1970, pp. 14-15). Clearly,

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<sup>92</sup> Jer 35:12-19.

this is a Christian legend and, just as clearly as the Malchus legend, it also has no obvious anti-Jewishness about it.

These legends apparently conflated, with changes and added details, and a story, or stories, of a sinner doomed to eternal life circulated in the near east and eastern Mediterranean up until as late as the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Roth, 1972, p. 259). Its appearance in Europe is highly problematic. There is evidence of what might be, at best, early analogues: an 11<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine tale, for example, tells of a Jew who wanders, but he is not The Wandering Jew (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 16). The first written account specifically mentioning a Jew condemned for his sin to live until Christ's second coming dates from Bologna in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, subsequently appearing in full, or mentioned, in chronicles, poems, tracts, miracle plays, and so forth from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Roth, 1972, p. 260). But it was the 1602 version that really "took off" in the Christian imagination.

Secondly, there is a dimension of Christian antisemitism to the legend which owes more to the era it emerged in, rather than Christian tradition. If the Bible and fifteen centuries of church tradition gave the legend the supposed pedigree it needed to be popular, its Lutheran connection was one of the things that gave its hearers a sense of immediacy. In the legend, an unknown narrator is retelling a story he had purportedly heard from one Paulus von Eitzen (1521-1598), an (actual) well-known theologian who went on to become Bishop of Schleswig. Paulus von Eitzen, it is known, studied with Luther. In fact, the two holidayed together in 1542, just a year before the appearance of Luther's poisonously antisemitic book *Concerning the Jews and Their Lies* (Edelmann, 1968, p. 6). It seems highly probable that the memory of von Eitzen (who had died a few years earlier), and his close association with the arguably antisemitic Luther, was invoked by the legend as an additional cue to the hearer that it was to be understood anti-Jewishly. Together, the Biblical and the Lutheran components of anti-Jewishness are just the sort of combination of anti-Judaism and antisemitism one would expect to find in something like the legend of The Wandering Jew—indeed in any such anti-Jewish story, from almost any era.

#### **2.4.3.3 A synecdoche of anti-Jewish construction**

A third reason why this particular legend has been chosen has to do with the legend's main character, rather than the legend per se. The 17<sup>th</sup> century, say David Hillman and Carla

Mazzio, was “an age of synecdoche” (1997, p. xiv). The host of social-cultural changes that characterised 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe (discussed in detail in the next chapter) resulted in “a pervasive sense of fragmentation”, a new fascination with the particular rather than the universal, and the relationship between these two (Hillman & Mazzio, 1997, p. xiii). In this context, the figure of The Wandering Jew can be understood as emblematic of Christian constructions of Jews as “other”.

Above all, there was a revaluation of the human body—for example, a marked tendency in art to represent the female body as an erotic object (Scribner, 2001b, pp. 135, 138)—and a fascination with body parts as “vehicles of culture and symbolization, as organs with eerily individuated agencies, as objects of libidinal cathexes, as instruments of sentient experience, as imagined *loci* of self-knowledge and self-alienation” (Hillman & Mazzio, 1997, p. xii). Early moderns, no less than postmoderns, were deeply interested in particularities of corporeality, say Hillman and Mazzio, and it would be “a mistake to underestimate the important role of corporeal partitioning in medieval life and thought” (1997, pp. xi-xii). The “rediscovery” of the clitoris in the medical texts of the period (Park, 1997), and concern about the relationship between masculinity and the physiology of the eye (i.e., the “male gaze”) are both examples of the way anxieties about gender roles in an age of change became resident in symbolic body parts. The punitive dismemberment of Henry Garnet, Superior of the Jesuit Order in England, for his alleged involvement in the Roman Catholic “Gunpowder Plot” of 1605—he was hanged, castrated, had his tongue cut out, was beheaded, disemboweled and quartered—was no mere mediaeval gore-fest; each of those actions was imbued with a particular significance associated with the different parts of his body (Nicolson, 2003, p. 116). On another plane entirely, a French literary fashion of the period was the “anatomical blazon” (Vickers, 1997)—lyric poems in praise of (sometimes disparaging), not the person, but her (usually her) body parts (hair, hands, breasts, feet, etc.). Vickers (and others) argue that this “tropic disfiguration” articulated conditions of bodily, social and syntactic dislocation typical of subjectivity in the social and political world of early-modern Europe (Hillman & Mazzio, 1997, p. xix).

Jay Geller notes that, four hundred years later, the social dislocations, economic instability, and collapse of traditional narratives of value and meaning in fin-de-siècle Europe also produced popular discourses which endeavoured to fix identity to the body,

especially the bodies of “those menacing others” (1999, p. 358). As everything else vaporised, “the body remained”, says Geller, “inscribed with the natural markers of gender, sexuality, race. Identity was read off these inextricably intertwined signs. Jewish identity, in particular was betrayed by the nose, the foot, the smell, and—because it was of the body—circumcision.”<sup>93</sup> Freudian discourse, Geller adds, “was at least as much shaped by corporealization of identity as it helped to shape this phenomenon” (1999, p. 358). Mary Douglas, in the now classic work summarising her anthropological research, finds that the body cannot be endowed with universal meanings, and that while the continual exchange of meanings between the experiences of the social body and the physical body reinforce the categories of the other, body symbolism is always servant to social intentions (1973/1996, pp. 69). Interest in bodily apertures, for example, *depend upon* a “preoccupation with social exits and entrances, escape routes and invasions” (Douglas, 1973/1996, p. 74).

Even though the idea was not to be found in print until a hundred years after its first appearance, it seems safe to assume that within the cultural and literary conventions of the late-mediaeval/early-modern period, the figure of The Wandering Jew would not have been understood as exotic or incongruous, but as entirely representative of Jews in general. It would furthermore seem highly likely that the naming of the various body parts of The Wandering Jew in the legend, along with other descriptions of his physicality, should be understood not as merely incidental (e.g., literary embellishment), but that significant, culturally-constructed meaning is associated with every detail.

Finally, there is the question of how a typically anti-Jewish story belonging to around four centuries ago might have any relevance for understanding anti-Jewishness in the life of the church today. In the next chapter there is further discussion of the context into which the legend was born. From this, it will be seen that the *legend* may have long since ceased to have the sort of sociological and theological explanatory power it had then. But, it will become clear that The Wandering Jew—the *character*—has an almost trans-historical relevance. Why, for example, did the Gustav Doré engravings previously mentioned have the huge popular appeal they had over 250 years after the appearance of the legend? I

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<sup>93</sup> There was some discussion of circumcision/castration in the previous chapter, and there is a huge literature on the interrelationship of discourses on antisemitism, gender, sexuality, race and madness (e.g., Cheyette & Marcus, 1998b; Gilman, 1985, 1986, 2003; Goldstein, 1985; Silberstein & Cohn, 1994), and on antisemitic inscriptions upon the Jewish body (e.g., Eilberg-Schwartz, 1992; Geller, 1992a; Gilman, 1992, 1994).

believe it is because The Wandering Jew has all manner of unconscious Christian fantasies about “Jews” overtly and covertly inscribed upon his body, that can be shown to have much the same meaning (especially psychoanalytically-informed meaning) in the early-17<sup>th</sup>, the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and the early-21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and probably many other points in between.

#### **2.4.4 Summary**

The legend of The Wandering Jew has been chosen as a narratological “way in” to discussing Christian anti-Jewishness. The Wandering Jew is a late-mediaeval/early-modern Christian legend, popular across Europe and North America until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A 17<sup>th</sup> century German pamphlet version is of particular interest, as it is the first evidence of The Wandering Jew as a fully-fledged, Christian, anti-Jewish fantasy. It is the wholly fictional account of a Jerusalem Jew cursed by Christ to wandering forever for an affront to Christ on the way to his crucifixion, the supposed authenticity of which has been confirmed by repeated sightings over the centuries. There were resurgences of interest in the legend during the Romantic period, and again from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, but it lost its popular appeal after the end of World War I. Research beyond the purely descriptive is both recent and sparse, but The Wandering Jew is generally understood to personify popular Christian beliefs about Jews.

The main reason for choosing this particular legend is because the focus is on a central character, and this offers the possibility of picking up very particular, “embodied” meanings concerning Christian anti-Jewishness which may have been missed to date. It is also quite what would be expected of the anti-Jewish literature of the era: the story clearly has both anti-Judaic and antisemitic features, and the main character is a classic example of the corporealization of identity which was typical of the “age of synecdoche”. While the legend has long since ceased to have the sort of explanatory power it had four centuries ago, the character appears to have an almost trans-historical relevance, probably because the anti-Jewish fantasies inscribed upon his body have remained essentially unchanged across time.

## 2.5 Engaging psychoanalytically with the legend

The purpose of this section is to outline the ways in which psychoanalysis will be used to examine the legend of The Wandering Jew, in order to shed light on the critical questions summarised at the end of the introductory chapter, which are the focus of the next three chapters. Detailed methodological discussions are reserved for later, but the following introduces and outlines the approaches to be taken.

### 2.5.1 Listening with “evenly suspended attention”

One of the questions that distilled out of discussions in the introduction to this thesis was: What is the psychological mechanism that rouses largely unconscious anti-Jewishness in contemporary congregations when texts such as the “Jewish trial of Jesus” are performed in church? What happens in the “listening” (in various ways) to stories like this, that perpetuates Christian fantasies of supersession—particularly towards Jews and Judaism—that seem to be sabotaging the church’s good (if inconsistent) intentions for better Jewish-Christian relations?

As discussed at some length in the introduction, there is a cluster of recent research, first, detailing the paranoid context that produced many of the texts of the early church; secondly, relating experiences of infancy and childhood to religious styles in later life; and, thirdly, noting the irrationality of the contemporary church’s anti-Jewishness. But, to date, no one seems to have made any of the connections. Can they be made in a way to give some sense of what the psychological links are that perpetuate first century anti-Jewishness in the contemporary church? It is this question that the following chapter addresses, and because one of the objects of this research is to see if psychoanalysis has any light to shed on the issue, it is only consistent that, not only theory, but some *method* which is recognisably psychoanalytical should be employed to do at least the initial investigation.

The method will be to listen to an anti-Jewish text—in this case, the legend of The Wandering Jew<sup>94</sup>—with what Freud called “evenly suspended attention”.<sup>95</sup> Broadly speaking, it is the last of what Baudry regards as the four common approaches to the psychoanalytic interpretation of a literary text (1984, pp. 551-2). A critical discussion of this

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<sup>94</sup> Why this legend, and not some other anti-Jewish text, is discussed in 2.4.3 of this chapter.

<sup>95</sup> For a full discussion of this term see the following chapter.

method is what begins the next chapter, keeping in mind also both the methodological “wish list” of the previous chapter, and the methodological warnings discussed above regarding “applied” psychoanalysis.

### **2.5.2 Identifying psychoanalytically significant themes**

The purpose of chapter four of this thesis is to investigate why contemporary anti-Jewishness has the particular and peculiar features it does, and to ask what turns out to be a closely related question: namely, what is the aetiology of the fear and anxiety that apparently drives this? Why is the sort of Christian anti-Jewishness discussed in the introduction to this thesis often so passionately irrational, palpably incarnate, so deep-rooted and difficult to educate against, and where does it all come from?

The methodology for this chapter, which is basically Baudry’s third approach (1984, pp. 551-2), is to identify psychoanalytically significant themes in the legend that might shed light on these questions, particularly (for reasons already discussed) the way the central character has been constructed in the Christian imagination, and—even more particularly—the anti-Jewish meanings implied in descriptions of his physicality (his body, his demeanour, etc.).

In a way, this methodology is the complement of that proposed for the previous chapter. In analytic practice, says Spence, “we are always wearing two hats.” During the analytic encounter there is no great concern for whether interpretations can be corroborated in any precise manner. To look for precise fits and patterns would be ridiculous, he says, and might easily interfere with the process. But outside the “analytic hour”, a different kind of standard is needed for sifting over the data and “we...must adopt more conventional rules of truth finding” (1982, p. 24). To identify and discuss significant themes in the legend in a conventional sort of way may not immediately strike one as especially “psychoanalytical”, but there are emphases within psychoanalysis that will shape what is looked for, and what is found.<sup>96</sup> An example (already mentioned above) is an interest, not only in what is overtly said, but in the things that are only half said, or not said at all. This is elaborated on further,

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<sup>96</sup> This is a matter the analyst almost inevitably feels ambivalent about, as Cooper notes. “There is often a dialectical tension regarding theory as a friend and foe, self and alien, welcome and unwelcome fellow traveller, and ultimately, constructive and destructive factor in the understanding of clinical process” (1996, p. 256).

along with other related methodological considerations, at the start of chapter four. As with chapter three, the methodological wish list from the introduction and the caveats discussed above will need to be borne in mind.

### 2.5.3 Some theoretical reflections

Writing to close associate Sándor Ferenczi, Freud commented, “I consider that one should not make theories. They should arrive unexpectedly in your house, like a stranger one hasn’t invited”.<sup>97</sup> Steven H. Cooper is not quite so cavalier about the relationship between individual observations and overall theory. His sense is, he says, that the “facts” of psychoanalytic observation can never be separated from the theory that organises them into a coherent whole (1996, p. 260). Nevertheless, it is apparent that from the beginning, psychoanalysis by and large took a pragmatic approach, and new psychoanalytic insight emerged from practitioners reflecting on the exigencies of their work with suffering women, men, and (very often) children, rather than through re-working theory, as such.<sup>98</sup> It is also notable that the abbreviated biographies introducing, or appended to, most psychoanalytic publications (“bios”) very frequently show the authors to be practitioners as well as theorists (and primarily practitioners, one suspects). Following in this psychoanalytic tradition, the methodological focus on praxis planned for the next two chapters is followed by a chapter of broader theoretical reflection.

As will be seen—particularly in chapter four of this thesis—the psychoanalytic idea of projection takes us some way towards better understanding one of the main psychological mechanisms by which Christians are understood to construct Jews as other. And yet, it will be argued, there seems to be “something missing” from such descriptions. A metaphor that better expresses the “incarnate” and “palpably alive” nature of Christian anti-Jewish projection seems to be called for. The first question, then, to be explored theoretically in

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<sup>97</sup> This is in a letter from Freud to Ferenczi that does not appear to be included in any of the extant collections (in English translation) of their correspondence. The letter is quoted in an editorial commentary on an essay by Freud on “transfer neurosis” (Freud, 1915b, p. 113). The English translation above is that of Gribinski (1994, p. 1019), from the French “*J’estime que l’on ne doit pas faire de théories—elles doivent tomber à l’improviste dans votre maison, comme des hôtes qu’on n’avait pas invités...*”

<sup>98</sup> For example, Anna Freud, Margaret Mahler, Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott, John Bowlby, Heinz Kohut, Carl Rogers, Daniel Stern, Donald Spence, Stephen Mitchell and Thomas Ogden. Social psychoanalytical theorist Karen Horney is a notable exception.

chapter five is whether the psychoanalytic ideas of “projective identification” and the “analytic third” might allow the anti-Jewish constructed other to be seen in sharper relief.

Secondly, as already signalled at the conclusion to the previous chapter, a question still outstanding at this point is that if the extant literature suggests it is not appropriate to characterise contemporary anti-Jewishness as psychopathological, how then might it helpfully be understood, psychoanalytically? How is the anti-Jewish behaviour of Christians to be reconciled with lives which otherwise appear to be those of relatively mentally healthy, good people? This is the second main question to be addressed in chapter five.

## Chapter three—Making connections

*It is a very remarkable thing that the unconscious of one human being can react upon that of another, without passing through the conscious. (Freud)*

### 3.1 Introduction

To recollect, Jewish-Christian relations seem to be “stuck”, in part—perhaps in large part—because of enduring, largely unconscious, Christian supersessionist fantasies, particularly in relation to Jews and Judaism. This sort of anti-Jewishness is most evident in the performed life of the church, and seems to be at odds with its desire—at least at some “official” levels—to eliminate anti-Jewishness from its faith and life. As discussed in the previous two chapters, recent research appears to be circling around the issue of this apparent contradiction. First, there are those like St Clair, Jones and Rosenman who contend that adult styles of religion are correlated to experiences of childhood. Then, some studies of the first century Jewish context (e.g., Davis and Meissner) help understand, from a psychoanalytic perspective, why the early church produced anti-Judaic texts that, ever since, have been an important component of Christian worship. Thirdly, a wealth of literature testifies to a contemporary understanding of anti-Jewishness as chimerical (Kille, Langmuir, Ostow, Sartre)—that is, almost entirely a product of Christian fantasy, performing some function other than expressing any sort of empirical reality. Finally, although Christian anti-Jewishness might be played out in many different ways (in various times and places), there are common themes running through much of this. Particularly, paranoia (Meissner, Shapiro), and splitting and projection (Meissner, Davis, Clarke) work together to produce the grandiose, supersessionist fantasies that this thesis argues underlies the church’s contradictory attitudes towards Jews and Judaism (Biddick).

In the introduction to this thesis (1.6.4), it was proposed that from this mass of data more might be understood, from a psychoanalytical perspective, about the specific aetiology and peculiar nature of Christian anti-Jewishness. These two related matters are discussed in the following chapter. It was also proposed that psychoanalysis might help better understand how, largely via unconscious mental processes, particular sorts of stories from the church’s distant past can act as catalysts in the present to re-activate primal fears and anxieties, which

can find expression in Christian anti-Jewishness. It is to test this idea, by way of an experiment, that the current chapter now turns.

### 3.2 Methodology

As already signalled in the previous chapter, the proposed method—which is classically psychoanalytic in approach—is to listen with “evenly hovering attention” to an anti-Jewish text (the legend of The Wandering Jew), to try to understand better the psychological mechanism that rouses a largely unconscious contemporary anti-Jewishness when certain sacred texts are performed in church. According to some theorists, this mode of listening has aspects in common with reader-response approaches to literary theory.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, to listen with “evenly hovering attention” is sufficiently distinctive—and problematic—a topic to require a critical discussion to itself, and is thus the next subject of this chapter.

### 3.3 Listening with “evenly suspended attention”

Freud first discussed at any length *gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*—“evenly suspended attention”, as Strachey translates it<sup>100</sup>—in his “Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-analysis” (Freud, 1912b), subsequently elaborating upon these earlier theories (1923; 1925). David A. Carlson (2002) gives a useful history of the idea, post Freud, which seems to have been accepted as one of the “givens” of psychoanalysis for most of last century, and to have received no great critical attention until the last few decades.

Freud’s claim that it is a “very simple” technique is belied by the subsequent literature, but he says it is a matter of “not directing one’s notice to anything in

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<sup>99</sup> Reader-response theory is concerned with the inter-relationship between reader and text, in particular the reader’s contribution to the meaning of a text (Cuddon, 1999, p. 726). There is more than an echo here of aspects of the analytic relationship, and numerous theorists draw the analogy (e.g., Brooks, 1987; Esman, 1998; Parkin-Gounelas, 2001). While the process of analysing textual rather than real-life human characters must always be partial and speculative, says Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, this “is not to say that the processes of free association and transference, crucial to the analytic reaction, cannot occur in written texts, as recent psychoanalytic criticism in the reader-response tradition has shown. If it can in a strict sense ‘say nothing more’ than itself, the literary text can certainly be ‘re-said’ in the process of a dynamic exchange between text and reader, meaning and desire” (2001, p. xii). “When we are what we call literary critics, our interventions—our efforts to re-write and re-transmit [the text]—may closely resemble the psychoanalyst’s,” says Peter Brooks, “—with all the attendant perils of transference and counter-transference” (1987, p. 12).

<sup>100</sup> The German is variously rendered elsewhere also as: “evenly hovering attention”, “evenly floating attention”, “free floating attention”, or (less commonly) “free swinging attention” or “free listening”.

particular...in the face of all that one hears” (1912b, pp. 111-112). It is a “listening with indifference” (Ward & Zarate, 2000, p. 132), with “intense but uncritical attention” (Skura, 1981, p. 201). Herbert J. Schlesinger discusses it in terms of empathic listening, on “the midpoint of a dimension that has alienation at one pole and identification at the other” (1994, p. 33), or of being able to listen with an attitude of “cultivated naïveté”, or “studied innocence” (1994, p. 34). What often is not noted, adds Abby Adams-Silvan, is that Freud’s enjoinder to maintain an evenly suspended attention applies not just to a special quality of listening, but also of remembering. “What the patient and the analyst are both doing...is to engage in listening and remembering in a way that is regressive and characterized by primary process. This is a sine qua non of the transformation of ordinary listening into analytic listening” (1993, p. 516). The object, says Freud, is to avoid focusing too soon on some aspect(s) of material presented, because of the danger, for the analyst, of missing important information, and “never finding anything but what he already knows” (1912b, p. 112).

To listen with evenly suspended attention—which is the counterpart to speaking with “free association” (Freud, 1912b, p. 112)—remains, as it was from the beginning, one of the classic features of psychoanalytic method (American Psychoanalytic Association, 1995; Carlson, 2002, p. 736; McWilliams, 2004, p. 32). But, as those in other fields note, while the idea is distinctively Freudian, it did not drop out of nowhere. Jonathan Crary says the capacity to “pay attention” in some way is the “product of a dense and powerful re-making of human subjectivity in the West over the last 150 years”, a re-making which is inseparable from “the processes of modernization that made the problem of attention a central issue” (1999, pp. 1-5). The 19<sup>th</sup> century developments of cinema and photography were early technological expressions of new, and particular, ways of looking at things. Around the same time, the medical profession (e.g., Janet, Breuer, Charcot, and Freud) took an interest in hypnosis (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 24-8), which for a while balanced uneasily between offering new possibilities of clinical power and medical benefits on the one hand but, on the other, “demonstrating so dramatically the precariousness and malleability of what had been thought of as consciousness” (Crary, 1999, p. 65). Freud is depicted as having abandoned hypnosis for pragmatic reasons (Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 28), and this may be so, but his change of tack was contemporary with an “astonishing cultural reversal’ around the fin de

siècle, during which hypnosis became derided as incompatible with humanist assumptions about the autonomous and voluntarist character of human subjectivity, and the importance of rationality (Crary, 1999, pp. 69-70). Nevertheless, it is clear that Freud's early interest in both hypnotism and dreams (1900) fed directly into the establishment of his classic technique of having the client speak in a mode of "free association", while the analyst listens with "evenly suspended attention".

Explications and elaborations upon both these themes are legion. Connecting with ideas of dream and hypnotic states, McWilliams as a practitioner describes evenly suspended attention as a "trance-like receptiveness", and an attitude of "receptivity to whatever presents itself and the curiosity about the multitude of things it may mean" (2004, pp. 14, 32). Freud's thinking changed over the years from this somewhat diffuse state of attention (to everything, equally, that the client had to offer), to the importance of listening to "the interplay between wish and defense" (Brenner, 2000, p. 547). Many theorists describe floating evenly between a number of particular modalities, rather than—or, perhaps, as well as—"everything". These modalities are characterised in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of abstruseness, depending on the theorist (Ward & Zarate, 2000, pp. 130-1). In what Carlson says has become mainstream practice (2002, p. 740), Herbert Schlesinger advises practitioners to: "listen openly and patiently, while attending both to the hints of unconscious conflict [in the client] on the one hand, and to the reactions evoked in the analyst by resonances with the patient's material, on the other" (1994, p. 31).<sup>101</sup> Despite what some see as the importance of maintaining a distinction between such modalities (see footnote 101), these are processes which are not as visible as discussion of them might imply, adds Schlesinger. "In practice, the process is seamless; we slide from one mode of listening to the other." And while all this might be referred to as the analyst's mind "at work", it would seem more accurate to characterise the analyst's mind in psychoanalytic listening mode as being "child-like", or "infantile" (Carlson, 2002pp., 726, 742-3), and being "at play" rather than work (Kelley, 1998, p. 102; Schlesinger, 1994, p. 36).

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<sup>101</sup> Adams-Silvan thinks it important to differentiate between the latter (the counter-transferences) on the one hand, and the former, which is the analyst remembering the *patient's* memories, in a way the patient is, for some reason, unable to do (1993, p. 518). It is a process that provoked Freud to remark, "It is a very remarkable thing that the *Ucs.* of one human being can react upon that of another, without passing through the *Cs.*" (1915a, p. 194). Allan N. Schore reports (2002a, pp. 23, 27) that recent cognitive research suggests the body is especially involved in what he calls "right brain to right brain" communications (which he equates to the sort of unconscious-to-unconscious communication Freud describes) (see also Carlson, 2002, p. 730).

None, save perhaps Freud, underestimates how slippery all this might appear. However, Meredith Anne Skura points out that the psychoanalytic process is not as special or exotic as it might seem: “Its strength derives from two simple strategies: first, it insists on paying attention to everything, and second, it mistrusts the seemingly obvious implications of what it then observes” (1981, p. 201). This intense stress on detail, coupled with self-monitoring, could seem the exact opposite of evenly suspended attention, observes Adams-Silvan. However, “We are, rather, stressing that the *relative* significance of any element is a judgment we cannot very often make...Everything is laden with *some* meaning, and we hover in order to absorb, not discard. *Relative* valence becomes more or less clear only when a great deal of apparently disparate information has been taken in” (1993, p. 522, author's emphases).

Neither, says Skura, is there anything very esoteric about interpretation. Describing a binary modality that suits analytic interpretation of texts,<sup>102</sup> she says while one part of the mind is freely associating, “undoing or loosening...codifications”,

the “observing ego” performs the second part of the process as it tries out new forms of organization. The “observer” (whether internal or external) often draws on the resources of logic and secondary process thinking discarded by free association, but its role is not to provide authoritative interpretation, in the sense of diagnosing a symptom or filling in a missing memory. Instead, it provides new perspectives, finds new relationships, reorganizes figure and ground, and changes emphasis. Together, finally, the two processes—loosening and reorganization—lead to those moments of surprise that are the characteristic marks of a good analysis. The surprise in psychoanalysis is not the shock of having something brought up from the alien depths, nor the drama of recalling a secret that only the analyst had guessed at before. Rather, it is the quiet realignment, the small shift in perspective, the recognition of what was always there but not seen before, or what was almost there...In other words the analyst reminds us there is always more in a text than we normally see, and much that would surprise us. These unnoticed elements are not unconscious secrets but merely the details and patterns that become available only if we are willing to be flexible in the sort of consciousness we bring to bear on texts. The analytic stance gives the critic more to work with, even if he decides not to use everything it enables him to see. (Skura, 1981, pp. 203-4, 273-4)

And so it is not that analysts are more highly developed human beings than their patients, observes Carlson, “but rather that we have a readier range of levels on which to function” (2002, p. 744).

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<sup>102</sup> This modality has a near-identical twin in the analytic situation also—see mention of Freud, Ferenczi and Fenichel (“oscillation from intuition to understanding”) in section 2.2 of the previous chapter.

As discussed in previous chapters, both Roy Schafer and Donald Spence, taking a narratological approach to psychoanalysis, share a radical scepticism that Freudian styles of analysis are doing what practitioners think they are doing so. Despite the assurances of someone like Skura that free listening is not akin to black magic, it comes as no surprise that both Schafer and Spence are especially critical of the ideas of free association and evenly suspended attention. Schafer, without saying as much, regards the idea of “free association” as one of the great fantasies of psychoanalysis: “The analyst treats free associations as neither free or associative, for within the strategy of analyzing narrative actions, it is not an unregulated or passive performance” (1980/1993, p. 355). It is not simply that this is how it is, explains Spence; it cannot be any other way. Citing Gadamer (1975), Spence says that the analytic interpreter who is trying to understand a text is constantly projecting before himself or herself a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning starts to emerge. “Only by projecting a set of assumptions onto the material can we listen to meaning rather than words,” he says (1984, pp. 40, 57). “Unless some kind of internal elaboration takes place, the listener hears only words...and communication fails...We might even argue that to carry out Freud’s recommendation to the letter is to run the risk of losing the meaning and hearing only the words” (1982, p. 116).

One of the consequences of this understanding, Spence believes, is that “the myth of the innocent analyst...must be re-examined.” “We no longer look for ways to cancel out countertransference or ways to create the model analyst, free of projection and other impurities; rather, we try to identify *which* models are being projected in order to bring about such-and-such understandings” (1984, pp. 47, 50). To use our associations as some kind of guide to understanding is “the worst kind of naivete”, says Spence, and a “kind of psychoanalytic imperialism” (1984, p. 56). What he calls “truly respectful listening”, Spence says,

falls somewhere between the Scylla of free-floating attention and the Charybdis of unwitting projection. Some projection is a necessary part of enhanced listening, but the analyst must identify these assumptions as they come into play, label them as tentative, and by all means, avoid giving them the dignity of empathy... Truly respectful listening requires a continual making and breaking of tentative assumptions in an effort to hear what the patient is “really” saying; as such, it represents an active process which seems quite different from the neutrality of free-floating attention. Truly respectful listening is, at best, a supreme example of

inductive logic in which the principles behind the utterance must be inferred from multiple examples, made particularly difficult by the fact that principle and example are often separated by irrelevant material. (Spence, 1984, pp. 57-8)

What Spence warns of is over-hasty interpretations, in which analysts do not take sufficiently seriously their own subjectivity and theoretical points of view, their own context (which is often radically different from the “text” they are seeking to interpret), which does not take into account in common-sense sorts of ways other relevant information, which shuts out the great likelihood of alternative interpretations, and which fails to anticipate the possibility of, not just “analytic surprise” but that, indeed, the analysis might fail altogether.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, Spence’s critique of free-floating attention would be rather more compelling if that were all there is to analytic interpretation. But, as already noted (chapter 2), “good” interpretation, like “good history”, takes everything possible into account, which is the approach to be taken in the following experiment and reflection.

Finally, for reasons that will become clear when the various aspects of this chapter are drawn together (3.5, below), there are some important connections to note between what has been discussed already about the psychoanalytic mode of free listening, and what is sometimes characterised to be “going on” during Christian worship. Speaking from my own experience (as both a congregant and worship leader in various New Zealand and UK Methodist churches), my impression is that the worshipping congregation quickly settles into the sort of trance-like state previously discussed (pp. 82f.): that is, paying attention to everything in general and nothing in particular, but shifting modality from this rather diffuse state of attention to focus, from time to time, on things in particular. There seems to me to be a regularly shifting modality, too, between what is going on “out there” (i.e., up front, or somewhere else in the congregation), and the subjective experience of being in worship. Above all, my impression is that worship is at times a very suggestible atmosphere,<sup>104</sup> in the sense that ideas from the worship leader—and emotionally freighted ideas in particular—tend to unconsciously hook into associated thoughts and feelings of worshippers, thus, out of awareness, giving added weight to the idea that precipitated the connection in the first place.

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<sup>103</sup> A classic example of which is Freud’s attempted analytic interpretation of Lady Macbeth (Freud, 1916). Why did she fall to pieces and commit suicide when all her plans finally were coming to fruition? Even with all his own theory of fraught familial relationships at his disposal, Freud could not say (Simon, 1992, p. 1201).

<sup>104</sup> Suggestibility, David Spiegel notes (1991, p. 440), is one of the main components of the hypnotic state, along with “absorption”: “the tendency to become fully involved in a perceptual, imaginative or ideational experience.”

At a rational level, there may be little or no connection between what the worship leader has said, and the unconscious association made in an atmosphere of free listening. But if a matching emotional association is stirred up, it will unconsciously attach itself to the idea, adding to the verisimilitude of that idea.

The literature investigating what might be “going on” during Christian worship from a psychoanalytic perspective is scant. Judith Greene Holt makes a comprehensive survey of psychoanalytic investigations of religion (not particularly worship) from Freud onwards, and concludes that, while “isolated studies, some more and some less well-known, have made unique contributions to the psychoanalytic study of religion” (1986, p. 27),<sup>105</sup> “analysts’ critique of religion as escapist and infantile cause outrage in religious circles, and rigid defensiveness in both groups.” “Both sides suffer from narcissistic wounds. Religion reacts to attacks on beliefs and practices, and psychoanalysis adheres to its own deep investment in the powers of the human mind” (1986, pp. 23-4).

Nevertheless, some have noted possible similarities between psychoanalytic free listening, and the mental context of worship. Will Adams, for example, regards the evenly suspended attention of psychoanalysis, and a state of “meditative awareness” as analogous (1995, p. 465), and identifies churches as one of the places providing a favourable “holding environment” for such experience (1995, p. 469). Taking another tack entirely, Joseph Kelley says that, while Freud’s approach to worship has “led to valuable understandings of the complicated motivations which draw people to religious ritual”, at the same time “it is possible to develop psychoanalytic understandings different from Freud’s” (1998, pp. 98-9), and draws attention to Heinz Kohut’s “self psychology” approach to psychoanalysis. Kohut’s clinical work led him to gradually realise that patients not only transferred unmet, unconscious instinctual wishes onto him as an analyst, they also had pressing, unmet narcissistic needs of the self. He noticed two basic forms of his clients’ narcissistic needs: a need for mirroring by another, and a need to idealise another (Kelley, 1998, pp. 106-7). In contrast to Freud,<sup>106</sup> Kohut’s view is that long after infancy and childhood, our relationships

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<sup>105</sup> Holt cites Meissner at some length as an example.

<sup>106</sup> James W. Jones reviews Freud’s position on narcissism, and concludes: “For Freud all neurotics, including religious devotees, are completely in the grip of infantile fantasies. Since acceptance of the reality principle is the sole criterion for mental health, there is no place for any accounts of religious motivation or its role in human development other than those that treat religion as infantile and neurotic” (2002, p. 18). Jones says in

continue to sustain narcissistic dimensions that are not regressive. “Mature and healthy relationships involve an experience (usually unconscious) of the other not as apart from and distinct from oneself...but as part of, contributing to, and even constitutive of one’s own self” (Kelley, 1998, p. 106). Within such a theoretical framework, religious ritual can be understood as an experience in which the various narcissistic needs of the self are met (or frustrated), in a similar way to that in which Kohut listened (psychoanalytically) and responded to his client’s narcissistic needs. This interpretation of worship as a psychic space where people seek to have unconscious, narcissistic needs met, tends to be supported by research which has found that, while clergy describe the purpose of worship as “connecting with God”, “congregants were most likely to understand worship as an activity undertaken for their personal benefit” (Barna Group, 2005). Similarly, while only a third of clergy deem a quiet time for introspection to be important during worship, two thirds of parishioners deem it “very important” (Barna Group, 2005). From a psychoanalytic perspective, worship may be more narcissistically oriented (in a relatively healthy sense) than clergy in particular commonly appreciate.<sup>107</sup>

In summary, there is evidently a need for more research in the area that might better describe, in terms of group psychodynamics, some of the things that go on during worship (e.g., people having their narcissistic needs met), and how the overall atmosphere of worship might have evolved over the centuries to be conducive to such unconscious, as well as conscious, activities. However, what literature there is points towards a plausible connection between the state of mind when psychoanalytically free listening, and the collective state of mind of those at worship.

### **3.4 The experiment**

#### **3.4.1 Listening to the legend**

Despite having read the legend for myself numerous times, I had a friend read it out loud to me on around half a dozen different occasions during the course of a week. The purpose of

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passing that Kohut did for narcissism what Freud did for sex: remove the shame attached to it and reframe it as a normal part of human life (2002, p. 31).

<sup>107</sup> Religious beliefs and practices certainly fulfill self-object functions, says Jones, but that does not in itself make it healthy on Kohut’s definition. “To be healthful they must contribute to building psychological structures, support the self in its own nuclear program, and facilitate the self’s location in an empathic, selfobject milieu” (2002, p. 25).

this was, first, to encounter the legend as a majority of Christians will have done for most of its history<sup>108</sup> and, secondly, to hear the story—at least to some extent—afresh. Both the reader and I sat. I positioned my friend in my peripheral vision so as not to be completely distracted by the novelty of hearing it read aloud, but so that I could pick up a degree of body language.<sup>109</sup> The experience was different each time but, generally speaking, I found myself able to move between different modalities with no great effort. Sometimes the shift was between individual sense units (words, phrases), and the “wash” of the story as a whole. At others, it was between what the story was saying and what I was silently “saying”, in various ways, in response. Sometimes this latter was a movement between what I was consciously thinking about the story, and faint, ephemeral feelings and associations that drifted into consciousness. In retrospect—and rightly or wrongly—the process was not unlike the way I sometimes listen “with intention” in different ways to a favourite piece of music<sup>110</sup> (as opposed to having it on in the background). I deliberately took no notes (see Freud, 1912b, p. 111), nor did I begin any conscious reflection until after the week of readings—although on several occasions (e.g., in the shower) I caught myself unintentionally “wondering” about aspects of what I had heard.

The following is the translation in Anderson (1970, pp. 45-47) of the 1602 pamphlet version of the legend (Kurtze [sic] Beschreibung, 1602). The ellipses are Anderson’s, indicating the omission of “a few irrelevant phrases”.

Since these times have contributed little that is news to us, I will relate to you something old which is still considered with awe by many as something new...

Paulus von Eitzen, doctor and Bishop of Schleswig ... told me and other students more than once, that when he was a student in his youth at Wittenberg, he once went to Hamburg in the winter of the year 1542, to visit his parents. On the following Sunday in church, during the sermon, he saw a man who was a very tall person, with long hair reaching down over his shoulders; he was standing barefoot close by the chancel. He paid such close attention to the sermon that one could detect no

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<sup>108</sup> Discussions of literacy in late-mediaeval/early-modern Germany, and the relationship between literacy and orality, are complex (see Scribner, 2001b, chap. 9). However, as an approximation, from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when the legend was published, for the following two hundred years it would almost certainly have been heard—probably from the pulpit on Sunday morning, when “sermons [were] coupled with news about local and foreign affairs, real estate transactions and other mundane matters” (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 94). While “we would certainly find at least some persons in each village able to read and write” (Scribner, 2001b, p. 239), most rural villagers probably remained a “hearing” public down until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>109</sup> For a discussion of various theories of the positioning of the analyst relative to the client, see David A. Carlson (2002, pp. 728-734) and André Green (1999, pp. 232-4).

<sup>110</sup> For example, Górecki’s third symphony.

movement in his body, except that when the name of Jesus Christ was pronounced he bowed his head, beat on his breast, and sighed very deeply. He wore no other clothing, in that very hard winter, than a pair of trousers badly worn at the bottom, a cloak reaching to the knees, and over that a mantle reaching to the feet. Otherwise he appeared to be a man of about fifty years. Since he attracted attention to himself because of his tallness, clothing, and behavior, he was asked who he was and what his business was. And it was reported that ... he was born a Jew in Jerusalem with the name of *Ahasuerus*. His vocation was that of shoemaker; he had been present in person at the Crucifixion of Christ, and since that time had remained alive and had traveled through many lands, and for proof of the truth of his assertions he had knowledge of many circumstances concerning Christ after he had been taken and led before Pilate and Herod and finally crucified. He could tell more of such things than either the evangelists or the historians. He told further of many changes of government, especially in Eastern countries, as they had occurred throughout these many centuries. Then he told with great minuteness the lives, sufferings, and deaths of the holy apostles.

Now when Paulus von Eitzen heard such things, he wondered about them greatly and sought an opportunity to speak directly with this man. When he finally succeeded in bringing this about, the Jew told him all these things in detail. He had been living at the time of Christ in Jerusalem. He had been stirred against the Lord Christ, whom he considered a heretic and seducer of the people (because he knew no better), as did the high priests and the scribes. And all the time he did his best to have this seducer of the people (as he considered Him) put out of this world. And finally, when they had seized Him, and He had been led before Pilate by the high priests, he took part in the cry "Crucify Him!" and called for the deliverance of Barabbas, and helped to bring it about that the sentence of death was passed on Him. And when the sentence had been pronounced, this Jew hurried to his house, since the Lord Christ must be led that way, so that he could see Him. He took his little child in his arms, and stood before his door, that they might see the Lord Christ go by. Then, when the Lord Christ under his Cross was led by, he leaned for a moment against the Jew's house. The anger of the Jew rose up more than ever, and with curses he ordered Him to pack and be off to where it was fitting for Him to go. Then Christ looked sternly at him, and spoke to him with meaning, "I WILL STAND HERE AND REST, BUT YOU MUST WALK!"

Immediately the Jew put down his child; he could stay no longer in the house. Rather he had to follow along and see, as it had been ordained him. Afterwards everything came to pass; it was impossible for him to return to the city of Jerusalem and to enter it. His wife, his child, and his relatives he never saw again. Forthwith he went into foreign lands, one after another, until the present time. When, after many centuries, he came back to his land, he found it all laid waste and Jerusalem destroyed, so that he could no longer recognize it. What God now intended to do with him, in leading him about so long in this wretched life, he could not explain otherwise than that perhaps he should be on Judgment Day a living witness of the Passion of Christ, to

the greater confusion of the godless and the infidels. But he must endure his portion until it pleased God to call him forth from this vale of sorrow to eternal peace.

Whereupon Paulus von Eitzen, along with the rector of the schools in Hamburg, who was a learned man expert in history, asked him for the true account of all kinds of things which had occurred in the countries of the East after Christ's birth and times. He gave a satisfactory and circumstantial account of that, so that they could scarcely wonder enough. In his own life, the Jew said, he was quiet and withdrawn within himself. He did not talk much, except when asked a question. If invited into a house, he did not eat or drink much. If anyone should offer him money, he would take not more than two shillings, which he would straightway give to the poor with the remark that he did not need money and that God would provide well for him. None ever saw him laugh during the time he was in Hamburg. In whatever land he came he spoke the language; he could at that time speak Saxon as well as if he had been born a Saxon.

Many people, as Von Eitzen observed, came from many lands and widely separated regions of the earth to see and listen to him while he was in Hamburg, and many came to judge him. Most of these thought that he had with him an errant spirit that could reveal such things to him as those whereof he spoke. But he [Von Eitzen] did not think so, for the Jew not only was attentive to God's word and spoke of it, but also showed great reverence and named God's name with deep sighs. Moreover, he could not tolerate a curse. When anyone cursed in the name of God's sufferings and wounds, he would tremble at it and reproach that man with fierce zeal, saying "Miserable man! Miserable creature! Wilt thou then take in vain the name of God and His martyrdom? If thou hadst seen and heard how sorely the Lord Christ was wounded and tortured for thee and me, as I saw it, thou wouldst rather torture thyself than name thus His name!"

All these things Paulus von Eitzen told me truthfully and with many other further circumstances, which also I have heard from several old burghers throughout Schleswig, who themselves saw this man and talked with him.

In the year [15]75, the Secretary Christoph Ehringer and Magistrate Jacobus who ... had been sent as ambassadors to the King of Spain and afterwards to the Duke of Alba in the Netherlands ... when they returned home and came to Schleswig ... reported that they had seen at Malduit [Madrid] a man with the same build, clothes, behavior, and age; that they had talked with him; and that other people had understood him, and that he talked good Spanish.

What are we to think of this man? One may be free in his judgment. The works of God are wonderful and inscrutable, and as time goes on they will be more so, and more things hitherto hidden will be revealed, particularly... on the approaching Day of Judgment and end of the world ...

Dated Schleswig, June 9, 1564

This man or Jew is said to have soles on his feet so thick that one can measure them with the thickness of two fingers across. They are as hard as horn because of his long walking and traveling. He is said to have been seen in Danzig in the year 1599.

### 3.4.2 Self analysis

Listening to the legend several times over, in a new way, did not seem to produce any new *ideas*. Nothing happened during the course of my listening in this different mode that even hinted at de-stabilising what I take to be some of the significant themes of the legend. Nor did it occur to me that there might be “something missing” that I had not picked up before. As already noted, many of the current methodologies make it almost axiomatic that any interpretation should always be open to being de-stabilised and revised, so to the extent that none of my main ideas changed as a result of the re-reading, I thought at first that this aspect of the experiment had been unsuccessful.

Why had I not “picked up” something that had the potential to be picked up? I think it is most likely because I had already been through this process when I first encountered the legend earlier in the research. As pointed out in the introduction, in my reading of the legend and the related literature to date, there are gaps in the extant interpretations that seem to be shouting out for attention, so I was already very aware of where the gaps are. Then, my reader-responses to the earlier readings were so syntonetic and highly cathected, it is likely that I quickly became defended against the possibility of any significantly different interpretation(s).

At what seems to be another “level” of apprehension entirely, I think the feeling-thought that condensed out of repeated listening to the legend in the manner described above, was of *something that had gone terribly wrong*. I had tried not to “expect” anything. If I am honest, I had, of course, expected something—more of which shortly. But what I had half-expected was nothing like this, so it took a while, searching around inside myself, to identify what it was. And I did so by an association which, as it came into consciousness for the first time, was accompanied a hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach, pilomotor response (“goosebumps”), and a tightening of the scrotum. It was a feeling that connected, first, with the sort of dread that went with a conversation with my then wife, at New Year 1996, when we both admitted our marriage was over, and talked about what should happen next. Those feelings at the time were, on reflection, very familiar. They connected with

feelings of terror, insecurity, and guilt from my childhood, when my parents had “had a row”, and days of stygian gloom descended inexorably upon the whole household—all of which I, irrationally, but not unusually, felt somehow responsible for.<sup>111</sup> Not responsible that it had happened, so much, as responsible for somehow making things right again. And that no matter how hard I might try, it was all beyond me—which, as a child, it was, of course.<sup>112</sup>

### 3.4.3 Critical reflection on the analysis

Knowing that I harbour unconscious anti-Jewishness,<sup>113</sup> what I had expected—if anything—was that my listening to the legend in psychoanalytic mode might evoke unwanted thoughts, feelings, whatever, of the same or a similar nature. That they did not probably indicates a more actively operative superego—at least in this regard, after decades of involvement in Jewish-Christian relations—than was in evidence at the time of my first experience of my own unconscious anti-Jewishness.

What, then, was this feeling that “something had gone terribly wrong” possibly about? In one way, what the legend “projected” clearly stirred up counter-transference feelings in me that had to do with *my* unconscious memories of *my* history. But, as already mentioned above, in what has evolved into mainstream understanding of counter-transference (Mitchell & Black, 1995, pp. 243-250; Sandler et al., 1970), in an unconscious-to-unconscious communication, there is also the possibility that this feeling might relate to something—real, fantasied, or some mixture of both—belonging to the world of those who redacted and set down the legend in 17<sup>th</sup> century Germany. Was what I felt in the counter-transference, at least in part, something that the legend writers were unconsciously attempting to evacuate?<sup>114</sup> And does such an interpretation make sense in the historical

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<sup>111</sup> It is a process Stalfa calls “parentification” (1994, p. 5). “This occurs when children are drafted into premature responsibility within the family system in order to compensate for real or perceived inadequacies in the functioning of the parents. One result is an actual reversal of role in which the child ‘parents’ the parents”. Philip Culbertson lists a variety of roles children are covertly drafted into in this way to meet the family’s needs and internal dynamics (2000, pp. 16-17).

<sup>112</sup> This inference concerning events in my past reconstructed from the data provided by free associations or free listening is, in conventional psychoanalytic terms a “construction in analysis”, the theory of which is discussed near the beginning of the next chapter.

<sup>113</sup> See 1.7 of my opening chapter.

<sup>114</sup> “Evacuation” as a psychoanalytic term derives from parallels between psychic and physical processes as observed by, for example, Mahler:

The effect of his mother’s ministrations in reducing the pangs of need-hunger cannot be isolated, nor can the infant differentiate them from tension-reducing attempts of his own, such as urinating,

context out of which the legend emerged? Does an impression that “something had gone terribly wrong” make sense as a Christian projection in the context of early 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe? To do proper justice to the methodological considerations already discussed—that analytic interpretations need to correlate as robustly as possible with other information—a comprehensive discussion is called for, situating the legend within its historical context.

It might be expected that the legend emerged at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as part of a fresh outbreak of anti-Jewishness, but Adolf Leschnitzer argues that it was actually much abated by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the reason being that violent persecution of Jews in the previous two centuries had severely depressed Jewish life (Chazan, 1997, p. xii; Leschnitzer, 1956, p. 114). Witch-hunts, instead, had become the main way in which society found its scapegoats and vented its anxiety or rage (Leschnitzer, 1956, pp. 97-8).<sup>115</sup>

As progressively more is found out about the era in question, Robert Scribner warns against inferring too much about the “popular culture” of Germany at the time, either from the surviving literature or much of its interpretation to date (2001b, chap. 1). Baron similarly believes it is difficult to reach conclusions about Jewish-Christian relations in the late-middle ages from historical evidence, which he contends is “both meagre and slanted” (1967, pp. 182-3). Nevertheless, it seems clear there was a general “background static” of anti-Jewishness at the time. There was, for example, a steady production of all sorts of

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defecating, coughing, sneezing, spitting, regurgitating, vomiting—all the ways by which the infant tries to rid himself of unpleasurable tension. (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975, p. 43)

It is physical processes like these, Mahler contends, that provide the blueprint for the later psychological evacuation of “destructive unneutralized, aggressive energy, beyond the body-self boundaries” (Mahler et al., p. 47). While it is generally accepted that many mature mental processes have their aetiology in infancy, the notion of such a visceral connection (between defecating, vomiting and psychological projection) is, as Hinshelwood observes, uncongenial, and may seem far-fetched (1994, p. 23). But practitioners frequently observe the concreteness of the fantasies of psychotic people, and the close association between the expulsion of bodily wastes and unwanted thoughts or feelings (see e.g., Symington & Symington, 1996, p. 157f.).

<sup>115</sup> While there were (and are) both male and female witches, by far the majority persecuted and burned were women. Brian A. Pavlac (2001) warns that the causes of witch-hunts were highly overdetermined, and that any one view is likely to be simplistic. Similarly, Robert Scribner says it is a mistake to characterise witch-hunts as “pathological”, and not understand the complex power games being fought out in the community around this issue (2001b, chap. 10). While witch-hunting was, in a general sense, symptomatic of the high level of anxiety in this era, it more specifically reflected, first, concern about shifting gender roles and, secondly, a renewed fear of “hidden enemies”, which in previous centuries had been directed towards Jews. This interchangeability of Jews and women as scapegoats anticipates modernist constructions of Jews as “effeminate” (see chapter 4). There was fear not only of what was happening within society—a cultural sea-change subverting the old intellectual and religious order—but also fear associated with an increasing awareness of the desires lurking within the unconscious of the individual (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1993-2003b). Witch-hunting waxed and waned, but was particularly intense in Europe in the period 1560-1623. The English 1603 Witchcraft Act, for example, is almost exactly coincident with the appearance of the legend of The Wandering Jew (1602), and this supports the idea that similar social and psychological forces were driving both.

polemical pamphlets (including, but not only, anti-Jewish material),<sup>116</sup> stimulated by the invention of modern printing a century or so earlier. The gradual secularisation of the European theatre, also, had “opened the floodgates to the presentation of unsavoury Jewish characters” (Baron, 1967, p. 123).

Sociological factors also contributed to a general, if low level, anti-Jewishness at this time. Jonathan Israel notes (1989, pp. 34-40) that, as the result of a tentative readmission of Jews into central and western Europe (including Britain), the 1570s onwards witnessed the greatest mass migration of Jews since the repeated expulsions of the previous three centuries which had driven them progressively eastward (see also Kriwaczek, 2005, p. 211). By 1613, for example, the Jews of Frankfurt made up nearly fifteen percent of the city’s population—six times the figure for 1550 (Israel, 1989, p. 41). “By the end of the sixteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth, the Yiddish civilisation stretched right across the European continent from the Central Russian Uplands to the North Sea, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, with the exception only of England and Russia, Scandinavia and Iberia, where none but Christians might officially reside” (Kriwaczek, 2005, p. 209). There were, in truth, Wandering Jews everywhere at this time, says Hyam Maccoby, “and this historical fact has been adduced to explain the growth of the Wandering Jew legend” (1972, p. 238).<sup>117</sup>

At around the same time that this huge population shift was going on, there was a Jewish renaissance that seems to have arisen simultaneously in the east and the west (Israel, 1989, p. 71). There was a sense within Jewry that, with their newly granted freedom of movement, catastrophe and suffering at the hands of Christians were at last coming to an end, and that Jews would be restored to an honoured place among the nations (Israel, 1989, p. 86). There was a rise of the so-called “court Jews”, the *Hoffjuden*:

Every self-respecting princely seat needed its court Jew in the seventeenth century: Nini Levi and Abraham Isaac in Münster, Simon Model at Ansbach, Bonaventura Sachs in Saxony, Leffmann Behrends in Hanover, Behrend Lehmann at Halberstadt, Aaron Beer at Frankfurt, the famous Samuel Oppenheimer and Samson Wertheimer

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<sup>116</sup> The breadth of material that, within a very short space of time, began pouring from the European presses is simply astonishing. Most of it was scholarly, catering to the literate classes. But as well there were “scandal sheets, ‘lewd Ballads’, ‘merrie books of Italie’, and other ‘corrupted tales in Inke and Paper’” (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 94).

<sup>117</sup> Maccoby’s idea finds support when it is remembered that descriptions of the garb of The Wandering Jew (in the 1602 pamphlet, for example) were typical, not of a Jerusalem Jew (the purported subject of the legend), but of a Jew from Eastern Europe.

at the imperial court in Vienna. Israel Aaron was long on the payroll of the Russian rulers; five generations of the Gompertz family served at the court of the Hohenzollerns. There were dozens of others. (Kriwaczek, 2005, p. 212)

There was a flowering of communal music and poetry. Jewish leaders dared to be more openly critical of Christianity and, indeed, to actively proselytise. Jean Fontanier, a Montpellier lawyer, for example, adopted Calvinism, reverted to Catholicism, rejected Christianity altogether, and was finally burned at the stake for propagating Jewish ideas (Israel, 1989, pp. 82-5).

In northern Germany, where the legend is believed to have first appeared in its now familiar form, the local populace thought they had been free of Jews for some time. But then in Hamburg, as part of the aforementioned Jewish revival, some previously hidden Jews had “come out”, much to the consternation of local clergy. In Danzig (where possibly the pamphlet was published), Jews who had been living there “unofficially”, but by tacit permission of the authorities, suddenly became noticed. There were efforts to expel Jews from both places—unsuccessfully in the case of Hamburg, because Jews were too much of an asset to international trade. But in Danzig there was more success. In 1605 Jews were forbidden from religious practices by the council, and in 1616, they were finally expelled (Edelmann, 1968, p. 8). This rather sudden deterioration in Jewish-Christian relations in the Hamburg/Danzig (Gdańsk) region correlates with the known upsurge in Jewish activity right across Europe at this time, and supports other evidence that it was at this particular time and place that the legend first appeared. Thus, while anti-Jewishness in this period—at least at a political level—was much reduced, the net effect of all this was to raise the profile of Jews everywhere, and along with it, the general level of anti-Jewish anxiety.

But Jewish readmission to Europe, and the revitalisation of the Jewish community, were merely symptomatic, says Israel. Underneath, the whole of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was “an age of turmoil” (1989, p. 35), and “much of the physical and moral effort of early modern people was directed at simply coping” (Scribner, 2001a, p. 56). The summer of 1591 marked the start of a sudden, dramatic climate change which went from bad to catastrophic over the next six years. It was the beginning of what has been called the Little Ice Age, during which

the river Thames in London regularly froze over.<sup>118</sup> Hundreds of thousands across Europe died of starvation, in which many saw the hand of God in action (Kriwaczek, 2005, p. 227).

The vast, unsettling waves caused by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation beginning around the 14<sup>th</sup> century were still in progress during the period in question.<sup>119</sup> Prior to 1570, Europe was a Christian world, and it continued so for centuries, but progressively shaken in confidence. What particularly shook past beliefs so severely during the final third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (immediately prior to publication of the legend) were the deadlocked wars of religion that held the whole of western Europe in their grip (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1993-2003a). Previously, international conflicts had been resolved sooner or later, one way or another. God would be back in heaven, and all right with the world. But suddenly, and for the first time, it was all very different. God was not seen to be acting in ways that God had been thought to act previously. The received religious truths of the past came under critical scrutiny, resulting in “a rising tide of doubt, deism and atheism” (Israel, 1989, pp. 36-7).

The recent invention of modern printing played no small part in all this. As a heritage that was transmitted by texts, “Christianity was peculiarly vulnerable to the revolutionary effects of typography” (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 158). And so this period marked the start of nothing less than an intellectual revolution, including a sudden, explosive rise in modern science. In 1585, for example, Pope Gregory XIII instituted a new calendar in Rome, replacing that of Julius Caesar, to more accurately regulate the relationship between the lunar month and the solar year.<sup>120</sup> Among religious scholars, there was a fresh awareness

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<sup>118</sup> Nearly a century on, a contemporary painting—*The Frozen Thames*, c. 1677, by Abraham Hondius—shows booths laid out in formal streets, providing shopping, trades services and entertainment, such was the regularity and extent to which the river froze solid. The practice was abandoned only in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century after a series of disasters on the ice due to a rise again in the average temperature (Ackroyd, 2001, p. 426 & illustration between pp. 296-7).

<sup>119</sup> Where the legend sits with respect the Catholic/Protestant divide appears complicated. Hacking says the legend “was a Protestant production all the way”, implying that it may have been as much anti-Catholic as it was anti-Jewish. Without giving his source, he goes on: “It has been conjectured that the 1602 pamphlet was to be a confirmation of the facts of the Crucifixion by a witness, who directly trumped the Roman Catholic claim to legitimacy through the apostolic succession” (Hacking, 1998, pp. 116-7). And yet, as noted in the previous chapter, the legend was never as popular in anti-Catholic Britain as on the Continent, because of its “supernatural” elements. The reason for the confusing picture is probably because, for several generations after the Reformation, there was a good deal of syncretism between old forms of popular religion and the new (Scribner, 2001b, p. 81).

<sup>120</sup> Instead of calling the day after the 15<sup>th</sup> of October the 16<sup>th</sup> of October in 1585, the Pope decided it would be the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, so that the year was shortened by ten days (Kriwaczek, 2005, p. 204). Many of the populace right across Europe were furious, believing that ten days had, somehow, been stolen from them. The

that the scriptures were based on badly corrupted texts, which called for study in totally new ways.<sup>121</sup> This led, not insignificantly, to a type of narrow philosemitism, as scholars engaged afresh with the Hebrew texts (Israel, 1989, pp. 54-5).

As a result of all this, political leaders and princes chose, or were forced to adopt, policies based not upon traditional claims of the church and faith, but upon the emerging vision of a good society through the power of radical scepticism and of the state (Israel, 1989, pp. 38, 53). At the popular level, of course, there was little or no comprehension that such a sea-change of culture was taking place, beyond an apprehension that the known world was changing frighteningly fast, and in ways little understood. In traditional religious terms, it all portended ill, and Maccoby talks about “the millennial excitements and conflicts” of these times (1972, p. 240), which Anderson (1970, pp. 38-42) discusses at some length in terms of what he calls the “Great Rumour” of circa 1599.

The Great Rumour was fuelled by centuries of mediaeval Christian expectation of the imminent return of the Antichrist, reinforced by folk memories “of the fabulous depredations of earlier times by Genghis Khan...”. The intellectual and social changes of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century already discussed precipitated a widely circulated rumour that “...a vast, uncountable horde of Jews, headed by the Antichrist, the son of Satan and a Jewish whore...was to debouch in hellish violence all over Europe” (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 40).<sup>122</sup> Anderson paints a grim picture of the decades around the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: of a

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Gregorian reform was accepted only slowly. In some parts of the Orthodox east, especially, change did not come until the beginning of last century.

<sup>121</sup> Between 1500 and 1800, the invention of printing made possible the production of more than 70 lexicons devoted solely to Hebrew. Christopher Plantin, head of the largest printing firm in Western Europe in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, set out to produce a slightly revised version of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible and ended up publishing a monumental new work containing five volumes of text and three of reference materials which included grammars and dictionaries for the Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac languages (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 69). This renewed scholarly interest had the effect of contributing, inter alia, to Christian anxiety over the higher profile of Jews and Judaism at this time.

<sup>122</sup> In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Sabbetai Zvi, the highly learned but deeply disturbed son of a kosher poultry dealer from Smyrna in Turkey, was declared by his manager and publicist to be the long-awaited Messiah. Arrested a year later by the Ottoman authorities, he chose conversion to Islam over execution, and died in prison a decade later. But not before precipitating a pandemonium that came close to destroying the Jewish world of eastern Europe. As English diarist Samuel Pepys records, as the year 1666 approached (when it had long been speculated that there would be the second coming of Christ) talk of Zvi even penetrated the Christian world (Kriwaczek, 2005, pp. 245-250). While 17<sup>th</sup> century Judaism survived the Zvi phenomenon, it marked the beginning of the break up of centuries of a more-or-less unified Yiddish civilisation into the Germanised west and north and the Slavicised east and south, between the *Mitnaggedim* and the *Tsaddikim*, a division between “orthodox” and “ultra-orthodox” which, in practice if no longer geographically, exists to this day (Kriwaczek, 2005, pp. 262-7).

period of high anxiety, religious warfare and intolerance, superstition (“charlatans...of all kinds flooded Europe”), rumour, and credulity (1970, p. 40). On top of all that, according to Arno Schmidt (1927, as cited in Anderson 1970, p. 43), if Danzig was indeed where the legend originated, that city was in 1601–2 virtually paralysed by the plague—a further indication of the imminence of doom. “No wonder, therefore,” concludes Anderson (1970, p. 41), “that at such a time of rumors and counter-rumors there should be a new cycle of popular literature concerning the Wandering Jew.”

In summary, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were part of a period of huge transition from the mediaeval to the modern periods. The printing press was to that era as electronic communication is to ours, and the free flow of new ideas, both secular and religious, was unprecedented, inexorable, and in many ways highly destabilising. Much of Europe was in the grip of a war that would not resolve itself. Christian anti-Jewishness was inflamed by mass migrations of Jews back into western Europe and a concomitant Jewish renaissance. Except for those few of the intelligentsia who were driving the changes, to the vast majority it must have seemed that the whole world was, indeed, going terribly wrong, frighteningly fast, and for reasons quite beyond their comprehension.

#### **3.4.4 Interim summary**

A psychoanalytic reading of the legend produced some unexpected results. In spite of being open to the possibility that my existing interpretations of the legend might be destabilised, nothing (as yet) happened. Half-expected anti-Jewish counter-transferences did not eventuate. However, on reflection, both these unexpected outcomes can be understood in perfectly conventional psychoanalytical terms and, with the benefit of hindsight, might even have been anticipated.

Another, rather more problematic, unexpected event was the sense that arose in the course of listening to the legend that “something had gone terribly wrong”. Adopting the generally-accepted, bi-modal model of counter-transference, this reaction was quite understandable in one way, because (according to conventional psychoanalytic theory) what the legend was projecting stirred up unconscious, affect-laden memories that I associated with the trauma of my marriage break-up, and of childhood anxiety and unhappiness. That

left the question of whether the particular words that clothed my counter-transference<sup>123</sup> were of any significance. Were they the other part of a bi-modal counter-transference, representative of some sort of reality for the 17<sup>th</sup> century redactors of the legend?

A historical investigation revealed that at the time of the production of the legend, the whole of Europe, due to profound religious, social and intellectual changes, had for some time been in a state of progressively heightened fear and anxiety, epitomised by the anti-Jewish “Great Rumour” of around 1599. In addition to this generally elevated level of anxiety, Christian anti-Jewishness was on the increase due to a greater visibility of Jews, as a result of Jewish immigration into western Europe and an associated Jewish renaissance. There is also historical evidence of anti-Jewish acts in northern Germany in particular at the time that the legend is thought to have been published. There may also have been an outbreak of the plague at the same time and place.

There is also further historical evidence that the legend was typical of its day. First, its being both “supernatural” as well as Protestant (probably Calvinist) in origin, fits with the religious syncretism that is now understood to have characterised post-Reformation Europe for some generations. Secondly, as discussed in the previous chapter, the legend’s depiction of The Wandering Jew—who was somehow representative of all Jews—was a characteristic construction in “an age of synecdoche”, which was also fascinated by partitioned corporeality. Thirdly, the legend’s anti-Jewishness is typical of its era in that it has components of both anti-Judaism and antisemitism.

When all of these are taken together—a reading of the legend with evenly suspended attention which produces, inter alia, problematic counter-transferences, and a bi-modal analysis of the unconscious transferences, part of which correlates with both the historical context the legend emerged out of and the legend’s literary construction—it seems safe to infer that the legend might covertly project some sense of “something having gone terribly wrong”. If regarded as provisional, and that it is very likely only one of a number of possibilities, it would not seem too “wild” an interpretation to understand that what I picked

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<sup>123</sup> Counter-transference is, of course, primarily unconscious. To be consciously thought about, discussed, etc., the counter-transference(s) need to be “clothed” in language. Borrowing the term from Bion, Thomas Ogden refers to the conscious derivatives of unconscious experience as “reveries”: “Reverie is a process in which metaphors are created that give shape to the analyst’s experience of the unconscious dimensions of the analytic relationship” (2001, p. 38).

up via a largely unconscious communication, and—in a way—re-lived, was something of the existential reality of those who set down their version of the legend at the time.

### **3.5 Making connections**

To recollect, the object of the exercise of listening psychoanalytically to the legend has been to try to get some sense of the psychological processes involved by which the anti-Jewishness of the first century church, which found expression in some passages of the New Testament, becomes reiterated—mostly unconsciously—in the life of the contemporary church, when those same texts are performed as part of the church’s regular worship life. With the data accumulated above, the next step is to compare the following two processes.

First, what happened in the experiment. It begins with a text—the legend of The Wandering Jew—which is now known to have been produced in a context where, to most ordinary people, “the whole world seemed to be going terribly wrong”. My listening to the legend with evenly suspended attention unconsciously hooked into associated repressed memories, producing—unexpectedly, at the time—a similar sense of “something having gone terribly wrong”. What seems to have been demonstrated here is that free listening to the legend can stir up powerful, unconscious thoughts, feelings and bodily reactions which, by association, tend to give emotional weight to the verisimilitude of the legend. But more than this—and another surprise—the association I came up with seems not to have been random—that is, any old experience from my past with some strong feeling about it. My sense of “the whole world having gone terribly wrong” appears to correlate with at least one of the things the redactors of the legend—given their context—would be unconsciously wanting to evacuate via projection, the whole process constituting the sort of “unconscious to unconscious” transmission that, as already noted (footnote 101), Freud in his day found so remarkable.

Now consider New Testament texts such as the “Jewish trial of Jesus”, which Davis, Meissner and others have shown were produced in an atmosphere of paranoid fear and anxiety. These are heard by Christian worshippers, over and over again, in a state—it has been argued—very similar to that of “evenly suspended attention”. In this context, the covert fears and anxieties embedded in these sorts of texts, via unconscious association, hook into unconscious fears and anxieties of those at worship, affectively reinforcing the

verisimilitude of what the church has understood to be the anti-Jewishness meaning of the texts as they are performed—for example, by being read out loud, or dramatised. As D. Andrew Kille points out, what gets lost in this process is context. The anti-Jewishness of the first-century church, which makes at least some sort of sense given the historical circumstances, lifted out of its first-century context and remapped into entirely different contexts, at best frequently makes no sense, and at worst is capable of being hijacked for almost any sort of anti-Jewish interpretation:

When sacred texts develop to express and define group identity in a context of conflict, they often crystallize these idealizations and projections and preserve them in written form. While these formulations may be appropriate in the formative stages of the religious community, it sets the stage for future distortions. As Paul Ricoeur has observed, something significant happens when communication moves from speech to text. In dialogue, it is possible to clarify ambiguity by direct reference to the surroundings. Once a communication moves into a text, however, the direct referential context is lost, and the multiple significances inherent in written language make a variety of interpretations possible. (Kille, 2004, p. 61)

But what fears and anxieties do these texts covertly activate? Generally speaking, ones similar to those activated in me during the experiment: unconscious memories of varying degrees of trauma, commonly dating back to childhood and infancy. However, as in the experiment, it turns out that hearing these texts does not stir up just any old unconscious fears and anxieties. In the same kind of “unconscious to unconscious” communication already discussed, the *particular* fears and anxieties stirred up in parishioners who are free listening during worship are likely to be very similar to the paranoid anxieties that, inter alia, constituted the backdrop against which the parts of the New Testament the church has always understood anti-Judaically—possibly anti-Jewishly—were set down.

In the next chapter, the legend of The Wandering Jew is once again employed to illustrate how such New Testament texts derive their power to perpetuate anti-Jewishness in the church, not only—and perhaps not primarily—via their overt message, but by connecting with *particular* unconscious fears and anxieties in parishioners during the hearing of these texts, which reinforce *particular*, long-standing, Christian fantasies about Jews. It is to this we now turn.

## Chapter four—Some psychoanalytically significant themes

*As Freud has demonstrated, we are not who we think we are, and the world is not what we think it is. (Will Adams)*

### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a psychoanalytic reading of the *legend* of The Wandering Jew provided an understanding of the process (the “how”) whereby the performance, in church, of what the church traditionally understands to be anti-Jewish texts hooks into unconscious fears and anxieties of worshippers, thus, out of awareness, emotionally reinforcing the verisimilitude of what such (anti-Jewish) texts say. This unconscious freighting of traditional Christian anti-Jewishness with powerful affective associations is part of the reason—it has been argued—the church finds it so difficult to let go of its supersessionist fantasies, which in turn unconsciously thwart the church’s intentions towards better Jewish-Christian relations.

More than this, and to recollect, one of the inferences from the “free-listening” experiment was that listening in such a way may well hook into, not just any old fears or anxieties, but something far more specific. In what psychoanalysis understands to be “unconscious-to-unconscious” communication, *particular* sorts of fears and anxieties projected by the author(s) of a text, during performance of that text, connect with *particular* sorts of unconscious fears and anxieties in parishioners, which reinforce *particular* sorts of long-standing Christian fantasies about Jews. The connection, however, is not obvious, for it is neither rational nor logical. It is, rather, associative, and predominantly affective in nature. And it is the covert, and fundamentally non-rational, nature of Christian anti-Jewishness that—as this thesis keeps emphasising—makes it so difficult to recognise and do anything about.

Complementing the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to focus on The Wandering Jew (the *character*) in order to understand, as well as the “how”, the “what” and the “why” of Christian anti-Jewish construction. What anti-Jewish fantasies are to be seen both overtly and covertly inscribed upon the body of The Wandering Jew? Why, from a psychoanalytic perspective, do these fantasies take the particular, peculiar, often stereotypical form they do? What are the fears and anxieties that shape these fantasies as

they do, that make them as passionately irrational as they often are, and so palpably incarnate, and hence so deep-rooted and difficult to educate against?

## 4.2 Methodology

As discussed in the methodology section of this thesis, the way forward for this chapter will be to identify psychoanalytically significant themes in the legend, particularly those associated with the way the body of The Wandering Jew has been constructed in the Christian imagination. As was commented earlier, there is no particularly psychoanalytically distinctive method for identifying such themes as there was, say, in the previous chapter for the purpose of picking up meaning(s) that might normally be outside awareness (i.e., by listening with evenly hovering attention). Analytic reading is, rather, a “quiet realignment, the small shift in perspective, the recognition of what was always there but not seen before” (Skura, 1981, p. 204).

There are, however, themes or emphases often regarded as typically psychoanalytical. For example, and in broad terms, some believe a genuine interest in humanity (the welfare of both the other and oneself) that might find expression in a passionate curiosity in the analytic process is almost a *sine qua non* of psychoanalysis (Cooper, 1996, p. 362; McWilliams, 2004, p. 31).<sup>124</sup> An ability to be attuned particularly to the affective component of communication is also commonly regarded as being psychoanalytically distinctive (McWilliams, 2004, pp. 36-40). But there are also more specific emphases, some of which have been mentioned already. First, Skura’s observation that there is an insistence in analysis on paying attention to everything, equally, down to the smallest detail, and after that to take nothing simply at face value (1981, p. 201). To this needs to be added—to invoke one of the main criteria discussed in the methodology chapter for doing sound “applied” analysis—the plain, commonsense strategy of also taking notice of the blindingly obvious. The half-dozen themes that make up the substantive part of this chapter, for example, seem to me to be psychoanalytically significant, but are hardly touched upon—if at all—in the extant literature. To take my first two themes for example, nowhere does it appear that anyone is curious, from *any* sort of psychological perspective,

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<sup>124</sup> Although there was more than one side to Freud, Berman says that “His curiosity, open-mindedness, patience, and empathic capacity enabled him to discern subtle nuances and emotional currents both in the life stories of his patients and in novels, poems and dramas, which he [read] avidly” (2003, p. 119).

about the meaning of The Wandering Jew as “still alive” after sixteen centuries. As one of the “givens” of the story it simply seems to go unseen.

Secondly, as already mentioned in the methodology chapter, psychoanalysis has always had an interest in the parapraxes (Freud, 1901)—those things apparently forgotten, or “accidentally” let slip in the course of telling a story, those things in a text that are “almost there”, as Skura puts it (1981, p. 204). Psychoanalytic theory and practice regard both the overt and covert, the manifest and the latent, content of communication to be at least equally important, and the latter often the more significant of the two. Thus, the main organisation of this chapter is first to examine some of the overt—and hence more accessible—psychoanalytically significant themes in the legend (pertaining to the main character). Then this chapter deals with some of the more covert themes—some of the things hinted at in the story, but not quite said, for some reason.

Thirdly, from the beginning, psychoanalysis has tried to make sense of the sorts of selves we are in the present—whether relatively mentally healthy or unhealthy—by reference to unforgotten memories, sometimes real, sometimes imaginary, sometimes traumatic, and often dating back years, even to childhood and earlier.<sup>125</sup> This connection, which is an inference from the data of analysis, is a process commonly termed “construction in analysis”. While, nowadays, this is a generally accepted idea (even beyond the psychoanalytic community), it is sufficiently large a topic to warrant a discussion of its own.

### **4.3 Constructions in analysis**

In the previous chapter, the interest was not so much in the analytic yield of a “free listening” to the legend of The Wandering Jew, as in what the experiment revealed about the process. That is, for the purposes of this research, discovering just what the author(s) of the legend might have been attempting to psychically evacuate at the time (on the one hand), and (on the other) analysing the particular content of my counter-transferential response to these projections, are both of less significance than how the experiment helped better

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<sup>125</sup> See again, for example, Freud’s treatment of Fraülein Ilona Weiss for leg pains, at times so unbearable she could not walk, but with no apparent cause (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 34-41). Together they discovered the pain in her legs had arisen through association and symbolisation with her father’s heart attack years earlier, and the pain she had felt standing, her legs “frozen”, at the bedroom door after her father had been brought home. There was much more to her case than that, but the principle is that the source of her neurotic symptoms was a series of painful ideas from the past, which were unconsciously converted into bodily symptoms in order to exact a kind of self-punishment, because of various ways she felt she had let her father down.

understand the way anti-Jewish projections from the past hook into, and activate, unconscious memory in the present.

Similarly, in this chapter, there is no special interest in the nature of Christian, anti-Jewish construction visible on and in the body of *The Wandering Jew*, *as such*. As will be seen, it is (inter alia) irrational, ambivalent, and affect-laden—just what one would expect. What *is* of interest, and what a psychoanalytically-informed examination of the body of *The Wandering Jew* will illustrate, is the relationship between these sorts of anti-Jewish fantasies and the type of unconscious fears and anxieties of worshipping Christians (and of most of us) that become hooked into, and vivified when anti-Jewish texts of the same type as the legend are performed in church.

As explained briefly in my self-analysis following the experiment in the previous chapter, my associating the sorts of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations I had during “free listening” to the legend with experiences in both my recent and the (now) distant past of my childhood, is not something I could ever somehow “prove”. It was an inference from the data that emerged from the experiment. In conventional psychoanalytic terms, such an interpretation is a “construction in analysis”: that is, it is a hypothesis concerning events in the past reconstructed from the data provided by free associations or free listening (Rycroft, 1968, p. 24). The hypothesis is that, in my free listening to the legend, I was like a patient in analysis who “has [been] induced to remember something that has been experienced by him and repressed” (Freud, 1937, p. 258). While Freud had begun to recognise early on (1915a) the extent to which people who inhabit our minds—“ghosts from the past as well as goblins from the present” (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 77)—influence who we are and what we do, nevertheless, until the end of his career he remained tentative about how some aspects of analytic construction “worked”, saying they were “a matter for later enquiry” (1937, p. 266).<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Although Freud probably could not have anticipated later enquiry taking the direction it has, recent cognitive research into “implicit memory” refers to “memory that is observable in behavior but is not consciously (explicitly) brought to mind” (Westen, 1998, p. 336). This research shows that, like cognition generally, memory also is far more complex than previously thought. In one model, five different forms of memory are distinguished, arranged in an autozoetic hierarchy—that is, determined by the degree of reflectiveness (awareness that a particular memory belongs to one’s past). At its “deepest”, memory is adualistic—lacking reflective capacity:

One knows something to be a fact, but does not link a personal episode to this knowledge... When the memory is evoked by contextual clues, it is experienced in the present, without awareness of its

Despite its still hypothetical nature, it would be hard to overestimate the utility of this idea in trying to understand more fully who we are and the things we do. From Freud onwards, this has been understood to apply not just as individuals, but socially also.<sup>127</sup> Cognitive science seems to be supporting the long-standing psychoanalytic working hypothesis that in order to understand personality type and psychopathology (to take two ends of a spectrum), taking into account normal human psychological development, and to see pathology as residues of problems at a particular maturational phase, is at least “a necessary *part* of the picture” (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 24-5, author's emphasis). There are, as discussed earlier, contemporary issues about just how the relationship between past and present is interpreted—for example, “archaeologically” in Freudian mode (Freud, 1937), or narratologically as per Schafer (1992)—but it has long been, and remains, one of the cornerstones of psychoanalytic thinking, says McWilliams, that:

(1) current psychological preoccupations reflect infantile precursors; (2) interactions in our earliest years set up the template for how we later assimilate experience, making that experience comprehensible according to categories that were salient in childhood. (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 40-41)<sup>128</sup>

We human beings may be complicated, but our intricacies are not random, says McWilliams reassuringly, and analytic theory such as this offers us ways of making sense out of the seemingly inexplicable ironies and absurdities of our lives (1994, p. 38).

Moving now into the substantive discussions of this chapter, the working assumption—at least to begin with—is that the aetiology of some of the “ironies and absurdities” of current Christian attitudes towards Jews and Judaism that constantly subvert the church’s desire for better relations, lies not just in that they are shaped by irrational,

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origins in the past. In this sense, the memory is, at least in part, unconscious.” (Meares, 2000, pp. 78-9)

These various modules of memory are presumed to function together in consciousness so that, ordinarily, a single event is recorded in several different ways. This, as Russell Meares points out (2000, pp. 79-80), is consonant with Freud’s theory that “memory is present, not once but several times over” (Freud, 1896, pp. 173-174). Psychological trauma causes a retreat down the hierarchy, says Meares, “with the more severe traumata producing the greater regression”. This should not, however, imply relative inefficiency, Meares suggests; unconscious memory at this level is part of primitive mental processes that are “extraordinarily accurate” (Meares, 2000, p. 80).

<sup>127</sup> Freud contends that how the past can shape how the present is both experienced and interpreted can apply not only to the individual, but to “mankind as a whole” (1937, p. 269).

<sup>128</sup> Just how researchers believe they know what is going on inside a baby’s head is beyond the scope of this work. Among the many useful discussions see Stern (1985, pp. 13-18). While such data remains necessarily hypothetical, says Culbertson, “the conclusions are widely accepted today in a variety of fields” (2000, p. 75).

affect-laden, unconscious mental processes, but that these in turn draw on deep, powerful, primal unconscious memories.

## **4.4 Overt themes**

### **4.4.1 Theme one—Irrationality and Christian anti-Jewishness**

#### **4.4.1.1 Introduction**

At the risk of stating the obvious, and contrary to what the legend itself claims,<sup>129</sup> The Wandering Jew is not “real”, and his story is not “true” in any literal sense (even if it is understood to carry “truth” in other ways).<sup>130</sup> There are those who thought they saw, or even met, The Wandering Jew. There have been many more who were told by others of having met The Wandering Jew. But, again using as evidence what the legend itself has to say, it can legitimately be concluded that no such person has ever existed. He is a fiction. He is a mental construction, assembled out of bits and pieces of the Christian imagination. The clearest evidence for this is that the story has as its main device the idea that this man continued to live for centuries, rather than dying after a normal human life span. Such an idea (“immortality”) has long been one of the fantasies—a wish, a hope—of many Christian (and other) writers but, by any usual reckoning, is not part of normal, physical, human life. This is not in any way to dismiss what history shows, clearly, to have been a very powerful story. Nor is it to impose a naively reductionist view of how broadly reality has always been experienced and articulated.<sup>131</sup> But it is to say that The Wandering Jew is the product of Christian fantasy, founded on an obvious irrationality—that is, an idea that is “not reasonable” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003, p. 915), that lies outside of everyday empirical and logical ways of thinking (i.e., that he is somehow living-dead).

If this interpretation is accepted, a question immediately arises (that seems to have been asked nowhere else): How is it that this story still “works” in spite of the irrationality at its heart? It is known that, in part, the story worked because it said something theological.

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<sup>129</sup> “All these things Paulus von Eitzen told me truthfully...” (see previous chapter).

<sup>130</sup> The Wandering Jew is consistently referred to as a “legend”. This, according to one definition, places it somewhere between historical fact and fiction, although the sort of fiction that intends to convey a psychological truth (Cuddon, 1999, pp. 451, 525).

<sup>131</sup> Scribner points out that, in late-mediaeval Germany (and right through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century), in spite of the Reformation, the dead “demanded and received continual attention in popular belief.” “Ghosts and poltergeists plagued Catholics and Protestants with confessional indifference” (2001a, p. 60).

The story of The Wandering Jew that the church at least condoned, and probably promoted, was of a Jew who personified all Jews (Felsenstein, 1995, p. 64), and who incarnated what would nowadays be termed the church's theology of Jewish-Christian relations.<sup>132</sup> Another way the story probably worked, as has already been noted (chap. 2, 2.4.3), can be inferred from the historical context into which the story was born: in part, it offered implied answers to contemporary social issues, such as, "Why are Jews so visible again these days?"

But while the socio-cultural context helps understand the need for such a story, a fundamental question remains: what are the mental processes that allowed the irrationality of this story to be tolerated in its telling and hearing, and for it to retain such potency despite, by almost any standard, contravening plain common sense? The irrational ontology of The Wandering Jew—something at the heart of his very being—opens up one of the most important issues in the context of the current research, which is: How and why is the irrationality of much Christian anti-Jewishness able to be tolerated?

#### **4.4.1.2 Irrationality—a psychoanalytic view**

The psychoanalytic community seems ambivalent about the term "irrationality". Psychoanalysis gets called, on the one hand, the "science of the irrational" (P. Gordon, 1993, p. 281) and, certainly, is discussed as such (see e.g., Gardner, 1993; Sturdee, 1995) but, on the other hand, not widely. This is probably because, as Clarke points out (2003, p. 62), using this term is not without its problems, in that "irrational" means many things to

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<sup>132</sup> The theology of Jewish-Christian relations embedded in the legend in large part reflects the intentions of an edict of Pope Innocent III at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), that the Jews who had killed Christ were nevertheless to be tolerated, as their continuing existence, interpreted as God's conferring of immortal life upon that sinful race, was ongoing evidence of God's infinite mercy (G. K. Anderson, 1970, pp. 17-18). This theology, in turn, rested largely upon the shoulders of Augustinian teaching about the Jews: that, with the destruction of the Second Temple, God had scattered the Jews into exile (Council of Christians and Jews Victoria, 1994) for having killed Christ and for refusing to believe in him and, through their writings, bear witness that Christians did not invent their prophecies regarding Christ (Leschnitzer, 1971, pp. 230-1). This teaching was ignorant of, or ignored, the reality that the Jewish diaspora had begun well before the first century CE, and that, long since, there had been more Jews living outside of Israel than within. Nevertheless, Augustine was immensely influential in moulding the theology of the European middle ages (Cross & Livingstone, 1974), including how Jews appeared to Christians (Leschnitzer, 1971, pp. 230-1). In summary, while it might seem reckless to generalise about what the legend might have meant to the whole church up until the early-modern period, it appears highly likely that the legend played an active and important part in shaping the attitudes of Christians towards Jews throughout this time. It did so, at the very least, at the level of parish church preaching, and of popular story-telling in its various forms. And while never an approved church document, or expressing what would nowadays be called an official theology of Jewish-Christian relations, the anti-Jewish ideas embedded in the legend of The Wandering Jew clearly sat comfortably with the institutional church, on occasion even to the highest levels.

different people.<sup>133</sup> In the popular sense, irrational behaviour is probably most commonly equated with something like “crazy”—essentially random, meaningless, peculiar, and frightening (Gardner, 1993, pp. 250 note 1, 261 note 9). However, psychoanalysis (and other mental sciences, to the extent that they use the term) has understood the term irrational differently from this.

First, and for completeness’ sake, it has to be said that, from the beginning, psychoanalytic theory has recognised that not all unconscious processes are necessarily irrational. Many of the things we do without thinking—such as breathing—are self-evidently, universally meaningful. At another level, many skills are unconscious, but they are hardly irrational or childish. Being able to tie one’s shoelaces without thinking is neither neurotic nor maladaptive. Freud re-worked his model of the human mind several times during his lifetime, including the relationship between the conscious/unconscious and the rational/irrational. Although not so much in favour these days because it employs a spatial metaphor which, rightly or wrongly, is understood to imply old-fashioned, hierarchical ways of thinking, the relationship between id, ego and superego was Freud’s highest development of this particular collection of ideas, and remains the classic Freudian model for expressing (inter alia) the various relationships between conscious and unconscious, and rational and irrational mental processes (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 103-4).

But some unconscious processes *are* irrational, by which is meant not that they are “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”,<sup>134</sup> but that they are organised by something other than logic, by something “more primitive than propositional sequences yet capable of affecting their course” (Gardner, 1993, p. 35). Unconscious mental process may not be rational, but it is nevertheless a determinant procedure. That is, once one learns how to “listen” to what are partially unconscious processes,<sup>135</sup> and understands the “grammar” of what is going on, there is a meaningful connection between thoughts, feelings, behaviour, fantasies, et cetera, and whatever evokes them. As Sturdee perceptively and succinctly puts it, it is a “*rationaly motivated* irrationality” (1995, p. 171, author’s emphasis). That said, there is also almost infinite scope for misinterpreting irrational connections because, while

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<sup>133</sup> Sturdee (1995, p. 170), following Gardner (1993), is one of the few to consider carefully what irrationality might mean, and to differentiate between different types of irrationality.

<sup>134</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5.

<sup>135</sup> See the previous chapter on “evenly hovering attention”.

the core relational theme remains constant, details may differ greatly (Lazarus, 1994, p. 308).

As Gardner observes, unconscious, irrational mental processes are normally associated with primitivity. McWilliams describes “primitive”, in the generally understood psychoanalytic sense, as primary, immature, or “lower order”, and concerning the boundary between the self and the outer world, in global, undifferentiated sorts of ways, fusing cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions (McWilliams, 1994, p. 98). As Culbertson points out (2000, chap. 3), this world of primitive mental processes is one which the object relations<sup>136</sup> strand of psychoanalysis associates—in the first instance—with that of the infant, much of the theory of which follows on from research begun in the first half of last century by Margaret S. Mahler.

Mahler’s most important work was with autistic and symbiotically psychotic children (Mahler, 1968, pp. 1-3; Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 216-7).<sup>137</sup> From the mass of research data she and her colleagues collected over the years about normal children and their mothers, Mahler constructed a sequence of stages in normal growing up, of which the process of “separation-individuation”—the “psychological birth of the infant”—lasting from around four to thirty-six months, was regarded as key for normal ego functioning (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). In Mahler’s model, however, there are two “forerunner” phases: “normal autism” (Mahler, 1968, p. 7) and “normal symbiosis”<sup>138</sup> (Mahler, 1968, pp. 12-13; Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 218-221). During the first few months, the infant’s life is characterised as strongly protected from external stimulus, as it gradually gains physiological stability outside the mother’s body. Mahler’s observations suggested that the infant’s connection with the external world is global, especially at first (1975, p. 45), and

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<sup>136</sup> Object relations is a strand within psychoanalysis that focuses on relationships that people form, in contradistinction to interest in oneself (Colman, 2001, p. 502). “An ‘object’ is a mental representation of, most commonly, a person, though it may represent a place, thing, idea, fantasy, or memory. An object is the product of some sort of relationship, thus being created through some event or interaction, and is invested with a particular emotional energy such as love, hate, or fear” (Culbertson, 2000, p. 74). Object relations theory is sometimes taken as synonymous with interpersonal theory. However, object relations includes both intrapsychic and well as interpsychic mental processes—i.e., it reaches beyond social interactions to include private and unconscious meanings (Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 235).

<sup>137</sup> Mahler’s background was in medicine, eventually specializing in paediatrics. She became interested in psychoanalysis early on and, while her relationship with the psychoanalytic community was for a variety of reasons somewhat fraught, it became the main frame of reference for her research (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 226-9).

<sup>138</sup> “Normal symbiosis” was not coined by Mahler but, like “normal autism”, the term is part of the argot of object relations developmental theory.

only slowly evolves into a more differentiated apprehension and response, which are essentially adaptive (1975, p. 5).

One of the corollaries of all this, as Culbertson observes (2000, p. 76), is an understanding that “an infant’s cognitive abilities and mental capacities are extremely limited, to the extent that it can process informational input, such as sensations, experience, satisfaction, and frustration, only in partial and highly subjective ways.”<sup>139</sup> Clearly, infants *do* learn, and there is much more to be said (and will be said) about the things that are important in the course of early human development (mainly because, in the psychoanalytic view, they lay down patterns of thinking, feeling and relation for the rest of life). But it also seems clear that cognition and rational mental processes have only a limited part to play over the first few months, and that the infant’s main preoccupation with what is, literally, the life-and-death issue of maintaining an existence<sup>140</sup> is mediated by dimensions of experience other than the sorts of logical, rational styles of thinking associated with later in life.

These primitive processes are thought of as belonging to infancy and childhood, but not exclusively so. McWilliams says that although primary (primitive) psychological processes become modified by secondary processes, “these [primitive] ways of experiencing are assumed by analytic thinkers to live on in all of us, whether or not we have significant pathology” (1994, p. 99). One of the implications of this is that some threat, fear, or anxiety,

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<sup>139</sup> An alternative viewpoint to all this needs to be noted. In contrast to Mahler, Stern characterises the infant as “outward looking” from birth (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 166). “Infants never experience an autistic-like phase,” says Stern emphatically, and, “They never experience a period of total self/other undifferentiation” (1985, p. 10). “It is in the eyes of the beholder”, he contends, “not in the infant’s experience” (1985, p. 23). A recent (i.e., c. 1970 onwards) “revolution” in observational research necessitates a reconsideration of the infant’s subjective social life during the first two months, Stern contends (1985, p. 38). Babies only a few days old, for example, can differentiate the smell of their mother’s milk from that of other nursing women; at the same age they can “discriminate and imitate smiles, frowns and surprise expressions”; the neonate can “discriminate the mother’s voice from another woman’s voice” (Stern, 1985, pp. 39, 63-4). On the other hand, just as Stern contends that researchers in the past did not see what they were not looking for (1985, p. 46), physiologist David Mellor warns against seeing what we want to see. Current research shows that the foetus does react to a range of stimuli, he confirms, but the evidence is that it is not consciously experienced—an effect (further evidence suggests) that persists well beyond birth (Massey News, 2005). Where does any sort of reality lie between these two extremes? Are infants over the first few months in a state of narcissistic autism, or are there all sorts of things going on that were not appreciated until recently? The answer is probably “both-and” rather than “either-or”. As Green points out, Mahler was a psychoanalyst and Stern is not, and they look at psychic processes from very different viewpoints (2004, pp. 102-3). Both infants and adults, suggest Mitchell and Black, may shift back and forth between two ever-present dimensions of experience: “one that is deeply fundamental to self needs for development and continuity of vitality...and another that relies on an experience with other people viewed as both separate from the self and needed in quite different ways” (1995, p. 166).

<sup>140</sup> That this is the fundamental preoccupation of the infant is the view of (inter alia) John Bowlby (1970).

experienced in later life, if sufficiently intense, is likely to hook into similar, unconscious, primordial memories which, as will be seen (below), have all sorts of dimensions (e.g., affective). But rationality is not one of them—or at least not to any significant extent. This understanding can illuminate an important aspect of The Wandering Jew, and Christian anti-Jewishness in general—the irrationality of both.

To return now to the main question (4.4.1.1, above): how, despite, the story's obvious irrationality, does the legend retain such potency, and the main character his credibility? A psychoanalytic understanding of unconscious mental processes of the sort just discussed helps to understand that the story existed (and exists) not to answer only—or even primarily—intellectual questions that arose in the context of the times, such as those already discussed (chapter three). Given its great popularity and durability in spite of its irrationality, it is likely that the legend was a response to some *associated* issue—one with, most probably, a heavy emotional loading, perhaps even with some sense of “life or death” urgency about it.

Once something of the historical situation out of which the legend emerged is known (see chapter three), one of the questions posed by the huge changes characteristic of this (early-modern) period might have been something like: “When the state of the world has for so long caused me to feel such fear, anxiety and uncertainty, how can I know that my religious faith is true?” In part, the story fulfilled a psychological need that transcended the importance for it to appear to be true in a rational way. The legend implies that, like the sudden appearance of The Wandering Jew (and Jews in general), life throws up all manner of unexpected and unwanted surprises that seem so undeserved, so difficult to understand, and so disconcerting, that one could easily give in to despair. However, the legend assures, there is nothing new in any of this. The Wandering Jew has been coming and going for centuries—people have seen this with their own eyes—and while such unpleasantness may, unfortunately, be a fact of life, it eventually goes away again. As a further consolation (the legend implies), The Wandering Jew (and Jews in general)—as “perfidy incarnate”—were clearly the ones responsible for everything going wrong with the world. It was certainly not the fault of good Christians. But, above all, while none of this might make complete sense, it is all in God's hands (the legend says). God has had the measure of The Wandering Jew, and

of all Jews, and of everything else that is wrong with the world, from the beginning and until the end of time. If one does, indeed, remain Christian, then everything will be all right.

At the time the legend emerged, the supposed presence of The Wandering Jew (the character) out and about in all the world and still alive after sixteen centuries, though an irrational idea, provided some sense of psychological security during difficult times.<sup>141</sup> The many reported sighting of The Wandering Jew repeatedly confirmed that this Christian story was “true”, that Christianity was “right”, and that—despite appearances sometimes—God was still in control of everything. And it worked, at the time, in spite of its irrationality because, as has been seen, there was a far more important need to be met than requiring the story to be credible. It worked by providing a sense of assurance and security, but it was bought at the expense of keeping alive, and reinforcing, traditional Christian stereotypes about Jews.

#### 4.4.1.3 Conclusion

As Paul Johnson observes, one thing that changes very little is the irrationality of Christian anti-Jewishness:

What strikes the historian surveying anti-Semitism worldwide over more than two millennia is its fundamental irrationality. It seems to make no sense, any more than malaria or meningitis makes sense. In the whole of history, it is hard to point to a single occasion when a wave of anti-Semitism was provoked by a real Jewish threat (as opposed to an imaginary one). (P. Johnson, 2005, p. 34)

The reason rationality is not important to the effective functioning of anti-Jewish, imaginary constructions is because—as has been seen with the example of The Wandering Jew—the church has fearful, anxiety-ridden, narcissistic needs (real and/or imaginary) that *will* be met ahead of anything else. The reason for this is that whatever fears and anxieties are stirred up (by, say, the performance during worship of texts understood in anti-Jewish ways) unconsciously resonate with pre-verbal, pre-cognitive unconscious memories of times when existence had an urgent “life or death” feel about it, and that were, at the time, satisfied in almost any way *but* cognitively, and rationally. Certainly, as psychoanalysis has long

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<sup>141</sup> Zygmunt Bauman notes the irony of the correlation between the intensity of witch scare, anti-Jewishness, and irrational fears in general (on the one hand), and (on the other) the rise of science and rationality. As already discussed elsewhere in this thesis, they are related, says Bauman, “to the intensity of anxieties and tensions provoked or generated by the collapse of the *ancien régime* and the advent of the modern order” (1989, p. 40).

understood, and as the example of the legend of The Wandering Jew emerging in the context it did shows, times of stress exacerbate the problem of something like irrational, Christian anti-Jewishness. But, as history shows, anti-Jewishness can be just as rampant in good times as bad, the reason being that the performance of anti-Jewish texts during worship unconsciously hooks *primarily* into ubiquitous primitive fears and anxieties with a similar, irrational “feel” about them. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Christian anti-Jewish fantasies do, indeed, need certain things about them in order to “work” (some of which are the subject of the rest of this chapter) but—for reasons just discussed—rationality is not one of them. It is almost a tautology, but it needs to be said that it is this fundamental irrationality that makes Christian anti-Jewishness so nearly impossible to make any sort of sense of, or to counter, in any ordinary commonsense sort of way.

The more visible, contemporary face of all this, as discussed at some length in the introduction to this thesis, is a deep-seated, irrational, intractable, Christian fantasy of superiority towards Jews. As a fantasy it may be fuelled by different fears and anxieties in different ages but—as Biddick and others argue—it finds consistent expression in a type of supersedionism that began with Paul and persists to this day, and that continues to covertly undermine, from the Christian side, the possibility of better Jewish-Christian relations.

#### **4.4.2 Theme two—Incarnation and Christian anti-Jewishness**

##### **4.4.2.1 Introduction**

A second psychoanalytically significant theme relating to The Wandering Jew (the character) is the idea the legend presents that he is “real”. He may be the central character of a well-known story, but—the story asserts—he is no fiction; he is an actual person. He is, furthermore, not just some historical personage (although he certainly is that, the story says)—he is real and he is alive *now*. This contradiction is explained by his immortality—although not explicitly in such terms, possibly because he is not to be understood as merely some sort of spirit, or ghost or apparition. He is real in every human sense. The Wandering Jew is fully open to observation, down to each small physical detail. Though frugal, he both eats, and uses money. People have lengthy conversations with him. Typologically, within a Christian frame, he seems to have more in common with Jesus Christ than with the First Testament prophets. The latter may be highly revered figures, to whom supernatural things

might happen, but clearly they are anchored in time. The Wandering Jew, however, like Jesus Christ, is depicted as belonging both to some particular point in time, and thereafter to all time, in some way. In fact, the Wandering Jew has a corporeality not accorded to Christ. All the descriptions of The Wandering Jew in the legend point towards his being as real, and alive (in a physical as well as every other sense) as those many people he is reported to have interacted with, over the centuries. Christ, by comparison, while understood by the church to have been present in the world in a physical way after his resurrection (Cross & Livingstone, 1974, p. 1178), did not continue to be experienced in such a way indefinitely. According to the Christian tradition, Christ's ascension<sup>142</sup> marked the close of the post-resurrection appearances, the theological significance being that at that time "Christ's human nature was taken into heaven" (Cross & Livingstone, 1974, p. 94). The Wandering Jew, then, is understood to have been alive and real in an embodied way, more or less like Jesus Christ (and arguably more, rather than less). It is very likely that the legend garnered credibility from resonances like this with the Christian tradition.

Yet, like the idea discussed above that he is, somehow, both alive and dead at the same time, the idea that The Wandering Jew is—somehow—"real", and walking about as an incarnation of Christian anti-Jewishness, appears largely uncanvassed in the extant literature. Maccoby seems inclined to dismiss sightings of The Wandering Jew as being much the same as reports of flying saucers nowadays (1972, p. 237), but what he and other commentators seem to overlook is what such an idea might mean, and particularly what it might signify about the nature of Christian anti-Jewishness.

To pick up this theme back in the 1602 pamphlet version, the assertion that The Wandering Jew is alive and real is made by weaving a long, elaborate tale beginning with the narrator claiming to have had repeated conversations, in the presence of witnesses ("other students"), with a (real and well-known, though now dead) Dr Paulus von Eitzen, who in turn claimed to have had a long, theological conversation with The Wandering Jew. The narrator asserts that von Eitzen must have "told [him] truthfully", because he (the narrator) had heard the same story from "several old burghers throughout Schleswig" who had also seen and spoken with The Wandering Jew. In a similar way, nearly four hundred

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<sup>142</sup> Mk 16:9; Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9.

years later, in Edwards' introduction to her collection of North American folk tales (which she takes to be "Wandering-Jew-like"), she says:

This book isn't about folklore or myths. The legend of the Wandering Jew has remained alive for nearly 2000 years, in part because of numerous "eyewitness" accounts recorded and told throughout the years...Most of the stories that follow come from first-hand testimonies or written accounts as told by eyewitnesses. All those involved testify that the experiences they have had were true and in some cases even withstood ridicule for telling about them. Because people alive today claim to have seen this supernatural being, these stories cannot be simply classified as myths or folktales. (Edwards, 1998, p. 14)

From the *Kurze Beschreibung* to the most recent written versions of the legend (or stories that an editor like Edwards interprets as such), there is almost always some part of the story purporting to document an actual encounter with The Wandering Jew. As with the 1602 pamphlet, this claim usually takes the form of a preamble to what The Wandering Jew has to say, often describing in elaborate detail the circumstances of the encounter, and the appearance and demeanour of The Wandering Jew himself. Up until around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were at least 19 claimed appearances, from North America, to Great Britain, north to Scandinavia and as far east in Europe as Astrakhan (Jacobs, 2002; Roth, 1972). If one includes the sorts of encounters Edwards writes about, then they may well be innumerable. Of course, says Baron, there have been impostors over the years, and sceptics also. But, he adds, "the masses never wavered in their belief" (1967, p. 180). Clearly, the notion that The Wandering Jew was not merely a fictional character, but was real, was alive, and was a flesh-and-blood human being (whatever else he might have been) was important to how the legend worked. But how? And why?

To respond in somewhat broad terms to the first of these questions, it seems self-evident that the idea of The Wandering Jew being out and about in all the world, where (as has reportedly happened, numerous times) he might be met by anyone at any time and asked to confirm his story, adds credibility and weight to the story. Clearly the legend will be taken much more seriously if, first, there are (supposedly) those around who have had the opportunity to check out its veracity first hand and, secondly, if it seems that almost anybody at all might, perchance, get the same opportunity. Thirdly, reported encounters with The Wandering Jew, century after century, kept the relevance of the legend contemporary. A recent meeting, locally, with The Wandering Jew implied that the anti-Jewishness he

personified was relevant not only to long ago and far away, but to here and now also. The implication was that the sorts of Christian attitudes towards Jews embodied in the legend are eternally important, and as important *now* as they ever were.

However, even taking such interpretations all together, they seem to fall short of fully explaining why The Wandering Jew is constructed in such a way. It would seem to require extraordinary psychic energy to maintain this fantasy—the suspension of disbelief, and a huge imaginative effort, sustained across generations. One has to wonder why, and to ask what might be driving this need for the construction to be eidetic in such a corporeal way.

As with the “irrationality” of The Wandering Jew (discussed above), one suspects that somewhere within the Christian psyche there was some deep, powerful need for him to be a quasi-real, physical, living person rather than just a story character. One also suspects that, once again, a psychoanalytically-informed understanding of those unconscious mental processes primarily associated with infancy might help clarify why, not just The Wandering Jew in particular, but anti-Jewish construction in general, is commonly so palpably incarnate—that is, fabricates internally coherent fantasies of a quasi-person—“the Jew”—and not just some motley collection of abstract, anti-Jewish ideas.

#### **4.4.2.2 Aspects of infancy—a psychoanalytic view**

The traditional psychoanalytic view is that this need for the construction to take such a form relates to the manner in which early experiences of infancy are understood to be “whole body”. As discussed in the previous section, Mahler characterises the mental state of infants over the first few months as a kind of “normal autism”. Concomitantly, the sorts of mental processes associated with cognition and rationality play little or no part in human development at this time. In infancy, being alive in a whole body sense is what is “real”. Allan Schore, citing copious recent research, says that “primitive mental states” are beginning to be understood as much more than early appearing “mental” or “cognitive” states that mediate psychological processes. “Rather,” he says, “they are more precisely characterised as ‘*psychobiological states*’. Thus, those of us with a developmental framework are exploring not primitive states of mind, but primitive states of mind-body” (Schore, 2002a, p. 4, author's emphasis).

While the infant may connect with the external world in somewhat diffuse, holistic sorts of ways, it does not happen in isolation. Mahler includes the mother in the infant's global experience of reality: "The infant behaves as though he and his mother were an omnipotent system—a dual unity within one common boundary", highlighting particularly what she calls "contact perceptual experiences *of the total body*" (Mahler et al., 1975, pp. 44-5, authors' emphasis). As already noted (above), the psychoanalytic view is that primitive ways of experiencing live on in all of us, whether or not we have significant pathology. A "whole being" style of infant interaction appears to connect later in life with the normal childhood and adult longing to be held and hugged (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 45), and with experiences of romantic love, such as those of a couple feeling as if they are in a world of their own, where different rules apply (Kernberg, 1980, p. 316), where they feel enveloped by a sort of wholeness and oneness that seems to get lost somewhere after childhood (Arlow, 1986, p. 135; Hendrix, 1988, p. 43), and where they feel invincible as long as they are together, but that they "might die" if they were to be separated from each other (Hendrix, 1988, p. 44). Unconscious memories of such styles of relating to external reality may also correlate with the sort of adult experience that Freud's friend, Romain Rolland, famously called the sense of "boundlessness of the oceanic feeling" (Freud, 1930, p. 64).<sup>143</sup>

#### **4.4.2.3 Incarnate Christian anti-Jewishness**

As repeatedly emphasised, the psychoanalytic view is that experiences of infancy lay down a kind of psychic palimpsest, and that our later lives tend to fall into these almost invisible grooves. Rustin relates the importance of bodily sensations in early infancy to the manner in which racism can manifest itself in later life. His observations could equally apply to Jewish-Christian relations:

In physical contact between parents and infants, sensations of touch, smell, the feel of hair, the perception of family resemblance, become suffused with intense feeling. In so far as early attachment is textured in these ways, physical characteristics remain potential objects of powerful emotions, both positive and negative. (Such physical characteristics are subsequently given typical or idealized form in cultural representations, tapping and reinforcing the early identifications of dominant groups and alienating or severing contact with those of subordinate or marginalized ones, which is why argument over the diffused range and plurality of representations is an

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<sup>143</sup> Ironically, Freud himself seemed to struggle to understand what Rolland meant, wondering if the whole idea might not warrant psychoanalytic investigation (Freud, 1930, p. 65).

important one.) This is not to say that human beings naturally remain fixated for life on these dimensions of similarity and difference. If this were the case, attachment would be exclusively within family groups, and incest would be the norm. (Rustin, 1991, p. 63)

It does however suggest, Rustin concludes, that the often passionate irrationality that underlies racism usually includes far more than ideation, and is as firmly rooted in human identity—who we are as embodied beings—as Freudian theory asserts, and that “the capacity to enjoy differences depends on a continuing developmental struggle within each individual and social group, and cannot be accomplished by a simple act of rational will” (1991, p. 64). Something like Christian anti-Jewishness will always be a struggle, says Rustin, because its aetiology lies in who we are as embodied beings, not only in what we think.

Psychoanalytic theory thus far helps to understand that the legend employed the elaborate and highly improbable story it did, in part, in order to sustain the Christian fantasy that The Wandering Jew is real, and is palpably incarnate, because what lies in unconscious memory from the time of infancy is a sense that what is mediated by the *whole body* is what is ultimately real, is what is believable and true, is what is trustworthy, and can be depended upon. If the main character of the legend is invested with these qualities, then so too, by association, are both his message and the message of the legend overall. At a deep psychological level, then, the anti-Jewish message inherent in the legend is made to seem all the more real, and true, and believable, and trustworthy, because of the “truth” of its main character, in all his embodied detail.

The Wandering Jew is but one example of anti-Jewishness incarnate. In an earlier section of this chapter (4.4.1.1), it was observed that, while in many ways the context nowadays is quite different from that in which the legend was born, one of the things that changes little is the fundamental irrationality of Christian anti-Jewishness. A similar observation might be made about the incarnate, embodied nature of anti-Jewish fantasy: it seems to be another distinctive feature that endures across the ages. From Paul’s choice of circumcision as a metaphor to lay the foundation for Christian supersessionist theology, through to Matthew’s having Jesus characterise “the teachers of the Law and Pharisees” as “blind guides” and “blind fools”, and as being like “whitewashed tombs”, “full of bones and

decaying corpses on the inside”,<sup>144</sup> through to *The Wandering Jew*, and through to contemporary fantasies about, for example, the “Jewish” nose (Geller, 1992a; Gilman, 1994), feet (Gilman, 1992), physiognomy and body shape (Gilman, 1985)—all attest to the central importance of Jewish bodies and body parts, both inside and out, in anti-Jewish discourse. “The stock image of the Jew in anti-Semitic propaganda from the Middle Ages on, was that of being disgustingly soft and porous, receptive of fluid and sticky, womanlike in its oozy sliminess,” says Martha C. Nussbaum (2004, p. 108). “In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such images were widespread and were further elaborated, as the Jew came to be seen as a foul parasite inside the clean body of the German male self.”<sup>145</sup>

#### 4.4.2.4 Conclusion

In summary, there seems to be an almost transhistorical character to the corporealised dimension of anti-Jewish construction, and whether one thinks of an early Christian contributing a thought on the Pharisees to Matthew’s pen, or a mediaeval Christian standing in the marketplace listening to someone’s account of meeting *The Wandering Jew*, or a contemporary Christian participating in a performance of the Passion, a common denominator of the mental image that each has of Jews and Judaism is that it is likely to be of such detailed solidness and vividness as to make the fantasy almost visible (eidetic).

The unconscious memories that get stirred up by the repeated performance, in church, of anti-Jewish texts have their roots in an early time of life when, as has been said, rationality did not matter. But, as just discussed, this is also a period when “bodies” do matter, and matter very much. It is through the early psychobiological interactions with primary caregivers that humans begin to make sense of their lives, and this lays down important parts of the template that helps organise and interpret experience for the rest of life. What is learned over those first crucial weeks and months is that what matters, what is important, and what is real, is an embodied, an incarnate, a corporealised reality. And it is because the fears and anxieties overt or latent in anti-Jewish texts, by affective association, stir up these sorts of unconscious memories, psychoanalytic theory would say, that anti-Jewishness has this very particular and almost universal quality of “embodiedness” which,

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<sup>144</sup> Mt 23: 15-17, 27-28.

<sup>145</sup> Anti-Jewishness couched in gender and sexual terms is discussed separately (4.5.1, below).

in largely unconscious but deeply visceral sorts of ways, reinforce the verisimilitude of the anti-Jewishness of such texts (i.e., help make the assertions seem “real” and “true”), and contribute towards subverting the possibility of better relations between Christians and Jews.

#### **4.4.3 Theme three—The homeless wanderer**

##### **4.4.3.1 Introduction**

In the 1602 pamphlet version, The Wandering Jew is a man, although again this is a matter apparently not discussed in any of the commentaries. The idea of a Wandering Jewess does occur, sometimes as The Wandering Jew’s wife, but only rarely (G. K. Anderson, 1970, pp. 414-6; Hacking, 1998, p. 216). Christians did (and do) have fantasies about Jewish women—recall The Great Rumour, and the Jewish whore who was to be mother to the Anti-Christ (chap. 2, 4.3) and, as discussed shortly in this chapter, ideas of effeminacy later become one of the cornerstones of anti-Jewish construction. But The Wandering Jew has almost always been a man.<sup>146</sup>

Secondly, the man is homeless, and a wanderer. As has already been noted, this is commonly understood to be a personification of a popular belief about Jews that served as both an explanation of, and a justification for, the rootlessness of the Jewish community (Leschnitzer, 1971, pp. 230-1). This interpretation has the effect of locating responsibility for the fate of Jews other than within socio-political realities created, in large part, by the power of Christendom (i.e., church and state together). But that said, and once again, while

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<sup>146</sup> The literature covering psychoanalytic views on gender is vast. Mitchell and Black give a brief but useful overview of some of main contemporary strands (1995, pp. 220-3). That The Wandering Jew was almost always male seems to have been *primarily* socio-culturally determined, with no particular or great psychological significance, and hence any sort of comprehensive discussion of the subject lies outside the scope of this thesis. But briefly, the male Wandering Jew is entirely consistent with the highly gendered, patriarchal nature of western European society. Nancy Chodorow (1978; 1979) argues that European society both sides of the mediaeval/modern divide was highly gendered (and patriarchal), even if there were huge changes in the socio-economic mechanisms by which the status quo of gender relations was maintained. Tamar Garb (1995, p. 24) explains that “the very rationalism that underpinned the theorization of the new political and social order, and the erosion of old systems of privilege, also provided the basis for the development of those disciplines that erected their own systems of hierarchy and classification, ones that safeguarded the privileges of a white Christian patriarchy even though they based their claims to superiority on the apparently objective findings of science” (see also Elizabeth Foyster, 1999, p. 3). In summary, while at the time the legend was published the pattern of the daily lives of men and women was shifting, it was men, still, who occupied the public domain and were expected to travel to war, on affairs of state, or on business; women were expected to stay safely out of sight, guarding—above all—their virtue (Norton Topics Online, 2003-2005). In such a context, a vagabond male, or a vagabond couple, were tolerable—albeit on the margins of society—but a solitary, wandering woman was virtually unthinkable.

this interpretation is helpful in its own way, it does not seem to encompass the full significance of The Wandering Jew as homeless and a wanderer. Stepping into a psychoanalytic frame of reference once again, a question suggests itself: What is the psychological significance of a man who is totally unattached, who is homeless and belongs nowhere? And a second: What is the significance of his ceaselessly roaming the countryside, of his being a “wanderer” as opposed to something else (say, a hermit)? Discussion of these two questions will be taken separately.

#### **4.4.3.2 The homeless man—a psychoanalytic perspective**

Almost a century before John Bowlby’s *Attachment*, William James observed, “The great source of terror to infancy is solitude” (1890, p. 418). Like Freud, Bowlby had one foot in ethology and the other in psychoanalysis, yet his attachment theory represents a significant departure from both Freud and Klein (Rutter, 1995, p. 560). Freud’s infant, says Bowlby, is driven to seek anaclitic pleasure<sup>147</sup>, whereas the “attachment infant” is born to seek relationship with the primary caregiver (1970, pp. 270-1). The human infant is highly vulnerable for a relatively long period, and the purpose of attachment behaviour is survival (Bowlby, 1970, pp. 223-8). If protection from predation is the function of attachment behaviour, then fear of the loss of the primary attachment figure is what lies at the heart of the need to attach, says Bowlby (1973, chaps. 5-12). As in psychoanalysis, one of the main tenets of attachment theory is that patterns of attachment established in infancy and childhood persist throughout life (Bowlby, 1970, p. 350)—not only cognitive components, but affect as well (and, perhaps, especially so).<sup>148</sup> The bulk of Bowlby’s career consisted of observing and detailing various styles of attachment, and the psychological consequences of various degrees of insecure primal attachment (Bowlby, 1973, 1980). However, attachment behaviour is not only in one direction (i.e., from the infant towards the mother). Bowlby observed that:

Not only are babies biased to behave in special ways towards humans, but mothers are also biased to behave in special ways towards babies...And the more each experience the other in these interactions the stronger do the relevant responses of each other tend to become. In this reciprocal way early interaction between mother

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<sup>147</sup> As exemplified by the infant at the breast (Colman, 2001, p. 32).

<sup>148</sup> Not infrequently, say West and Sheldon-Keller (writing from an attachment perspective), a single affect may be central to an individual’s model of attachment throughout life (1994, p. 51).

and baby is begun. (Bowlby, 1970, p. 272)

D.W. Winnicott, a colleague of Bowlby, made similar observations, and reached much the same conclusions about the primacy and long-lasting effects of the mother-child relationship (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 42). His oft-quoted remark that “there is no such thing as a baby” represents what Monte and Sollod call “a landmark in...object relations” (2003, p. 289), putting the focus of childhood emotional development—contrary to orthodox Freudian theory—on what Winnicott termed the “nursing couple”: that is, a child in an adaptation enhancing relationship with a mother.<sup>149</sup> Today, the significance of the first close relationship(s) of the infant (as emphasised by Bowlby and Winnicott, and later by others such as Daniel Stern), not only for the sake of survival, but in laying down a primal pattern of human relationship-seeking for the rest of life, seems to be widely understood and accepted (Rutter, 1995, p. 551).<sup>150</sup>

To return now to the idea that The Wandering Jew is a person who, because of his affront to Christ, has been compelled<sup>151</sup> to separate from his family, to leave his home, and to wander unattached, never belonging anywhere or to anyone, and “forever”: this would seem to be a horrific idea, even in terms of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.<sup>152</sup> But set against the sort of psychological backdrop provided by attachment theory, the idea becomes an order of magnitude more significant. The idea of being unattached, to anyone, anywhere,

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<sup>149</sup> Freud, with his “biology is destiny” view of gender construction (and his sexism), Nancy Chodorow contends (1979, p. 65), totally overlooked the pre-oedipal years, and that differentiation does not happen in a vacuum; it happens “*in relation to*...whomever is the child’s primary caretaker” (Chodorow, 1979, p. 54, author’s emphasis). It lies outside the scope of this study, but Chodorow’s main point is that gender differences are constructed because the primary parent in contemporary capitalist society (her analysis is Marxist) is almost always the mother, and that the oedipal processes Freud describes are simply an age-appropriate enactment of perceived gender differences long since internalised. The reproduction of mothering is a central and constituting element in the social organisation and reproduction of gender, she contends, and occurs through social structurally induced psychological processes (Chodorow, 1978).

<sup>150</sup> Rutter’s contention that “attachment ideas have come to dominate writings on relationships and social development in adult life...as well as in childhood” (1995, p. 550) seems borne out by the fact that Bowlby continues to be cited extensively in, e.g., contemporary educational theory (e.g., Drewery & Bird, 2004; Smith, 1998).

<sup>151</sup> That The Wandering Jew had no choice over his role needs to be emphasised. His wandering does not imply that he enjoyed a freedom to roam, that he made the best of things and became some sort of tourist or adventurer. He was never to stay anywhere long or to return home. It was a non-negotiable punishment that he was never again to belong anywhere or to anyone. The legend calls his state a “vale of sorrow”.

<sup>152</sup> Abraham Maslow conceptualised a hierarchy of needs: needs higher in the scale cannot emerge until lower ones have first been satisfied (Drewery & Bird, 2004, fig. 11.2). In Maslow’s hierarchy, the need for security and to belong are only a step or two above basic physiological needs such as food, water and sleep. The essentialist dimensions of his theory have since been seriously critiqued. Nevertheless, “Maslow’s basic idea that people are motivated by needs appears to be well accepted” (Drewery & Bird, 2004, p. 281; Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 460-1).

forever, is not just a challenge to everyday survival, it has deep and terrible unconscious resonances with primal fears of separation, abandonment, loss and potential oblivion, all having—literally—the feel of life or death about them. It would be anachronistic to suggest that the authors of the legend had this sort of psychological understanding of the significance of The Wandering Jew’s eternal, unattached status, but it would seem safe to deduce that this aspect of the way the character is constructed is far from arbitrary. At an unconscious level at least, the authors (and most hearers) would understand the horrific nature of The Wandering Jew’s punishment—tapping, as it does, into the sorts of universal, unconscious memories discussed above.

#### **4.4.3.3 The wanderer—a psychoanalytic perspective**

Related to The Wandering Jew’s lack of “attachment” to anybody or any place, is the central theme in the legend of the “wanderer” role he is obliged to take on. The socio-cultural explanatory function of this aspect of the legend has already been noted, but what might psychological theory have to contribute to a better understanding of this particular aspect of how he is constructed?

Ian Hacking says that “there have been sudden and inexplicable flights, often by unhappy people, from time immemorial” (1996, p. 427) so, presumably, the phenomenon was well known to authors of the legend, as to almost everyone, even though the behaviour did not become medicalised until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and even then not everywhere (see 3.3.4 below). So is there evidence (within the legend) that the “wandering” aspect of The Wandering Jew construction might have been informed at all by knowledge of what came to be called, medically, “dissociative fugue”?

For a start, it needs to be acknowledged that the incidence of dissociative fugue appears low,<sup>153</sup> hence accounts of fugue are rare and often sketchy (Venn, 1984, p. 429), and fugue is the least studied of the all dissociative disorders (Coons, 1999, p. 881). The result is that there is no great body of information on the subject. There are, however, well-

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<sup>153</sup> A prevalence rate of 0.2% for dissociative fugue has been reported in the general population (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 524). Coons, however, wonders if, like other dissociative disorders, dissociative fugue may not be as rare as once thought (Coons, 1999, p. 885).

established diagnostic criteria for dissociative fugue.<sup>154</sup> Single events of fugue, and in adults rather than children, are the most commonly reported (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 525), although another medical source says fugue states can last for “days, months or years” (Emily, 2005, December 3). The “prototypical fugueur” is a man, and the “prototypical multiple” (i.e., person diagnosed as having multiple personalities) is a woman, says Hacking, although both he and Coons—who makes the same observation (1999, p. 881)—warn that there are reasons for this that have little to do with gender, *per se* (Hacking, 1996, p. 429). The psychological community these days includes fugue among a range of dissociative mechanisms, which are characterised as being typical of the defensive and adaptive processes of hysterical personalities. Hysterically structured people, says McWilliams (1994, p. 307), have a surfeit of unconscious anxiety, guilt and shame. As with other symptoms typically associated with dissociation, the psychoanalytic view is that fugue can be a way of escaping either unbearable pain or terror (or both). Erwin Stengel finds the loss of a parent of the opposite sex striking in fugueurs, and wonders if part of the unconscious meaning of fugue lies in the subject trying to find the missing parent (1941, pp. 591, 593).

In most aspects, the symptomatic “wandering” of dissociative fugue is there in the behaviour of The Wandering Jew. While DSM-IV understands fugue typically to be a one-off event of finite duration, years on end of wandering is also medically reported. The high levels of guilt and shame that McWilliams says commonly underlie the behaviour of those who might employ dissociative fugue as a defence certainly fit with the aetiology of the wandering of The Wandering Jew, as does the idea of wandering as an attempt to escape the horror of what he has done (his affront to Christ). Connections between the behaviour of The Wandering Jew and what came to be classified as dissociative fugue may have been known to those who put the legend together (although not, of course, understood in medical terms), as might Stengel’s idea that fugueurs seem sometimes to be searching for “someone”, like a parent or some sort of authority figure. If Stengel is correct, then this may indicate a connection with some of the theological themes embedded in the story. The

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<sup>154</sup> Diagnostic criteria for 300.13 dissociative fugue according to DSM-IV are (A) The predominant disturbance is sudden, unexpected travel away from home or one’s customary place of work, with inability to recall one’s past; (B) Confusion about personal identity or assumption of a new identity (partial or complete); (C) The disturbance does not occur exclusively during the course of Dissociative Identity Disorder and is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., temporal lobe epilepsy); (D) The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 526).

Wandering Jew is wandering until Judgement Day, when, according to Christian doctrine, along with the rest of humanity, he will again meet Christ. But in his particular case it will be the same Christ whom he alienated himself from aeons earlier. Again in conventional doctrinal terms, Christ is the same as “God the Father”, so in a sense The Wandering Jew wanders in the hope and expectation of being reunited with the father figure that was lost to him so long ago. Storytellers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century would certainly not have understood The Wandering Jew’s wanderings in terms of oedipal theory, but lost/found, father/son themes—literally and/or metaphorically interpreted—have long been a staple of the Judeo-Christian storytelling tradition (e.g., the so-called Parable of the Prodigal Son).<sup>155</sup>

All that said, it seems not possible to gain the sort of additional psychological insight into the “wandering” aspect of The Wandering Jew as was obtained looking, from a psychoanalytic perspective, at his being unattached (4.4.3.2, above). However, there are certainly psychological aspects of fugue that are consonant with the rest of The Wandering Jew’s story, and which make a modest contribution to what might additionally be understood about the meaning of his wandering.

#### **4.4.3.4 The universal “non-fitting” Jew**

Like the irrationality and the corporealisation of anti-Jewishness, the construction of Jews as congenitally pathological wanderers, as “not belonging” anywhere, as being somehow “unfitting” into the rest of humanity, seems to be yet another distinctive, and almost universal, feature of Jews constructed as other. An example is the way some in the 19<sup>th</sup> century medical profession, informed on the one hand by the newly emerging field of mental science and, on the other, by the legend of The Wandering Jew, constructed a new stereotype of Jews as “pathological wanderers”.

As the word “fugue”<sup>156</sup> suggests, it was the French who were among the first to take a medical interest in “wandering” sorts of behaviour.<sup>157</sup> Around 1875 a new description

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<sup>155</sup> Lk 14:11-32.

<sup>156</sup> The origin of the word is French, from the Latin *fugere* to flee (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003, p. 698). Although there is a basic idea of some sort of “wandering”, a wide variety of terms incorporating the word “fugue”, meaning different things, has been used over the years. There are any number of histories (e.g. Hacking, 1996; Stengel, 1943, pp. 224-4), and the terminology is still changing. The DSM-III term “psychogenic fugue”, e.g., has become “dissociative fugue” in DSM-IV (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 523). The latter term is the one used almost universally in the contemporary literature.

emerged within psychiatric nosology of “travelling insanity” (Goldstein, 1985, p. 537). This newly recognised pathology was seen to be relevant to contemporary issues, such as military desertion, “vagabondage”,<sup>158</sup> and concern about the large numbers of Russian Jewish refugees in France at the time. Given the tendency of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French medical profession to pathologise Jews,<sup>159</sup> and an antisemitic, anti-Dreyfusard press (Hacking, 1996, p. 441), it was almost inevitable that “wandering” soon became identified as a characteristically Jewish psychopathology, and so The Wandering Jew entered psychiatric literature in the form of an 1887 case study (reproduced in Hacking, 1998, pp. 135-194). The connection was, apparently, introduced almost as a humorous aside (Goldstein, 1985, pp. 539-540). But however it was intended, the idea was picked up with alacrity and developed by the antisemitic Charcot (Goldstein, 1985, p. 540). The ultimate step in this psychiatric theoretical development was by one of Charcot’s students, Henri Meige (1893). Jewish wandering was, Meige suggested, an overdetermined phenomenon, at once racial, epidemiological and social in nature. This morbid and insatiable need for travel was, furthermore, encouraged and sustained by the social organisation of world Jewry. Finally, Jewish pathology not only tainted the act of travel, it also furnished the object of such travel: the search for a cure for some ill-defined nervous ailment (Goldstein, 1985, p. 541). In Meige’s view, the legend of The Wandering Jew was a pre-scientific explanation of what had become an established medical fact—that Jews are typically afflicted with a travelling neurosis (Goldstein, 1985, p. 542). These restless wanderings of the Jews, he seemed to be saying, was not the result of some sort of supernatural punishment, but was natural by virtue of their strong propensity to nervous illness. Jews were to be considered not so much an impious people, as a constitutionally defective one (Goldstein, 1985, p. 543). It almost goes without saying that such interpretations of Jewish “wandering” were not only sociologically naïve in the extreme but, more to the point, were largely informed by antisemitic prejudice,

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<sup>157</sup> Ian Hacking, in his extensive essay on how fugue became a medical entity, points out that fugue came into existence primarily by being socially defined, rather than “discovered” in any scientific sense. For example, compared with France, Germany and Russia, there was little interest in fugue in Britain and North America. “America was full of men in flight, but fugue was never medicalized” (Hacking, 1996, p. 429).

<sup>158</sup> A term reflecting bourgeois anxiety at the droves of uprooted French rural smallholders forced off the land and roaming the countryside due to a slump in commodity prices (Goldstein, 1985, p. 538).

<sup>159</sup> The aetiology and extent of French psychiatric antisemitism is well detailed elsewhere (Goldstein, 1985; Hacking, 1998). But, e.g., Charcot—the ultimate authority at the time on psychiatric science for both laypeople and the medical profession—regularly lectured on the “hereditary nervous disease” of the Jews (Goldstein, 1985, pp. 523, 536).

not science. The 19<sup>th</sup> century European medical profession's diagnosis of Jews in general as pathological wanderers can be understood as a new expression of an age-old prejudice characterising Jews as belonging nowhere. As already noted (chap. 2), in time this would become the Nazi stereotype of the Jew as the "rootless cosmopolitan", with no loyalty to the fatherland, and only a clannish sort of loyalty to his or her own Jewishness (Maccoby, 1972, p. 252).

Zygmunt Bauman compellingly argues that this particular form of anti-Jewish animosity is better understood as proteophobia,<sup>160</sup> rather than heterophobia—that is:

related not to something or someone disquieting through otherness and unfamiliarity, but to something or someone who does not fit the structure of the orderly world, does not fall easily into any of the established categories, emits therefore contradictory signals as to the proper conduct. (Bauman, 1998, p. 144)

With the dawn of modernity, Jews were, in one way, simply "an estate among the estates, a caste among the castes" and subject to the same relatively self-contained, autonomous and self-perpetuating social, cultural and economic conventions as everyone else (Bauman, 1998, p. 151). But what Jews entered modern times with, along with few others, was having been already cast by the church in the role of the "non-fitting" (Bauman, 1998, pp. 145-6).

What happened next, says Bauman, only corroborated the received wisdom:

The order modern Europe built was to be the nation-state order, and that involved political powers waging cultural crusades against ethnic minorities, regional customs and local dialects, so that the myth of national self-sameness could be made into the legitimizing formula of political powers. Into this Europe of nations, states, and nation-states, only Jews did not fit, having only gypsies for company. Jews were not an ethnic minority in any one of the nation-states, but dispersed all over the place. But neither were they locally residing members of a neighbouring nation. They were the epitome of incongruity: a non-national nation, and so cast a shadow on the fundamental principle of modern European order: that nationhood is the essence of human destiny. (Bauman, 1998, p. 153)

Any minority that refused to assimilate, says Clarke (2003, p. 82), became a target of hatred, of exclusion and ultimately of extermination, in a "rage" against difference that is characteristic of the "totalistic, dominating impulse of western civilization" (Jay, 1994, p.

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<sup>160</sup> Bauman appears to have coined this term, but gives no explanation in the work cited. The etymology is, at least in part, problematic. The *-phobia* affix is commonly understood as the excessive fear of something or someone. *Proteo* is not a common prefix but probably derives from *protean*: "tending or able to change frequently or easily" (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003, p. 1414).

243).<sup>161</sup> The stereotype that emerged in the middle ages (epitomised in, e.g., The Wandering Jew), but which had been inherited from Christian antiquity, and would be passed on to modernity (in, e.g., the *völkisch*<sup>162</sup> school of thought), was a perpetuation of the idea of Jews as:

rootless, soulless, materialistic, aggressive, ugly, weak, dishonest, unassimilable, shallow, loud, urban, internationalist, liberal, conspiratorial, evil, godless, competitive, abstract, insincere, cosmopolitan, sneaky, shrewd, lazy, usurious, opportunistic *and most of all alien*. (S. A. Gordon, 1984, my emphasis)

#### 4.4.3.5 Conclusion

As previously discussed, from a psychoanalytic perspective, there appears to be an unconscious-to-unconscious sort of communication of the anti-Jewish fears and anxieties of the early church to the church of today, which is analogous to the transference in an analytical situation. Given the context in which the church's sacred texts were set down—still in many ways tied to, but increasingly differentiating itself from, the synagogue—it seems self-evident that one of the chief anxieties of the age concerned “belonging”. Did one belong to church, or synagogue, or both? Was one still Jewish or not? Such dilemmas are clear in Paul's letters (Flannery, 1985, pp. 29-30; Wistrich, 1991, pp. 15-16). Three centuries later, fury that some Christians were still sometimes attending synagogue as well as church is understood to be part of the reason for John Chrysostom's particularly vituperative, anti-Jewish railings (Flannery, 1985, pp. 50-52; Wistrich, 1991, p. 8).

That The Wandering Jew, qua wanderer, has been such an enduring idea for nearly two millennia (rather than, to use the same example as above, some sort of hermit) seems testimony to the potency of the idea. A psychoanalytic perspective is that, while the time of the early church is long past, and the particular anxieties of that age with it, such fears lie latent, as a kind of invisible sub-plot within the church's sacred scriptures, to stir up deep and terrible resonances with unconscious, primal memories common to all, of fear of separation and potential oblivion. The pariah status of Jews was constructed early in the Christian imagination and has thrived, in various forms, for the last two thousand years, doubtless still informing the supersessionist fantasies of the church via unconscious

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<sup>161</sup> Jay is here interpreting “rage” against difference as the Frankfurt School's understanding of “the ultimate source of anti-Semitism” (1994, p. 243).

<sup>162</sup> See Gordon (1984), p. 25.

association which, this thesis argues, is one significant factor lying at the heart of stalled Jewish-Christian relations.

## **4.5 Covert themes**

As already mentioned both in the chapter on methodology, and in the introduction to this chapter, psychoanalysis has always had an interest in what is left untold in life stories (but which is conspicuous by its absence), and those things “almost there” in the text (by virtue of being hinted at or alluded to, rather than spoken overtly about). The three themes covered so far in this chapter I have characterised as “overt” because they appear so obvious in the legend. It seems hard to miss the fact that The Wandering Jew is portrayed as somehow both dead and alive, is supposedly real and not just some story character, and that his vocation is to wander, homeless for eternity. The following three themes, on the other hand, are classified as “covert” because they seem to me less obvious; they are only hinted at, or are implicit in the text, and require the sort of close attention to the “not so obvious” that, as has already been discussed, is commonly regarded as one of the distinctive features of psychoanalytic methodology.

### **4.5.1 Theme four—Sexualisation of Christian anti-Jewishness**

#### **4.5.1.1 Introduction**

To recollect (from the previous chapter), Anderson’s translation of the 1602 pamphlet version of the legend concludes thus:

What are we to think of this man? One may be free in his judgment. The works of God are wonderful and inscrutable, and as time goes on they will be more so, and more things hitherto hidden will be revealed, particularly...on the approaching Day of Judgment and end of the world...

Dated Schleswig, June 9, 1564

This man or Jew is said to have soles on his feet so thick that one can measure them with the thickness of two fingers across. They are as hard as horn because of his long walking and traveling. He is said to have been seen in Danzig in the year 1599.

This last, short paragraph attracts attention. First, because it looks like a postscript (an afterthought? something not quite proper?) and, secondly, there is a tentativeness about its tone not evident in the rest of the legend (twice: “He is *said to* have...”). No one, including

Anderson (1970), seems to have noted these oddities. Why is it outside the main text, and why does the writer seem to distance him or herself from the contents of this paragraph? On the surface, what is described is no less believable than anything else in the main body of the legend, so it is difficult to conclude that the editors positioned it as they did because they had difficulties with its authenticity. What might their reservations have been, then? The possibility is that reference to the “feet” of The Wandering Jew is sexual innuendo, and that it is placed where it is—after the main ending—in deference to the quasi-religious status of the legend. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, “feet” has long been understood as an indirect reference to the male genitals (E. F. Campbell, 1975, p. 121; Wolfson, 1992). For example, although some commentators remain coy about the idea, Ruth’s uncovering the “feet” of Boaz (Ruth 3:4, AV) is generally understood to be a Biblical euphemism for “penis” (Hubbard, 1988, p. 203; Laffey, 1989, p. 556).

Such an interpretation might seem idiosyncratic and strained—“wild”, in the language of those with methodological anxieties. First, it is true that the legend refers to the “soles of his feet”, not just to his feet. It is, however, not unusual for human body parts which are considered sexually suggestive to be referred to metonymically—that is indirectly, by some related attribute, rather than directly—for example “boner” or “hard on” instead of erect penis, or “pussy” instead of vulva (referring to its soft, hairy qualities, rather than to the organ directly). It could even be argued that such indirect references, ironically, tend to raise rather than diminish levels of sexual interest or arousal and, therefore, that reference to the state of the soles of The Wandering Jew’s feet, rather than cloaking what is intended, has the effect of further drawing attention to the possible sexual significance of this detail of the story.

Secondly, while little or nothing on the matter appears in the current literature, the sexual significance of The Wandering Jew’s “feet” does seem to have registered in the past. Despite most versions of the legend describing him as going barefoot, shoes allegedly worn by The Wandering Jew have been on display in various places, such as Ulm and Berne.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> The existence of these shoes conceivably links with the tradition (in the legend) that The Wandering Jew was originally a cobbler, and perhaps there is an implied bitter irony in the idea that, as part of his punishment, a man who made shoes for a living should have to spend eternity barefoot. Peter Stallybrass points out that, apart from possible sexual connotations discussed above, both “feet” and “shoemaker” carried associations in the early-modern period that would no longer be generally understood. Feet marked the presence of power: kissing the feet of another, or trampling another underfoot were ways of acknowledging and asserting power

There is no mention of how early these might have appeared, but given that they were on display in a museum in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, presumably they had already been around for some time (Baron, 1967, p. 181). There is, however, an important detail about these artifacts: the shoes were unusually large. Why should The Wandering Jew be thought to have had such large feet? Again, as far as can be ascertained, the commentators miss the significance of this. “It has long been suggested,” a BBC news article reports, “that various parts of a man’s body—his nose, hands or feet—could indicate penis size” (BBC News, 2002; see also Geller, 1992a, p. 248). The same article also says that this long-standing myth has been disproved by recent research conducted at the urology clinic of a London university hospital. But be that as it may, it is hard to imagine what else the large size of the shoes implied other than that The Wandering Jew had a big penis. Once again, it needs to be noted in passing that, with one notable exception—Jay Geller’s treatment (1992b) of Daniel Paul Schreber’s sexual fantasies about both himself (Schreber) and The Wandering Jew—the significance of the sexuality of The Wandering Jew remains unexamined in the extant literature.

Such an interpretation does not seem so “wild”, either, when one notes the increasing overtness of anti-Jewish psychosexual fantasy from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, as a result of the increased freedom of expression commonly associated with the shift from mediaeval to modern ways of thinking (Rose, 1990, p. 24).<sup>164</sup> Prior to the appearance of the legend, Jews were identified symbolically (tall hats, money bags, etc.), rather than physically, and only during the 17<sup>th</sup> century did the so-called “Jewish type” emerge (Geller, 1992a, p. 247). But by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the scholarly literature, as well as the popular oral culture of pre-revolutionary France (for example), broad generalisations about Jews were commonplace, says Goldstein (1985, p. 525), including assertions regarding “the libidinous proclivities of the Jew, the vulnerability of the Jewess to ‘nymphomania’, and the sexual precocity of their

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respectively (1997, pp. 314-5). And shoemakers, for reasons that Stallybrass does not make altogether clear, “were the leading popular philosophers and radical politicians of early modern Europe... into the era of early industrialism” (1997, p. 319). What sort of feelings would some of the original hearers of the legend have had at the idea that a shoemaker had been brought low? *Schadenfreude* perhaps.

<sup>164</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is often understood to epitomise this radical shift in thinking. While Nietzsche’s remarks on Jews are contradictory (Robertson, 1998, p. 28), he was especially significant in shaping a new cultural and political context in his call for the remasculinisation of Europe, and a new German empire defined in terms of heroic virility, which, he believed, had become “feminized and Judaized”. This new context gave meaning to a new antisemitic discourse representing the male Jew as essentially effeminate, and key sexual stereotypes applied to Jews: viz., “the eroticized Jewish woman and the lecherous Jewish man” (Cheyette & Marcus, 1998a, pp. 3-4).

offspring.” A century later, Guillaume Apollinaire’s short story about The Wandering Jew includes the following fantasy: “His circumcised penis reminded me of a knotty tree trunk, or a redskin’s totem pole, striped with burnt sienna, scarlet and the dark violet of stormy skies” (Apollinaire, 1910/1967, p. 12).

However, as is pointed out in a huge extant literature, by the time Apollinaire was writing (late-19<sup>th</sup> century), such grotesque sexual inscriptions were only part of a larger picture, as anti-Jewish discourse included a whole complex of inter-related, socio-cultural constructions around ideas including gender, madness, disease, circumcision, and race, as well as sex. “By the mid [19<sup>th</sup>] century,” says Gilman (1994, p. 370), “being black, being Jewish, being diseased, and being ‘ugly’ came to be inexorably linked.” The idea that Jews were “black” derived from 19<sup>th</sup> century theories of race (already touched upon in the introduction) that regarded dark-skinned people as inferior to white-skinned, commonly in terms of being mentally deficient (Gilman, 1985, p.p. 148-9), and sexually voracious (Gilman, 1985, p. 109). “Jews were quite literally seen as black,” says Gilman (1994, p. 372). “Adam Gurowski, a Polish noble, ‘took every light-colored mulatto for a Jew’ when he first arrived in the United States in the 1850s.”

However, under the increasing weight of empirical evidence to the contrary (i.e., that not all Jews are, literally, dark-skinned), by the late-19<sup>th</sup> century the focus in anti-Jewish discourse had shifted from skin colour to “the Jewish nose” (Silberstein, 1994, p. 24). Around the same time, by association, it became understood that Jews supposedly had not only a distinctive shape and size of nose (which betrayed their Jewishness and sexual lasciviousness), they also had a distinctive smell: *foetor judaicus*. Both these constructions barely hide the underlying sexual interest: the nose because its protruding from the middle of the face is analogous to the shape and position of the penis further down the body (Geller, 1992a, p. 248), and smell, according to Gilman (1993, p. 153), because of “the centrality of olfactory impressions in the debates about the nature of human sexual attraction (from Darwin on)” (see also Geller, 1992a, p. 251).

As already seen in Meige’s construal of Jewish “pathological wandering” (3.3.4 above), with the rise of medical science during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the basis for the representation of Jews shifted from theology to pathology (Geller, 1992a, p. 256). Jews, like women, were pre-disposed to mental illness—women because they were biologically

inferior to men; Jews due to their in-breeding (Gilman, 1993, p. 113). Jews, according to the racial stereotype, were particularly disease prone, and Jewish women were nymphomaniacal, so the disease-disseminating prostitute was frequently represented as Jewish. In popular thinking, there was also a connection between the circumcised penis and syphilis: “The damaged penis represented the potential ravages of sexually transmitted disease” (Gilman, 1993, pp. 60-61). With constructions like these as a framework, concern over a seeming epidemic of venereal disease rotting bourgeois society from the core (Geller, 1992b, pp. 229-232) was projected onto Jews. Citing a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century document, Geller says that syphilis, “this world-wide, prostitute-borne disease”, was itself characterised as a Wandering Jew, “never wearying and traveling down the ages” (1992b, p. 253), and the term *Judenpest*, he notes, became a synonym for syphilis (1992b, p. 254). Related images of Jews as slimy and disgusting are ubiquitous in the period, says Nussbaum, even making their way into fairy tales for children (2004, p. 110).

Just as 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-Jewishness was driven, in part, by syphilophobia, so too were constructions of Jewish males as “effeminate” informed by a new medical orthodoxy, as well as profound anxieties about how contemporary women’s movements were tending to de-stabilise traditional gender roles (Robertson, 1998, p. 23). The clitoris was commonly regarded as a truncated penis. A circumcised penis was also regarded as truncated. Logically, then, Jewish males were “feminine” (Gilman, 1993, p. 38), and this supposedly compromised masculinity became one of the defining qualities of the Jewish male (Gilman, 1995, p. 100).<sup>165</sup> Such ideas, already around in the late nineteenth century, became extremely influential in the wake of the devastation of World War I, says Nussbaum.

No doubt propelled by a fear of death and disintegration that could not help making itself powerfully felt at that time, many Germans projected onto Jews, as well as women, misogynistic disgust-properties that they both feared and loathed. The clean safe hardness of the true German man...was standardly contrasted with female-Jewish-communistic, stench, and muck. (Nussbaum, 2004, p. 108)

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<sup>165</sup> Gilman points out that it was not the case that the Jewish male was simply regarded as “feminine”. “He is not quite a man, and certainly not a woman (that is, a protected potential mother). He is constructed as a “third sex”, thus separated from the representation of masculinity and femininity” (1995, p. 100). Biberman’s recent thesis (2004) argues at length that Renaissance texts show evidence of a shift of the central antisemitic image from Jew-Devil to Jew-Sissy.

#### 4.5.1.2 Sex and libido—a psychoanalytic perspective

As already noted, it is nowadays understood that the anti-Jewishness which emerged with the evolution of modernity became located in, not just one, but a whole cluster of inter-related ideas. While this is evidently the case, there is, yet, one unifying theme: sex. There is a sexual component to almost every way discussed above in which Jews are constructed in the anti-Jewish imagination: with their being “black”, with their having feet and noses that advertise Jewish sexuality, with their exuding a distinctive (sexual) smell, with the idea that Jewish women are nymphomaniac, men effeminate (and yet sexually predatory), and that Jews of both sexes are particularly prolific bearers of sexually transmitted disease.

Having said that all this appears to be about sex, a modification is required because in psychoanalytic thinking sex is regarded as a developmentally late, and rather more particular, expression of something far more fundamental: libido. It is in concepts of the latter that it might be understood why sexuality, of all things, should figure almost universally in constructions of the Jewish other.

The story of why sexuality (broadly understood) looms so large in psychoanalytic discourse is well documented (e.g., Freud, 1940, pp. 152-6; Mitchell & Black, 1995, pp. 10-22; Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 43-65). In brief, in Freud’s day the general assumption was that children, left to themselves, were sexually innocent. His growing conviction that adult neuroses commonly had their origins in experiences of infancy or childhood and, furthermore, that these incidents had to do with sexuality, surprised Freud himself, and earned him considerable criticism from his medical colleagues.<sup>166</sup> In the end, Freud concluded that what he was dealing with in his patients were, by and large, memories of childhood fantasies of sexual experiences, rather than realities.<sup>167</sup> Freud became convinced that an intensely conflictual sexuality dominates the childhood not only of future neurotics,

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<sup>166</sup> Freud reports “innocently” addressing a meeting of the Vienna Society for Psychiatry and Neurology, expecting that his discoveries would be greeted “by the interest and recognition of my colleagues.” “But the silence my communications were met with, the void which formed itself about me, the hints that were conveyed to me,” Freud continues, “gradually made me realize that assertions on the part played by sexuality in the aetiology of the neuroses cannot count upon meeting with the same kind of treatment as other communications” (Freud, 1924b, p. 21).

<sup>167</sup> Freud’s abandoning of his “seduction hypothesis” (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 43-5) earned criticism from Jeffrey Masson (1984) which has been highly influential, as (inter alia) it alleges Freud tried to cover up the extent of actual child abuse that was going on at the time. This, in turn, has generated critiques of Masson and defences of Freud (e.g., McWilliams, 1994, p. 305; Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 46-8). See Mitchell and Black (pp. 211-212) for a brief but cogent overview of what they call the “fantasy-trauma dialectic”.

but of us all. This sexuality is not, in the beginning, genitally focussed as it becomes around puberty, but rather is located “in a diffused sensuality...in many different body parts, stimulated through the many different activities of the first years of life” (Mitchell & Black, 1995, pp. 13-14). The impulses of childhood sexuality survive into adulthood in various disguises. Some are allowed indirect expression via sublimation (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 142-3), but many infantile sexual experiences are too objectionable to the socialised adult mind, and elaborate defences are built around them to keep them repressed (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 14). The defences are far from perfect, however—especially under conditions of stress—and the Freudian view is that everyone, to a greater or lesser extent, exhibits neuroses that have their aetiology in defended memories of both real and fantasised childhood sexual experiences.

In Freud’s view, this diffuse, primal sexual energy, that he called “libido” (McWilliams, 1994, p. 140), is the central, primary motivation energising human life and giving it direction. It is somewhere in the white-water of this particular tributary of unconscious thought and feeling that we might find a clue as to why there is disingenuous reference to The Wandering Jew’s “feet” in the legend, and why later imaginings about Jews and Judaism are so frequently larded with graphic and bizarre sexual fantasy. Just as some of our most powerful, primordial memories unconsciously inform us that what is most “real” is *embodied* reality (4.4.2, above), so we understand that “being alive” epitomises what it is to be human. However, not just being alive in some passive sort of way, but being alive with an urgent, life-or-death, “will to live” feel about it; with the sort of energising, all-consuming wonderment often associated with the first flowering of sexual passion, and with the powerful sense of drive and commitment felt towards some enterprise or cause which one might engage with in later life.

Much of the extant literature (e.g., Gilman)—perhaps understandably, given some of the almost indescribably awful, fantastical, sexual images invented over the ages—is given over to analysing the underlying fears and anxieties resident in those possessed of this particular anti-Jewish turn of mind. While such images can, and do, tell a lot about some of the particular fears and anxieties underlying anti-Jewishness, equally important is what they collectively have to say about what—almost completely out of awareness—powers, drives, and energises much anti-Jewishness. The seemingly disproportionate rage—with its feel of

raw, primitive sexuality—that is characteristic of so much anti-Jewishness, in the Freudian view, has the same libidinal energy source that in infancy drives us with every fibre of our being to be alive and stay alive, whatever the threat, come what may. This, I would argue, is the significance of the legend's inclusion of reference to The Wandering Jew's feet/penis. The significance lies not only—and probably not primarily—in what particular *ideas* might be stimulated in the mind of the hearer about The Wandering Jew's penis. *Mere mention* of The Wandering Jew's penis (even in a glancing sort of way, as in the case of the legend), in the psychoanalytic view, by unconscious association, invests the story with a whole new dimension the minute it taps into the underground reservoir of primitive-libidinal, sexual energy.

#### **4.5.1.3 Conclusion**

As should by now be perfectly clear, to understand the power of contemporary anti-Jewishness to undermine the church's best (if intermittent) intentions towards better Jewish-Christian relations, it is not necessary to conceive of congregations of Christian worshippers sitting in church on a Sunday morning, entertaining lurid sexual fantasies about Jews and Judaism. To do so would be to misunderstand completely the psychoanalytic view of the role of sex—or, more generally, libido—in human affairs. To recollect yet again, the fears and anxieties lying behind the Christian anti-Jewish texts regularly performed in church, by unconscious association—primarily affective in nature—connect with various primal fears and anxieties of parishioners, to repeatedly stir up and reinforce traditional Christian anti-Jewish imaginings. All done, largely out of awareness. What the *sexual* content of anti-Jewish fantasy—covert in the legend, overt in later centuries—most importantly points towards is the libidinal power and the passion with which these particular fantasies are invested and by which they are maintained, thus (inter alia) making them so difficult to simply educate against.

#### **4.5.2 Theme five—Ambivalence and Christian anti-Jewishness**

##### **4.5.2.1 Introduction**

Most commentators note that stories about The Wandering Jew are not always tragic, and that he is not always portrayed unattractively. Even parts of the description of The

Wandering Jew in the 1602 pamphlet version, says Maccoby, could be interpreted at times as “dignified” (1972, p. 238). However, it was not until the “Romantic” period of English literature<sup>168</sup> (late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) that positive interpretations (or rather, a sort of ambivalence<sup>169</sup>) regarding The Wandering Jew came into sharper focus, spurred by the democratic spirit of the period, and significant moves towards Jewish emancipation (Belchem & Price, 1994, pp. 318-320, 534-6). This was the classic era of the “Gothic double”, of a type of literary ambivalence where, typically, a human monster hid behind a mask of innocence (Strengell, 2003). This period was when Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* was written (1818), and The Wandering Jew fitted right in.<sup>170</sup> Shelley’s father—one of the most popular novelists of the Romantic era—wrote a Wandering Jew type of tale (*St. Leon*) around the same time (University of Arizona Library, 2003). Both *Frankenstein*’s monster and The Wandering Jew, in a way typical of the genre, are simultaneously terrifying and fascinating. Freud used a similar character from another Gothic text—E.T.A. Hoffman’s (1816) *The Sand-Man*—to analyse in his monograph *das Unheimliche*, “The Uncanny” (Freud, 1919). In the following example, the appearance of The Wandering Jew in a notoriously lurid Gothic novel of the era, appears saturated with ambivalence:

He was a Man of majestic presence: His countenance was strongly marked, and his eyes were large, black and sparkling: Yet there was something in his look, which the moment that I saw him, inspired me with a secret awe, not to say horror... His countenance wore the marks of a profound melancholy; his step was slow, and his manner grave, stately and solemn.  
(Mathew Gregory Lewis, 1795, quoted in Felsenstein, 1995, p. 84)

Many writers of the period consciously idealise The Wandering Jew, says Felsenstein (1995, p. 88). For example, Eugene Sue’s *Le Juif Errant*, “the most famous Ahasverus story of the [19<sup>th</sup>] century” (Mosse, 2000, p. 196), makes him a hero who foils a Jesuit conspiracy. But reinterpreting The Wandering Jew in such ways seems to have been no more than a passing literary fashion (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 212), and there is no evidence that writers such as Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Coleridge, all of whom interpreted The Wandering

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<sup>168</sup> See chap. 2, footnote 82.

<sup>169</sup> Ambivalence can be defined as “the coexistence in one person of two emotions, desires, beliefs or behavioral tendencies” (Colman, 2001, p. 28).

<sup>170</sup> Matthew Biberman says, furthermore, that “it is clear that *Frankenstein*’s pages are crowded with clues that can be read... as pointing to the process that would stabilize the Creature’s [i.e., *Frankenstein*’s monster] identity as a Jew” (2004, p. 158). Biberman finds this element “considerably strengthened” when Shelley revised the 1818 first edition for its reissue in 1831.

Jew positively to varying degrees (Rose, 1990, p. 25), wished to promote more liberal attitudes towards Jews.

However, even if only a passing literary phase, Romantic interpretations of the legend are important for drawing attention to what turns out to be a number of ambivalences inherent in the legend. First, there is the man's religious status. Clearly he is Jewish—he is, after all, “The Wandering Jew”—but his confession “...the Lord Christ...” implies that he is Christian. Maccoby is quite certain that he is “now a convinced and repentant Christian” (Maccoby, 1972, p. 237), but Felsenstein thinks it is more subtle than that. On the one hand, much of The Wandering Jew's behaviour (such as his zeal to convert, his fear of blaspheming, and his refusal to accept money for himself) were, at the time, popularly thought to be distinctly Christian and distinctly un-Jewish. “Yet in his purgatorial state of wandering,” concludes Felsenstein, “his Otherness as a Jew is perpetually reaffirmed” (1995, p. 61).

Secondly, the legend says he was originally a Jew from Jerusalem, but the description of his clothing is not typical of that part of the world, rather of Eastern Europe. This somewhat obvious anomaly—although uncommented upon in the literature—is possibly best understood as conveying a sense of the exotic, while remaining recognisable to the audience. That is, he is neither friend, nor enemy, but stranger,<sup>171</sup> or “foreign”. Ideas about “foreignness” are characteristically ambivalent (Said, 1979), and would have been heightened at the time of the legend by, on the one hand, a fascination fuelled by the explosion of European exploration over the previous century but, on the other, anxiety over the flood of Jewish immigration into western Europe from further east.

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<sup>171</sup> Gothic interpretations of The Wandering Jew (along with other Gothic characters like Frankenstein's monster, and The Sand-Man), share characteristics with the “stranger” as discussed by Bauman (1990, chap. 3; 1991, chap. 2) and Kristeva (1991), which Freud (1919) talked about in terms of *das Heimliche/das Unheimliche*, (the homely-familiar/the unhomely-unfamiliar)—usually translated as “The Uncanny”. The uncanniness of what at first appears new or alien, lies in its unconscious familiarity, and the sense that “something which ought to have remained hidden...has come to light” (Freud, 1919, p. 241). In a Kleinian sense, adds Clarke, the source of *das Unheimliche* is relational, rather than biological. “The racial ‘other’ is constructed in phantasy [unconscious fantasy] through ignorance, projected into others through fear, recognised in others as familiar, and experienced by us as *uncanny*” (2003, p. 174, author's emphasis). Bauman's idea of the “stranger”, who lives both in our psyche and our community, illustrates well the social manifestation of unconscious fantasies of the uncanny other, says Clarke. “They the stranger [Jews, gypsies, etc.], represent all our fears of chaos, of displacement, and represent a threat to our psychic stability” (2003, p. 172). The task, then, says Kristeva, is to recognise our own uncanny strangeness and foreignness within, for then we are all foreigners, and thus there are no foreigners (1991, p. 192).

Thirdly, a number of apparently straightforward physical inscriptions turn out to be far from that upon closer examination. His hair is described as long, which is suggestive of great age, or that he never stayed in one place long enough to have it cut, or perhaps even that he had got beyond caring about his appearance. But other meanings are possible. At the time (and for the rest of the 17<sup>th</sup> century), fashionable men (especially those associated with court—e.g., the Cavaliers) wore their hair long. However, religiously conservative men kept their hair shorter—protestant clergy at shoulder length, Puritans even shorter (hence the derogatory epithet “Roundheads”). To recollect (from chap. 2), the legend appealed mainly to protestants in Britain, but to both protestants and Catholics in Europe (albeit for different reasons). So what did the long hair of The Wandering Jew signify? The story itself does not say, and none of the commentators pick it up. Given the range of possible contemporary meanings, it is likely to have been understood ambivalently.

As well as long hair, The Wandering Jew wore threadbare clothing (apparently inadequate for the time of year). Anderson ventures that the appearance of The Wandering Jew could be interpreted as symbolic of “the Wanderer’s tattered spiritual status”, or, he says, it could be interpreted positively, as the appearance of a classic religious aesthete (1970, pp. 47-9). But he does not make the connection between these two possibilities, and does not see the inherent ambivalence. Maccoby is one who does understand that there has long been a fundamental Christian ambivalence towards Jews, and wonders if the very success of Christians in humiliating Jews in reality “led to a need for a more reverential image in the world of fantasy” (1972, p. 238-9).<sup>172</sup>

Finally (among this collection of physical attributes), and so prosaic it could almost be overlooked, this man is described as having been unusually tall—one of the main reasons he attracted attention to himself. Only Maccoby, it seems, ventures an opinion on this: “The description of him as tall and stately, with a grave, sad expression, reinforced [an] impression of dignity” (Maccoby, 1972, p. 238). Certainly “there is a pervasive social attitude which associates tallness with positive characteristics” (Jackson & Ervin, 1992, p. 433; Stabler, Whitt, Moreault, D’Ercole, & Underwood, 1980, p. 743), and that women unconsciously select tall men because it supposedly suggests that a man like this “either has

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<sup>172</sup> Nancy McWilliams, in a discussion of the secondary defensive process known as “reaction formation”, says that this is a favoured defence in those in which hostile feelings are of paramount importance, but which are experienced as being in danger of getting out of hand.

good genes or comes from a wealthy background” (BBC News, 2000). But such positive interpretations are not all that are possible. Taken together with the other descriptive elements of the character, might not his “tallness” be talking about something frightening: a monstrous, looming, dominating, overshadowing presence? Perhaps this uncertainty of meaning signals yet another ambivalence inscribed upon the body of The Wandering Jew.

To close this list of ambivalences, reference needs to be made again to the idea that The Wandering Jew is somehow both alive and dead. In their discussion of the “zombie”, Jeff Collins and Bill Mayblin say:

Zombies are... inscriptions of the failure of the “life/death” opposition. They show where classificatory order breaks down: they mark the limits of order. The zombie is therefore fascinating and also horrific. (Collins & Mayblin, 1996, p. 21)

The response that might be evoked when confronting a “living corpse” (S. E. Shapiro, 1997, p. 63) like The Wandering Jew, or a zombie, is both emotional and ambivalent (“fascination and horror”), which hint at a strength of meaning, and unconscious mental processes which psychoanalytic theory might, once again, be able to shed light upon.

In summary, a number of ambivalences inscribed upon The Wandering Jew have been uncovered, which—if the paucity of critical comment in the extant literature is anything to go by—are not all that obvious in the text: abject/dignified, Jewish/Christian, oriental/occidental, tattered/aesthetic, stately/menacing, and alive/dead. Any methodological concern that this may be, once again, some sort of idiosyncratic (“wild”) interpretation might be allayed by the knowledge that anti-Jewish construction, generally, is widely understood to be saturated with ambivalence. Bauman goes so far as to say that Jews are constructed as “ambivalence incarnate” (1998, p. 145-6). As the example of The Wandering Jew shows, ambivalence is sufficiently significant in anti-Jewish construction to warrant attempting a better understanding of how this mass of contradictions defying common sense, nevertheless, “works”.

#### **4.5.2.2 Ambivalence—a psychoanalytic perspective**

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the idea of ambivalence requires a prior understanding of the primitive defensive process of “splitting”. Melanie Klein, early in her work with children, came to understand the central importance of various forms of splitting in the earliest defence manoeuvres of the ego (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 443). In Kleinian analysis,

the most important object in the world for the infant—initially the *only* object—is the breast (Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 238), which, Klein contends, “to the child becomes split into a good (gratifying) and bad (frustrating) breast” (1946/1986, p. 176). This “splitting of the object” (Colman, 2001, p. 700) is the result of the infant’s limited capacity to understand that the breast that is available whenever needed, is the same breast that is too hard to suck or, worse, does not come when the infant cries (Culbertson, 2000, p. 84). “Riveted in this way to a rudimentary hedonism”, continue Monte and Sollod, “infants gradually perceive a world populated by good objects (satisfying and pleasurable) and bad objects (frustrating and painful)” (2003, p. 238), and all the infant’s experiences—intrapsychic, interpsychic, real and fantasised (in the “global” sort of way discussed earlier in this chapter)—tend to conglomerate around these two highly differentiated poles.<sup>173</sup>

The primitive splitting of objects provides a template for later “splitting of the ego” (McWilliams, 1994, p. 112). Splitting of the ego (which is what is usually meant in the literature by “splitting”) is the process in which two attitudes to external reality can co-exist within the ego without influencing each other (Colman, 2001, p. 700). These days, it is generally understood to be interpersonal in nature. For example, children aged one to two years—Mahler’s “rapprochement phase” (Mahler et al., 1975, pp. 76-108)—may employ ego splitting to deal with a contradictory love object, such as a mother or father who is the all-provider, but sometimes (inevitably) frustrator, or (most painful of all) sometimes absent altogether. Under these circumstances the parent may be experienced alternately as all good and all bad, or the good parent may be internalised as an over-idealised object, and aggression towards the bad parent may be evacuated (i.e., externalised, projected) to the outside world (Mahler et al., 1975, pp. 292-3; Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 223-4). During normal development, the ego is gradually able to synthesise these part-objects, and see the parent “whole”.

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<sup>173</sup> Stern, it should be noted, has a slightly different perspective on all this. While conceding that infants do group interpersonal experiences into various hedonic clusters (1985, p. 253), he says there is no evidence of the dichotomization of infant experience, and the experiential isolation of the two types one from the other. “It seems very unlikely,” he says, “that the continuous gradient from weak to strong in pleasure and displeasure should be perceived discontinuously” (1985, p. 251, footnote 5).

In object relations terms, part objects that are typically representative of reality in infancy, with maturity, become replaced by whole objects<sup>174</sup> and object constancy.<sup>175</sup> Opposite attitudes to the one external reality, no longer held at great remove from each other, become resident together in whole, constant objects in the form of “ambivalence” (McWilliams, 1994, p. 113).<sup>176</sup> The ability to tolerate ambivalence, rather than feeling impelled to split, is regarded as a sign of psychological maturity and health. However, when trying to make sense of complex experiences in everyday life, especially when they are confusing or threatening, it needs to be emphasised that splitting remains a powerful and appealing way to cope (McWilliams, 1994, p. 113). As Gilman observes, splitting between good and bad is at “the root of all stereotypical perceptions” (1985, p. 17). Splitting, as the starting point of the defensive processes of projection and projective identification, is a subject to be returned to in the next chapter.

Splitting and ambivalence continue to coexist in mature psychological processes in often subtle and complex ways. A parapraxis—some apparently inadvertent and/or uncharacteristic remark or action—can be evidence of the “leak through” of some contrary attitude of which the person is not fully aware (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 131-2).<sup>177</sup> As a further example, Thomas C. Wilson found in his research that ostensibly benign Jewish

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<sup>174</sup> For example, the body part an infant at first relates to (in the case of a nursing mother, to the breast)—the “part object”—becomes displaced by the primary parent as a whole (‘whole object’) (Culbertson, 2000, p. 76).

<sup>175</sup> Object constancy is the tendency for an object to retain its perceived identity despite the absence of the object (Colman, 2001, p. 501). It is a term from the psychological sciences that is used analogously in object relations (see e.g., Mahler et al., 1975, p. 118), signifying, for example, the ability of a child to understand he or she is loved even though the parent is temporarily absent. In object relations theory, the “object” in this case is the child’s mental representation of (primarily) the affective component of the relationship with the parent.

<sup>176</sup> It was Freud who introduced the idea of ambivalence into psychoanalysis. Freud credits Bleuler with coining the term, and discusses it himself in terms of negative transference and affectionate transference being found side by side, often directed towards the same person. What led Freud to this view, say Westen and Gabbard, was not only his clinical observations of patients in conflictual turmoil, but “a remarkably modern modular view of the mind”—that it is comprised of relatively independent unconscious operations (1999, p. 81). Freud’s observation that latent mental processes inferred from analysis appeared to “enjoy a high degree of mutual independence” (Freud, 1915a, p. 170) appear to receive support from contemporary “parallel processing” models of the mind in cognitive science (Westen, 1998, p. 345-7). Both suggest a similar theoretical aetiology for ambivalence—see Westen and Gabbard (1999, pp. 81-2) for a further discussion of ambivalence in the light of both psycho-sociological research and psycho-neurological research. Ambivalence, “up to a point... seems to be normal,” Freud said (1912a, pp. 106-7), which would still be the general view of the psychoanalytic community.

<sup>177</sup> Westen and Gabbard cite research showing that “when conscious motives are activated, they guide behavior. When they are not, which is much of the time, unconscious motives guide behavior” (1999, p. 76).

stereotypes are very likely “to veil underlying anti-Semitism” (Wilson, 1996, p. 474).<sup>178</sup> To further complicate matters, because ambivalence is largely determined by unconscious mental processes, it will also tend to be very fluid in nature. Gilman observes that stereotypes, far from being rigid, are “inherently protean”. The boundary between what is felt to be “good” and “bad”, because it is imaginary, can shift in response to stress. “We can move from fearing to glorifying the Other” (Gilman, 1985, p. 18). As previously discussed, the essential anti-Jewishness of the legend was, in part, a product of high social anxiety at the time (e.g., “The Great Rumour”), which included elevated levels of hostility towards Jews. But, two hundred years later, at the height of the Romantic period, and with Jewish emancipation in full swing, the different context produced—at least for while—*philosemitic* versions of the legend. As Zygmunt Bauman observes, antisemitism and philosemitism are two sides of the same coin (1998, p. 143).<sup>179</sup> And history shows how easily the coin flips, and how labile Christian ambivalence towards Jews can be.

In the introduction to this thesis, it was noted how conflicted both the protestant and Roman Catholic arms of the contemporary, western church appear to be over Jewish-Christian relations (albeit for different reasons). In my experience, similar feelings can also be evident at the level of everyday parish ministry. For example, while most parishioners might happily acknowledge that Jesus was, indeed, a Jew, one often senses that this is tagged with an unspoken “yes, but...” implying that Jesus was, somehow, a “different” sort of Jew from all the rest.<sup>180</sup>

One reason for attitudes like this is that, almost from the beginning, the church’s construction of Jews was saturated with ambivalence. As already noted, in Zygmunt Bauman’s words, Jews are constructed as “ambivalence incarnate”. And ambivalence is ambivalence, he adds (and this is thoroughly consonant with psychoanalytic theory), mostly because it cannot be contemplated without ambivalent feeling:

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<sup>178</sup> Bauman would say (see below) that this is because philosemitism and antisemitism are two sides of the same coin: constructing Jews as other.

<sup>179</sup> The coin being “othering” of Jews in both negative *and* positive ways, which Bauman calls “allosemitism”, a term he borrows from Polish-Jewish literary historian and critic Artur Sandauer (Bauman, 1998, p. 143). *Allos* is Greek for “other”.

<sup>180</sup> Eugene J. Fisher recounts an occasion when, in the course of an address, an auxiliary bishop of Chicago was booed and hissed for his rhetorical question, “Was not Jesus Christ a Jew?” (1993, p. 39). As Terry Wall points out, the tendency of the church to stress the *universal* significance of Jesus was a concomitant of the church’s wanting to emphasise the discontinuity of Jesus with the Judaism of his day, in the course of defining itself over against the synagogue (Wall, 2000).

It is simultaneously attractive and repelling, it reminds one of what one would like to be but is afraid of being, it dangles before the eyes what one would rather not see—that the settled accounts are still open and the lost possibilities are still alive. It is an insight into the truth of being which all ordering bustle is trying hard, though in vain, to hide. (Bauman, 1998, pp. 146-7)

Bauman also suggests that “the allo-Semitism endemic to western Civilization is to a decisive extent the legacy of Christendom” (1998, p. 148):

In the course of its self-definition and boundary-drawing Christianity marked the Jews as, above all, an oddity—the uncanny, mind-boggling and spine-chilling incongruity that rebelled against the divine order of the universe... The Jews were guilty of blurring the most vital boundary separating believer from non-believers, the truth faith from paganism: the Jews were *not heathens*—there was a sense in which they were more un-pagan-like than the Christians themselves, and yet they were simultaneously more pagan than “ordinary” heathens. The other non-Christians around were the ignoramuses waiting to be enlightened, to receive the Good News and be converted into Christians—but Jews were *infidels*, who from the beginning stared truth in the face and yet refused to admit and embrace it. (Bauman, 1998, pp. 145-6, author's emphases)

#### 4.5.2.3 Conclusion

The church's conflictedness over its relationship with Jews and Judaism (as evidenced in its erratic attempts at better Jewish-Christian relations), and the ambivalence many Christians seem to feel towards something like the Jewishness of Jesus, is not just curious; it adds considerably to the complexity of trying to understand the problem. It might be more obvious what is going on, and more straightforward to deal with, if Jews were simply loathed or feared, but that is not the way it has been, nor is it still.

Psychoanalytic theory helps shed light on the frustratingly contradictory attitudes that both the church as an institution, and many Christians as individuals, continue to have towards Jews and Judaism. Such ambivalence has its historical roots in the life of the early church, and has been sustained by the Augustinian theological tradition that subsequently evolved. But what makes ambivalence *psychologically* possible—indeed, what makes it so resistant to scrutiny and to being de-stabilised—is that it draws on ubiquitous, primal mental processes formed in the course of learning how best to respond to what Bauman calls proteophobia: fear of the disturbing, threatening, “non-fitting” other. As with many other facets of anti-Jewish mental construction, all this is made doubly difficult because ambivalent attitudes exist largely outside awareness—few would understand, or would wish

to own to, apparently irrational, contradictory attitudes towards anything or anyone, and be prepared to concede, furthermore, that such attitudes might change without their even knowing it, possibly from one week to the next. Also, if Bauman is correct, ambivalence tends to be driven by affect-saturated imperatives, rather than organised with any great degree of rationality, so making it, once again, difficult to understand, deeply entrenched, and resistant to being educated against.

### **4.5.3 Theme six—Emotion and Christian anti-Jewishness**

#### **4.5.3.1 Introduction**

A number of familiar psychoanalytic themes have emerged in the course of considering how Christian anti-Jewishness is sustained in the life of the contemporary church. First, it is understood to be prompted, and work itself out, mostly outside of the awareness of the perpetrators. Secondly, these unconscious mental processes are, to a significant extent, shaped along lines learned in infancy in the course of establishing formative intrapsychic and interpsychic relationships. Thirdly, while the connection between unconscious mental processes, and conscious thoughts, feeling and behaviour can be understood, the link is neither direct, nor logical. The connection is associative (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 84), and the main organising principle is affective. Thus, the “feel” of a given situation (say, listening to a text read in church that has traditionally been understood in anti-Jewish ways) may very well unconsciously hook into unforgotten memories, commonly going back to infancy, and these unconscious, affect-laden memories will—far more often than is commonly appreciated—inform thinking, feeling, and behaviour in the present. As Westen succinctly puts it (1998, p. 340): “People can feel things without knowing they feel them, and they can act on feelings of which they are unaware.”

According to these psychoanalytic principles, it is above all emotion, not rationality, that is *the* key to understanding the way human beings behave much of the time. Given that this is generally regarded one of the most important and unifying themes in psychoanalysis,<sup>181</sup> this, the last main section of the current chapter, is devoted to

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<sup>181</sup> It is regarded as important but also, as André Green points out, is one of the most problematic areas of psychoanalysis. The first difficulty is “to retain the originality of the affect when it is expressed in language” (1999, p. xi). Then there are issues of terminology (1999, pp. 4-8, 282) among practitioners and theorists whose approaches to affect have tended to diverge, rather than cohere, post-Freud (1999, pp. 102-3). This probably relates to the fact that Freud never published a definitive, comprehensive statement of his affect

understanding how and why, from a psychoanalytic perspective, affect—in particular—plays such an important part in anti-Jewish construction.

#### **4.5.3.2 Affect and infancy—a psychoanalytic perspective**

Out of discussions thus far, a picture of what the world of the infant might be like, from a psychoanalytic perspective, is starting to build up. The image that emerges is that the infant exists in an autistic-like state, relating to the outside world in “whole body”

(psychobiological) sorts of ways, impelled with every fibre of its being to establish and maintain attachment relationships in order to maximise the chances of staying alive. In the psychoanalytic view, these formative, primal experiences establish mental blueprints, mostly at unconscious levels, to such an extent that representations of the cognitive, affective and behavioural precipitates of childhood attachment relationships thoroughly pervade adult relationship patterns (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 77). As Westen and Gabbard imply (and Stern would concur), the picture presented nowadays of human development is a complex one, particularly in early infancy, and there is a danger of over-simplification in order to make a point. But a couple of things seem clear. First, that cognitive abilities are extremely limited at this time (Culbertson, 2000, p. 76). Secondly, not just in traditional psychoanalytic thinking, but from other fields also, there appears to be increasing evidence that, among all the organising principles at work during those formative months, because the infant has no words, affective processes may be particularly significant.

The first evidence that affective processes might have particular significance during infancy is from evolutionary psychology. Theorists in this field (e.g., Ekman, 1994a, 1994b)

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theory (Green, 1999, p. 1), which sometimes gives an incorrect impression that his ideas on this subject are somewhat undeveloped (Solms & Nersessian, 1999, p. 5). Green lists Freud's important works at the beginning of a long and comprehensive discussion (1999, pp. 13-72). Solms and Nersessian summarise Freud's affect theory from across his writings (1999, pp. 11-13). Inter alia, Freud held that affects are “universal, typical and innate”, although some basic emotions are apparently forged during early development (Solms & Nersessian, 1999, p. 9), and that in later life they represent “reproductions of very early...experiences of vital importance” (Freud, 1926, p. 133). Stern notes the traditional privileging of affective processes by psychoanalytic theory, and the awarding of high intensity affects an especially privileged status. “Extreme bliss or extreme frustration,” Stern says by way of example, “are [supposedly] more potent organising experiences than mild or moderate contentment or frustration.” Although there is research to support this idea, Stern says, he has difficulty with the idea of quantifying levels of affect. Also, other research seems to be showing that not only traumatic-level affective states are well remembered, but also “rather ordinary and very moderate affective experiences” (Stern, 1985, pp. 247-8). As with many psychoanalytic principles, the basic idea will continue to be modified in the light of subsequent research, but that affect is a main organising principle in unconscious, associative mental processes remains a psychoanalytic cornerstone (see Freud, 1915a, pp. 177-8; Stern, 1985, pp. 244-5; Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 67).

contend that there are a number of “primary” or “basic” emotions, so called partly because their associated facial expressions appear to be innate, the evidence being that they appear soon after birth (even in infants born blind and deaf who could not have learned from others), and that they are expressed and interpreted similarly across relatively isolated cultures (Colman, 2001, pp. 580-1; Parrot, Ekman, Friesen, Sonia, & Fridlund, 2001). The theory is that humans have evolved primitive modes of communication (and associated mental processes) which are at first mainly affective because it has been adaptively advantageous to do so.<sup>182</sup>

Secondly, recent psychoneurological research appears to be confirming the developmental significance of unconscious affective processes. As with earlier evolutionary psychology, there is once again, according to Schore (2002b, p. 63), “an intense interest in ‘biologically primitive emotions,’ which are evolutionarily very old, [and] appear early in development”.<sup>183</sup> Citing a raft of studies, Schore says that current (i.e., 1990s onwards) research shows the left and right hemispheres of the brain do not play equal roles in meeting imperative psychobiological needs; the right hemisphere is central to control of vital functions supporting survival and in responding to human stress response in adaptive ways (2002b, p. 65). Equally significant is that studies also report the pre-eminent role of the right hemisphere in emotional communication (2002b, p. 64), and the “unconscious processing of emotion-evoking stimuli” (1999, p. 53).<sup>184</sup> Bringing these two fields of investigation together, Schore’s own research:

has focused on the effects of emotional interactions in early life on the organization of brain systems that process affect; that is, the developmental neurobiology of attachment. I have proposed that the vitally important attachment experiences of infancy are stored in the early maturing right hemisphere, and that for the rest of the lifespan unconscious working models of the attachment relationship encode strategies of affect regulation for coping with stress, especially interpersonal stress.

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<sup>182</sup> This approach has been trenchantly critiqued by Ortony and Turner as “an air, earth, fire, and water” (i.e., essentialist) theory of emotion (1990, p. 329). Their argument is not so much with adaptive theory, as with the underlying assumption that emotions are capable of meaningful classification, “basic” or otherwise. They do concede, nevertheless, that “a reluctance to accept the notion of basic emotions does not mean that it is unreasonable as a research strategy to classify emotions in certain ways...However one ought not to reify the classification” (1990, p. 329).

<sup>183</sup> Schore’s theories, also, are sometimes critiqued as an essentialist “regression” (e.g., Orange, 2003).

<sup>184</sup> Other researchers, rather, identify the role of the amygdala in emotional processing (e.g., Phelps, 2005, pp. 62-6). Schore identifies the amygdala as one of a number of interconnected limbic areas that are “expanded in the right hemisphere” (Schore, 2002b, p. 67).

These internal representations are accessed as guides for future interactions, and the term *working* refers to the individual's unconscious use of them to interpret and act on new experiences. (Schore, 1999, p. 51)<sup>185</sup>

Few cognitive scientists would yet be willing to go as far as extending the notion of unconscious mental processes to affect and motivation, says Westen (1998, p. 336),<sup>186</sup> or want to be as specific as Schore, who says that: "Current neurobiological studies strongly suggest that the emotion-processing right mind...is the neurobiological substrate of Freud's unconscious"(2002b, p. 77).<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless, after a comprehensive survey of the literature, Westen concludes that: "Perhaps the most important contribution of this [cognitive] research is that it demonstrates unequivocally that affective evaluations can develop unconsciously and that multiple influences on affective associations can be combined outside of awareness" (1998, p. 338).

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<sup>185</sup> One of Schore's main theoretical frames is John Bowlby's attachment theory (see 4.3.2 of this chapter, above). Schore's research has focused on the reciprocal affective transactions within the mother-infant dyadic system. He believes the face-to-face emotional communication of the mother is essentially regulating the infant's psychobiological state, and that the attachment relationship is, in essence, the dyadic regulation of emotion. Furthermore, these interactive affect-regulating events act as a mechanism for the "social construction of the human brain". His own research, and the research of others, into the dominance of the right hemisphere in affective processes leads him to venture that "the attachment transactions represent right hemisphere-to-right hemisphere affective transactions between mother and infant" (Schore, 2002b, p. 68). Westen and Gabbard agree with Schore, saying that, according to Bowlby's model, the child's attachment behaviour is mediated by affect: "feelings such as separation distress, pleasure at being held in the mother's arms, or relief at reunion" (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 68). Along with "expectations of relationships", they add (1999, p. 63), "patterns of affective experience shaped in the first relationships" become "determinants of later interpersonal functioning (see also Stosny, 1995, p. 51).

<sup>186</sup> One particular point at which contemporary cognitive approaches would still part company with traditional psychoanalytic theory, says Westen, is with the idea of "what Freud referred to as *dynamically* unconscious processes; that is, those that are kept unconscious for a reason" (1998, p. 342, author's emphasis). Westen cannot understand why cognitive scientists have a problem with this idea. Along with others (e.g., Schore, 2002b, p. 65), he contends that the capacity to respond with automatic affective responses is highly adaptive (1998, pp. 342-3), and that people can learn to avoid particular affective processes as readily as they can learn to avoid particular cognitive processes when either is associated with shame, guilt, sadness or anxiety. There is nothing about our mental architecture that requires either cognitive or affective procedures, or their triggers, to be accessible to consciousness, he says. "In fact most processes that guide attention are not accessible to introspection" (Westen, 1998, p. 342). In a later publication (1999, p. 1096), Westen reiterates his belief in the adaptive nature of, not just unconscious affective processes, but unconscious processes in general: "From an evolutionary standpoint the capacity to process information, form affect-laden associations, and behave on the basis of wishes and fears that are unconscious is of tremendous adaptive significance—and much older than reflective consciousness. Phobias are maladaptive, but fears are not, and they can be learned and can guide behavior in adaptive directions unconsciously."

<sup>187</sup> In an earlier article (1999, p. 53), Schore also discusses specifically "*unconscious* processing of emotion-evoking stimuli" (my emphasis).

#### 4.5.3.3 Affect, infancy and Christian anti-Jewishness

Once again, the legend of The Wandering Jew will be used as a “doorway” into trying to understand the (often covert) contribution of affect to anti-Jewish discourse. “A simple but profound truth about stories is that *they are told*,” says Dan McAdams (1998, p. 1139, author’s emphasis). “It is in the nature of stories that there exist both a teller and a recipient of the telling”. Reader response theory helps us to understand that any text has no real existence until it is read, and that “a reader completes its meaning by reading it” (Cuddon, 1999, p. 726). What emotional response, then, is evoked by the hearing or reading of the legend of The Wandering Jew, and what might the significance of that response be?

The Malchus precursor to the legend (see chapter two) gives an initial clue to what the intended response might be. The narrator of the Malchus legend reports having met “a monk named Isidor”, who in turn had met Malchus and heard his story: “I am he who struck on the cheek the creator of the universe, our Lord Jesus Christ, at the time of the Passion”. “That is why,” said Isidor, “I cannot stop weeping”. Although we all begged him to lessen his woe, says the narrator, he could not prevent Isidor’s continual weeping and lamenting (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 13). One interpretation of all this is that the narrator is emotionally cuing the hearer/reader: the monk Isidor’s inconsolable sadness models the appropriate response to this story.

By the time an early European version of the legend appeared,<sup>188</sup> the affective content had shifted from the hearer (internal to the story), and become centred in The Wandering Jew himself. The wording is similar to that in the legend four centuries later: “And all this he relates without smiling or levity of countenance, as one who is well practised in sorrow.” “No one ever saw him laugh.” “He bowed his head, beat on his breast, and sighed very deeply” (G. K. Anderson, 1970, pp. 42f). Other details come and go in different versions of the legend over the centuries, but this theme persists, and Anderson says (1970, pp. 47-8) that having The Wandering Jew in an apparently continual state of grief is part of the “basic pattern of the treatment of The Wandering Jew from the time of the *Kurze Beschreibung* of 1602 to the present” (i.e., Anderson’s time of writing, c. 1965).

Whether or not it was the redactors’ conscious or unconscious intention to cue an emotional reader response, at the time of its appearance in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, The

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<sup>188</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> century—usually referred to as the “Roger of Wendover” version (G. K. Anderson, 1970, p. 45).

Wandering Jew evidently aroused “passionate interest” (Maccoby, 1972, p. 240). Two centuries later, the overall atmosphere of the series of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gothic-style engravings by Gustave Doré (referred to in chapter two) illustrating a version of the legend could be regarded as fraught with ambivalent emotion. They either seethe with a desperate, manic activity, or depict an abject loneliness and isolation. Apocalyptic dramas—the stuff of nightmares—form the backdrops. And central to each frame is the ambivalent figure of The Wandering Jew, sometimes pathetic, sometimes heroic; old, gaunt and tattered even before he leaves the foot of the Cross. “The Wandering Jew evokes both sympathy and scorn”, say Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes (1986, p. viii). He “inspires religious horror”, says Roth (1972, p. 259). Whatever meaning at a cognitive level the legend carries with it, its energy source is a powerful in-built affective component. The intended affective response is modelled by the behaviour of The Wandering Jew himself, and in some versions by the reported response of hearers internal to the story, and seem intended to evoke in the hearer/reader strong and ambivalent feelings of horror and fascination, of sadness and *Schadenfreude*.

What, from a psychoanalytic perspective, might be the significance of the emotion (in particular) evoked by the story? At one level, as just discussed, it connects the hearer/reader emotionally, as well as intellectually with the story, and it gives permission to feel passionate about the ideas contained therein. However, from a perspective that focuses on the latent rather than the manifest content of the legend, Culbertson suggests it is more relevant to ask not, “What does this story mean?” but rather, “What does this story do?” (2000, p. 49). Already one thing has been ventured that the story might have “done”, psycho-sociologically, in its 17<sup>th</sup> century context: it helped give religious reassurance in times of frightening uncertainty (see previous chapter). But, at a more individual psychological level, another thing Culbertson says a story like this does, according to thinkers such as Bruno Bettelheim and Claude Lévi-Strauss, is to “provide us with an emotional catharsis which in turn leads to personal integration” (2000, p. 45). As an example pertinent to this thesis topic, the legend—and stories like it—can be understood as a response to the question: “As a Christian, am I justified in harbouring sometimes troubling feelings about Jews, as I do?” The implied answer seems obvious: “Yes. This story of The Wandering Jew and those like it are true, and all you have ever learned about Jews from the

church is vindicated. And, yes, you are quite justified in feeling as you do both about this Jew in particular and about all Jews in general.” And so, oh the relief! Especially for those with any lingering anxieties about their own anti-Jewishness, troubling thoughts and feelings are cathartically discharged, and integrated into the psyche as normal and acceptable. Such stories confirm that, as a Christian, I am quite right not only to *think* as I do about Jews but—much more importantly—to *feel* as I do.

#### 4.5.3.4 Conclusion

Psychoanalytic theory has always said—and recent research from other fields tends to support the idea—that one of the main ways we respond to a given situation as human beings, is by unconscious, affective association. We respond in this way because—being pre-verbal and pre-cognitive—it is one of the earliest organising principles we employ, and, being early—part of the period of life with an urgent, “life or death” feel about it—invests this process (of making meaning by unconscious affective association), not only with passion, but with a sense of verisimilitude in a way which endures for the rest of our lives. And it is (as discussed just above), above all, a sense of *emotional* verisimilitude. To repeat, it is such primal experiences, and the ways they are interpreted at the time, that lay down patterns of thinking, feeling, behaving and relating for the rest of life.

Worshippers in church, participating yet again in the performance of some anti-Jewishly understood text—another sword-and-sandals version of the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus, or an ill-informed sermon about the supposed sins of the Pharisees—will not so much know or understand that these anti-Jewish allegations are right and true, they will *feel* that they are right and true. Given the power of emotional meaning to transcend, or displace, or subvert rational meaning (as psychoanalysis would have it), it probably matters little to the average churchgoer whether the anti-Jewishness they are part of makes sense, either at any time in the history of the church or right now. What matters is that what they are part of feels right, because it is consonant with what the church has taught about Jews and Judaism for nearly two millennia, and with what they have learned all their lives sitting in church. All of this, it bears repeating, happens largely outside of awareness. Recollect (chapter one) my own experience that most mainline congregations and their clergy would still be oblivious to the anti-Jewishness either explicit or implicit in their worship, or would dismiss the need to

do anything about it as “trivial”, and at the same time being appalled (and even indignant) to be thought in any way anti-Jewish. (“Goodness! Some of my *best friends* are Jewish”).<sup>189</sup>

#### 4.6 Summary conclusions

The previous chapter offered an understanding, from a psychoanalytic perspective, of the *process* by which the performance, in church, of traditional anti-Jewish texts helps to keep contemporary Christian anti-Jewishness alive, to such an extent that it constantly undermines the church’s good, if desultory, intentions towards better Jewish-Christian relations. One of the things deduced from the experiment was that, in a sort of unconscious-to-unconscious communication, the fears and anxieties underlying the passages of the New Testament traditionally understood in anti-Jewish ways, by affective association, hook into unconscious fears and anxieties of present-day worshippers, thus, out of awareness, emotionally reinforcing the verisimilitude both of what such (anti-Jewish) texts say, and also the church’s ongoing (and largely covert) supersessionary attitudes and practices towards Jews.

The results of the experiment also suggested that the apparent particularity to the *content* thrown up by the process may shed light on why Christian fantasies about Jews tend to be as distinctive as they are. From my examining what I regard as six psychoanalytically significant (and largely overlooked) themes in the legend (three overt, and three covert), and relating them to psychoanalytically-informed understandings of human psychological development, and how this lays down templates for mental functioning through the rest of life, six corresponding features distinctive of Christian anti-Jewishness emerged—but, just as importantly, some very strong indications as to the psychological aetiology of these constructions.

The object relations stream of psychoanalysis, particularly, along with theory emerging from recent research in the cognitive sciences, together paint a picture of the first few weeks and months of life where cognition and rationality play a relatively small part in what has been characterised as the “whole body” (psychobiological) way the infant begins to

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<sup>189</sup> *The Independent* newspaper reports that Mel Gibson “tried to defuse the row” (over news that his production company is following up the movie *The Passion of the Christ* with a mini-series about the Holocaust) by saying that “some of his best friends ‘have numbers on their arms’” (Usborne, 2005, December 8).

organise its intrapsychic and interpsychic mental life, especially—in the case of the latter—in relation to the primary caregiver(s). It is widely accepted that the infant is impelled, in the first instance, to establish a life-giving attachment with the primary caregiver, the corollary of this being (it is posited) that separation and “not belonging” is the greatest (real and/or fantasised) terror associated with this period of life. To enhance the potential for survival, the infant’s life is invested with an energy (which Freud termed libido), oriented as a “will to live”, which, much later in life, becomes sexual. Among the earliest defensive processes is a relatively crude but efficient sorting called splitting. With maturity, mental representations of both the self and external world (psychic objects) become less opposed to each other and better integrated. In all this, psychoanalytic theory has long understood—and cognitive theory seems to be supporting the idea—that, because of the infant’s limited powers of cognition, if there is one dominant organising principle over this first crucial period of life, it is affect. It is understood that the infant interprets experience over the first few weeks and months primarily in terms of “what feels right”, in a “whole body” sort of way.

Almost from the beginning—and, again, recent empirical research seems to be lending support to the idea—the psychoanalytic community has understood that the ways outlined above in which the first months of life are experienced seem so important at the time—with, literally, a “life or death” feel about them—that they lay down psychic templates which unconsciously affect how experience is interpreted for the rest of life. Although care is needed not to fall back into some sort of essentialist position in all this, many psychoanalysts understand that the grooves of these templates run deep and that our contemporary lives are shaped by factors out of awareness to a far greater extent than most give credit.

Such is the context, from a psychoanalytic perspective, against which some of the peculiarities of Christian anti-Jewish construction need to be understood. The performance, during worship, of sacred texts which carry a burden of both overt and covert fear and anxiety reflecting the fraught religious and political circumstances the texts were produced under, contain dimensions—again, reflecting the context of the times—which the church has found easy to interpret anti-Jewishly over the centuries. By unconscious, affective association, such texts—of which *The Wandering Jew* is a classic example—stir up all manner of fears and anxieties, revivifying and reinforcing, yet again, the verisimilitude of

traditional, Christian fantasies about Jews and Judaism, which are very likely to be (inter alia) highly charged, irrational, ambivalent, affect-laden, corporeal, and organised around themes of primordial psychological significance, such as (to cite, as an example, the main one thrown up by the legend) that of “belonging/not belonging”.

Understanding why Christian anti-Jewishness is every bit as irrational and ambivalent as it appears to be, and realising that ongoing Christian fantasies of supersession are undergirded by unconscious memories of things like infant concern about “belonging”, together begin to shed light on why Christian anti-Jewishness is so difficult to understand in ordinary, commonsense sorts of ways. Furthermore, realising how and why Christian anti-Jewish constructions seem, at times, so palpably incarnate, so passionately held, and so driven, gives some insight into why, for Christians, their anti-Jewish fantasies can seem so real, and so true, and can withstand almost any degree of critical inspection, and endure the way they do. Understanding that the aetiology of much of this, psychologically speaking, is deep-rooted in the unconscious begins to give some sense to why many aspects of Christian anti-Jewishness (e.g., supersessionist fantasies) seem to be, typologically at least, almost trans-historical in nature, and why, even with the best will in the world, anti-Jewishness is so difficult to destabilise, and to counteract by information and education alone.

## Chapter five—Theoretical reflections

*I consider that one should not make theories. They should arrive unexpectedly in your house, like a stranger one hasn't invited. (Freud)*

### 5.1 Introduction

As already mentioned in the chapter on methodology, it appears to be part of the psychoanalytical tradition that theory is seldom done for its own sake but, rather, emerges as reflection on, and in service of, clinical practice.<sup>190</sup> The latter, it would seem, has priority, and from Freud onwards most of the significant theorists were (and are), first and foremost, practitioners (see footnote 98). In this chapter, the theoretical reflections on issues raised by the research thus far are in the spirit of this psychoanalytic tradition.

First, in light of discussions in the previous chapter, it seems to me that there is “something missing” in psychological descriptions which seek to explain Christian anti-Jewishness in terms only of projection—that is, simply as the false attribution to others of intolerable thoughts, feelings or impulses (Colman, 2001, p. 588). While the “projection” metaphor (borrowed from 19<sup>th</sup> century optics) has long been invoked in discussions about things like racism and antisemitism, it appears to me not to do complete justice to the “fully alive”, “embodied” sort of anti-Jewish construction that has been the subject of this thesis. So, feeling my way in the dark somewhat, in the first half of this chapter I attempt to move towards the rather more full-blooded sort of metaphor which I believe the reality of anti-Jewish construction calls for. It does so by exploring Melanie Klein’s extension of the Freudian idea of projection into “projective identification” and, more recently, Thomas Ogden’s idea of the “analytic third”. The object is to see if these particular psychoanalytic approaches have anything to contribute towards better describing the aetiology and nature of

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<sup>190</sup> The value attributed to the counter-transference is one example of a significant shift in theory as a result of psychoanalytic practice. There is disagreement in the literature as to quite what Freud meant by counter-transference: the strong emotional reaction of an analyst to his patient (McWilliams, 1994, p. 32), or “the therapist’s inability, because of unconscious problems of his or her own, to decentre affective reaction to the patient” (Basch, 1988, p. 149). Either way, Freud’s view seems to have been that the analyst’s counter-transference was an unwanted intrusion into the analytic process. However, from around the 1950s, many therapists have found their own counter-transference response to be one of the best vehicles for understanding their clients (McWilliams, 1994, p. 32; Mitchell & Black, 1995, pp. 244-250; Sandler et al., 1970, p. 85; Schore, 2002a, p. 23). Sandler et al. detail how the concept has broadened to include many different meanings, and suggest that to be useful the definition should be neither too narrow nor too broad (1970, pp. 96-7).

Christian anti-Jewish construction, in all its—as this thesis argues—irrationally passionate, palpably incarnate, “otherness”.

Secondly, there is a question still outstanding from discussions in the introductory chapter that, if it is no longer appropriate to characterise anti-Jewishness as psychopathological, how, then, might it helpfully be understood psychoanalytically? This discussion is not entered into with a view to coming up with some new nosology, thus creating an illusion that the problem of Christian anti-Jewish is thereby, somehow, under better control. The question is asked, rather, to try to understand how the anti-Jewish beliefs, feelings and behaviour of Christians—which by almost any estimate are not mentally healthy—fit with lives which (at least in the tradition with which I identify) appear neither excessively narrow nor religiously fanatical. How does anti-Jewishness continue to flourish among people who otherwise appear to be relatively mentally healthy, good, caring people?

## **5.2 Towards a better model of the anti-Jewish, psychically-constructed other**

### **5.2.1 From projection to projective identification**

In the course of discussing the aetiology of ambivalence in the previous chapter (4.5.2.2), mention was made of the primitive defences of splitting and projection, in which unwanted feelings (e.g., aggression towards the “bad parent”) may be evacuated by projection onto someone or something (e.g., “bad teddy”) in the outside world (Mahler et al., 1975, pp. 292-3; Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 223-4). While, with maturity, the ego learns to hold part-objects together and becomes able to tolerate the resulting ambivalence, it is the psychoanalytic view that splitting and projection remain appealing ways to cope throughout life, especially during times of stress (McWilliams, 1994, p. 113). As already noted (4.5.2.2), Gilman believes that such primitive psychological processes are ubiquitous, and at the root of all inter-group stereotyping (1985, p. 17). However, while this is almost certainly the case (from a psychoanalytic perspective), more is needed than knowledge of the root cause of something like anti-Jewishness. As I will continue to argue, how and why it elaborates in such particular ways also need to be understood.

Klein’s original use of the term “projective identification” signified a process that she understood to be primarily intrapsychic—a primitive, internal, mental phenomenon

(Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 264). Although the mother is an essential part of the process,<sup>191</sup> projective identification in the Kleinian sense is one of the key ways the infant begins to mentally self-organise. Bion then took the idea from the intrapsychic to the interpersonal (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 105), which, according to Hamilton, is how Thomas Ogden appears to understand the concept entirely: “Projective identification does not exist where there is no interaction between projector and recipient” (Ogden, 1982, in Hamilton, 1992a). The bulk of the literature, however, shows that most commentators (such as Hamilton himself, and Sandler) allow for both intrapsychic and interpsychic projective identification (Hamilton, 1992a, p. 165), even if wanting to maintain a clear distinction between the two (e.g., Meissner, 1987, pp. 43-4).

While there is no consensus on either meanings or terminology,<sup>192</sup> and whether it is actually possible to distinguish between the two (or even desirable to try), some find it helpful to characterise projection as being “onto the surface” of another, and projective identification as “into” the other.<sup>193</sup> The “projected *onto*” is intended to signify that the recipient (person being projected onto) is oblivious to what is going on (is acting as a blank screen for the projector), and “projective identification *into*” signifies that those doing the projecting are able to evoke a response from the other, in order to have their fantasised needs met. The analogy in the clinical situation is that in the case of *projection* the analysand, in

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<sup>191</sup> The provision by the mother of what Winnicott calls the “holding” environment is discussed below (5.2.2).

<sup>192</sup> This highlights something it is easy to lose sight of: that mental processes, such as splitting/projection/projective identification, usually segue seamlessly from one into the other, and do not actually sit as neatly compartmentalised as might be implied by the usual way, for convenience, they are discussed. Added to this is another problem, which is both historical and ongoing: namely that as psychoanalytic ideas, both projection and projective identification have been on “a long and tortuous odyssey” (Meissner, 1987, p. 41) which, along the way, has attracted much controversy in the analytic literature (McWilliams, 1994, p. 110)—see, for example, correspondence on this matter in the Letters to the Editor column of *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* (Massidda, 1998; Steiner, 1998). The idea of projective identification, particularly, remains “theoretically enigmatic” (Schore, 2002a), and there is still much confusion over both ideas and terminology. Speaking mainly as a therapist, Janet Finell, for example, finds the distinction between projection and projective identification to be “so subtle it may not be verifiable.” And is it the case, she goes on to ask, that projective identification is really just projection if the relationship is disavowed or not overtly apparent? “The conceptual problems are enormous,” she concludes (1986, p. 105). Meissner is implacably set against distinguishing projective identification from projection. “Some complementary pulls are at work in all projections occurring in an interpersonal context; no inherently different mechanism is involved,” he says. “The term projective identification obscures more than it reveals” (1987, p. 44).

<sup>193</sup> Sandler, for example, says: “Projective identification is now described as if the externalization of parts of the self or of the internal object occurs directly *into* the external object” (1987, p. 18, author’s emphasis). Clarke (2003, p. 156) regards the “into” aspect of projective identification as its most important distinguishing feature.

thrall to his or her own narcissism and the illusion that unwanted objects have been successfully evacuated, is oblivious to whatever counter-transferences are evoked in the analyst. In *projective identification* on the other hand, the counter-transferences of the analyst matter to one doing the projecting—sometimes very much so. McWilliams explains that this is because, for those with anything up to borderline personality organisation (i.e., more or less normal), there is sufficient reality testing for there to be a felt need to subtly provoke in others the disowned attitudes or feelings that are being disowned (projected), thus “confirming” the illusion that what is unwanted originates from “out there” rather than “in here” (McWilliams, 1994, p. 210; Sandler, 1987, p. 22). How the situation Finell describes (footnote 192) should be categorised—where the intended response is not forthcoming—appears not to be discussed in the literature. Perhaps, practically speaking, no such situation exists (see footnote 195, below).

That there might be two distinct forms of projection (i.e., projection and projective identification) fits with some observations concerning anti-Jewishness, one of which has already been noted—that is, that some anti-Jewishness is (in Langmuir’s terminology) so chimerical that any sort of response is irrelevant and unwanted, as it would constitute an intrusion into the fantasy.<sup>194</sup> Granted the psychoanalytic nosology is still contested, but this seems to equate with most current understandings of projection. But then there are other situations where a response is far from irrelevant to the one doing the projecting, and so would seem best thought of as projective identification. Bion, for example, describes a patient whose increasing intensity of emotion he put down to the patient’s perception that he (Bion) was refusing to accept the patient’s projections. “Consequently he strove to force them into me with increased desperation and violence” (1959, p. 312).<sup>195</sup> And there are those like, for example, Stanley Rosenman (2002; 2003), who emphatically contends that it is

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<sup>194</sup> To recollect, anti-Jewishness can be in evidence in spite of a total absence of Jews. See chap. 1, footnotes 43, 44 & 45.

<sup>195</sup> Richard Rubenstein describes a social analogue to Bion’s clinical observation:

People are never neutral objects like Rorschach inkblots. Even when they confront each other in silence, their encounters involve some interchange. Even when Jews remained silent before the calumny of their adversaries, it is hardly likely that they were devoid of emotionally potent response or that their response did not become an element in the ongoing intergroup encounter. (1992, pp. 90-1).

Culbertson similarly observes (2000, p. 89) that projective identification necessitates “an object-other who is willing to participate...however unconsciously”. And perhaps the situation of theoretical concern to Finell seldom or never exists in practice because those wanting a counter-transference from their target will project more and more forcefully until they get the desired response (as in the case of Bion’s patient, cited above).

from *the effects* of their projections that antisemites (for example) derive their main satisfaction. By getting a reaction, the one doing the projecting, first, assures him or herself that the fantasies are real and, secondly, gains the unconscious illusion that “through controlling the object...one is controlling the unwanted and projected aspect of the self” (Sandler, 1987, p. 20).<sup>196</sup>

It seems clear that of the many interpsychic processes psychoanalysis attempts to describe, projective identification is one of the most violently intrusive. Bion (according to Hamilton) describes in graphic and concrete terms how, in the most extreme examples, the one doing the projecting attempts “to get under the object’s skin, invade his body cavities, infiltrate his tissues, take over control” (Hamilton, 1992a, pp. 164-5). Sandler talks in terms of “forcing” an aspect of oneself into the object (1987, p. 20), and Meares puts it that “there is a feeling of coercion, as if one is being ‘constructed’ to play out a particular part” (2000, p. 77).

This sort of language, which seems typical of discussions about projective identification in particular, has connections with some of the themes previously covered in this thesis. It has been argued that, from a psychoanalytic perspective, bodies matter, and affect matters a lot. This would seem to be particularly so in the case of projective identification. Both Cooper and Schore confirm that, as with all processes of externalisation (Colman, 2001, p. 260), projective identification is primarily about the unconscious ridding or the communication of internal *affective* states and processes, rather than cognitions and content (Cooper, 1998, p. 956; Schore, 2002a, pp. 3-4), and what cognitive research is finding is that “the prosodic elements of communication such as rhythm, force, and tonality, more so than the linguistic elements of language, carry the affective messages within projective identifications” (Schore, 2002a, p. 24). Regarding the somatic nature of unconscious communications via projective identification, it may be recollected that Schore, speaking as a cognitive researcher looking into unconscious mental processes, finds he has to take into account the “mind-body”, and consider “psychobiological” states, rather than

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<sup>196</sup> This is, furthermore, a continuous process. As Gerald Alder and Mark Rhine point out, “the person who projects then must maintain a relationship with the other person to control those projected parts through controlling that person” (1992, p. 152). According to Adler and Rhine, once the initial projective identification has been accomplished there will be a fresh projection, “managing” or “directing” the initial projections within the target once they have been got “on stage”. These will, of course, evoke a different counter-transference, and so the bi-directional interchange of projective identifications will continue.

only “mental” states of mind. And, he adds, this is particularly so when discussing projective identification (2002a, pp. 4-5). Thus, where the counter-transference (or its analogue outside the clinical situation) is important to the one doing the projecting, the most satisfying result is to evoke some sort of emotional response (e.g., reduce the other to tears, or to despair), and/or to have control over the bodily existence of the other—anything from being able to make another squirm, to having the political power to determine that a whole community should live in straightened circumstances (as had the church over the Jewish community, at many times and places in the past).

Projective identification, involving not just mental aspects, but body, mind and soul, seems to best describe the processes at work in the sort of anti-Jewishness Sartre discusses, in which Jews feel compelled to act out some sort of Christian fantasy *in their person* of what it is to be Jewish (1948, pp. 94-5, author's emphasis). Rosenman (2002, p. 190; 2003, p. 521), echoing earlier ideas briefly outlined by Meissner (1987, p. 39), similarly—but more emphatically—argues that projective identification is a “usurpation” and a “plundering” of the identity of the other.<sup>197</sup> “Projective identification operates at different levels and in different forms,” says Clarke (2003, p. 157), “but all have the same effect: to induce feelings of inferiority, misplacement, low esteem and of exclusion, a sense of not belonging.” Apprey and Stein put it rather more strongly:

the otherness of individuals and whole groups can be obliterated, violated, controlled, denied and heavily contaminated. Although this ‘other’ may well be cognitively recognized to exist as a being distinct from oneself (or from one’s group, from corporate to ethnic and national), at the deeper, intersubjective level, this ‘other’ ceases to exist at all. The other becomes role, cipher, foil, container, target, cliché. (Apprey & Stein, 1993, p. 257)

In summary, projective identification seems to take us further than projection in the bid to understand more clearly than has often been the case in the past the aetiology and mental processes involved in the most pernicious forms of anti-Jewishness—that is, those

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<sup>197</sup> Rosenman’s rhetoric leaves a strong impression that what he thinks drives the projective identification of those he calls “predators” is some sort of undifferentiated rage. For example:

Expressing the projector’s self-detestation and envy, the mode of PI here has a pernicious upshot for its object, and often for the projector. Preceded by the predator’s calamitous assault that deranges the identity structure of the victim, the former forces an emblem of his total identity into the victim to occupy, impair, dominate, dispossess and/or partly or entirely preempt the latter’s identity. (Rosenman, 2002, p. 190)

Such a style sustained as relentlessly as does Rosenman can leave one feeling like the recipient of some sort of deranged rage. Consciously or unconsciously, just the effect intended, I expect. The aetiology of this rage Rosenman locates in abusive child-rearing practices.

who would assault every dimension of the lives of Jews, and would seek—as literally as possible—to reconstruct them so they act out some demonised fantasy of what Jews are like. This, as both McWilliams, and Sandler point out (above), involves a delicate psychic balancing act for the one doing the projecting: that is, it requires being close enough to the one(s) being targeted with projection to see the evoked response (the “counter-transference”), but not so close that too much reality about the other intrudes to disconfirm the fantasy driving the whole process. In other words, context is important for projective identification to “work” effectively from the perspective of the one doing the projecting. Psychoanalytic theory is able to shed light on how, and why, this liminal sort of context is constructed in the very particular way it is. One way it does so is in terms of theory of the “holding” environment.

### **5.2.2 Psychoanalytic “holding”**

Once again it is necessary to return to experiences of infancy to understand, from a psychoanalytic perspective, how the “holding” environment, created together by mother and infant, lays down a template for the unconscious construction, later in life, of a mental stage upon which often highly fraught psychic dramas are enacted.

D.W. Winnicott, a paediatrician and psychoanalyst, despite his disagreement with some of Klein’s theories, incorporated many of her concepts into his psychology of the earliest days of life (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 277-286). Included in Winnicott’s legacy is his idea of the “holding environment” (Winnicott, 1965/1990, pp. 43-50), which is an interpersonal space between mother and child where the baby is handled, cuddled, fed, and—most significantly from a developmental perspective—which provides the context which “enables the infant securely to organize his or her muddled urges, wishes and fears into predictable experiences” (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 287, 312). Hamilton describes the developmental structural growth that results from adaptive projective identification and containment:

When children have strong affects that threaten to overwhelm them, they externalise their distress. The parent takes in the projected feeling and self-object state, contains it, modulates it, gives it meaning, and returns the transformed affect in the form of holding, a meaningful comment, or some other communication. The child can now accept the metabolised affect and self-object state as his own. He eventually takes in

the containing process itself along with the transformed projections, identifies with it, and learns to contain his own affects to a large degree.  
(Hamilton, 1992c, p. xiii)<sup>198</sup>

For the parent to be able to do this for the infant, the parent needs to be—in Winnicott’s terminology—a “good enough mother” (Winnicott, 1958/1975, pp. 304-5). That is, one who is neither too intrusive (too good), thus interfering with the child’s separation and development of selfhood, nor too distant (not good enough) so as to generate excessive anxiety (Colman, 2001, p. 312). It is within this delicately balanced context—Winnicott’s “holding environment”—that the infant negotiates its way from a state of primal “unintegration” (Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 287) to selfhood, in the sorts of ways described by Hamilton (above).

It has been the understanding of most of the psychoanalytic community that Wilfred Bion describes a similar process operating in the relationship between patient and analyst (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 105),<sup>199</sup> and that he was the first psychoanalyst to recognise normative functions of projective identification embedded in everyday thought processes (Mills, 2000, p. 854). Bion introduced the terms “container” and “contained”, defining the latter as a mental object which is projected into the former (Bion, 1962, p. 90). The result of the containment of the contained is a process of transformation he called “alpha function”, which—and this seems to be the most significant point of departure from Winnicott—can take on either “normal or abnormal valences”. That is, the way the projections are modulated before being offered back (which, as discussed above, the one doing the projecting often has control of) can be seen to be either integrating or destructive, adaptive or maladaptive, for the one doing the projecting. (Clarke, 2003, p. 155; Hamilton, 1992a, p.

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<sup>198</sup> I once watched my grand-daughter, running with her teddy, fall over, get up again, dust herself off, and speak reassuring words to teddy. It was not so much that she projected her feelings into teddy that was interesting, but that she had learned already (at age 3 years) the containing process.

<sup>199</sup> Ogden, it needs to be noted, believes that Winnicott’s concept of holding, and Bion’s idea of the container-contained, are “frequently misunderstood and confused with each other”, and are “different aspects of the same experience” (2004b, p. 1349). Joan and Neville Symington similarly say it is important to differentiate between Winnicott’s idea of holding and Bion’s concept of containing in several respects: the former is interpsychic, sensuous, and growth-promoting; the latter is intrapsychic, non-sensuous, and may be either integrating or destructive (1996, p. 58). The distinctions that Ogden and the Symingtons wish to make do not detract from Bion’s insight that something like the Winnicottian “holding environment” provides an unconscious backdrop in later life, against which life’s psychic dramas are played out.

164; Mills, 2000, pp. 856-7; J. Symington & Symington, 1996, chaps. 6-7).<sup>200</sup>

Sandler finds Bion's model of container-contained to be a helpful description of intersychic transaction in the analytic context:

The analyst as "container" is, as I see it, the analyst who can tolerate the patient's distress, hostility and love—indeed, all his fantasies and feelings—and who as a consequence of his "reverie" can return them to the patient in the form of interpretations which will allow the patient to accept as aspects of himself those parts he had previously considered dangerous and threatening, and which had been dealt with defensively, with ensuing cost. (Sandler, 1987, p. 23)

Similarly, but in a somewhat broader context, Culbertson finds the concept of a holding environment or container useful for describing aspects of parish ministry. "Pastoral caregivers are called upon to 'contain' people cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually." "The holding environment does not have to be perfect, but 'good enough'." Particularly in the case of anxious parishioners, or of a traumatised congregation, Culbertson goes on,

the minister is expected to take in the projected or communicated feelings, modulate them, transform them, give them meaning and return them to the congregants. If ministry is successful, the pastoral caregiver should be able to move gradually from adaptation to deadaptation, thus reempowering paralyzed object-parishioners. This process occurs most commonly within pastoral care and counseling, spiritual direction, and possibly within the weekly sequence of sermons. (Culbertson, 2000, p. 91)

However, as already noted, such containment is not always benign. Bion's model allows for maladaptive, "pathological containing" in which, in the worst sorts of projective identification, the one doing the projecting controls the container in such a way as to constrict the range and depth of what is contained (i.e., received, held, modulated, offered back) to exactly what the one projecting wants. Or the one projecting somehow renders meaningless any interventions that should happen to be made by the one being projected into (Ogden, 2004b, p. 1358). Either way, pathological, maladaptive projective identification will make every effort to evoke a response that confirms the fantasy of the one projecting, and will resist anything to the contrary.

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<sup>200</sup> Jon Mills understands this difference between Bion's "normal and abnormal valences" to be quantitative, rather than qualitative:

Drawing on Klein, pathological forms fall within a range of *excess*, such as the degree of aggressivity of splitting, hatred, intrusion, omnipotent control and fusion with the object, the amount of loss or defusion of the ego, and the specific awareness of destructive intent. Normal projective-identificatory processes, however, play an adaptive role in social reality and are ordinary operations of communication and empathy that transpire, furthermore, with the process of thinking itself (2000, p. 854, author's emphasis).

It is now possible to make some connections between this pathological sort of containing, and Christian anti-Jewishness. Returning first to The Wandering Jew (the legend), another way of looking at how it “worked” is to understand it as a receptacle into which Christians projected their anxiety, which the legend “contained” by “re-storying” that anxiety, and offering back for re-internalisation another story (itself, the legend) which was different from, but had strong links (via unconscious association) with, the first story which clothed the initial anxiety. This, as has been said, is analogous to how a mother takes her infant’s anxiety or rage, or a therapist might take a client’s feeling, and soothes it by re-framing it in some way, and then offering it back.

As discussed at some length in chapter three, the period during which the legend emerged in Europe was a time of terrifying change. When life felt simply too fraught, one way of coping would have been to tell a story, such as the legend of The Wandering Jew with its implied message of something like: “Don’t worry...everything may be changing, but The Wandering Jew is still out and about, showing that the most important things never change. Don’t worry...like The Wandering Jew, and Jews in general, unpleasant things come along, but they go again, you’ll see. Hold onto your faith; as the story shows, God’s in control—has been from the beginning and will be until the end of time.”

It bears reiterating that the important difference from the sort of integrative, adaptive containing Sandler describes in the clinical situation, and Culbertson in the church at its best, is that in the case of the legend, while containment certainly did soothe Christian anxiety, it was at the expense of reinforcing the projected fantasy and increasing the unreality. The reason for all the anxiety, as has been seen, had little or nothing to do with Jews, per se, but with the social and cultural sea-change taking place throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. From our perspective, to blame the Jews was essentially maladaptive for those doing the projecting (Christians), caused huge collateral damage to those being projected upon (Jews), and is a classic example of pathological containing (Ogden) or projective identification in its abnormal valency (Bion). Similarly, the performance in the contemporary worship life of the church of anti-Jewish texts, as an unconscious antidote to Christian anxiety that its grandiose fantasies of supersession might be under threat, can also be understood as maladaptive in the context of the great social and cultural changes begun over the past half century. While performing stories like the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus

provides the church with the soothing it wants (that all the old truths still stand), the collateral damage is a continued flight from reality, and the unconscious subversion of better Jewish-Christian relations.

As McWilliams and Sandler have already been noted as saying, all this implies a very particular distance between Christians and Jews: close enough for the exchange to take place via projective identification, and for the evoked counter-transference to be unconsciously “visible” to those doing the projecting, thus apparently confirming the verisimilitude of what was being projected, but not so close (from the point of view of Christians) to allow too much reality to intrude and disconfirm the fantasy (Orr, 1946, p. 94). Volkan notes the paradox in this distance maintained between a group and its enemy (which he calls the “psychological gap”):

On a conscious level we find ways to establish and control the distance from the enemy, while on an unconscious one our aggression toward the enemy binds us to him. Thus, both consciously and unconsciously, we become preoccupied with the enemy; in a sense, this makes for a closeness between us. (Volkan, 1986, pp. 176-7)

Therefore, as McWilliams points out, nothing about the projector’s choice and positioning of a particular target is due to happenstance; the person concerned works at it to make his or her projections “fit” the projective target (1994, p. 210).<sup>201</sup> Often this was done physically, by having Jews live in a separate quarter of town (Haverkamp, 1995; Rabb, 1995).

However, as Bauman notes (1989, p. 36), this was seldom enough. “Territorial distance had to be therefore supplemented by a thoroughly codified ritual aimed at formalizing and functionalizing such relations as could not be avoided.” The important point to remember, Bauman continues, “is that all such apparently antagonistic measures were at the same time vehicles of social integration”. All these varied practices aimed at creating a distance between Jews and the host group that was at one and the same time “safe”, and—as far as possible—unbridgeable.

To recap, the template for all this, psychoanalysis contends, is laid down in infancy in the carefully (if unconsciously) managed mix of fantasy and reality that is the “holding

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<sup>201</sup> As discussed in the introduction, the Christian choice of targeting Jews in particular for their projections relates to the close relationship between Judaism and Christianity over the first couple of centuries CE, one which seems to have haunted the church ever since. Although he did not expound on the idea to any extent, Freud understood this in terms of what he called “the narcissism of minor differences” (Freud, 1930, p. 114). The possible role of narcissistic styles of mental process in the production of anti-Jewish fantasies is considered in the next section of this chapter.

environment”, the interactive psychic space between parent and infant, where the latter learns to negotiate one of the most fraught journeys of life: between non-being and being. It is a lesson in survival that the human being learns well and, especially during times that have a similarly fraught feel about them, the strategy of coping by being “close enough” (i.e., “close, but not too close”) is employed—at least in outline—over and over again.

### **5.2.3 The analytic third**

As the discussions so far imply, there is a mutuality about projective identification understood as intersubjective, which Schore summarises thus:

Current developmental models... emphasize the fact that projective identification, both in the developmental and the therapeutic context, is not a uni-directional, but a bi-directional process in which both members of an emotionally communicating dyad act in a context of mutual reciprocal influence. (Schore, 2002a, p. 11)

The mutuality of this model is very different from most of those implied in past psychoanalytic practice. Freud regarded psychoanalysis as a form of treatment (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. xvi)—something he did with his “patients” from a position of benign disinterest. In North America particularly, psychoanalysis was thoroughly medicalised up until recently.

The American medical establishment laid claim to psychoanalysis and ran it monopolistically. Thus the impression that psychoanalytic ideas were by their nature esoteric, highly technical, and accessible only to the officially initiated partially reflected the political elitism and financial interests of those who benefited from maintaining the impression that psychoanalysis was a highly technical medical specialty. (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. xxi)

As in many other fields, there has been a more democratic spirit abroad in psychoanalysis over the last two or three decades. This is reflected not only in changes in therapeutic training and practice (e.g., a re-evaluation of the role of the counter-transference in therapy), but also in theory. New assumptions about the sort of mutuality and reciprocity in the analytic relationship Schore describes above have led to fresh theoretical directions in psychoanalysis, one of which recognises the co-production in the inter-subjective field of what is termed the “analytic third”.

The idea of the analytic third is usually credited as being Thomas Ogden's "original concept" (Fintzy, 1995, ¶ 4), although it has a history of its own (Hanly, 2004).<sup>202</sup> Ogden, nevertheless, is acknowledged as one of the significant voices articulating this new direction in psychoanalytic theory. He defines the analytic third thus:

This third subjectivity, the intersubjective analytic third... is a product of a unique dialectic generated by (between) the separate subjectivities of analyst and analysand within the analytic setting (Ogden, 1994, p. 4)<sup>203, 204</sup>

This raises an immediate difficulty in the current context: in the literature to date, it appears that ideas of the analytic third have been discussed only in terms of the therapeutic relationship, and that they have yet to find their way out of the consulting room to inform discussions of other sorts of personal relationship, perhaps even social relations. This is hardly surprising, as Ogden's writing on the analytic third is barely a decade old, is practice oriented, and has only recently started to stimulate discussion among others on the subject. In time, it should be expected that like earlier psychoanalytic ideas which at first belonged exclusively within the context of analysis, ideas of the analytic third will eventually find their way into broader psychological discourse. But right now, while there is an intuitive appeal to the idea that the analytic third might possibly shed light on "the Jew" as an unconsciously-generated "third" within the intersubjective space generated by the bi-directional projective identifications of Christians and Jews, the extant literature barely hints that this might be a possible future direction.

Before moving on to push the current boundaries a little, it first needs to be acknowledged that the advent of the whole idea of the analytic third is not going

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<sup>202</sup> Hanly (2004) and Green (2004) between them give a comprehensive overview of the history of the idea. However, as already noted, and as Ogden acknowledges, it was Bion who transformed Klein's idea that projection identification is intersubjective, and that, furthermore, something "larger and potentially more generative than either of the participants (in isolation from each other) is capable of [being] generat[ed]" (Ogden, 2004a, p. 190).

<sup>203</sup> Sometimes called "the subjugating third", "since this form of intersubjectivity has the effect of subsuming within it, to a very large degree, the individual subjectivities of the participants" (Ogden, 2004a, p. 187).

<sup>204</sup> Ogden explains how the individual subjectivities "make way" for, or "give space" to the analytic third, thus: Projective identification is a process by which the individual subjectivities of both projector and recipient are being negated in different ways: the projector is disavowing an aspect of himself that he imagines to be evacuated in the recipient while the recipient is participating in a negation of himself by surrendering to (making room for) the disavowed aspect of the subjectivity of the projector. (Ogden, 2004a, pp. 188-9)

This latter is a process prior to objectification sometimes called "de-subjectification". Although he does not specifically use the term, this is one of the main themes of all Rosenman's writings. By way of illustration Rosenman quotes George Orwell's *1984*: "Big Brother... foretells Winston Smith's capitulation under torture: 'You will be hollow. We will squeeze you empty and then we shall fill you with ourselves'" (2003, p. 525).

unchallenged, even clinically, let alone in “applied” terms. Charles Hanly, for example, believes that, philosophically, it creates more problems than it solves: “That psychoanalysis is a process, who could doubt? That it is greater than the conscious volition or detailed comprehension of analyst and analysand need not be in doubt either.” But, he says:

What *can* be doubted is that there is a third participant making up the process, a co-created subjectivity of some sort, with some kind of life of its own. Aristotle’s classic third-man critique of Plato’s forms would appear to apply here. It is an infinite regress argument. Since the analyst and analysand co-create a first relational third, the analyst will have to form some kind of relation with this third. But this relation will co-create a *second* relational third, and so on, ad infinitum. The same will apply to the analysand. I can understand that psychoanalysts might not be as impressed as philosophers by the problems posed for theories by infinite regression arguments. They do indicate serious logical and conceptual flaws in theories when they apply. (Hanly, 2004, pp. 287-8, author's emphases)

Would it not be simpler and more satisfactory, he asks, just to assume there are two people there, one in need of help and the other there to help?

Hanly may well be correct from a philosophical point of view. But what he evidently fails to take into account is that what those like Ogden are reporting is that a relational third *is* sometimes present, but (to date, at least) there is *no* “second relational third”, or anyone else. Perhaps, in time, the idea of the analytic third may need to be conceptually refined to take account of theoretical issues such as those raised by Hanly, and others. But one thing seems clear: while Ogden and others may not have “discovered” the analytic third, a new inference has emerged in the last decade or so that is provoking considerable interest (Mitchell & Aron, 1999, p. 459-460), because it gives every indication of being most useful, not only in therapeutic practice, but perhaps also to describe other relationships more adequately—including Jewish-Christian relations.

Taking up this latter possibility now, there is an encouraging sign of a connection between the idea of the analytic third and the anti-Jewish constructed other, in the similarity between the way the two are discussed. There appears to be a dialectical tension in the way The Wandering Jew (the character), and the analytic third are both talked about. Both seem to need to be understood as simultaneously the product of subjective, unconscious mental processes (i.e., a fictive construction, albeit a meaningful one), but at the same time “real”. Thus with respect to the analytic third, on the one hand Cohen and Schermer understand the language to be metaphorical: “We hold...that the phenomenology of the intersubjective field

is partly ‘apperceptive’ (on the periphery of awareness), being composed of *metaphorical* allusions conveyed by imagery and other symbolic representations” (2004, p. 583, authors' emphasis). “The ‘analytic third’,” they say later, is: “an eloquent personification of intersubjective convergence as it might be experienced by the parties to the therapeutic dyad” (2004, pp. 591-2). Green similarly believes that it is a “symbolic activity” to discuss a “third” (2004, pp. 106-7).

This seems to suggest that, in calling the third a symbol, already the idea has segued into some realm of meaning other than the purely semantic. John Rowan, discussing the strong empathy that sometimes develops between therapist and client—he uses Bion’s term “linking” (Bion, 1959)—calls it “an in-between state, where *images* take the place of language” (1998, p. 249, my emphasis). “Images”, also, seem to me to have one foot somewhere other than in the purely descriptive, even the figuratively descriptive. Ogden ups the ante a notch further when he talks of this “difference” (that which is other than analyst and analysand) in terms of the analytic third seeming to “take on a life of its own” (Ogden, 1999, p. 487). Culbertson, speaking from an object relations perspective, similarly observes that, in a sense, “object relations take on a life of their own as independent agencies capable of generating their own internal dialogic narrative in a subjective terrain” (2000, p. 75). The third, furthermore, not only seems to have a life of its own, but like *The Wandering Jew* it is an “embodied” reality. While neither analyst nor analysand could literally produce a person who is the analytic third, at least for those inside the loop of their unconscious, interpersonal interaction, it is not exactly a phantom either, as Ogden reports that “the analyst’s and the patient’s experience in and of the analytic third spans the full range of human emotion and its attendant thoughts, fantasies, bodily sensations and so on” (1999, p. 488).

This sort of embodiedness, and the implied specificity of the analytic third (i.e., any particular analytic third will be the product of a particular transference and counter-transference) helps understand why—at the risk of sounding facetious—the *Wandering Jew* could not have been “*The Wandering Chinaman*”. As already discussed, Christians had both reasons (historical, religious), and the power (social, economic) to set Jews up as targets that “worked” in the bi-directional interchange that is projective identification. Put another way, the anti-Jewish constructed other—Sartre’s “inauthentic Jew”—is a highly particular product of the Jewish-Christian relationship. Christians had (and have) a need for Jews to

be, not like Jews at all, but a Christian fantasy of Jews. Christians also had the means to ensure that their fantasy was repeatedly confirmed and sustained by, for example, creating the sorts of “holding environment” that served to soothe Christian anti-Jewish anxieties. This Christian fantasy of Jews, acted out by Jews, emerged from, but was something other than, a simple product of either or both faith communities. It was, in a way, some new thing, a “third” in the relationship. And once the tautological circle had been set up, the character in the legend could not have been anyone other than The Wandering Jew.

#### **5.2.4 Summary conclusion**

Some have reservations about the whole idea of the analytic third, and others might argue that Jews would need to be much more “present” in relation to Christians than they typically are in order for what is essentially an intersubjective model to be useful. However, it appears promising that the anti-Jewish constructed other (e.g., The Wandering Jew, the character) and the analytic third can be talked about in the same way, in that both can sustain more than one inherent meaning, and that these do not necessarily sit neatly together. What both are understood to *mean* (a metaphorical personification of some aspect(s) of unconscious interpersonal interaction) clearly is not all there is to either of them. What both *do*, in all their “thirdness”—in their apparently palpable embodiedness and life of their own—evidently adds another highly significant dimension to how they function in the analytic relationship (in the case of the third), and in Jewish-Christian relations (in the case of something like The Wandering Jew). There are hints, also, of other connections—the embodied nature of both the analytic third and the anti-Jewish constructed other, for example—all of which suggests that further research into socially “applied” versions of the analytic third may well prove fruitful for better understanding the aetiology and nature of the constructed other.

### **5.3 Christian anti-Jewishness: neurotic islands of narcissism and paranoia?**

To recollect, there is a second theoretical question: if Christian anti-Jewishness is nowadays understood as being too overdetermined to be categorised as psychopathological, how, then, is it to be understood? How does Christian anti-Jewishness fit with otherwise (generally speaking) relatively normal, good, mentally healthy lives?

### 5.3.1 Normal neuroticism

Nancy McWilliams, psychotherapist and author of one of the standard works on the subject (McWilliams, 1994), recounts that a friend of hers—someone with no experience in psychotherapy—once said he could not understand either her wish to spend hour after hour listening to other people’s problems, or her interest in writing a book on the subject. “It’s simple for me,” he said. “I have two categories for people: (1) nuts and (2) not nuts.” McWilliams says she responded by saying that psychoanalytic theory (which assumes that everyone is irrational to some degree) also has two basic attributions: (1) how nuts? and (2) nuts in what particular way? (1994, p. 40). The common, though somewhat imprecise, term “neurotic” (Colman, 2001, p. 488) can be understood to refer to the mix of fantasy and reality constituting normal subjectivity that McWilliams is talking about.

From Freud onwards, the psychoanalytic community has understood that mental health does not fall into some sort of binary (“nuts/not nuts”, as McWilliams’ friend so piquantly put it), but is more helpfully thought of as a continuum, from psychopathological at one end to relatively healthy at the other.<sup>205</sup> One of the conclusions Freud drew at the end of his discussion of the parapraxes was that: “If we compare them to the products of the psychoneuroses...two frequently repeated statements—namely, that the borderline between the normal and the abnormal in nervous matters is a fluid one, and we are all a little neurotic—acquire meaning and support” (1901, p. 278).

There are many psychological processes understood to be psychotic at one end of the spectrum and more or less neurotic in the middle, which at the other end of the continuum are not just “normal”, but are now known to be essential to human development, functioning, and social organisation. The “splitting” discussed in previous chapters, for example, is in one sense an unhealthy way of coping with adult stress, because it does so by retreating into what is very likely some sort of unreality (e.g., “I’m totally right and you’re totally wrong. Always.”). But there is also a positive aspect to splitting because, as a primitive mental process, it is one of the ways the infant begins to sort the vast amount of

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<sup>205</sup> The development of this model is generally associated with Object Relationist Otto Kernberg (Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 64). Given the complexity of what is understood by “mental health” these days, a single straight line representing all the possibilities is now probably an inadequate image. Marion Milner, for example, talks about people who are cognitively sane but emotionally mad (1987, p. 287). But for the purposes of the current discussion (understanding the ways in which everyone is more or less neurotic), the “continuum” model will do. McWilliams offers a comprehensive description of what she calls the “neurotic—borderline—psychotic spectrum” (1994, pp. 53-66, 92-3).

sensory information it is presented with, without which it would simply be overwhelmed (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 112-3; Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 259).<sup>206</sup> Narcissism and paranoia (discussed below) are two further examples of styles of mental processing that are understood to be only quantitatively, rather than qualitatively, different across the psychological spectrum.

### 5.3.2 Neurotic styles

While acknowledging that normal psychological styles traverse a wide range on the neurotic spectrum, and are highly complex and fluid, the psychoanalytic community nevertheless generally understands that each person is organised into some sort of psychological whole. While each person is psychologically unique, and more protean than is usually given credit, the ways in which most think, feel, and behave cluster to form patterns, variously termed “personality styles” or “character types” (S. M. Johnson, 1994; McWilliams, 1994, p. 147; Westen & Gabbard, 1999, p. 82). The common names of these categories—for example, narcissistic, paranoid, depressive, and so forth (McWilliams, 1994, pp. xv-xvii)—are a kind of shorthand which implicitly refers to a person’s, or a group’s, habitual defensive pattern (McWilliams, 1994, p. 96).

While many have found great utility over the years in being able to discuss various styles of mental organisation in such broad categorical terms, as might be expected, the very idea has been vigorously contested over recent years. Walter Mischel’s (1968) assertion, for example, that the usefulness of broad dispositional personality variables has been seriously overstated had the effect of “a bombshell” at the time, say Winter and Barenbaum (1999, pp. 18-19), the result being that nearly four decades on—in some circles at least—the whole idea of “personality type” is still not congenial.<sup>207</sup> However, in spite of critiques like this, which seem mainly to be around (thoroughly legitimate) concerns about “pigeonholing” people—that it sets up a hierarchical power relationship in reductionist, de-humanising ways—the extent of the current literature on the subject seems evidence of a broad acceptance, still, that it is useful to be able to talk in terms of personality style or type. In any

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<sup>206</sup> See also N. Gregory Hamilton (1992b, pp. 94-95) for a discussion of splitting and projective identification in “better-integrated patients” compared with those with “borderline personality organization”.

<sup>207</sup> A clinical psychologist acquaintance of mine, for example, will not have a bar of the idea of “personality types”. In his view, people are simply too complex for the idea to have any significant meaning.

case, the academic world has moved on considerably from when Mischel aired his concerns. First, there is a better understanding of the great complexity of ideas of personality (e.g., Brinich & Shelley, 2002, p. 22), part of which (secondly) is an increased appreciation of the significance of the interaction between personality and context (e.g., Winter & Barenbaum, 1999, pp. 19-20).<sup>208</sup>

Part of the complexity lies in the understanding that no one has only one personality; everyone can be, like Dr Jekyll/Mr Hyde, different people (as it were) for different occasions. The psychoanalytic understanding of the aetiology of this is that, under ordinary circumstances, during the course of normal infant and childhood development, human beings learn a wide range of ways of mental organisation which—as has already been said more than once—lay down mental templates that last for life. Each person, then, to some extent carries in his or her everyday life some proportion of those patterns of thinking/feeling/behaving that, were they not normal, might be called (for example) narcissistic, paranoid, and so forth. With maturity, secondary processes come to overlay primary processes, but do not displace them. Secondary defensive processes modulate, in various “higher order” ways (McWilliams, 1994, p. 98), primitive processes which nevertheless remain unconsciously present. Marion Milner, reflecting on a lifetime in psychoanalytic practice, and borrowing a turn of phrase from elsewhere,<sup>209</sup> talks about this as “the suppressed madness of sane men”.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Another way entirely of addressing the criticism that the idea of any sort of “general personality type” could be construed as yet another way in which people are psychologically labelled, is to make a hermeneutical shift away from the essentialist, ontological categorisation implied by the idea of character type (e.g., “this person is a masochist”), to a semiotics-based understanding that regards each personal narrative as having some sort of leitmotif, or belonging to one genre or another. It matters not, says Bruner, whether these are understood as literary conventions, as “built into the human genome”, or as “as an invariant set of plights to which we all react in a necessary way” (Bruner, 1987, p. 18), because if the intention is, above all, to be emancipatory then the issue becomes: To what extent does gathering the ways we think, feel and behave into patterns, for which we believe often thick correlates can be posited, help us to understand who we are? For example (still in narratological mode), does it help for me to understand the story of my life as broadly lyric, or maybe epic, or even tragic? Switching to psychological mode, it certainly helps my self-understanding that, as a sort of first order approximation, I am probably a “schizoid-depressive” type (McWilliams, 1994). To understand myself as schizoid-depressive, however, I do not regard as determinative of how I will think, feel or act in any given situation (although perhaps broadly predictive). Such sort of self-awareness *does*, however, mean that I might act less reflexively in any given situation.

<sup>209</sup> From an essay of the same title by George Santayana (Milner, 1987, p. 295).

<sup>210</sup> Frosh (1991) discusses at considerable length the debates (especially the views of postmodernists like Foucault and Lacan) over whether psychosis might rather, or equally, be a flight into sanity as into madness. While there is much to be gained from taking such a view seriously, says Frosh, particularly because it provides a powerful counterweight to idealising tendencies, he nevertheless concludes that “there are few who

In object relations terms, the psychic self consists of a constellation of object-selves (which might be named narcissistic, paranoid, etc.), any one of which is capable of being activated, or becoming more dominant than usual, depending on context, or the particular stress of the moment. Winter and Barenbaum use the analogy of a series of Windows computer applications:

Over time, different personality “applications” are installed, opened, moved between foreground and background, modified, closed, even deleted. Although the sum total of available “personality” elements may have limits that are specifiable (though perhaps unique for each person), the current “on-line” personality may be complex and fluid. (Winter & Barenbaum, 1999, p. 20)

Personality is not something we carry around with us and express everywhere, say Westen and Gabbard. Quoting Mischel and Shoda (1995), they say (1999, p. 73) that personality processes are, rather, “*if...then...contingencies*, in which particular circumstances—including external situations as well as conscious and unconscious configurations of meaning—elicit particular ways of thinking, feeling or behaving” (see also Culbertson, 2000, pp. 75, 81; Hamilton, 1992b, p. 94; Meissner, 1978, p. 98; Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 303-6).

R. L. Stevenson’s (1886/1998) character Dr Jekyll/Mr Hyde, mentioned above, is a physician whose “dark side” emerges and becomes increasingly dominant under the influence of some experimental substance. The popular appeal of this story, then and since, suggests it is well-understood—implicitly at least—that some sort of anti-social malevolence lurks deep within the best of us, potentially at least. The Jekyll/Hyde character ends up a psychopath, and so—other merits aside—the story does not provide a useful image of the sort of normal neurotic behaviour under discussion here.

Metaphors which might be more useful are somewhat few and far between. What is wanted is some sort of image showing the relationship between, on the one hand, who we normally are as whole persons, and on the other, particular ways we might behave on occasion. This latter, in one sense, might seem “out of character”, but in another way (from a psychoanalytic perspective) is perfectly understandable, predictable even. Winter and Barenbaum’s image of opening and closing computer applications software has already been

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would celebrate the dissolution of the whole structure of the psyche [as] psychosis is a process of shutting out experience that denies the subject any encounter with reality, relegating her or him to impotent brawls with hallucinated desires” (1991, p. 189).

noted. A number of writers refer to H. Rosenfeld's term "psychotic islands" in the personality (e.g., S. Klein, 1980; Lechevalier, 2004), but there is little further information.<sup>211</sup> Sydney Klein says he prefers to characterise these "islands" as autistic,<sup>212</sup> rather than psychotic, as—at least in the form he encountered them as a clinician—they seem to constitute "an almost impenetrable cystic encapsulation of part of the self which cuts the patient off from...the rest of his personality" (1980, p. 395). These autistic phenomena, Klein goes on to say, are characterised by a mute and implacable resistance to change, underlying which he believes lies intense anxiety in reaction to real or feared separation (1980, p. 399).<sup>213</sup> However, for all that they help, both the Windows and the "island" metaphors fail to communicate fully the sense of essential relatedness between the sorts of normal and abnormal psychology under discussion here.

Alicia Etchegoyen, in a discussion of fanaticism, goes one step further than Rosenfeld or Klein in characterising these psychic islands not as psychotic or autistic, but as necrotic. The sorts of fanatics under discussion appear to operate out of a particular psychic space which is not merely atrophied, or cut off, but dead. Clinically, Etchegoyen says what is found is that:

the person suffering from fanaticism experiences no anxiety, violence or aggression in relation to the fanatic ideas. The violent actions that are usually carried out under the influence of fanatic ideas are not registered as such by perpetrators. The lack of human emotion and concern (the "freezing fire") is not the result of defensive psychological process. It is like a "psychological area of necrosis".  
(Etchegoyen, 1997, p. 835)

Most of this, however, while not named as pathological in the literature, still seems a long way from the sorts of relatively normal psychological processes underlying the anti-Jewishness of ordinary church folk discussed in this thesis. As I have already observed, my experience in a variety of mainstream churches is that the majority are not "fanatical" about anything, and that to characterise Christian anti-Jewishness as proceeding out of a psychic space that is psychotic, autistic or necrotic (mad, numb, or dead) seems too far out towards the psychopathological end of the spectrum. I would suggest instead that these islands could

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<sup>211</sup> By all accounts, Rosenfeld's use of the term was during an unpublished 1978 lecture delivered to the Société Psychoanalytique de Paris, and so further information is not generally available.

<sup>212</sup> Lechevalier (2004), in discussions along the same lines as Klein, talks about "autistic enclaves".

<sup>213</sup> This emphasises, yet again, the profound unconscious significance around experiences of belonging/not belonging, as discussed in the previous chapter (4.3.2).

be better characterised as “neurotic islands”, in the sense of representing a subjective world, or worlds, that are some mix of reality and fantasy. These neurotic islands may, in addition have what might be called cultures, each of which is different and distinctive. They may be, for example, neurotic islands of narcissism and paranoia which (as discussed shortly) provide particularly fertile ground for the construction of Christian anti-Jewishness.

Another type of image entirely derives from what Meissner calls the “paranoid spike” (1978, p. 98), which could be understood more generally—not applying just to paranoia—and called, perhaps, a “psychic spike”. While the author does not elucidate greatly, the analogy he seems to be drawing is between psychological processes and the mains electricity supply. Like our psychic structures, the latter is simply “there” all the time, unobtrusively doing its job. Occasionally, something like a lightning strike, or a fault, might produce a sudden surge called a “voltage spike” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003, p. 1709). The voltage spike is essentially no different from the normal mains electricity supply; only quantitatively so. However, it is real, there is always potential for another event, and especially if running a computer without spike protection, it can certainly get one’s attention, but—generally speaking—such spikes are uncharacteristic of how the electricity supply behaves most of the time. The example of the “paranoid spike” that Meissner gives from what he calls “the psychopathology of everyday life”<sup>214</sup> is the inclination to look for others to blame in the face of disappointment (especially, he says, over “expectations of advantage or advancement”), rather than own to feelings of inadequacy and weakness (1978, p. 98). The point Meissner’s image emphasises is that, high amplitude or small, such a “paranoid spike” is not alien in any way, but derives from mental processes learned by all from a very early age, and unconsciously remembered. As an image, this is its main advantage compared with those of Windows and “islands”. Its main shortcoming is that the transitory nature of a “spike” is somewhat at odds with the ubiquitous and enduring nature of Christian anti-Jewishness.

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<sup>214</sup> As noted in an earlier chapter, the phrase is Freud’s. However, Meissner (along with many other writers in the field) does not use it in the strictly Freudian sense (which refers only to the *parapraxes*), but more broadly, meaning the sort of “normal neuroticism” discussed under 5.3.1, above.

### **5.3.3 Narcissism and paranoia**

In the psychoanalytically-oriented literature on anti-Jewishness, among all the styles of mental organisation, those commonly termed “narcissistic” and “paranoid” receive mention again and again, implying that these two might be particularly relevant to understanding anti-Jewishness. For example, recollect that Meissner (2000) understands paranoia to be of prime psychological significance in the way Christianity emerged out of Judaism in the first century or so of the common era, and Werman (1988) believes Freud underestimates the importance of narcissistic envy in fuelling inter-group hatred.

For reasons outlined in the introduction to this thesis, it is now generally understood that labelling Christian anti-Jewishness as “psychopathological” is not helpful, as it obscures what is nowadays understood to be an overdetermined problem, and effectively closes off the possibility of some practicable solution. However, as already discussed (5.3.1, above), to characterise behaviour as narcissistic or paranoid is not necessarily to pathologise it, as both these defensive styles are understood to exist on a continuum, in a way that “psychopathology” does not (at least, not in the context of these discussions). So, before drawing together various aspects of the argument so far to consider how—if not “psychopathological”—Christian anti-Jewishness might usefully be characterised, it seems important to note some of the relevant features of narcissistic and paranoid styles of mental organisation.

#### **5.3.3.1 Narcissism**

Somewhere towards the less healthy end of the psychological spectrum, narcissism becomes Narcissistic Personality Disorder, the essential features of which are “a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy” (DSM-IV, 1994, pp. 714-717).

However, as with psychological defending in general (see 5.3.1, above), there is a presumption shared by almost all theorists of narcissism that “there is a continuum between pathological and normal narcissism, and that even the most extreme manifestations of pathological narcissism are not entirely alien to normal narcissists” (Alford, 1988, p. 70). From Freud onwards, one of the key psychoanalytic assumptions is that—again, in common with most of the defences—there is a continuity of narcissism throughout life (Alford, 1988, p. 66). It is understood to have its roots in ego instincts of infancy, which have a self-

focused concern for “the preservation and continuance of the safety and bodily integrity of the individual” (Monte & Sollod, 2003, p. 89) which persists in the form of varying degrees of self-preoccupation.

Not surprisingly, Freud’s “On Narcissism” (1914) is the basis of almost all the subsequent discussions of this topic. Theoretical developments since then, associated with names like (inter alia) Klein, Kohut, and Chasseguet-Smirgey, are well documented (e.g., Alford, 1988, pp. 65-71), as are clinical aspects (e.g., McWilliams, 1994, chap. 8), so a comprehensive discussion of the subject here would be superfluous. However, there are two themes running through the literature on narcissism that seem to have a bearing on the sort of anti-Jewishness currently under discussion. The first is the grandiosity that DSM-IV says is *the* distinguishing feature of narcissism (1994, p. 716), which connects with discussions on the grandiosity of the church in the introduction to this thesis (1.4.5). To recollect, those like Scott Bader-Saye (2001), and Luke Timothy Johnson (2003) believe that lingering, imperialistic fantasies of omnipotence of which the church is barely aware lie behind the contemporary church’s ambivalence towards Jewish-Christian relations. Kathleen Biddick (2003) says that such grandiose, superseditionary ideas (especially towards Jews and Judaism) have, typologically, been one of the cornerstones of church belief since Paul’s “circumcision of the body/heart” right through to the present day. If these recent theorists are correct, then there is a potential commonality—as yet largely unexplored, it would seem—in the fantasies of omnipotence lying at the core of both narcissistic styles of mental organisation, and the church’s life. To put it another way, new psychological understandings about the way the church mentally organises its life (e.g., narcissistically) may open a door to fresh insights into, not only what the church believes, but *why* it believes the way it does.

To stay with the church’s fantasies of omnipotence for now, in the introduction to this thesis the idea was advanced that behind these lie all manner of fears and anxieties (especially in relation to the Judaism out of which Christianity emerged), which are “written in” to the texts of the early church, and implicit in narratives such as the Passion story and Jesus’ supposed excoriation of the Pharisees. Although some argue that New Testament texts like these are not intrinsically anti-Jewish, the evidence is that they are easily interpreted as such, long have been by the church, and still are. As discussed at length in chapters three and four, with the performance of such texts in church, these unconscious

terrors with their (at least potentially) associated anti-Jewishness, are reiterated in every generation of churchgoers by hooking into unconsciously associated, primitive fears and anxieties. Similarly, it would seem, for those who are excessively narcissistically preoccupied, underneath the belief that they are “superior, special, unique, and expect to be recognised as such”, lies an “almost invariably fragile self-esteem” making them hypersensitive to criticism or defeat, and likely to react “with disdain, rage, or defiant counter-attack” (DSM-IV, 1994, pp. 714-5). As with paranoid personality organisation, projective identification is the classic defense of the narcissist, building up fantasies of omnipotence by attributing disowned traits (real and/or fantasised) in the self to the other, and forcing the other to behave in conformity with those expectations (Vaknin, 1999). The behaviour associated with this pair of complementary defences which are classic of narcissism—idealisation of the self (“grandiosity”), and devaluation of the other (McWilliams, 1994, p. 173)—is an apt description the church’s behaviour in relation to Jews and Judaism, almost from the beginning, in most places, for most of the past two millennia.

As the previous paragraph suggests, narcissism is an expression of concerns around fundamental distinctions between self and others (Alford, 1988, p. 70), which introduces the second theme that seems to have some bearing on the nature of the church’s anti-Jewishness: the *style* of the church’s relationship with Jews and Judaism. As Freud (1930) and others have noted, the narcissist (in all of us) feels threatened, not by the other with whom there is little in common, but by the one who is nearly like ourselves, who threatens our narcissistic sense of uniqueness, perfection and superiority. As Langmuir (among many others) points out, from early on, Christianity understood itself to be in a unique relationship with Judaism, quite unlike any of Judaism’s previous relationships with non-Christian Persians, Greeks and Romans. The use of “sibling rivalry” as an image for Jewish-Christian relations has already been noted in the introduction to this thesis. And, still, the church often speaks of Jews as “separated brothers”,<sup>215</sup> says Langmuir, “a term with peculiar biological and gender overtones that underlines both the separation and the deep dependence of Christian identity on Jewish beliefs” (1990, pp. 6-7). Clearly there are differences between

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<sup>215</sup> Langmuir does not offer an example, but this term is to be found (for example) in the fourth to last paragraph of a statement from the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris (but datelined Rome), marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (Lustiger, 2005). Lustiger may have borrowed the term from Walter Cardinal Kasper on a similar, earlier occasion (Cunningham, 2003).

Christianity and Judaism but, all along, Christian anxiety has been not over what separates the two faiths, but the too-close similarities—what Freud called “the narcissism of minor differences”.

Volkan, taking an object relations approach, attributes the psychological aetiology of narcissism (and the narcissism of minor differences, in particular) to the persistence throughout life of what he calls “unmended” (i.e., unintegrated) “good” and “bad” part-self-images and part-object-images (1986, pp. 183-4).<sup>216</sup> What, in turn, often lie behind this, McWilliams suggests, are “early disappointments in relationship.” This echoes longstanding ideas in the psychoanalytic literature that various degrees of abusive parenting lie at the heart of much anti-Jewishness (Adorno et al., 1950; Rosenman, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2003).

In summary, there appear to be connections between psychoanalytical understandings of narcissism and the church’s anti-Jewishness, in that both are organised around a central fantasy of grandiosity, underlying which are all manner of fears and anxieties, commonly expressed as rage against the other, often—ironically—because of close similarities, not great differences, and both perhaps having their roots in profound, early relational disappointments. This would seem to suggest that, among the many more or less neurotic islands that constitute the archipelago of the human unconscious and, by extension, a social organisation like the church, an island which is distinctly narcissistic in culture can be understood as providing fertile ground for Christian anti-Jewishness.

Freud was inclined to regard the narcissism of minor differences as a “relatively harmless satisfaction of the inclination to aggression” (1930, p. 114). This is a view that both Gabbard (1993, p. 235) and David S. Werman take issue with:

Although it most often does manifest itself in such a manner, i.e., as a banal form of aggression in everyday life, the history of the last half century, if not of preceding millennia, suggests that the narcissism of minor differences has a malignant potential to erupt in vast bloodbaths which have even reached the level of genocide. One can no longer, for example, regard the antagonism of the Aryan for the Semite as a benign event. (Werman, 1988, p. 457)

It is the very banality of narcissism, Werman concludes (1988, p. 458), which makes it appear, if not normal, at least unworthy of serious examination. But it is for precisely this reason that this elusive and well-defended phenomenon invites further study.

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<sup>216</sup> See 5.2.2 of the previous chapter for a discussion of splitting, and part and whole objects.

### 5.3.3.2 Paranoia

Paranoid styles of mental organisation receive extensive discussion in the literature (e.g., McWilliams, 1994, chap. 10; Meissner, 1978; D. Shapiro, 1965), so no more than a brief introduction is necessary before moving on to themes that might shed some light on the anti-Jewishness of the church. The defining characteristic of paranoia, says McWilliams, “involves experiencing inside as if it were outside the self” (1994, p. 205, footnote). Excessively paranoid people see their source of suffering as the ill will of others, and are as sensitive as burnt skin to anything they perceive as directed towards them. Approaching the most unhealthy end of the spectrum, “the essential feature of Paranoid Personality Disorder is a pattern of pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent” (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 634). Like narcissists, paranoids are typically hypersensitive around issues of relative power, rank and position (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 173-4; D. Shapiro, 1965, p. 185). Projection and projective identification are generally regarded as typical of narcissism, but are understood to be *the* characteristic and basic psychological mechanisms employed in paranoid states (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 209-210).

To a greater extent than most other psychological styles, paranoia ranges across a wide spectrum of intensities (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 93, 205; Meissner, 1978, pp. 96-8). The very act of self-consciousness—for example, “I (subject) think, therefore I am (object)” —involves essentially the same psychic processes as what, by McWilliams’ definition (above), characterises paranoid styles of psychopathology. The same mechanism underlying the severe paranoia of Daniel Paul Schreber, who in his anti-Jewish delusion believed (inter alia) that he was turning into some effeminate version of The Wandering Jew (Freud, 1911), in its attenuated form also motivates humans to form community with those like themselves (although, concomitantly, to devalue and reject those not like themselves). The pathological distortion (of paranoid processes) is very likely a matter of quantitative variation rather than qualitative difference, says Meissner, and a dividing line is difficult to draw (1978, pp. 97-8).

Like other styles of mental organisation, paranoia has its roots in developmental processes of infancy. In fact, some theorists have regarded paranoia as the most primitive mental state. Hegel’s view that “the most primitive, wild and uncultured mental condition of the human being is one of exclusive psychological self-centeredness and extreme

defensiveness” (Wicks, 2003, p. 145), according to Mills (2003, p. 32), later helped shape Lacan’s understanding of the unconscious, pre-linguistic world of the infant as paranoid, in the sense that the very process of knowing is a threat to the self. Henceforth, and for the whole of our lives, Mills concludes (interpreting Lacan):

Whether paranoid acquisitions arise in the fragmented images and dissociated impulses that characterize the experience of the incipient ego, in the imaginary relations governing fantasy, wish, conflict, and defense, or in our confrontation with the Other, the epistemic-phenomenological process of “knowing” is dynamically informed by unconscious paranoid pressures. (Mills, 2003, p. 47)

Thus the paranoia of later life, whether relatively healthy or unhealthy, is commonly understood to be a residue of “a time before the child had clarity about internal versus external events, where self and object were thus confused” (McWilliams, 1994, p. 205, footnote).

Literature on anti-Jewishness frequently takes recourse from theories on paranoia. For example, Meissner says something like the legend of The Wandering Jew (which, in broad terms, he would call a “myth”) is constructed in similar ways, and for similar reasons, as the fantasies of paranoid construction. Précised, Meissner’s argument (1978, pp. 119-120) is that myth accomplishes for the community what paranoid construction accomplishes for the individual. The myth was not history or an explanation of past events, he says. It was a lived reality in the present life of the community, expressing a form of thinking, and their beliefs. This sociological function overrides the historical function. Similarly, contends Meissner, the paranoid construction is not merely a cognitive explanation of the individual’s experiences or memories—it is a lived present conviction and active reality. In paranoid thinking, he says elsewhere (1978, pp. 117-8), the “subjective needs become the determining element rather than objective evidence or consensual agreement”. Shapiro concurs, saying that the subjective world of the paranoid person is a peculiar blend of the autistic and the factual, in which “the paranoid person can be absolutely right in his perception and absolutely wrong in his judgment” (1965, p. 64-5).

The legend of The Wandering Jew and paranoid constructions have similarities not only in what they do—creating narrative structures that both express and sustain the respective fantasies, and the subjective needs that underlie them—but also in their intensity of affect. The significance of the myth lies not in its content, Meissner continues, but rather

in the intensity and conviction with which it is experienced and believed. The analogous problem in the paranoid construction is not so much the content of what it asserts, but rather the intensity and conviction that lie behind it. Both bear the stamp of necessity, which reflects the intensity of the inner subjective needs that it expresses and from which it derives. We cannot gain any entrance to the significance of paranoid construction, Meissner concludes, until we can feel the dynamic force that lies behind it and gives it life. This echoes some of the observations in the previous chapter concerning Christian fantasies about Jews and Judaism, which are very likely to be highly charged, irrational, ambivalent, affect-laden, and corporeal.

Underneath the suspicious, untrusting, humourless, and “impressively rigid” (D. Shapiro, 1965, p. 56) mental world of the paranoid person—it almost goes without saying—lies an overwhelming terror of being harmed by others, particularly of being shamed and humiliated (McWilliams, 1994, p. 208). As a result, things like tenderness, playfulness and sexual pleasure are diminished (D. Shapiro, 1965, p. 78). Individuals with paranoid styles of mental organisation “often have problems with close relationships” (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 635), and thus can be preoccupied with severely restricting sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular (Pruyser, 1977/1991, p. 62). McWilliams attributes this to their confusing sexual desire with the need for closeness (1994, pp. 215-6, 223). Those with excessive paranoid preoccupation—which clinically, at least, is more common in males (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 636)—not unusually defend these fears of intimacy with hostile and deeply entrenched misogyny and homophobia. It needs also to be noted that gender relations, and attitudes to gay and lesbian people, like Jewish-Christian relations, remain highly problematic in the life of the church, which cannot be surprising, says Gilman (1985; 1993), given the close interrelationship of constructions of gender, sexuality, and “race” (including antisemitism).<sup>217</sup> What the literature appears not to pick up is that what these different sorts of mental construction have in common is that they all appear to be “made” in the same place: on one of the neurotic islands of contemporary culture named “paranoid”. Further exploration of constructions like those listed above, with reference to theories of

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<sup>217</sup> It is beyond the scope of these discussions, but a number of writers, Meissner (1978; 2000) in particular, find parallels between paranoid personality organisation and the culture of institutions such as the church. The extent to which exclusive and antagonistic paranoid attitudes must be generated as a means of sustaining and reinforcing the group’s ideology is a real and problematic question, Meissner says (1978, p. 813).

paranoia, and associated power issues, would appear to be another area for further research.<sup>218</sup>

#### **5.3.4 Anti-Jewishness: neurotic islands in the (worship) life of the church**

There is now a quantity of material to be gathered together. The original question was that if Christian anti-Jewishness is not to be regarded as a form of psychopathology, by most standards clearly it is not mentally healthy either, so how is it to be understood, psychoanalytically? This is asked, to recollect, not for the spurious satisfaction of replacing one nosology with another, but to try to understand more adequately how something like Christian anti-Jewishness fits with otherwise—by and large—good, relatively mentally healthy, Christian lives (Freud’s somewhat jaundiced view of the church notwithstanding).

To come up with an alternative to the psychopathological option, it is helpful to review from the beginning some of the key points of the discussion thus far. Given normal human development, everyone carries within them a wide spectrum of mental strategies, learned in the course of organising the deluge of sensory information and intrapsychic and interpsychic experience that constitute life for the first few weeks and months outside the womb. Over time, these mental strategies tend to coagulate—for a variety of reasons, differently for each person (McWilliams, 1994, pp. 97-8)—to become the neurotic style(s) of that person. This style, while unique and complex, nevertheless has much in common with the styles of others, and while characteristic of that particular person, is somewhat fluid, especially in relation to context.

This constellation of coping mechanisms (the primitive defences) is unconsciously remembered for the whole of life and, especially in times of stress, perhaps augmented by habit, there is a strong tendency to draw “instinctively” (i.e., using high-speed, mainly affectively-organised, unconscious mental processes) upon these primitive defence strategies, the rationale being that because they worked “then” (i.e., at some primal moment with a “life-or-death” feel about it), such strategies seem the best things to use again “now”.

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<sup>218</sup> The relationship between paranoia and anti-Jewishness appears to be both one of the most promising and most long neglected areas of research. In the middle of last century, Ackerman and Jahoda, in their clinical study of people with antisemitic attitudes (1950, pp. 56-73), listed a range of defences—projection, denial, substitution of aggression for anxiety, and rationalisation—which they found to be typical of the psychological style of their subjects. These (projection in particular) can be regarded as classic features of paranoid style personality organisation, and yet the authors seem not to make the connection and, apart from what has been noted, there has been little subsequent research.

Understood in this way, the defensive reactions of an individual or a community draw upon a particular part (or parts) of the broad palette of unconscious strategies that are part of our common humanity. The psychic construction that is The Wandering Jew (for example) needs to be understood not as a psychotic fantasy, but as a conscious derivative of a particular part of the normally operating (even if more active than usual), unconscious self. As has been seen, it is—as yet—a struggle to find a suitable metaphor to describe the relationship between, on the one hand, the normal self, with its vast, hidden repertoire of primitive coping mechanisms and, on the other, who one might “be” in some particular context, but the idea is clear among most theorists that the psychic space in which anti-Jewish fantasies like The Wandering Jew are constructed is different only in intensity, not in kind, from some patch of the broad psychic collage that constitutes the human unconscious.

As discussed at some length in previous chapters, there is a distinct particularity to this process: *particular* fantasies will often be evidence that *particular* primitive coping mechanisms have been evoked in response to *particular* anxieties. Recollect, for example, that the *wandering* of The Wandering Jew associatively correlates psychologically to primitive fears of not belonging, and culturally to the enormous sense of dislocation—intellectual, social and religious—pervading the late-mediaeval/early-modern period. Two particular psychoanalytical categories that repeatedly arise in discussions about Christian anti-Jewishness are narcissistic and paranoid styles of mental organisation. Given the understanding that seems to be emerging that it is grandiose fantasies of supersession that, still, drive much of the church’s agenda (and particularly, it has been argued, its anti-Jewishness), then theories of narcissism—which understand grandiosity to be at its core—would seem to have something to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of anti-Jewishness. Similarly, theories of paranoia, although more commonly invoked than other defences in discussions of anti-Jewishness, seem to be under-utilised, especially given that projection and projective identification are almost universally understood to be *the* classic defences used in the construction of both anti-Jewish and paranoid fantasies. The extant literature does make some of these connections, but the potential for theories of narcissism and paranoia to shed light on Christian anti-Jewishness appears as yet largely unexplored.

All of the above, then, give some sort of psychological context in which Christians construct Jews as other. To emphasise, the process is not to be understood as

psychopathological, but as employing psychic processes, and drawing upon unconscious content which, normally speaking, is common to all. Against this backdrop, in the life of the church—and during Christian worship especially—a mental process is set in train that has the effect of selecting, and bringing from the background to the foreground, particular aspects of unconscious knowledge and processes. Or, to use the image of the “psychic spike”: when provoked, some particular unconscious knowledge and processes (which are there all the time) become temporarily, and situationally, more active than usual.

The first step in the process is that church worship establishes a context analogous to that of “evenly suspended attention”, in which members of a congregation are likely to be more than usually attuned and responsive to whatever is being performed in church—for example, the reading aloud of a passage from the New Testament (see chap. 3). This increased sensitivity will be not only to what is explicit in the performance, but also (and perhaps especially) to “unconscious” elements. That is, participants may find themselves “caught up” in what is happening—emotionally moved, reacting in bodily ways, aware of similar reactions in others around about, thinking things, remembering things, and making spontaneous associations (both personal and supplied by the tradition).

Within this situation, particular sorts of texts are likely to evoke particular sorts of psychic spaces—that is, are likely to bring some element or dimension of the psyche from the general background into the active foreground. This is especially so if the texts are intrinsically affect-laden—such as the diatribe against the Pharisees that Matthew puts into the mouth of Jesus, or the Passion narratives, or the legend of The Wandering Jew—because before we learn anything else, we learn that affective communication is important, so important it sometimes has a life-or-death feel about it. Affect is also important in this process because it is the main associative link, or hook, in the performance of the text that reaches “down” or “back” into the unconscious, latching onto similar-feeling, primitive fears and anxieties, and strategies for defending against them, and then hauls them out of the Greek chorus of the general unconscious, to stand them “front-and-centre” of stage for a solo, duet, or whatever, at least for a time.

Particular texts are likely to conjure up particular sorts of psychic spaces, also, if participants have been taught, often and long, that these texts are very significant or important in some way. For example, while some theorists argue that the sorts of New

Testament texts cited above are not intrinsically anti-Jewish, almost all concede that the church has clearly interpreted them in this way for nearly two thousand years. And so participants in the performance of such texts are hearing not only (or perhaps even primarily) their plain meaning, but all the anti-Jewishness the texts have become freighted with in the course of centuries of church tradition. Christian anti-Jewishness has been around for many generations, so habit will tend to reinforce the way the performance of particular texts evoke particular responses. As discussed in the introduction, most churchgoers, still, spend their whole lives learning—implicitly, at least, and often explicitly also—the anti-Jewishness that the church has traditionally pegged onto the sorts of texts given as examples above.

To recollect, these sorts of psychic spaces in which Christians are able to construct and sustain their fantasies of Jews and Judaism are created out of the unconscious sediment of infant and childhood experience by complex processes, largely outside awareness. Some, as has been discussed, characterise these as “psychotic islands”, a place where an otherwise normal, mentally healthy person, or an institution such as the church, is in this particular matter highly irrational and disconnected from reality, is largely oblivious that this so, and defends vigorously against understanding this particular matter in any other way. In this latter sense, they may also be thought of as “autistic islands”, virtually impervious to outside influence—to being subverted, unsettled or educated against—a place where otherwise normally sensitive, relationally competent people seem unable to understand the significance of a particular, small cluster of thoughts, feelings and behaviour (such as their anti-Jewishness), let alone communicate any of it to others in a way that might make any sort of sense, except that it is in continuity with untold generations of the same behaviour (i.e., it is part of the tradition).

Perhaps in the case of contemporary Christian anti-Jewishness it overshoots the mark to characterise the mental space in which such fantasies are made and sustained as psychotic or autistic. But more or less neurotic they certainly seem to be, and the governance of these “neurotic islands” of Christian anti-Jewishness in the life of the church appears to be organised particularly around narcissistic and paranoid preoccupations. For example, the popular theological understanding (still) that only the church—and the Jewish people no longer—is the repository of the “one true faith”, bears the hallmarks of grandiose,

supersessionist narcissistic fantasy. Similarly, the popular idea (still) that any faith other than the church's is not only to be regarded with suspicion and devalued, it is to be ruthlessly and relentlessly campaigned against, is not only the flip side of narcissism, but especially in the urgent, "driven" feel of the church's need to convert or eliminate what it perceives as enemies of its life and faith, it reeks of paranoia.

The original question was: If Christian anti-Jewishness is not psychopathological, what is it? My tentative, interim response is the whole of this section (5.3.4). Unfortunately, it does not lend itself to being neatly summed up in one single word (like "psychopathological"), nor even in a sentence or two. Like most mental processes understood psychoanalytically, Christian anti-Jewish construction is a complex process, to a large extent happening outside of awareness, according to the peculiar grammatical rules of the human unconscious (mostly forged in infancy), and organised around affective associations, rather than rationality and logic. If my response to the initial question is understood thus, I would plead it is little wonder that it does not come out in something like a ten-second sound bite. More pertinently, perhaps, this complexity helps appreciate why Christian anti-Jewishness is no easy thing to lay hold of, let alone to know what might be done about it.

## Chapter six—Summary and conclusions

*So (said the doctor). Now vee may perhaps to begin. Yes? (Philip Roth, Portnoy's Complaint [last line])*

### 6.1 Summary of research

The main concern of this study has been to try to understand why, after around half a century of progress, Jewish-Christian relations seems to many to have got “stuck”. Commentators, looking from both sides of the inter-faith divide, offer a wide range of possible reasons why this might be so. Because my experience is almost entirely within the church, this study focuses only on what it might be on the Christian side that inhibits better relations. It began with my wondering if psychoanalysis might offer any insights into Christian anti-Jewishness which could complement the many other perspectives (e.g., historical, theological), in order that the problem might be more comprehensively understood.

One of the most intriguing features of the church's attitude towards Jews and Judaism is its ambivalence. At “official” levels, along with all the high-minded statements there appears also to be a deeply entrenched, ongoing anti-Jewishness constantly subverting the church's apparent desire for better relations. At parish level, most worshippers would regard anti-Jewishness as anathema, and yet still there are regular performances of New Testament texts which, because of how the church has interpreted them, keep traditional anti-Jewishness alive. Generally, most parishioners and clergy seem either oblivious or indifferent to this, although on occasion their anti-Jewishness is acted out with an enthusiasm which seems—literally—quite senseless, and at odds with the generally benevolent aim (to “love one's neighbour”) of the church. Why the ambivalence? What drives this passionate irrationality? How can it happen virtually unawares? Why does the church remain in denial of its anti-Jewishness? Putting the original question in these terms, it seems psychoanalysis might, indeed, have something to offer.

From Freud onwards, a number of researchers, in a kind of “applied” psychoanalysis, have commented on anti-Jewishness (usually calling it “antisemitism”). Especially after the Holocaust, some have wondered if antisemitism is evidence of some form of psychopathology, but the general consensus nowadays is that the phenomenon is too overdetermined to be usefully categorised as such. Others, following Freud's lead, have

utilised classic psychoanalytic ideas such as oedipal and sibling rivalry, and the castration complex, to try to understand the psychological aetiology of antisemitism, but, like “psychopathology”, these also seem to have largely exhausted themselves as useful explanations. It is, perhaps, worth looking elsewhere entirely for another starting point.

Recent researchers—especially Biddick (2003)—mount a compelling argument that “supersession” is one of the key ideas to have shaped western thinking over the past two millennia. From the apostle Paul onwards, it finds expression in church theology (especially in relation to Jews and Judaism—e.g., in the theological idea that grace takes the place of law) and, typologically, it is still to be seen in secular-modern thinking (e.g., the idea that old ignorance or falsehoods are constantly giving way to new truths). But staying with the church’s thinking, what may well underlie supersessionist theology, in psychological terms, is a narcissistic/paranoid style of self-aggrandisement, with a concomitant antagonism towards the Jewish other. And underneath such self-preoccupied and grandiose fantasies—it is almost universally understood—lie all manner of unconscious fears and anxieties. Expressed in these terms, again, psychoanalysis would seem well positioned to help understand where such things come from, and how they work in the perpetuation of Christian anti-Jewishness.

While the extant literature no longer attempts any sort of simple “explanation” of Christian anti-Jewishness (e.g., that it is *something* psychopathological), there is a cluster of recent ideas which appears to be gathering around a new possibility of a psychoanalytically informed *process* showing the connection between, on the one hand, the circumstances in which New Testament texts like the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus, or Jesus’ supposed excoriation of the Pharisees, appear to have been constructed and, on the other, the way the performance of these same sorts of texts in the worship life of the contemporary church hooks into unconscious primal fears and fantasies of participants to keep alive one of the most important and enduring fantasies of the church: that it has superseded the Jews as chosen of God.

The current literature thus seemed to suggest that my own research should focus on two matters: first to try to understand more clearly how this psychological mechanism works, by which traditional Christian anti-Jewishness is constantly fanned into life and sustained in the life of the contemporary church, to continue doing the damage it does—

especially to Jewish-Christian relations. Secondly, to try to clarify why Christian anti-Jewishness is as distinctive as it so often is: in general terms, why it is so passionately irrational and palpably incarnate.

Before embarking on either of these tasks, there were methodological considerations to address. First, although psychoanalysis has long been “applied” outside the consulting room to investigations of interpersonal and social relationships—and sometimes even broad cultural issues—there is still concern that such analyses should not be (as they are accused of having been in the past) reductionist at best, and “wild” at worst. Like “good history”, good applied analysis needs to take proper account of as much relevant information as possible before making an interpretation. And no matter how novel and interesting the contribution of psychoanalysis, it needs, also, simply to make sound common sense.

Secondly, psychoanalysis is both a method and a theory. Historically, and within contemporary psychoanalysis still, it is almost always the exigencies of practice that have driven theory. Thus, in adopting psychoanalysis as a lens through which to examine Christian anti-Jewishness, the need to conduct the research in a manner consonant with analytical *practice*, as well as informed by the theory, seemed inescapable.

From Freud onwards, psychoanalytical method can be understood to have been narratively organised, which suggested using a typical, Christian anti-Jewish story as a “doorway” into the research. The decision to use psychoanalytic method wherever possible also suggested listening to the story in the classic psychoanalytic mode of “evenly hovering attention” to hear its covert, as well as its overt message(s).

Among the many possibilities, a widely circulated, early 17<sup>th</sup> century, German version of the legend of the Wandering Jew was chosen for the task, the main reasons being, first, that this particular story is a Christian construction, with clear connections to the early Christian tradition and, secondly, because it focuses on a central *character* (rather than on some event, or set of beliefs). “Embodied” meanings are of particular interest in psychoanalytic interpretation. Utilising The Wandering Jew (the character) as a synecdoche of Christian anti-Jewish construction offers the possibility of picking up deeply embedded, affect-saturated, visceral dimensions of anti-Jewishness that currently appear generally overlooked, or undervalued, by other disciplines.

Listening repeatedly to the legend of The Wandering Jew in a mode of “evenly hovering attention” evoked a feeling—somewhat unexpectedly—of “something gone terribly wrong” (which I brought to consciousness by association with personal experiences earlier in my life). On reflection, this appeared to correlate with the highly fraught mood of the age in which the legend was set down, and to represent the sort of “unconscious-to-unconscious” communication between the redactor(s) of the legend and me, that Freud in his day found so remarkable, but which has long since become one of the staples of psychoanalysis. For the purposes of this research, however, it is the communication *process* that is of primary interest, rather than the specific *content* of this particular instance.

The results of this experiment appear to support the idea that the state of mind of the early church—which Meissner (2000) characterises as being, at least in part, one of anti-Jewish paranoia—in which it set down its sacred stories, is unconsciously communicated to worshippers when these texts are performed in an atmosphere similar to that of “evenly hovering attention”. The paranoid fears and anxieties embedded in these texts, by unconscious association “hook” into similar-feeling fears and anxieties, which originate mainly as the mental sedimentation of normal developmental processes of infancy and childhood. It is these primal, unconscious fears and anxieties that provide the associative links so that the affective state of the early church is, out of awareness, carried across time and transplanted into the life of the contemporary church.

Again using The Wandering Jew as a doorway into the topic, the research went on to show that some of the most distinctive features of anti-Jewish construction bear little relation to who, or what, Jews or Judaism “really are” but, psychologically, are closely related to unconscious memories of (both real and imaginary) fears and anxieties associated with the first few months outside the womb. These sorts of preoccupations turn out to be distinctively organised. Cognition at first plays a relatively small part as the infant begins to arrange its intrapsychic and interpsychic mental life; it happens, rather, in ways that engage the whole body, as well as the developing mind (psychoneurobiologically, Schore (2002a) puts it). Different streams within psychoanalysis have different emphases, but it is almost universally understood that these sorts of highly somatic, primal experiences—many with a “life or death” feel about them—lay down mental templates which, to a greater extent than is generally appreciated, unconsciously shape how experience is interpreted for the rest of

life. It is thus hardly surprising that looking at something like *The Wandering Jew* from a psychoanalytic perspective reveals features that are far more body-, sense- and affect-oriented than they are rational, logical and intellectual. This, not unsurprisingly, is true also of Christian anti-Jewish construction in general.

Six psychoanalytically significant themes discussed in the course of the research illustrate various aspects of this point. First, the fundamental irrationality of the idea of *The Wandering Jew*—in this particular case, that he is somehow both alive and dead—is typical of much anti-Jewish fantasy. The reason irrationality can be tolerated as part of this sort of mental construction is because—as in the days of infancy—there is a much more important and urgent need to be met than for it simply to make sense. As discussed above, performance of certain texts during worship is likely to rouse all manner of unconscious fears and anxieties. Early in life, we learn to deal with such intolerable feelings by splitting them off and projecting out onto, or into, something or someone else, preferably to be contained and soothed in some way before being re-internalised. For the church, Judaism and the Jews have traditionally been the targets of such projections. Outside the context of the first few centuries of the common era this does not make sense—but when primitive, terror-ridden feelings are stirred up, rationality will always play second fiddle, and the “other” is always expendable.

Secondly, the need for *The Wandering Jew* to be alive, real and true (i.e., not just some story character), and the reason anti-Jewish construction, generally, is often so palpably incarnate—that is, fabricates internally coherent fantasies of a quasi-person (“the Jew”, in the Sartrean sense)—also relate to mental patterns laid down early on. As has already been said, for the infant, reality is experienced in “whole body” sorts of ways, especially in the symbiotic relationship between mother (usually) and child. Christian fantasies like *The Wandering Jew* are corporealised the way they are because what lies in unconscious memory from the time of infancy is a sense that it is what is mediated by the *whole body* that is ultimately real, believable and true. Such primal memories also underpin anti-Jewish fascination with the Jewish body, and body parts (e.g., size, shape, colour, smell), which are fantasised, often in obsessive detail and with impressive rigidity, as signifiers of a supposedly essential Jewishness.

A third classic feature of anti-Jewishness, yet again, has its roots in experiences of infancy. The “wandering” of The Wandering Jew, and the contemporary incarnation of that same idea that Jews neither have, nor deserve, a home of their own, and are doomed (either due to divine fiat, or out of perverse choice) to belong nowhere, to never “fit in”—and *forever*—connects with early childhood experiences (real and/or fantasised) of belonging/not belonging. These are ideas which may well have—literally—a “life or death” feel about them. Throughout life, such issues of intimacy and alienation remain among the most potent. The pariah status of Jews was constructed early on by the church, and sustained over the centuries for mainly politico-theological reasons that are now generally well understood. What psychoanalysis helps appreciate as well, is the intimate *psychological* connection at work in such ideas, and hence why the church seems so intransigent in its anti-Jewishness, especially regarding its supersessionist fantasies (that Christians, not Jews, are now the ones who “belong to God”).

Just as some of our most powerful, primordial memories unconsciously inform us that what is most “real” is *embodied* reality (see above), so we also understand that “being alive” epitomises what it is to be human—although not just in some passive sense, but being alive with an urgent, life-or-death, “will to live” feel about it. Freud regarded this as an innate drive, orienting the human infant towards survival, and called it “libido”. Around puberty this becomes genitally focused, rather than “whole body” (as in infancy), and becomes sexually oriented. But it is essentially the same energy source that drives a baby’s will to live, and young people to seek sexual satisfaction, and motivates older people to accomplishment. With libido so much an integral part of what it is to be human (in the psychoanalytic view), it is hardly surprising to find that sexual fantasy looms large in anti-Jewish construction. “Sex”, then, is the fourth psychoanalytically significant feature. It is there, albeit somewhat obscured, in reference to The Wandering Jew’s exceptionally large feet/penis. It is overtly present in a whole raft of fantasies about Jewish sexual promiscuity and rapacity, about the supposed effeminacy of circumcised/castrated Jewish males, about Jews as bearers of sexual diseases, and about Jews as “black” (i.e., sexually “jungly”). There seems no end to how diverse, improbable, and grotesque anti-Jewish psychosexual imaginings can be. Nevertheless, it is not so much the content of anti-Jewish fantasy that is of significance, but what it points towards: the libidinal power and the passion with which

these particular fantasies are invested and by which they are maintained, thus making them so difficult to counteract.

Near the beginning of this summary it was observed how ambivalent the church seems towards Jews and Judaism. The Wandering Jew, who in many ways epitomises and incarnates the church's view of both, is constructed in ways that reek of ambivalence: is he Jewish or Christian, oriental or occidental? What are his long hair, unusual height, and the state of his clothing intended to signify? The meaning of all this is highly ambiguous, and there are many, often contradictory, ways one might feel about them. Many contemporary churchgoers feel similarly ambivalent about something like the Jewish roots of Christianity. They will acknowledge that, indeed, Jesus was a Jew. But, most would want to add, "different" from all the rest (the "Son of God" as well as the "Son of Man", the tradition puts it).

Church historians point out the aetiology of Christian ambivalence towards Jews and Judaism in the highly fraught circumstances of the "parting of the ways" between the two faiths in the first few centuries of the common era, and Augustine's subsequent theologising. Now, additionally, psychoanalysis contributes an understanding of how this mass of contradictions can be tolerated. Once again, it is because this is one of the main coping mechanisms learned early in life, and which stays with us always, seeming more or less normal. With maturity, part objects ("good breast", "bad breast") become integrated into whole objects, but psychic splitting and learning to live with the resulting emotional ambivalence remains an option for coping throughout life, especially under stress. Taken by itself, Christian ambivalence towards Jews and Judaism (rather than, say, simple hatred) might not seem particularly noteworthy. But as additional layer on top of a fundamental irrationality, ambivalence certainly increases the complexity of Christian anti-Jewishness, making it all the more difficult to understand, and hence to know how best to try to counter it. Ambivalence, then, is the fifth psychoanalytically significant theme.

The sixth and final theme is the role of affect in anti-Jewish construction. As already mentioned, early experience, and how it is interpreted, are mediated in very diffuse sorts of ways. If, however, there is anything like a single organising principle, it is *affect*. Psychoanalysis has long maintained that this is so, and recent cognitive research seems to support the idea. A primitive coping mechanism organised around affect (what feels good,

or feels bad, in psychobiological sorts of ways)—to repeat—lays down mental pathways, so that for the rest of life one of the main ways we respond to a given situation as human beings is by unconscious, affective association. Such a way of making meaning not only invests the interpretation with passion, but with a sense of verisimilitude—above all, a sense of *emotional* verisimilitude. It is this mechanism that seems to confirm for Christians, as they listen to their sacred texts, and the church’s interpretation of them, that it is not only correct to think as they do about Jews and Judaism but, more importantly, to *feel* as they do.

Collectively, what the research under each of these six heads highlights is that the anti-Jewishness of the church is frequently irrational, ambivalent, palpably incarnate, and commonly feels saturated with affect, and “driven”. In most ordinary terms, all this would be quite incomprehensible. However, psychoanalysis has it that Christian anti-Jewishness, irrational and destructive of relationship though it is, nevertheless is not random. Psychologically, these six classic features of anti-Jewishness can be understood to have their roots in near universal, primitive mental processes, which are learned, and which are ruled by the grammar of the unconscious, in which affective association is the main organising principle. Taken together, these six themes also give some sense of the complexity of the problem of Christian anti-Jewishness, and why it is so difficult to destabilise, particularly why it is nearly impossible to simply educate against.

That said, psychoanalytic theory is as hard pressed as any other discipline when it comes to finding a more adequate metaphor to describe the sort of passionately irrational, palpably incarnate construction this research argues much anti-Jewishness to be. What seems at present to have the greatest potential is the relatively new idea of the analytic third—that is, that in the analytic situation, the analyst/analysand dyad co-create a psychic entity which to a certain extent takes on a life of its own—and not just in some ethereal way, but psychobiologically.

One difficulty is that the idea of the analytic third has had little discussion to date outside the clinical context. Theoretically, it begins in familiar psychoanalytical territory with splitting and projection, and then goes on to include considerations of transference and counter-transference, and the relationship between the two—all key aspects of what some regard as the rather more problematic process of projective identification. This particular defence is often one of the most highly intrusive and violent, invading the psyche of the

other with the intention of coercing the other into responding in ways that appear to confirm the fantasies of the one doing the projecting. As a metaphor, projective identification comes a lot closer to describing some of the realities of Christian anti-Jewish construction than projection alone.

The enforced mutuality of projective identification suggests there is something significant about the psychic context for how the process works. Theory deriving from ideas such as “containment” holds that the interpersonal space in which many of our most fraught relationship issues are negotiated is delicately balanced between being “close” but “not too close” to the other. It is a process just as capable of being maladaptive and destructive as integrating. The way the legend of The Wandering Jew “worked” in its historical context is a classic example of a pathological style of containment, in how it re-storied anxiety in a way that was soothing for Christians, but at a cost of increased unreality for Christians, and huge collateral damage to Jews. Like so much already discussed, this finely-judged distance between self and object (“close enough”), that “works” for the one projecting, is patterned on one of the earliest relationships in life: that between parent and child in which similarly fraught issues around dependence and autonomy are first negotiated.

It is within this style of psychoanalysis—one which puts emphasis on the dyadic relationship, and the context in which the interpersonal realities are created—that discussions of the analytic third are currently taking place. There may still be some philosophical difficulties with the whole idea, but the growing literature suggests the third is a significant new inference emerging within psychoanalysis, which may well also have application beyond the confines of the clinic. Commonalities in some of the ways the analytic third and anti-Jewishness can be discussed are encouraging, but the extent to which, by analogy, the idea of the third might shed light on “the Jew” as an unconsciously-generated “third” within the intersubjective space generated by the bi-directional projective identifications of Christians and Jews is a matter for future research.

The final important theoretical question thrown up by the research was that if Christian anti-Jewishness is not some form of psychopathology, then how might it usefully be characterised? One of the basic psychoanalytic presuppositions is that, while people are complex, almost universally, everyone is organised into some sort of psychological whole, which has a characteristic defensive style. Nosologies vary, but styles such as depressive,

narcissistic, paranoid, and so forth are widely accepted descriptors of both defensive style and the corresponding eponymous personality type. A second basic assumption of psychoanalysis is that defensive mental processes are understood to range from “normal” (in the sense of being essential to proper human development and functioning) through more or less normally neurotic (the mix of reality and fantasy with which most of us live) to, at the most unhealthy extreme, some form of psychosis.

Personality, however, is not fixed; it is contingent, particularly according to context, and can change over time. The psychoanalytic view is that each of us, as part of normal development, acquires a very wide range of coping strategies. With maturity, early-appearing defences become modulated by “higher order” secondary defences, but the primitive strategies nevertheless remain unconsciously present and accessible over the whole of life. Particularly in times of stress (of which we may be unaware) any of us may start thinking, feeling or behaving in ways which—superficially at least—seem quite “out of character”, but which in fact draw upon a huge, ever-present, unconscious, defensive repertoire.

The present literature struggles to come up with satisfactory metaphors to describe this relationship between who we “normally” are, and the “other” sort of person we might, on occasion, be. If one starts with an object relations model of the self—that, psychically, we are made up of an archipelago of inter-related object-selves and object-others—then the idea that this mental geography includes “neurotic islands” has appeal. This model makes it clearer for example, that when the church at worship is yet again re-living its anti-Jewish fantasies, it does so in a mental place which is—arguably—*atypical* of its life in general, but not qualitatively so.

Commentators on Christian anti-Jewishness often note that these neurotic islands have a distinctive “culture” (to continue the metaphor)—narcissism and paranoia being the two most common. This supports the theory (to return almost to the beginning) that what may well underlie the church’s supersessionist theology, and the church’s apparent intransigence over better Jewish-Christian relations, are two things (each one side of the same coin). On the one hand, there is an unwillingness to let go of a narcissistic, grandiose fantasy that the church and Christians have superseded Judaism and Jews as God’s chosen

people, and on the other hand there is a paranoid-style suspicion of, and antagonism towards, the Jewish other.

## **6.2 A conclusion from the research**

This research began by asking to what extent psychoanalysis might illuminate why and how Christians continue constructing Jews as other. My initial hunch that there has been little recent research in this direction was borne out by a search of the extant literature. As obvious an anti-Jewish construction as *The Wandering Jew*, for example, has received little critical examination of any sort, let alone from a psychoanalytic perspective. In their day, Freud and some of his followers attempted a better understanding of “antisemitism” in psychoanalytic terms, but for most of last century the social sciences held sway in such investigations. However, more recent research, such as that of Simon Clarke (2003), suggests a renewed interest in psychoanalysis. This could be because, as Clarke himself observes, while Biblical scholars, historians, sociologists, and so forth, in their own ways show what has shaped the distinctive features of Christian anti-Jewish construction over the past two millennia, still there often seems to be “something missing” in the explanations.

It is not enough to know the “what” of Christian anti-Jewishness. That much is essential, of course, and the more one can understand the inter-relating social, religious and historical factors that make anti-Jewishness what it is, the better. But alongside this we still need to understand better not just the “what”, but the “how” and “why”: why does the church obstinately entertain such highly irrational, affect-saturated, palpably incarnate fantasies concerning Jews and Judaism? What is it, psychologically speaking, that underpins and drives all this? These are significant issues which, by and large, lie outside the scope of the social sciences. In chapter three of this thesis, for example, the results of a personal experiment support the idea that paranoid aspects of the life of the early church can, in the context of worship, become real in similar sorts of ways for contemporary Christians. This is not a process that most other disciplines are well equipped to theorise about, if at all. Chapter four likewise addresses half a dozen features of anti-Jewish construction which appear to have been largely invisible to date, but which seem to cry out for attention when looked at through a psychoanalytic lens.

So, in broad terms, the main result of this research is to have shown that much that is puzzling about this phenomenon—the church’s ambivalence towards Jews and Judaism, and the irrationality of its anti-Jewishness, for example—*can* be better understood. What I believe to have been emphatically demonstrated is that psychoanalysis has, indeed, much to contribute towards a better understanding of the church’s anti-Jewishness. This research clearly underlines what psychoanalysis has understood from the beginning: that human relationships—even including something as broad as Jewish-Christian relations—are more extensively influenced by unconscious mental processes than is generally acknowledged. These, in turn, are shaped to a far greater extent than is generally appreciated by formative experiences of infancy and childhood. Tying all this together—the dynamic interaction of past, present, and context—are normal, everyday, mental processes which have unconscious association as the prime connective link, not logic; which centre mainly around affect, not reason; and which typically combine in unfortunate ways to produce a ubiquitous self-deception. Christian anti-Jewishness is due not only to Christian ignorance concerning Jews and Judaism, and disinformation spread by the church over two millennia. There are significant dimensions to anti-Jewishness which do not operate according to rules of rationality, and which cannot be easily understood in the plain, commonsense sorts of ways which are fundamental to the social sciences. It follows that neither is it a simple matter to explain these things, and to communicate the dynamics of anti-Jewishness, and their importance, in plain, straightforward terms which can be quickly grasped. Finally, psychoanalysis helps towards a better understanding of why the mental processes that abet anti-Jewishness are highly resistant to being destabilised simply by strategies such as trying to raise awareness of the issues, or by education alone: it is because they are largely unconscious, organised around primitive principles, and operate according to the largely self-serving grammar of the unconscious.

If that seems like the bad news, then the good news is that psychoanalysis does offer a theoretical framework for a better understanding of the unconscious mental processes that, this thesis argues, lie at the root of the otherwise mysterious problem of how and why—despite its good (if desultory) intentions—the church seems so thoroughly wedded to its anti-Jewish fantasies. To paraphrase one of Nancy McWilliams’ observations: we may be complicated, but our intricacies are not random. Analytic theories offer us ways to help

make sense out of the seemingly inexplicable ironies and absurdities of our lives (1994, p. 38). Even within the necessarily limited scope of this research, it has become abundantly clear that psychoanalysis has potential to make a major impact upon the future study of Christian anti-Jewishness.

### **6.3 Possible future research directions**

Some of the points at which current psychoanalytic theory show promise for helping towards a better understanding of Christian anti-Jewishness in terms of the psychically constructed other have already been noted. The first is that the context established during Christian worship seems, in some ways, to be analogous to the atmosphere of psychoanalytic “free listening”. Research to date into the group psychodynamics of worship seems sparse. More work in this area might shed further light on the sorts of unconscious associative connections facilitated during worship discussed in chapter three. Nóirí Ní Ríain, for example, argues for retrieving an understanding of worship as primarily oral/aural (Ríain, 2005). Bearing in mind that classic psychoanalysis is primarily just such an interpersonal exchange, this could be a useful point at which to begin further exploration of possible connections between theories of worship and psychoanalysis.

Secondly, there are theoretical ideas which need developing around what, to date, have been almost entirely clinical experiences of the analytic third. To be able to talk about Christian anti-Jewishness as comprehensively incarnate and palpably alive mental constructions, rather than in comparatively abstract terms such as Christian prejudice and stereotyping, seems to me to come a lot closer to the reality of the phenomenon as someone like Sartre (1948) discusses it, and as I have often experienced anti-Jewishness in the life of the church. This new inference which seems to be emerging from psychoanalytic practice, that sometimes there is a quasi-real third present in the analytic encounter, raises an interesting and exciting possibility that Christian anti-Jewish construction might be usefully understood in similar terms.

The third point at which psychoanalytic thinking appears to warrant further development is the idea that the mental life of the church is populated by neurotic islands, and that those with cultures of narcissism and paranoia (so to speak) might be of particular interest in better understanding the psychodynamics of Christian anti-Jewishness. To take

the issue a step further, how might understanding the church's anti-Jewishness to be narcissistic and paranoid shape some new way for dealing with the problem? Is it worth asking, for example, what strategy a therapist will typically adopt when faced with a client who presents with narcissistic or paranoid preoccupations? Are some interventions particularly appropriate? Are others quite inappropriate? Nancy McWilliams says, for example, that her narcissistic clients very typically complement their need for self-aggrandisement with a trivialisation of the insights she has to offer (1994, pp. 178-9). This reaction, as I have said, is one I received after confronting (gently, I thought) a clergy colleague over the persistent anti-Jewish elements of Sunday worship. With narcissistic clients in particular, a more than usual degree of patience is required, McWilliams says (1994, p. 181), so perhaps I could have raised the issue with my colleague in a better way. Especially if one is dealing with someone who has a paranoid style of mental organisation, says McWilliams, confrontation is particularly inappropriate (1994, p. 221). As long as the client does not interpret it as ridicule (which the paranoid person is very apt to do), humour can be very useful for helping deal with that particular style of preoccupation (1994, pp. 218-9). Knowing what I know now, perhaps I would have been better using a light-hearted approach for raising the matter with my colleague. As far as I am aware, no one has yet taken up the huge extant literature on narcissism and paranoia in any comprehensive sort of way to try to understand something like Christian anti-Jewishness, and how it might be appropriately dealt with. My research strongly suggests that this is a future direction which should be pursued.

#### **6.4 Possible implications of the research**

Nothing that has come out of this research would contradict what has been generally understood for some time: that anti-Jewishness is highly over-determined, both in the broad sense of having multiple causes—social, cultural, historical, and so forth—and in the more specific psychoanalytical sense of having its aetiology in any number of both primitive and more mature defensive ways of interpreting experience. One implication of this is that there is no magic wand, psychoanalytic or otherwise, that will fix Christian anti-Jewishness at a stroke; the problem needs to be tackled on as many fronts as possible.

First, research needs to continue on “outside” factors (e.g., religious, sociological, economic) that influence anti-Jewishness, because these are changing all the time. Jews may no longer be condemned as well-poisoners, for example, but particularly in Israel they are still regularly accused of equally heinous crimes, and these accusations need investigation.<sup>219</sup> Are Jews perpetrating dreadful new crimes, or are these accusations the old anti-Jewishness dressed up in new clothes for propaganda purposes? Not only the substance (or otherwise) behind allegations of criminality against Jews, but also the various meanings of such rhetoric need continuing investigation in the rapidly shifting context of contemporary religious politics.

Education needs to continue also, although, as Bergmann notes (1988b, pp. 520f.), both teaching experience and sociological research have shown that it is very difficult to change anti-Jewish attitudes acquired in informal settings (around home and in the playground) through formal settings, such as school teaching programmes. Rupert Brown has reviewed an extensive literature (1995, pp. 236f.) and similarly finds that educational approaches alone produce limited results in reducing inter-group prejudice.

However, one way that *can* reduce prejudice, Brown continues, is social contact between the groups concerned. The observations of those like Sartre (1948) and Langmuir (1990) have already been noted: that the most toxic form of anti-Jewishness is frequently in the complete absence of Jews, where the anti-Jewish imagination has free reign to indulge its fantasies, and is not obliged to accommodate reality. However, research also shows—the so-called “Contact Hypothesis”—that not just any old social contact will do; it needs to be of a particular kind.<sup>220</sup> Anecdotally, many Christians in the Auckland Council for Christians

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<sup>219</sup> See, for example, the selection of anti-Jewish cartoons from the media of Arab countries and the Palestinian Authority collected together on <http://www.tomgrossmedia.com/ArabCartoons.htm>. One cartoon restates the widely held myth that Jews were responsible for the 9/11 attack on the New York World Trade Centre. Many of the cartoons equate Jews with Nazis, and caricature Jews according to the physical stereotypes of that era, which suggests the motives are not only anti-Israeli, but anti-Jewish.

<sup>220</sup> As Brown points out (1995, pp. 236-7), “the term ‘Contact Hypothesis’ is actually somewhat of a misnomer because it implies that mere contact is a sufficient panacea in itself.” From at least as far back as research begun shortly after World War II, it was realised that a number of conditions need to be satisfied before the contact could be expected to have the desired effect of reducing prejudice. In summary, these include social and institutional support for the measures designed to promote the contact; the contact should be of sufficient frequency, duration and closeness to permit the development of meaningful relationships between members of the groups concerned; as far as possible the participants in the contact situation should be of equal status; and the contact should involve co-operative activity (R. Brown, 1995, pp. 268f.). As well as the production of institutional documents and theological treatises, Melanie Wright notes the growing recognition of the “equal

and Jews (Auckland CCJ) can trace their involvement to an—often chance—personal friendship (with a Jewish school-friend, neighbour or workmate) and the relationships that have developed over the years in the Auckland CCJ, in many ways, fulfill the criteria outlined in the Contact Hypothesis. But for all that, as mentioned in the introduction to this research, there has at the same time been frustration among many in the Auckland CCJ that the percentage of both faith communities who think good relations are important remains small, and that “something” seems to inhibit mutual understanding beyond certain well-rehearsed points in the dialogue. Public discussion of Jewish and Christian perceptions of the state of Israel, for example, still seem beyond us, despite years—in some cases decades—of understanding that has grown between many members of the Auckland CCJ. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, there are many possible reasons why Jewish-Christian relations get stuck like this, despite good social contact. But part of that “something” at least, this thesis has argued, is that the problem of Christian anti-Jewishness is an “inside” problem, as well as an “outside” one. Laurence Silberstein, leaning on one of Julia Kristeva’s (1993) distinctive themes, sums up one of the main contentions (broadly speaking) of this thesis:

Only by thoroughly investigating “our remarkable relationship with both the Other and strangeness within ourselves”<sup>221</sup> can we reach a point where we no longer attempt to elevate ourselves by making the Other into a scapegoat.  
(Silberstein, 1994, p. 8)

Thus, one view of Christian anti-Jewishness this investigation would support is that it is a highly complex problem, having multiple causes, with both “outside” and “inside” dimensions, all of which requires ongoing research. Continuing education needs to happen also, as one of a broad range of strategies to counter anti-Jewishness.

But as well as understanding the problem to be very broadly based, and needing to be comprehensively addressed, there is also something very specific which the research has made clear, and concerning which something quite particular needs to happen: Christian anti-Jewishness is primarily *the church’s* problem, and it is up to the church to do something about it. This is because, as has been argued, it is primarily the performance of the church’s sacred texts during worship today, and the way many of these have been traditionally

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(greater?) value [of] attempts to theorise and reconstruct the dynamics of inter-group and interpersonal behaviour” (2002, p. 249).

<sup>221</sup> Silberstein at this point cites Kristeva’s (1993) *Nations Without Nationalism*.

interpreted, and the psychodynamics involved, that keeps anti-Jewishness alive, particularly the sort centred around fantasies of superiority—of Christians over against almost everyone else, certainly, but most especially over against Jews and Judaism. This fantasy of supersession, it needs to be emphasised, is not only in the eyes of the church, but (the church would have it) also in the eyes of God. And that is the heart of the church's problem: it is this irrational, passionately held, palpably incarnate fantasy of the church that it believes it knows the mind of God regarding Jews and Judaism which subverts better Jewish-Christian relations. That the church, by and large, is oblivious to this stupendous grandiosity simply heaps tragedy upon tragedy. So what might be done?

Thirty-odd years ago, and not infrequently since, many of us men were told in no uncertain terms that patriarchy, sexism and misogyny were basically a “men's problem”, and it was up to us men to deal with it. Similarly, anti-Jewishness is the church's problem, and it is up to the church to face up to the fact that this is so, to do something about it, to not expect the victims of anti-Jewishness to do our work for us, and not to rely on concerned Jews forever being the church's conscience in such matters. Such a re-definition of the problem—that it is not Jewish-Christian relations per se, but a whole orientation of the church that it is barely aware of—makes clear that for a few Jews and Christians to get together and discuss in friendly ways what they have in common will inevitably be—as many in the Auckland CCJ have already found—frustrating. Equally frustrating is the impotence, by and large, of official church statements to effect any significant change in Christian attitudes at “pew level”. This is because such activities, worthy though they are in their own way, do not even begin to address what really subverts better Jewish-Christian relations, which is the church's general blindness or indifference to its own anti-Jewishness, let alone any general willingness to do anything about it. By all means let the discussions continue at local CCJs. But if Jewish-Christian dialogue is going to move beyond where it seems to be stuck on the present plateau, something that might be effective—the results of this research suggests—is that informed and concerned Christians need to devise strategies for radical change in the church's view of Jews and Judaism, and initiate such change wherever they have the power to do so. This is something Christians need to do for themselves from within the life of the church.

Discussion of strategies for such change is beyond the scope of this study, but the research certainly indicates where initial efforts might be focused. First, if the church at its anti-Jewish worst is, indeed, operating out of what this research has characterised as neurotic islands of paranoia and narcissism, then, logically, a confrontational approach is contraindicated, and patience and persistence will be needed to effect change. Confrontation and impatience, in my experience, have been hallmarks of how many wanting to drive change in the life of my own church have behaved, and their opposites are likely to be thought pusillanimous. But they are not; in the matter of Christian anti-Jewishness at least, it is taking an informed approach to dealing with the problem.

Secondly, as discussed at some length in this research, it is the performance during worship of texts interpreted in anti-Jewish ways that is the catalyst for keeping anti-Jewishness alive in the church, Sunday by Sunday, and generation after generation. This suggests either removing the offending texts from worship, or at least modifying them in some way, in order to break the cycle of continual unconscious reinforcement of supersessionist fantasy, and its concomitant anti-Jewishness. If, at first glance, it seems improbable that the church would take up either suggestion, there are good precedents for both. From the 1965 performance of the Oberammergau Passion play onwards, the script was seen to be increasingly out of step with church thinking (J. Shapiro, 2000, p. 74), and moves were made to remove some of its anti-Jewishness. The supposed cry of the crowd at Jesus' sentencing, for example—"Let the punishment for his death fall on us and our children!" (Matthew 27:25)—was finally omitted, after years of controversy and equivocation, for the year 2000 performance (J. Shapiro, 2000, p. 85). While shorter readings do not lend themselves to editing as readily as something like the Passion, they could at least be accompanied by some sort of introduction or explanation. As I have already contended, when such texts are left just to "speak for themselves" they do not simply surrender up their meaning to the congregation in some value-neutral sort of way, as leaders of worship often seem naively to imagine, but come freighted with two millennia of anti-Jewish tradition. Alternatively, that such texts might, in future, be completely omitted from public reading is not so unlikely either. In most mainline churches these days, what is read—and not read—during worship is controlled by the *Common Lectionary*. As already noted (chapter one, footnote 21), the 1992 revision of the *Common Lectionary* took into account

“the tragic history of the abuse of biblical materials” in support of anti-Jewishness, and “the need to avoid such abuse” (Consultation On Common Texts, 1992, pp. 78-9). Why, then, does a large part of the diatribe against the Pharisees remain (Matthew 23: 1-14; Year A, Proper 23)? Why are many of the First and New Testament readings in the *Lectionary* still organised according to a rationale of prophecy and fulfillment, especially during Easter and Advent? Pressure can be brought to bear—in clear, firm but non-confrontational and patient sorts of ways, through the proper channels—to continue reform of the *Common Lectionary*, already begun and well accepted. If the 1992 revision is anything to go by, a new edition of *Lectionary* could come out, and the changes pass seamlessly into parish life apparently unnoticed by almost everyone, but with the potential, over time, to significantly change how worshippers think and feel about Jews and Judaism, in a way that official statements on Jewish-Christian relations appear seldom to do.

The introduction to this thesis touched upon the idea of Anderson, Bader-Saye, Saliers, and others, that the church’s truth is to be found in its *orthopraxis* rather than its *orthodoxy*—what it does, rather than what it says it believes—and particularly in its “performed” life (i.e., primarily, worship). From his study of the events of the last half century or so, and the Nazi Holocaust in particular, John Pawlikowski has become convinced that unless the church can, once again, “experience a living and challenging God through liturgical expression truly reflective of our era”, then the church will be “doomed to silence by the inability to even face, let alone make any sense of current reality”, and will be unable to stop the deterioration of, or contribute towards the rebuilding of, the moral ethos of humankind (1984, p. 316). The church’s worship is co-mingled with its ethics. Liturgical reform that somehow avoids a “retreat into the past, or a retreat into abstract universalism”, that recovers a fresh sense of transcendence (i.e., that there exists a judgement upon human endeavours that goes beyond mere human judgement), Pawlikowski believes, is essential to the church in a post-Holocaust world, if the church wishes to work consistently towards the creation of a just and humane society (1984, pp. 316, 320). It is, he says, a truly death-defying mission:

Unless we can recreate a new sense of a God-human person relationship through symbolic experience and thus shape a new moral sensibility within humankind we have little chance of preventing the horse from riding through our lands again as it did during the Holocaust. (Pawlikowski, 1984, p. 329)

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**It is not your responsibility to finish the work [of perfecting the world] but you are not free to desist from it either.**

□ **Rabbi Tarfon in *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)* 2:16**