The Residual Afterlives of Blood

Project Background

For our seminar “From Life to Afterlives: Creative Re-presentation in the Premodern World,” I wish to present what I hope will become an introduction to my book-length project, which focuses on the narrative uses of blood and ritual impurity in the hagiographies of early modern Christian and Muslim saints with known or recent family histories of conversion in Iberia and North Africa. The project traces how, during a historical period in which parallel discourses about lineage and blood became central to claims of religious authority and social hierarchies in Spain and Morocco, these saints’ bodies (including residual matter) were treated as sources of religious authority despite concerns over their “mixed blood.” I argue that, because of blood’s potential to transform/defile that which it touched and animate distant or imagined pasts, its narrative or ritual use could render objects, bodies, and spaces exceptional, and endow them with extraordinary power.

During this period in the Western Mediterranean, questions about the ritual and social status of blood were often influenced by broader concerns about genealogy, purity and impurity. In addition, in the context of Islamic law, blood is also a possible source of ritual pollution. In order to show how the dichotomy between pure and impure blood accentuates its moral and performative qualities—even when the binary opposition between purity and impurity is destabilized—this section of my project will draw connections between two mythical Qur’ānic codices (one medieval, one contemporary) that are thought to have been “touched” by blood. Both of these codices have been used to legitimate the authority of certain dynasties, albeit with very different moral effects.
I begin with an examination of how the existence and reception of a Qurʾānic codex said to have been written with the blood of the former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein (1937–2006) demonstrates the persistence (the afterlife?) of historical, moral, and ritual preoccupations with blood hierarchies and blood’s ritual power. The production of a Qurʾānic codex in which ink is exchanged for blood violates most iterations of the Islamic purity system in which blood is, usually, classified as a polluting substance. Ritual purity laws in Islam also regulate the handling and production of sacred scripture, seek to prevent its ritual contamination, and instruct the believer on how to prepare her body for worship. The commissioning of such a codex thus presupposes that whereas most blood is ritually impure, some blood is—or should be—considered to be exceptional, and thus, ritually effective and even potent. The fact that such an object exists, against all cultural and theological taboos, is a reminder of its patron’s ability to live in a permanent state of exception, outside the limits of morality and the law, and of the potential power of that liminality.

The case of Saddam Hussein’s “blood Qurʾān” also demonstrates another key phenomenon that I wish to explore in this project—that of the performative power of blood. In other words, the possibility that no “actual” blood was used to write Saddam Hussein’s Qurʾān (and, thus far, we have no definitive evidence either way) has not changed the codex’s ritual treatment or the myth surrounding it, even when we have the scientific tools to determine whether or not blood was used to write the codex. Blood, then, points beyond itself: it is not merely a substance, but it is not simply a symbol either. In the second part of this paper, I briefly expand upon some of the theological, literary, and legal understandings of blood in Islam, with particular attention to how it
relates to ink. In addition, I introduce the “original” myth of the blood-stained codex in Islamic history—that associated with the caliph ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (d. 656), who is considered in traditional accounts to be the official redactor of the Qurʾān. The book, marked with the blood of the Caliph, who was reportedly martyred during as he prayed over it, appeared in the historiography of al-Andalus and Morocco as a source of power and legitimate authority, often against a background of Muslim-Christian encounters or disputes between Muslim dynasties. Finally, the third part of this paper draws from Gil Anidjar’s discussion of the limpieza de sangre statutes in early modern Iberia in Blood: A Critique of Christianity (2014) in order to examine the ways in which blood, as a category of analysis, can serve to naturalize hierarchies and forms of exclusion within and between communities, and to produce extraordinary bodies capable of overcoming the dichotomy between purity and impurity.

**Blood, performance, and ritual exception: the case of Saddam Hussein’s Qurʾānic Codex**

In 1996, ʿUday Ḥusayn (1964–2003), son of former Iraqi President Ṣaddām Ḥusayn (1937–2006), suffered an assassination attempt that left him with serious injuries.¹ Allegedly, to thank God for the survival of his first-born son and heir apparent, Saddam Hussein commissioned a Qurʾān from the renowned calligrapher ʿAbbās al-Baghdādī, with the condition that Hussein’s own blood be used instead of ink. Over the course of two years, Hussein is reported to have sat with his doctor to donate between 24 and 27 liters of blood, which was delivered to the calligrapher and his team in intervals. According to most accounts, al-Baghdādī mixed the blood with stabilizing agents in order

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¹ From here on, the usual English spelling of his name (Saddam Hussein) will be used.
to write a Qurʾān of over 600 pages. After completion, the work was stored in the basement of Umm al-Qurā mosque in Baghdad where the individual pages could be viewed by appointment only from behind glass.

Since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, this artifact has been kept behind vaulted doors, away from public view—an uncomfortable relic of the dictator’s regime. Beyond the inevitable question of what place, if any, this object should occupy in Iraq today, there is also the question of its ritual status. In the system of ritual purity in Islamic law (tahāra), blood is a substance associated with ritual pollution, a source of “tangible impurity” (najāsa ḥissīya/ḥaqīqīya) that may ritually contaminate a person, a place of worship, water used for ablutions, or, most relevantly in this case, a Qurʾānic codex. Contact with a defiling substance (a category which, in addition to blood, includes wine, excrement, urine, pus, vomit, carrion, nasal mucus, and semen) should be avoided, or corrected by removing, washing or rubbing it off, or exposing it to sunlight. On the other hand, different types of bleeding are among the bodily “events” (ḥadath, sing. ḥadath) that can cause ritual pollution. Post-partum bleeding and menstruation fall under the category of “major events” (al-ḥadath al-akbar), whereas momentary instances of bleeding (such as nosebleeds or as the result of a wound) may classify as “minor events” (al-ḥadath al-اعتماد), depending on the scholarly opinion.

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3 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 106.
Because of these questions about its ritual status, some Muslim jurists have called for the destruction of Saddam’s Qurʾān by fire, which is a traditional method used to dispose of damaged or polluted Qurʾānic codices. Others have called for its preservation, arguing that if blood is sufficiently diluted in other pure substances (such as water), or changed chemically by coming into contact with other substances (stabilizing compounds to make ink), then it is no longer impure. Again, although the scholarly opinion on this matter varies. It is important to note that, in Sunni jurisprudence, being in a state of impurity is not contagious: a person cannot make someone else impure or defile a space by simply by being impure herself, or, as A. Kevin Reinhart has stated (in response to Mary Douglas), a state of impurity is, generally, not “dangerous” (I will return to this question—which is central to this book project—in the context of Christian-Muslim relations in the Western Mediterranean later on). The concept of purity, however, is important in Islamic practice, as evidenced by the amount of attention given to it in legal manuals; after all, according to the Prophet himself, half of the faith is purity (“al-ṭahāra shaṭr al-imān”) and the debate over the ritual status of Hussein’s Qurʾān bears an extreme ideological and religious charge.

A number of obstacles, however, that prevent us from determining this Qurʾān’s actual material composition. First, we do not, in fact, know if blood was used at all to write the text. If it was, we do not know its origin, whether it was given voluntarily, or even whether the source is a human being (or several, since 24–27 liters of blood over two years significantly exceeds all international limits on blood donation for a single

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individual and amounts to far more “ink” than is needed to write a single codex, large as it may be), or a non-human animal (or several). In addition, the consistency of blood makes it a difficult material with which to write, because it does not “stick” to paper on its own, hardens quickly in cold weather, and decomposes in warm temperatures. Writing with blood is even more difficult if the paper is the smooth, glossy kind traditionally used for Islamic calligraphy, which is deliberately coated and burnished to make it less porous. In fact, because of its thickness and of how rapidly it congeals, the blood al-Baghdādī and his team used was supposedly mixed with glucose (or a similar chemical compound), in order to make it flow better on the page.⁸

Even if Hussein did deliver what he promised to the calligrapher, given the practical difficulties of writing with blood—in addition to the moral and physical revulsion that the request may have caused—it is not unlikely that team disobeyed the dictator’s orders and never used blood at all. Therefore, a second possibility is that the ink used to write this Qurʾān contains no trace of blood: but even so, its ritual status is still compromised by the myth of its origins and by the possibility (even if remote) that the story of its origins could be true. In fact, to my knowledge, the bulk of the evidence that the text was in fact written in Hussein’s blood is narrative testimony provided by Saddam Hussein himself (at best, an unreliable source), and by the calligrapher and the legal scholars who authorized its commission.⁹

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⁹ One presumes that Saddam did not defer to the legal scholars’ authority, but instead presented them with a situation that they were then obligated to justify. See: Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa’dī discusses the production of the book (accessed April 2018) [Link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOQt-1239mQ)
Moreover, even if forensic science could be used to determine that whatever material Hussein provided the calligrapher and his team was not what the dictator claimed it to be, the fact remains that the myth cannot be untold. Even when narrated, the use of blood produces an aesthetic and moral shock that cannot be undone, at least in this case. Regardless of the chemical composition of the ink of “Saddam’s Qurʾān” it is nearly impossible to think of it as inert matter. The book, in turn, is not—and can never be—an object like any other. (Or, to phrase more precisely, since in the Islamic tradition the Qurʾān is unlike any other object or text, this is not just a Qurʾān among other Qurʾāns). Its materiality is tied to a specific body. Its existence is an attempt to proclaim the singularity of that very body, to show that it is not subject to the laws of ritual purity in the way that ordinary bodies, which contain ordinary blood—of the kind that is potentially defiling—usually are. In other words, to blur the boundaries between a certain blood and the ink fit to copy revelation is to suggest, at a minimum, that the quality of that blood is exceptional by nature, or made exceptional by circumstance.

The myth of Saddam Hussein’s Qurʾān may seem a bizarre introduction to a project about the early modern Western Mediterranean. Recall, however, that this project centers on discourses about and uses of blood. In particular, it examines the treatment of the blood of saints who descended from converts at a historical moment in which genealogy and blood became central to questions of religious and political authority.

Indeed, during the early modern period two distinct hereditary discourses consolidated. First, in Spain, the limpieza de sangre (blood purity) statutes, which initially appeared in the fifteenth century, came to restrict the degree to which Jewish and Muslim converts to Christianity and their descendants could participate in institutional
life. Second, in Morocco, the sixteenth century saw the rise of a set of religious and political leaders, the *shurafāʾ*, who claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through his daughter Fāṭima and son-in-law ʿAlī ibn Abī ʿĀlib. Even though an emphasis on blood as a primary marker of heredity and thus of the transmission of filial bonds and communal affiliation did not likely begin in the sixteenth century or in the Western Mediterranean, these parallel discourses in Spain and Morocco demonstrate, in each case, a systematic expansion and development of prior links between blood and genealogy.

We cannot, of course, explain why the Qurʾān commissioned by Saddam Hussein exists by alluding to the “genealogical turn” during the early modern Western Mediterranean trace its origins to that historical moment. Despite the fact that in North and West Africa blood writing has been used in the making of talismans (which can sometimes contain Qurʾānic verses or even short chapters of the text), Saddam Hussein’s re-writing of the entire Qurʾān is rare. I cannot find reports of any other codex quite like it in legal, historical, or hagiographical works. Unique the object may be, its very existence was made possible by a broader history in which blood and power are tied together not only conceptually but materially, and in which this relationship is inscribed (literally, in this case) through corporeal practices as well as symbolic social structures and histories.

Knowingly or not, with the commission of this Qurʾān, Saddam Hussein echoed the myth of an earlier blood-stained codex that sealed the encounter between the sacred codex and the human body, increasing the power and legitimacy of both. The original myth of blood-stained codex, to which I will turn later, first made its way to Islamic Iberia from Damascus and, eventually, to medieval and early modern North Africa.
(Meanwhile, in the context of Western Christianity, politico-religious notions of community in early modern Iberia depended on parallel theological debates on the nature of blood and difference). Furthermore, blood and ink are metaphorically linked in other ways, adding layers of meaning to an already complex relationship between these two substances valued for their creative potential.

**Ink and blood**

In the Islamic tradition, blood and ink are joined together in various written and oral literatures in ways that include valorizing the qualities of one substance over the other, using each substance as a metaphor or symbol for a moral activity, and/or blurring the distinctions between them. There is, for example, the famous hadith in which the Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have said: “the ink of the scholar is weightier/holier than the blood of the martyr.” Calligraphers often draw inspiration from the Chapter of the Clot in the Qurʾān (Sūrat al-ʿalaq). This chapter, which is traditionally regarded as the first revelation received by the Prophet also connects blood (as the element from which life originates) with writing and creative activity: “Read: in the name of your Lord who created/Created the human being from a clot (ʿalaq)/ Read: and your Lord is most the most generous/ Who taught by the pen/ Who taught the human being that which he did not know.”

Blood and ink are also central to other ritual and cultural practices, often associated with women. There is, of course, tattooing, which involves delivering pigment subcutaneously by puncturing the skin’s outer layers which leads the ink to be pulled into the skin by capillary action (and also causes bleeding). The practice of tattooing has been the subject of debate and censure in the Islamic tradition, particularly in the Muslim West

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10 Q 96: 1–5.
and the Maliki school of jurisprudence. Similarly, as Suzanne Stetkevych has written, blood and henna (which functions as a type of impermanent body ink, and is thus less controversial) are associated with virginity and bloodshed—Stetkevych, like Edward Westermarck, calls it “deflowering”—brides, after all, are hennaed on the day of their wedding. On the other hand, improper ritual uses of blood and/or ink, such as those exemplified by women of the pre-Islamic era (referred to as “the time of ignorance” or *Jāhiliyya*) figure heavily in the inscription of taboo behaviors in Muslim historiography. Among the most salient examples are those of Hind bint ʿUtba, who tried to eat the liver of Ḥamza ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (the Prophet Muḥammad’s uncle) and mutilated the bodies of fallen Muslims to make amulets, and the “harlots of Ḥaḍramūt,” who dyed their hands with henna in celebration upon hearing the news of the death of the Prophet. Men are not entirely absent from this metaphorical or even metonymical relationship either: for example, in pre-Islamic poetry, the *ṣuʿlūk* (brigand) seeking blood vengeance would refrain from drinking wine until he had properly fulfilled his oath, linking blood, ink, and wine in through ritual exchange.

The relationship between these two substances, however, changes depending on the types of sources and the conventions that govern different genres. Thus, in Islamic jurisprudence, ink and blood remain distinct substances in the purity regulations that focus on the handling of scripture. Other religious traditions, however, have had different relationships with the practice of blood writing (as Jimmy Yu notes, blood writing was a prominent cultural marker across religious divides in early modern China). Blood piety

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13 Stetkevitch, 131.
has a distinct role in pre-modern Christianity. In contrast with those traditions, writing the Qurʾān with blood was and remains not only rare, but anathema.\(^{14}\) Sacred texts and their transmission (in particular the written corpus of the Qurʾān, the mushaf, and its recitation) are to be “handled” with attention to the ritual and ethical states of scribes, reciters, and others who come into contact with them.

And yet, there is one legendary instance of blood on a mushaf that turned a particular codex into a coveted relic, a “sacred object which conferred legitimacy to rulers East and West.”\(^{15}\) It is said that ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (the third of the rāshidūn caliphs in Sunni Islam, remembered as the leader under whose supervision the authoritative Qurʾān was redacted and distributed) was assassinated in 656 CE as he was reading, or in some versions, copying, the Qurʾān from his own hand.

Different communities have claimed to possess the mushaf stained with the blood of ʿUthmān, and in each community, the sacred object has allegedly granted power and authority to its keepers. The best known of these bloodied codices is said to have made its way to Cordoba in the hands of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III when he fled Damascus after the ʿAbbasid takeover in the middle of the eighth century. As Travis Zadeh recounts, tales of the circulation of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III’s personal Qurʾān, which later interpreters claimed was the authentic ʿUthmānic codex, became central to broader narratives about Christian-Muslim encounter.\(^{16}\) Furthermore, it became a material sign of continuity between the Umayyad dynasty in al-Andalus and the early Umayyad clan, to which ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān belonged.

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According to chronicler Ibn Ḥayyan’s reconstruction of ʿIsā ibn Aḥmad al-Rāzī’s history of al-Andalus, in the 930’s CE ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III lost a valuable mushaf to Ramiro II, King of Leon, at the Battle of Simancas (known as the al-Khandaq in the Arabic sources), and later recovered it as part of a truce between the two rulers. The Battle of Simancas (or, rather, series of battles), about which Latin sources beginning in the tenth century also wrote, marked the single military defeat suffered by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—who, in fact, did not himself participate in a military campaign ever again. In Andalusi historiography, therefore, the story of the loss of the codex and its subsequent return (which also appears in the chronicles of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Rāzī and Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb, among others) becomes emblematic of the rise and fall of the Umayyad dynasty and, more generally, of Islamic rule in al-Andalus.

Other accounts place the ʿUthmānic codex in the Great Mosque of Cordoba, from which it was taken out on elaborate processions after the Friday prayer. Not every chronicler links ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III’s mushaf with Uthmān, but the popular account by Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Idrīsī (d. 1165)’s popular account mentions the visible drops of blood, which al-Idrīsī claims to have seen on the book’s pages, and emphasizes that the stained Qur’ān had been written in Uthmān’s handwriting. One of the best-known of these accounts, that of the great Sufi master Ibn al-ʿArabī of Murcia (d. 1240), does not name ʿUthmān, but does give an example of the Qurʾān’s ceremonial use in the Umayyad court during a diplomatic visit by the Franks. However, these are fairly late sources. As noted

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18 Ibid., 332–335.
19 Ibid., 330–331.
by Amira K. Benninson, chroniclers’ references to the *muṣḥaf* disappear around the fall of the Umayyad caliphate in Cordoba in 1031 and, when they resurface again, they speak of the book as a prized possession of the North African Almohads in the twelfth century. In the Maghrib, the blood-stained *muṣḥaf* becomes the object of elaborate rites of veneration and dynastic displays of authority. In this historical context, the myth of the codex developed fully.21

Evidently, then, conventions regarding the authority and purity of this blood-stained codex changed depending on the region and time period. One common characteristic that these narratives regarding the ʿUthmānic codex share, however, is the absence of contagion or defilement. Neither the blood of the martyred caliph nor that of the enemy Christians seems to have made the *muṣḥaf* impure. On the contrary, its value as a relic was made possible precisely because of its connection to the Caliph’s body, and its power was proven when it survived crossing into the *dār al-ḥarb* (abode of war) during the Battle of Simancas.

The reason why the codex was not considered to be impure, despite having been spattered with blood, has to do with legal distinctions between bloods under Islamic law. The blood of martyrs—and Sunni Muslims see ʿUthmān as a martyr—is not ritually impure, and it is not washed off their bodies in preparation for burial: they are buried as they died in battle, contrary to other Muslims, whose corpses are thoroughly cleansed in preparation for the funeral rites. As Brannon Wheeler notes, “Martyred bodies, such as those of the prophet Muhammad’s followers killed in the battle of Uhud which were

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buried without having the blood washed from the wounds and clothing, are used, in a literal sense, to mark land where Islam has been established.” 22 The difference between blood that can make an object or place sacred and blood that can defile them, therefore, is not just spiritual, but material.

Furthermore, the stains of blood that mark the text did not obscure its meaning. On the contrary, they made the material Qur’ān into a living document. In some accounts of ‘Uthmān’s murder, the caliph was reading sūrat al-baqara (“The Cow”), and the blood highlighted the verse “So if they believe like you do, they will be rightly guided. But if they turn their backs, then they will be entrenched in opposition. God will protect you from them: He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing.” 23 In another, the blood-stained portion is āya 77 of sūrat al-a’rāf (“The Heights”): “and then they hamstrung the camel. They defied their Lord’s commandment and said, ‘Salih, bring down the punishment you threaten, if you really are a messenger!’”. 24 The first verse in the chapter of “The Cow” refers to sectarian conflict, and the second, “The Heights” to improper bloodshed—the sacrifice of a life-giving gift from God (the Prophet Ṣālih’s camel mare). Both fragments stress the spiritual and material significance of blood, and also, as they become stained with the blood of ‘Uthmān, act as commentary. In light of the blood-marked verses, the death of ‘Uthmān is understood as a refusal to recognize the signs that God sends as signs of His mercy. Murdered amidst intra-Muslim strife (against which the Qur’ān repeatedly

23 Q 2: 137.
cautions), the caliph is sacrificed by the very people who should have seen his leadership as a divine gift and who will be punished for their defiance.

More specifically, the mark of blood sacrifice on the scripture is a counter-claim to genealogical claims to authority that, of blood against blood. The stains, therefore, legitimized those leaders who did not share the Prophet Muḥammad’s bloodline, such as Uthmān, against the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through his daughter Fāṭima and son-in-law ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib: “The discursive significance of ‘Uthmān’s codex, the ‘Protecting Imām,’ draws upon the early sectarian history within Islam, set to counterweight ‘Alid [the descendants of ‘Alī] claims of legitimacy and notions of the Imāmate. . .The power of the ‘Uthmānic muḥaf weds both scripture and relic together.”

We can perhaps imagine how this anecdote may have resonated with Saddam Hussein, whose brand of secular nationalism did not prevent him from modeling himself after powerful figures in Islamic history in ways that also promoted sectarian division, and who, in the context of war against an enemy other, crafted his own blood relic while he was still alive.

25 Zadeh, 333.

Blood’s many forms

Blood is a fluid that circulates in the body. It has a distinct composition as well as discrete properties. Because of its performative impact, however, it is also a substance that, once invoked, has the potential to alter not only spaces, objects, and bodies, but also literary narratives of many kinds (legal, historiographical, panegyrical, theological, etc.). It is also itself capable of transformation. In a range of local semiotic systems, blood is
used metaphorically in relation to the essence, quality, or origin of a person or group and thus, inflects ideas about kinship, race, and nation, life, death, intensity, fertility, both through its absence and its presence during the menstrual cycle, nourishment, and currency. In the history of medicine, it is one of the Galenic humors (associated with air), and, through practices from cupping to bloodletting, played a major role in Mediterranean healing traditions. Despite its constant presence in metaphorical language, blood also flows beyond the realm of the symbolic. It can intrude in everyday life in ways that, while politically, culturally, and religiously mediated, cannot be fully theorized away. This means that, in discussions about bloodlines, for instance, blood is not simply a metaphor flowing only in the realm of the symbolic. Even as a sign that points beyond itself, blood, as a substance, cannot be fully theorized away.

In Blood: A Critique of Christianity, Gil Anidjar rejects the notion that blood is a concept, arguing that it “has not been subjected to philosophical or theoretical inquiry or to formal analysis, nor has it been reflectively assigned to a particular field or sphere or examined for its apparent failure to keep within the limits of such confinement.” Instead, blood is an “element,” and even, echoing Joan W. Scott, a “category of historical analysis” through which Anidjar is able to link the Inquisition with the Eucharist (arguing that the Inquisition was not an aberration, but a logical extension of Christian attitudes towards blood), and to locate the limpieza de sangre statutes in Spain within a broader movement in Western Christianity that sought to reconstitute itself as a “community of blood.” To insist that blood operates similarly in Islam (or in any tradition outside of Christianity, really) to create a community of blood is to miss Anidjar’s point about the

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28 Ibid, 40; 67.
specific trajectory through which blood came to redefine social bonds and hierarchies between individuals, families, and groups, all the while being central to Christian piety. Nevertheless, blood can function as a “category of analysis” both materially and symbolically, since, as Anidjar suggests, these two things cannot be independent of one another. What is more, while avoiding grand theological claims about the notion of the Islamic community (the umma) in terms of blood, we can still focus on those practices that organize social structures through the differentiation and classification of various types of blood in order to engage with with historical narrative, material culture, and corporeality in geographical areas and time periods, particularly in relation to genealogy.

In the Muslim West, in the early modern period (as in earlier historical moments), blood was understood to serve as a conduit for good, as the Qurʾān so intimately describes in relation to the inner workings of the human body (Q 50:16, “we are nearer to the human being than his jugular vein”), or for evil (as in the ḥadīth “shayṭān flows through the bloodstream of the human being—yajrī min al-ḥayān majrā al-dam”). However, by the sixteenth century, genealogy was trail of blood (not semen or milk, for instance, although these are also important) that could be traced through the bonds of parentage, enacting sociopolitical and religious boundaries and functioning as a broader metaphor for circulation in the Maghrib, not just among Christians, Muslims, or Jews, but between them as well. What communal boundaries, then, are being marked, whose blood purifies, whose blood pollutes, and is there such a thing as exceptional blood? Practices and ideas related to blood as well as relics circulated and flowed across religious lines. They reemerge occasionally, as in the case of Saddam Hussein’s Qurʾān, not as inert

29 Peter J. Awn, Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption, Iblīs in Sufi Psychology (Leiden: Brill), 47.
residue, but as objects and concepts through which forgotten pasts can suddenly be reignited and set in motion.

I conclude here hoping to have convinced you of the usefulness of this type of analysis or, if not, to think of ways in which to think about the afterlives of residual matter. (Working draft: Do not cite without permission).