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**“Blood Inscriptions: Science, Modernity, and Ritual
Murder in Fin de Siècle Europe”**

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When trials against Jews for “ritual murder” reappeared in Central Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, after a hiatus of three hundred years, they seemed to be a throwback to the Middle Ages. The truth is, however, that the modern trials were very different. The “rules of the game” had changed: ritual murder accusations, and the criminal examinations that ensued, could no longer be framed in pre-Reformation language and symbols. Prosecutors, magistrates, trial judges, and police investigators shared an implicit understanding that a new universe of knowledge was in place in which academic experts and practitioners of science defined the boundaries of plausible argument and were to be accorded deference. This does not mean that traditional religious beliefs suddenly ceased to be disseminated or no longer influenced courtroom proceedings, but cultural traditions and psychological predispositions would no longer suffice. A new set of arguments and new appeals to authority were now needed to move states to indict or judges and juries to convict.