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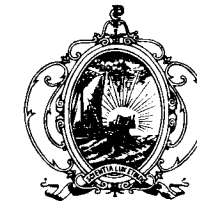
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CULTURES OF CONVERSIONS

EDITED BY

Jan N. Bremmer, Wout J. van Bekkum and
Arie L. Molendijk



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POETICS AND POLITICS IN AN AGE OF MASS CONVERSION

David Nirenberg

In 1391, rioters attacked the Jews across the lands we now call Spain. Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of Jews were killed, and many thousands more converted to Christianity. In the city of Valencia, for example, so many sought baptism that the clergy feared running out of chrism. But in parish after parish priests returned from supper to find vessels that they had left empty now overflowing, so that they could resume their work. 'Consider for yourself,' the town council of Valencia wrote the king, whether these things can have a natural cause. We believe that they cannot, but can only be the work of the Almighty'.¹ Nor did the Almighty cease his labours. In the second decade of the fifteenth century tens of thousands more Spanish Jews converted, inspired this time by the marvelous eloquence of St. Vincent Ferrer, as well as by a campaign of total segregation, forced disputation, and compulsory attendance at Christian sermons. Many Christians, including Saint Vincent, saw in these conversions miraculous proof that messianic times were at hand.²

By the end of that century the mood was very different. Many now believed that the converts and their descendants were not Christians but hybrid monsters, motivated only by ambition and a 'carnal lust for nuns and Christian virgins'. The converts' goal was to poison true Christians in order to marry their spouses and stain their 'clean lineages' with Jewish traits. These traits were genetic, encoded in blood, the product of natural history: not even God's miraculous grace working through baptism could wash them away.³ Consequently, the converts posed a far greater danger to Christian society than the Jews had done before them. For example, intermarriage be-

¹ See the list of miracles in AMV, Lletres missives, g³-5, fols. 20^v-22^v, dated July 14, 1391, published in Hinojosa Montalvo, *The Jews*, pp. 332-334, no. 11.

² The bibliography on St. Vincent is vast. On the specific topic of his mission to the Jews, see Beltrán de Heredia, 'San Vicente Ferrer, predicador de las sinagogas', in *idem*, *Miscelánea*, pp. 225-233; Floriano, 'San Vicente Ferrer'; Torres Fontes, 'Moros'; Vendrell de Millás, 'La Actividad'; *eadem*, 'La política'; Millás Valli-crosa, 'En torno'. And especially Cátedra, *Sermón*.

³ Many of these claims were first put forth explicitly in the polemics surrounding a revolt in Toledo in 1449. These are edited in Benito Ruano, 'El memorial' and 'La Sentencia-Estatuto'. The first of these texts will be discussed further below.

tween Old Christian and New was thought to have spread Judaism throughout the noble houses of Castile and Aragon. Even Ferdinand and Isabel, those 'most catholic majesties' who founded the Inquisition, conquered Muslim Granada, and expelled the Jews, were rumored by their subjects to favour Jews in their policies by reason of kinship.⁴ And because 'Jewishness' was now linked to blood, Christian society could fear the spread of 'Jewish' tendencies long after the Jews themselves were expelled in 1492. Hence Spanish Christians established the Inquisition to root out Judaizers, and filled vast archives with apotropaic genealogies. Each of these prophylactics only increased the conviction that shades of Judaism lurked in every corner of Spanish society and culture.

This thumbnail sketch of a familiar story serves to make a simple point. Over the course of the century following the mass conversions, the converts (and through them all of Spain) became Jewish. I use the word 'became' advisedly: despite what the historiography tells us, the *conversos* were not marked as Jewish from the moment of their conversion. Very little evidence of anxiety about the converts' 'Jewishness' has reached us from the period 1391-1430. Christians (and Jews) of these first generations after the mass conversions did worry that the conversions had blurred distinctions between the two faiths. Almost as soon as the killings and conversions of 1391 were over, the air began to fill with complaints that it had become impossible to tell who was a Christian and who was not. But what is striking is that Christians of these early generations did not attempt to resolve their 'identity crisis' by re-judaizing the converts. Instead they sought to contain the dangers of Judaism by focusing on the remaining Jews themselves, advocating a program of increased segregation, continuing conversion, and even (in extreme cases) elimination by violence.⁵

It is not till the 1430s that we start to find widespread evidence of skepticism about the Christianity of the converts, and widespread efforts to 'rejudaise' them. The earliest *sustained* representations of converso Jewishness emerged in debates about the nature of poetic language that were staged in a collection of poems known as the *Cancionero de Baena*, the first of the many critical anthologies of court poetry that began to appear in fifteenth century Castile. The manuscript, compiled by Juan Alfonso de Baena at some point before he presented it to King Juan II circa 1430, contains some 600 poems composed in the courts of four Castilian kings, ranging

⁴ On Isabel as 'protector of the Jews and daughter of a Jewess' see the account of the Polish traveler Nicolas Popplau in Liske (*Viajes*). On Ferdinand, see Kriegel, 'Histoire'.

⁵ On the anxieties about religious identification that arose in the period 1391-1430, and on responses to these anxieties, see Nirenberg 'Conversion'.

from the late fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth century. Each poem is preceded by a short editorial introduction, the whole prefaced with a meditation on the function of poetry and the nature of the poet's art.⁶ Juan Alfonso's preface is silent on the matter, but if his selection is any guide he agreed with Aristotle on the importance of insult and invective as a function of poetry, for the *Cancionero's* (Christian) poets are constantly defaming one another.⁷ Prominent among the charges they hurl is the accusation of Jewishness. Indeed Juan Alfonso's collection includes many poems that cast his own Christianity in doubt. His birthplace of Baena is impugned in one poem as a land where 'much good eggplant' is grown, another mocks him for having 'eyes of eggplant,' yet another of eating 'adefyna', these being dishes associated with Jews. Other poets refer to his 'bath in the water of holy baptism,' or to his sexual encounters with Jews both male and female. Even Juan Alfonso's dedication of the anthology to the royal family has been read as a marker. Did he sign himself *el judino Johan Alfon[so] de Baena* or *el judino Johan Alfon[so] de Baena*? The 'unworthy' Johan Alfonso or the 'Jew' Johan Alfonso? The grapheme in the manuscript can be read either way, as n or as u, and generations of critics have opted for the second reading, though current philology agrees with the first.⁸

⁶ All references to the *Cancionero de Baena* are from the *Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena* (ed. Dutton and González Cuenca). References for all poems are also keyed to the indexing system of Dutton's *El Cancionero del Siglo XV*, and poems from *cancioneros* other than that of Baena will be cited from that edition. The literature on the *Cancionero* is venerable and vast. Two recent collections may serve the neophyte as a starting point: Poetry at court in Trastamaran Spain: from the *Cancionero de Baena* to the *Cancionero general* (ed. Gerli and Weiss); *Juan Alfonso de Baena y su Cancionero* (ed. Serrano Reyes and Fernández Jiménez). Those interested in attitudes toward Jews and converts in the *cancionero* may begin with (in addition to the works cited below) Rose, 'Anti-Semitism'; *idem*, *Poesia*; Hutcheson, *Marginality*; Fraker, *Studies*, pp. 9-62.

⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b.

⁸ The eggplant quotes are from poems by Diego de Estuniga (#424 [ID1552 S 1545]) and Juan García (#384 [ID1509 R 1508]). The reference to *adefyna* is by Juan de Guzmán (#404 [ID1531 R 1530]), and the baptismal allusion by Ferrand Manuel (#370 [ID1495 R 1494]). For allusions to Juan Alfonso de Baena's sexual encounters with Jewesses, see *inter alia* the same poem by Juan García: *Con judia Aben Xuxena / o Cohena/ bien me plaze que burlades....* In #418 [ID 1546 R 1545] the Mariscal Íñigo de Astuñiga asserts that Juan Alfonso is stuffed full of Jewish sperm. Allusions to interfaith sexual dalliance are very common in the *cancionero*. Juan Alfonso de Baena, for example, asks Gonçalo de Quadros: *nunca nombrastes la vuestra señora, / sy era cristiana, judia o mora* (#449 [ID1577]). For the debate over *indino/judino* see the commentary in María Azáceta, *Cancionero*, vol. 1, pp. v and 4, and accompanying notes.

Juan Alfonso and his colleagues in the *cancionero* accuse each other of Jewish ancestry, of having too small a foreskin or too big a nose, of heterosexual and homosexual intercourse with Jews, and even of renouncing their Christianity. Modern critics realise that not all these accusations can be taken literally. What genealogical truth can one find in an ancestry like the one attributed to Pedro Méndez: 'one quarter marrano (i.e. convert) / and three quarters sodomite'⁹ Nonetheless the poems have been mined for proofs of religious identity. If a poet is attacked as Judaizing, then he must be a *converso*. And if the attacker himself betrays knowledge of Judaism (for example, by drawing on Hebrew vocabulary, such as *meshumad* for apostate) then he too may be presumed to have a Jewish past.¹⁰ Such logic has turned philologists into cousins of inquisitors. We can turn them back into lovers of words rather than lineages by suggesting that converso Judaism in the *cancionero* is a literary product, not the result of insincere conversion or clandestine Judaism. It is not about prosopography but about poetics. We cannot understand why the accusation of Judaizing appeared so precociously in poetry, or what poets meant by it, unless we take seriously the genre in which they were writing.

This is true at a number of levels of analysis. At a formal one, still useful though now out of fashion, it is well known that the *cancionero* poets drew on earlier genres of competitive poetic defamation such as the Provençal *tenso* and the Galician-Portuguese *Cantiga d'escarnho*.¹¹ In this earlier poetry of insult religious identity could be portrayed as ambiguous, as in the late thirteenth century Galician verses maligning the knight Joan Fernández. 'Joan Fernandes, how badly you were cut' (*que mal vos talharon*), one poem mocks, simultaneously criticising the cut of his clothes and of his penis, suggesting that he is circumcised. Another claims that he is committing the crime of interfaith intercourse whenever he lies with his (Christian) wife: 'Joan Fernández, a Muslim is screwing your wife, at the same time that you are screwing her' (*fode-a tal como a fodedes vós*).¹² Fifteenth-century poets revived such word plays, writing entire poems punning

⁹ This 'genealogy' of Pedro Mendez is drawn from the much later anonymous work produced toward the end of the reign of Henry IV and known as the *Coplas del Provincial*. For this and other examples, see Rodríguez-Puértolas, *Poesía*, pp. 216-224. See also Arbós, 'Los cancioneros'.

¹⁰ The most representative example of this type of scholarship remains Cantera Burgos's important article: 'El Cancionero'.

¹¹ Cummins, 'The Survival'; Scholberg, *Sátira e invectiva*; Rodríguez Puértolas, *Poesía*.

¹² *Cantigas d'escarnho e de mal dizer* #300. #229. #51 (ed. Rodrigues Lapa). On these poems, see Liu, 'Affined to Love the Moor', p. 61.

items of clothing with foreskins.¹³ It seems at least plausible to suppose that continuity of genre contributed to the precocity and enthusiasm with which Joan Alfonso de Baena's colleagues took up the derogatory theme of Jewishness.

At a more materialist and up-to-date level of analysis, we can also see how the theme of Jewishness became useful within the shifting sociological context of poetic production. The *Cancionero de Baena* has fruitfully been read as a staging ground for the competition between three classes of poet: 1) the 'full time professionals' or 'hired pens,' like Alfonso de Villasandino (d. c.1420), whose verses scramble for patronage and who offer their employers *palabras de buen mercado* to aim against their enemies; 2) the *letrados*, members of an expanding class of scribes, bureaucrats, and other non-nobles engaged in the administrative business of the court (Juan Alfonso de Baena was himself of this class), for whom poetising is something of an alternative career; 3) the aristocrat, whose poetics presents itself both as a morally edifying practice in the education of the nobility, and as an index of that nobility's achievement.¹⁴ I do not want to dwell upon this extraordinarily complex contest except to add that the language of 'Jewishness' provided a new weapon to the aristocrats in their deprecation of 'careerist' poets. The (admittedly later) attack by the noble Gómez Manrique against Juan Poeta provides a nice example:

You are a novice poet, / which is to say a convert. / I am anciently professed, / an hidalgo from the beginning ... And because your rhymes are store bought, as I say ... they can do no harm to mine, for yours are gross, and cold, and of base metal.¹⁵

But the most important explanation for the early rise and importance of convert Jewishness in the *cancionero* has to do with questions about the nature

¹³ Villasandino's attack against Alfonso Ferrández Semuel in Baena #141 [ID1281 D 1280] provides an early and lapidary example: *Alffonso, capon corrydo, tajar te quiero vn vestido...* The association of items of clothing with circumcision recurs constantly in the *cancionero* genre, with terms like *capirote* (little cape) becoming key words. Perhaps the wittiest example is the much later ditty by Juan Poeta in the *Cancionero General*, written upon receiving the gift of a small cape from a nobleman [ID 6768, 11CG 996]: *Vos no soys sayo ni saya / tajo frances ni morisco / ni soys funda dazagaya / ni ropa de san francisco / Soys beca de capirote / no se como soys cortada / soys embiada por mote / pese atal que no soys nada*. On the vocabulary of clothing in the *cancionero* see Puigvert Ocal, 'El léxico'.

¹⁴ See especially the elegant study of Weiss, *The Poet's Art*, pp. 25-40. For *palabras de buen mercado*, Baena #177 [ID1317].

¹⁵ ID3377. MP3-94.

of language and of poetry that are as old as criticism itself. What is the status of poetry within a system of thought that distinguishes hierarchically between the life of the body and that of the soul, between the confusion of carnal perception and the clarity of spiritual cognition? For Plato and Aristotle, poetry was above all a mimetic genre: its first principle, as Aristotle puts it in the *Poetics* (1447a), is the imitation of the forms of nature, and its appeal is to the bodily senses. This is why Socrates and Phaedrus agree in their dialogue that poets are incapable of perceiving the higher reaches of truth.

The place beyond heaven – none of our earthly poets has ever sung or will ever sing its praises enough! ... What is in this place is without color and without shape and without solidity, a being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge, visible only to the intelligence, the soul's steersman. (*Phaedrus* 247C).

And it is why Socrates, in his hierarchy of reincarnations, assigns to the poet a soul just above that of the lowly farmer, whose job it is to extract bodily nourishment from the earth (248E).

Of course the problem was not simply a poetic one. It afflicted all language, insofar as the same words through which philosophers mounted to incorporeal truth also pointed literally to material things in the world. Hellenistic philosophers, Jewish as well as gentile, developed an anthropomorphic reading practice as one way of addressing the problem. Word and meaning were arrayed against each other in a hierarchy explicitly parallel to that of flesh and spirit. The task of a reader was to penetrate beyond the outer body (Gk. *sōma*) or literal meaning of a text, and into its inner or spiritual meaning. The Hellenistic Jew Philo, for example, stressed the need to read scripture for 'the hidden meaning that appeals to the few who study soul characteristics, rather than bodily forms' (Abr. 147).¹⁶

At much the same time that Philo was writing in Alexandria, the first Christians were re-casting these problems of language into their own distinctive terms. Many have studied this process, notable among them Erich Auerbach in his essay 'Figura'.¹⁷ Without repeating the insights of these scholars, we can extend their import by suggesting that the Apostle Paul and his successors reconceived the challenges of language in terms of

¹⁶ These points are too well known to demand footnote. Nevertheless on Philo's (and later Origen's) neo-platonic use of the analogy of body and soul for text and meaning I have found especially helpful Dawson, 'Plato's Soul'.

¹⁷ Auerbach, 'Figura' (transl. Mannheim): *Scenes*.

the passage from Judaism to Christianity. They did so, at least in part, because of the challenges posed by questions of conversion in their own day.

As everyone knows, many of the first generations of Christians were Jews, their flesh and their habits marked by Judaism and Jewish law. It is not surprising, therefore, that questions quickly arose about the Jewish Christian's proper relationship to his or her own past. The Acts of the Apostles suggests that early answers to these questions were relatively flexible. So far as we know, all the disciples, even Paul, continued to observe Jewish ritual law as Christians.

Much more conflictual, for early Christians, were questions involving the increasingly numerous proselytes from gentility. These questions emerged from the first moments of the Pauline mission. Should gentile converts observe the laws of Judaism? We know that there were communities of gentile converts who advocated at least a minimum of ritual observance (for example, circumcision). Paul saw such views as a horrifying symptom of literalism and incomplete conversion. It was in part to counter them that he developed the tension so predominant in his writings (particularly Galatians and Romans) between outer shell and inner meaning, letter and spirit, literal and allegorical. To give but one example from Romans 2:25:

Being a Jew is not only having the outward appearance of a Jew, and circumcision is not only a visible physical operation. The real Jew is one who is inwardly a Jew, and real circumcision is in the heart, a thing not of the letter but of the spirit.

When Christians circumcised themselves they placed significance in the Jewish outer 'letter of the law' rather than in its inner spiritual significance, and thereby revealed themselves as 'severed from Christ' by the 'desires of the flesh'. (Gal 5:4, 16-18. Cf. Rom. 8:6-8)

The style of reading through which Paul achieved this translation from promise in the flesh to promise in the spirit was not a novel one.¹⁸ Like Philo and many other Hellenistic exegetes, he mapped word and meaning onto the hierarchy of flesh and spirit. But for Philo spiritual meaning increased, rather than lessened, the necessity of the bodily practice.¹⁹ Paul surprised not by his methods but by his conclusions: once the inner meaning

¹⁸ See Wedderburn, *Baptism*, esp. p. 127.

¹⁹ E.g. *On the Migration of Abraham* 92-93: 'we should look on all these [outward observances] as resembling the body, and [these inner meanings as resembling] the soul. It follows that, exactly as we have to take thought for the body, because it is the abode of the soul, so we must pay heed to the written laws. If we keep and observe these, we shall gain a clearer conception of those things of which these are the symbols'.

was understood, the literal meaning could be dispensed with. As he put it in Romans 7:5-6:

For when we were still in the flesh, our sinful passions, stirred up by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are fully freed from the law, dead to that in which we lay captive. We can thus serve in the new being of the Spirit and not the old one of the letter.

It is not just the law that is left behind by the spiritual believer and reader, but also the companions that Paul everywhere associates with it: the letter, and even flesh itself.

In his attempts to dissuade gentile converts from Mosaic practice, Paul drew sharp distinctions between Judaism and Christianity. He aligned the former with captivity, law, letter, and flesh; the latter with freedom, grace, inner meaning, and spirit; and coined a new verb, 'to Judaize' (Gal. 2:14, Lt. *Judaizare*), in order to characterise the dangerous slippage that could occur between them. But if for Paul this danger applied primarily to converts from gentility, it quickly extended itself to converts from Judaism as well. Already for the next generations of Christians, those who produced the gospels, it was Jewish and not gentile converts (and particularly Pharisees like Paul himself) who symbolised the difficulties of true conversion. As in Paul, the problem of conversion manifested itself as a reading disability. Thus Jesus complains in the Sermon on the Mount that even those Jews and Pharisees sympathetic to him incessantly confuse outer appearance with inner truth. They are like tombs (Gk. *sêma*, punning with *sôma*, body), attractive on the outside, repulsive within (Matt. 23:25-32). There is a complex historical movement from the frustrations expressed by the authors of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John (writing roughly in the period from 70-100 C.E.)²⁰ over the pace and nature of Jewish conversion, to the opinion of Gregory of Nicea in the ninth century that 'no Jew has yet lifted the veil

²⁰ As with all things related to the New Testament the dating of its books is much debated, but there is a scholarly consensus at which all revisions aim (For the consensus, see for example Kümmel, *Introduction*). That consensus has long placed the genuine writings of Paul first, circa 45-60 C.E. (For a revised dating of the letters see Luedemann, *Paul*). The gospel of Mark is thought to be the earliest gospel, written shortly before or after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., followed by Matthew later in the first century (Farmer's *The Synoptic Problem*, however, argues for reversing these two, since he sees Mark as an abridgement of Matthew). Luke is often treated as contemporaneous with Matthew but is probably later, since Acts, written by the same author, is generally dated to circa 100 C.E. John has almost universally been treated as coming last and latest, though recent revisionists argue instead for its priority (see, for example, Robinson, *Redating*).

(from his eyes), insofar as not one among them has converted legitimately'.²¹ That movement cannot concern us here. We need only note a point so obvious that it has become invisible: the passage between Judaism and Christianity came to serve very early as an analogy for other passages, especially those between letter and spirit, body and soul. It was this analogical function that made questions surrounding conversion so productive in all sorts of arguments that had nothing to do with living converts from Judaism.

A particularly important example of these arguments was that over the relative weight of literal and non-literal (metaphorical, allegorical, figurative, etc.) readings of the bible. Many third- and fourth-century Christian exegetes like Origen, Chrysostom, and Jerome, believed that conversion from Judaism to Christianity required a complete transformation of the convert. Any continuity of practice was dangerous, insofar as it constituted Judaizing. But if this was true, then how should Christians read those many New Testament passages attesting to ongoing observance of Judaism by the apostles? Following Origen (c.185-252/3), many theologians claimed that such biblical passages could not be understood literally, but should only be read as allegories. Indeed these passages became very important in debates over biblical hermeneutics, precisely because they served allegorists like Origen as the clearest evidence that some parts of the New Testament (and many parts of the Old) were literally untrue. Such a position struck other theologians as heretical, insofar as it stressed spirit excessively over flesh, and came perilously close to the critical style of Gnostic exegetes.²² It is for this reason that Augustine focused on the question when he argued against Jerome that every word of the bible has a literal truth in addition to a figurative one. According to Augustine, the apostles and their generation of converts from Judaism to Christianity had 'retained the ceremonies which by the law they had learned from their fathers.' Jerome responded violently. Augustine was 'reintroducing within the Church the pestilential heresy' of the Ebionites and other Judaizing sects. Such opinions, Jerome warned, would destroy the Church:

If ... it shall be declared lawful for (the Jews) to continue in the Churches of Christ what they have been accustomed to practice in the Synagogues of Satan, I will tell you my opinion in the matter: they will not become Christian, but will make us Jews. (Ep. 75. iv.13)

²¹ Dagron, 'Le Traité'.

²² On Origen I have especially depended on, in addition to the article by Lawson above: Caspary, *Politics*; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*; Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*.

Of course Augustine was not arguing that the Law was binding on the apostolic or any other generation of converts from Judaism. What he did say, most clearly in the treatise 'Against Faustus the Manichee' of 398 as well as in his correspondence with Jerome, was that such observance was not prohibited to the apostolic generation; that it was understandable as the product of habit and custom; and that the apostles had favoured it as a theologically advisable approach toward the Torah, 'lest by compulsory abandonment it should seem to be condemned rather than closed' (*Contra Faustum* XIX.17). His was a thoroughly historical response to dualist readings of these biblical passages about apostolic Judaism, one that articulated the legitimacy of Law and Judaism for converts in generational terms. Augustine developed a similar 'conversionary' method of thinking, not only about specific passages like these, but about the nature of biblical language itself. As Augustine put it in *De doctrina Christiana* (III.v.9):

The ambiguities of metaphorical words ... demand extraordinary care and diligence. What the Apostle says pertains to this problem. 'For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth'. That is, when that which is said figuratively is taken as though it were literal, it is understood carnally. Nothing can more appropriately be called the death of the soul than that condition in which the thing that distinguishes man from beasts, which is the understanding, is subjected to the flesh in pursuit of the letter (*hoc est, intelligentia carni subicitur sequendo litteram*).

To read carnally, 'to be unable to lift the eye of the mind above what is corporeal and created', was 'a miserable slavery of the soul'. This was in fact, as Augustine went on to say, the slavery of the Jews. But no Christian, at least none who utilised language, was immune to the potential slavery of reading carnally, with all its attendant risks of hermeneutic 'Judaisation.'

I recognise that my patristic claims here are far too compressed, but I hope they make plausible a basic point. Thinking about conversion from Judaism was for Christians an important way to think about the incompleteness of their own conversion from flesh and letter to spirit, an incompleteness that was as dangerous as it was unavoidable in this pre-apocalyptic world of flesh. Because of its heightened association with sensual mimesis, Christian poetics confronted these same questions in concentrated form. The resulting debates are some of the most interesting in the literary history of the Middle Ages: I am thinking, for example, of the twelfth-century neoplatonic defenses of poetry by authors like Bernard Sylvester; of Thomas Aquinas' contrary claim, in his *Quodlibetal Questions*, that 'Poetic fictions have no purpose except to signify; and such signification does not go beyond the literal sense' (7.6.16); or of Dante's, Petrarch's, and Boccaccio's

counter-insistence on the spiritual and allegorical value of even pagan poetics.²³ Similar debates flourished in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Spain, and it is in their context that I believe we should understand accusations of Jewishness in *cancionero* poetry.

This suggestion may sound more plausible if we remember that peninsular poetry already had a tradition of thinking through these poetic issues in Jewish terms. The fourteenth-century Castilian poet Juan Ruiz, for example, wrote his 'Book of Good Love' as a self-conscious exploration of the promise and the peril of poetry. In line with a tradition inspired by Augustine's stress on love as the mediator between the literal and the non-literal (in Book 3 of 'On Christian Doctrine,' continuing the passage quoted above), Juan Ruiz argued that the art of poetry could lead to either carnal or spiritual ends, depending upon whether it was inspired by the lusts of the flesh or the love of God. Again like Augustine, Juan Ruiz mapped the choice onto the distinction between Jew and Christian. Thus his prologue on the nature of poetry begins with an invocation so negative as to approach an exorcism: 'Lord God, who rejected the Jews, people of perdition', and works its way toward a proper trinitarian dedication at the end: *Dios padre e Dios fijo e Dios spiritu Santo*. It was the good poet's duty to make a similar transition, from damning Jewish carnality to salvific Christian synthesis. The poem itself stages the struggle even more dramatically as a war between Sir Carnal and Lady Lent. In this war the Jews are Sir Carnal's greatest allies: it is in their butcher shops that he seeks refuge during Holy Week, and upon their rabbi's horse that he sallies forth once again to take the offensive.²⁴

Like Juan Ruiz' 'Book of Good Love,' Juan Alfonso de Baena's *cancionero* is also provided with a prologue. Two lines of Latin verse scrawled at the top of the first manuscript folio capture its general theme: *Unicuique gratia est data / Secundum Paulum relata* ['To each one grace is given / as

²³ Again, this is a debate with a storied bibliography. For medieval examples, see among many others the work attributed to Bernardus Sylvesteris, *Commentary* (transl. Schreiber and Maresca); Giovanni Boccaccio's *Geneologia deorum gentilium libri* (ed. Romano), esp. the preface and books 14-15. On the medieval Spanish translation of this text, see Piccus, 'El traductor' and Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum*, available in a fifteenth-century Castilian translation by Hernando de Talavera, 'Invectivas'. Of course in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Spain, as elsewhere, it was Dante's work that had the greatest impact. The modern scholarship on this issue is too enormous to adumbrate, although chapters 8, 11, and 12 of Curtius's *European Literature* make a canonical attempt.

²⁴ Juan Ruiz, *Libro de Buen Amor* (ed. Chiarini, pp. 1-8, ll. 1-125). For Don Carnal's Lenten philo-semitism, *ibidem*, ll. 4854-4874, 4970-4974.

in Saint Paul is scriven'], a paraphrase of Eph. 4.7).²⁵ It is through a theory of poetic grace that Juan Alfonso attempted to answer the criticisms being leveled against secular poetry by contemporaries like St. Vincent Ferrer and Alonso de Cartagena, the learned converso bishop of Burgos.²⁶ Again like Juan Ruiz, the poets of Juan Alfonso's circle were well aware of the dangerous ambivalence of poetry, but they went further in explicitly debating the prerequisites necessary for a proper Christian poetics. As Juan Alfonso summarised them, these were extensive: 1) the 'infused grace' of God; 2) knowledge of rules of meter and form, 3) subtle inventiveness; 4) exquisite discretion and judgement, 5) broad reading, 6) knowledge of all languages, 7) familiarity with court life, 8) nobility, 'fydalguía' and courtesy, and 9) always being a lover, loving whom one should, as one should, where one should.

It is my contention that the pages of Juan Alfonso's *cancionero* were the lists in which the mettle of each poet and each poem were put to the test of this standard. Within this *agôn*, in good Pauline fashion, the charge of Judaism served to make a claim about the hermeneutic qualities of a poet, about his place in the continuum between poetic letter and poetic spirit. I suspect that similar claims could be made of other idioms of opprobrium in the *cancionero*, such as the frequent charges of homosexuality and sodomy, meant to imply of a poet that, as Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino put it, *nunca serviste amor / nin fuste en su compañía*.²⁷ Indeed these idioms were often combined. To the charge just cited, Alfonso Álvarez added that the target of his poem was an apostate Jew with a prominent nose, a *meshumad*. The Franciscan monk and theologian Diego de Valencia strove for the same derisive combination when he wrote a poem whose rhyme scheme was made up almost entirely of Hebrew words, accusing the convert Juan de Espanha of having no testicles. Those critics who have focused on the

²⁵ Baena, p. 1. The rubric is discussed in a number of poems, most notably by Baena #359, p. 639 [ID 1484], vv. 9-10; and Manuel de Lando, #253 [ID1389], pp. 451-2, vv. 17-24, and #257 [ID0514], pp. 456-8, couplet 11. For a good summary and revision of the scholarly debates over the meaning of this theme of *gracia* in the *cancionero*, see Weiss, *The Poet's Art*, pp. 25-40.

²⁶ On these themes see especially Kohut, 'Zur Vorgeschichte' and *idem*, 'Der Beitrag'. On St. Vincent Ferrer, and on responses by *cancionero* poets to his preaching in Castile, see Cátedra, *Sermon*, pp. 251-268. For Ferrer's Thomistic opposition to the allegorisation of poetry, see Cátedra's 'La predicación', esp. p. 278, citing Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, ms. 9,433, fols. 33'-43'.

²⁷ # 140, [ID 1280] Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino against Alfonso Ferrández Semuel. Such claims, of course, need not involve Jews or converts. Juan Alfonso, for example, versified [in #363, ID 1488 R 1487] Ferán Manuel's anal sodomisation by a shepherd.

poem's Hebrew vocabulary in order to argue that Fray Diego was a converso have missed the point.²⁸ The language of Judaising was a language of literary criticism, not a biographical assertion, and as such was separable from the genealogy and religious orthodoxy of its object. In fact it was even possible for a real Jew to possess the qualities of a poet, as when the same Friar Diego praised the Jew Symuel Dios-Auda for his charity, his courtesy, and his *fydalguia*: 'For your word never changes or wavers ... these are the markers of a noble man/to say things and do them without any doubt'.²⁹

The poets of the *Cancionero de Baena* explored the tense space between Judaising in poetry and Judaising in the flesh in order to create a fascinating (and as yet unstudied) language of poetic critique. But although poets were the earliest to put the language of Judaising to serious work in the generations following the mass conversions, they were not the only ones to do so. Royal courts knew other types of competition beside verse: those of Castile and Aragon were settings of concentrated factionalism and struggles for power that in the 1430s and '40s began to tip the scales of civil war. It is well known that all parties in these struggles sought to blacken their rivals, and particularly (but not only) those descended from converts, as 'Jewish' and therefore politically corrupt. Of course this political debate left many literary traces. Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, for example, suggested an experiment in his *Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho*, written c. 1438. If one were to take two babies, the one a son of a labourer, the other of a knight, and rear them together on a mountain in isolation from their parents, one would find that the son of the labourer delights in agricultural pursuits, while the son of the knight takes pleasure only in feats of arms and equestrianism: *Esto procura naturaleza*.

Thus you will see every day in the places where you live, that the good man of good race (*raça*) always returns to his origins, whereas the miserable man, of bad race or lineage, no matter how powerful or how rich, will always return to

²⁸ Baena, #501 [ID1627] p. 343. Francisco Cantera Burgos is among those who move from vocabulary to sociology: *Ya adelantamos que se ignora la ascendencia de Fray Diego y desde luego sorprende en él el amplio conocimiento que del vocabulario hebreo hace gala. Nada nos chocaría, pues, que... poseyera amplios contactos judaicos, quizá incluso familiares* ('El Cancionero', p. 103) Similarly, Fraker, *Studies*, pp. 9-10, note 2.

²⁹ Baena # 511 [ID1637], pp. 355-56: *ca vuestra palabra jamas non se muda ... Estas son señales de omne fidalgo: / dezir e fazer las cosas syn dubda*. Cf. the Marqués de Santillana's comment on the writings of Rabbi Shem Tov de Carrion: *No vale el açor menos / por nasçer en vil nio, / ni los exemplos buenos / por los dezir iudio*. (*Proemio*, in: *Obras Completas* (ed. Gómez Moreno and Kerkhof), p. 451).

the villainy from which he descends ... That is why when such men or women have power they do not use it as they should³⁰

But it is less the literary than the legislative that interests us here. Within the increasingly polarised political context of the 1430s, prominent factions in the town councils of Seville, Lerida, Barcelona, Calatayud, and other places attempted to move against their competitors by arguing that those who were converts or descended from converts, that is, those who were not 'Christians by nature,' should be barred from holding any public office. This sharpening of the somatic limits to conversion was sharply opposed by the monarchy, and it was condemned both by the council of Basel in 1434 and by Pope Eugenius IV in 1437. As the council put it,

since regeneration of the spirit is much more important than birth in the flesh ... (the converts) enjoy the privileges, liberties and immunities of those cities and towns where they were regenerated through sacred baptism to the same extent as the natives and other Christians do.

But these genealogical arguments became broadly useful during the civil wars against King Juan II of Castile and his minister Alvaro de Luna, whose attempts to strengthen the monarchy aroused fierce opposition. It was during those wars, and most explicitly during the rebellion of 1449, that the rebel government of the city of Toledo issued the first 'statute of purity of blood'. Jewish hatred of Christianity and of Christians ran indelibly in the veins of descendants of converts, the rebels argued, and through their actions it was Judaising society. Once these were barred from ever holding office or exercising power over Christians, the corruption would end and Christian society would be purified.³¹

Scholars have met this political phenomenon in the same way as its poetic analogue: with family trees and prosopographies, counting *conversos* in public office in order to uncover genealogical and socio-political realities underlying Old Christian claims about the dangers of Jewish government.³² But again, this approach overlooks the long history of 'Judaising' as a Christian language of political critique. The roots of this language lie in the same dialectical tension that we discussed so briefly earlier: the tension in

³⁰ Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, *Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho* (ed. Gerli), p. 108ff.

³¹ On the shift described here, and on the debates that accompanied it, see my 'Mass Conversion'. The events of 1434 and 1437 are discussed on pp. 23-25.

³² See, for example, the many works on this topic by Márquez Villanueva, beginning with his 'Conversos'.

Christian thought between the visible, carnal, and literal, on the one hand, and the invisible, spiritual, and non-literal, on the other. Jews and Judaism played as crucial a role in the politics generated by this dialectic as they did in the semiotics. This should not be surprising, given that Hellenistic political thought was fashioned out of the same distinctions of body and soul as Hellenistic hermeneutics. Aristotle articulated a key distinction, between the corporeal politics of bare life and the higher politics of the good: 'the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life'.³³ The 'natural' relationship of soul to body as ruler to subject provided a powerful political analogy:

(A)lthough in bad or corrupted natures the body will often appear to rule over the soul, because they are in an evil and unnatural condition ... It is clear that the rule of the soul over the body ... is natural and expedient (*Politics* 1254b).

For Aristotle and the tradition that followed him, the chief function of the sovereign was to guide politics away from the demands of body and bare life toward those of the immortal soul. As Aristotle put it in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: 'we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal' (1177b). He realised, of course, that many rulers did indeed reverse these priorities, placing worldly gain ahead of a common and immaterial good, and he represented this reversal not as sovereignty but as its most basic distortion, tyranny. Tyranny, in other words, consisted of a perverted preference for self-interest over the commonwealth, for the mortal over the immortal, for flesh over spirit.³⁴

These distinctions were easily translated into Christian terms, and the relationship in early Christianity between the politics of flesh and the politics of spirit proved every bit as dialectically tense as that between carnal and spiritual hermeneutics. The energy released by this tension, like its hermeneutic analogue, had a tendency to seek ground in the Jew. We can see how great the potential force of this tension was by focusing on important early Christian debate about the relationship of secular to divine power. There were many apostolic positions available in this debate. Paul, in Romans 13:1 ff., had refused to distinguish between the two, treating secular magistrates as God's appointees and agents: 'Let every soul be

³³ *Politics* 1252b, 30. See also *Politics* 1278b, 23-31; 1252a, 26-35.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 1279b.

subject to the governing authorities ...'.³⁵ The author of Matthew 22:21 drew a clearer distinction: 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but unto God the things which are God's'. The Gospel of John went further, and imagined sharp conflict between the power of the Word and the 'prince of this world' that would only be resolved with the defeat and disappearance of the latter (12:31, 14:30, 15:18). Early Christian exegetes developed all of these positions and many others.³⁶ At one extreme were those who emphasised a futuristic eschatology like that articulated in the Revelation of John. They understood the relationship between Christian Church and pagan Roman Empire as analogous to the struggle between Christ and Satan, and tended toward antithesis rather than dialectic: Caesar became Antichrist, empire became Babylon. (Rev. 18:1-20, 1 Peter 5:13) At the other were those who emphasised the 'realised' triumph of Christ and understood the relationship in terms of incarnational dialectics, with the Empire as fleshy body and the Church as inner spirit.³⁷ All, however, mapped their distinctions onto the same dualities of flesh and spirit, Old Dispensation and New, which had pointed hermeneutics so fatefully toward the Jew.

Of course in executing Jesus, the Jews themselves were thought to have preferred Caesar's kingship to Christ's, as Pseudo-Cyprian put it.³⁸ But more important for our purposes is the early Christian tendency to think of the princes and principalities of this world in carnal terms. Origen, for example, adapted the same distinctions that informed his exegesis to the ques-

³⁵ Elsewhere Paul seems less monistic: cf. 1 Thess. 5:1-11, 1 Cor. 3:5-4:5, 15:24; 2 Thess. 1:1-12.

³⁶ I have relied on Caspary, *Politics* (esp. chapt. 4), and Field, *Liberty*, to clarify the issues treated in the paragraphs that follow.

³⁷ For Tertullian, for example, Church and Empire are opposed as castle of light to castle of darkness, banner of Christ and banner of demons: *De Idolatria* 19.1 (CC 2:1120). Similarly for Hippolytus of Rome 'the kingdom of this world rules through the power of Satan,' and Rome is equated with anomia, lawlessness. (*Eis ton Danila* 3.23, 4.6, 164ff., 198). A more neutral position was that of kingdoms as *externae potestates*, natural powers appointed for those who were not of God. The phrase is from the council of Antioch (341), canon 5, but the argument that earthly kingdoms are Godly institutions for the utility of the pagan un-Godly emerges first (I believe) in the second-century author Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereseos* 5.24.2. Caspary uses the term 'fleshy envelope' to refer to Origen's view of the relationship of state to Church, p. 181. Eusebius will more famously articulate this penumbral theology as a way of integrating Christianity and Empire.

³⁸ Ps.-Cyprian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 42, 54 (CC 4.271, 273), and *De montibus* 7 (CSEL 3.3.111). See also Justin, *Dialogus* 41.1, and Melito of Sardis's *Homily on the Passion*. On debates over the dating (212?) and authorship of the *Adversus Iudaeos*, see the works listed in Field, *Liberty*, note 60, p. 280.

tion of politics, dividing mankind into three classes: the hylic (from *hylê*, matter), or materialist, who were pagans and Jews; the psychics (from *psychê*, soul), who corresponded to the average Christian; and the pneumatics (from *pneuma*, spirit), that included only the most spiritual and ascetic of Christians.³⁹ Since Caesar's claims were only on the body, only those who were of the body had to render unto him: Jews, pagans, and average Christians, but not pneumatics, not those who dwelt truly in the Spirit. Hence Peter and John had nothing to render unto Caesar ('Gold and silver have I none', Acts 3:1), for they had no business in the world.⁴⁰

It has been justly said of Origen that 'in his politics the state is related to the Church, very much as in his exegesis the letter is related to the spirit'. The same general claim could be made of many a theologian, whether Latin or Greek, that came after him. One seldom noted consequence of this relation is the possibility of characterising political error (that is, an improper balance between secular and spiritual) in the same terms used to assess hermeneutical error: that is, in terms of Judaism and Judaizing. Origen himself occasionally did so.⁴¹ But the most famous example of such slippage in Late Antiquity, and the most revealing, comes from more than a century later, when the Emperors' conversion to Christianity had sharpened the stakes involved in questions about the relationship between Princely and Episcopal power. I refer, of course, to the famous altercation between Ambrose of Milan and the Emperor Theodosius after some monks, at the instigation of a bishop, burned down a synagogue. The Emperor's officials saw this as a violation of imperial law, and the Emperor endorsed their order compelling the bishop to pay for the synagogue's reconstruction. In letter and sermon Ambrose responded by insisting upon the superiority of divine over public law, and claiming that in this case neither the bishop (as God's priest) nor his victims (as God's enemies) fell under the laws of the state. Most

³⁹ *Com. Rom.* 9.25, 1226B. See Caspary, *Politics*, p.142; Crouzel, *Théologie*, pp. 193-196.

⁴⁰ *Com. Rom.* 9.25, 1226B *Hi qui habent in se superscriptionem Caesaris, reddant Caesari quae sunt Caesaris. Petrus et Johannes nihil habebant ... Qui vero habet aut pecuniam aut possessiones, aut aliquid in saeculo negotii, audiat: 'Omnis anima potestatibus sublimioribus subiaceat'*. This position is less antinomian than it sounds. Elsewhere Origen stressed (tropologically) that all men must care for their bodies, and since all bodily things 'bear the bodily image of the Prince of Bodies,' all men must pay 'tribute to Caesar'. *Com. Mat.* 17.27, 659ff: *imaginem enim Caesaris habet omnis res corporalis*.

⁴¹ The quote is from Caspary, *Politics*, p. 9. For examples of Origen's 'Judaizing' political error see *Com. Mat.* 17.27, 659ff, where he calls those Christians who err by refusing to acknowledge the debts of the flesh *Pharisaei*, or his characterisation in his commentary on Romans of pneumatics who resist the earthly powers with material force as Judaizing Zealots.

pointedly, he presents the emperor's insistence on upholding the letter of the law as itself Judaising, and reminds the emperor of his predecessor's unhappy fate:

Maximus ... hearing that a synagogue had been burnt in Rome, had sent an edict to Rome, as if he were the upholder of public order. Wherefore the Christian people said, "No good is in store for him. That king has become a Jew ...".⁴²

Ambrose here implies a 'resistance theory' much older than the Protestant vindications against tyrants so beloved by scholars of early-modern political thought. A monarch who reads literally, upholding the letter of the law over the demands of spirit, deserves deposition as a Jew. This is a complex justification of revolution, a Christian fusion of politics and hermeneutics achieved through the enmity of the Jew. The revolutionary anti-Judaism it foreshadows did occasionally surface in the early Middle Ages, but it became a coherent political discourse in Latin Christianity only after the year 1000, when newly robust monarchies began to extend their power throughout Western Europe, in part by establishing their prerogatives over Jews.⁴³

The history of medieval rebellions is peopled with 'Jew-loving' rulers. In Castile alone the list is revealing. The rebels against Alfonso X 'the Wise' claimed that among other things he was a puppet of the Jews.⁴⁴ The aristocratic factions that deposed and murdered King Peter 'the Cruel' in the mid-fourteenth century justified their actions by portraying him as a favourer of Jews, and even claimed that he was a cuckoo, the son of a Jewess adopted by the queen mother to conceal her inability to provide an heir. Prince Henry (IV) rebelled against his father Juan II claiming that he favoured the Jews. He himself would later be ritually deposed, accused of favouring Jews and of living like a Muslim. Even the 'Catholic monarchs' Ferdinand and Isabel were, as we have seen, not above suspicion.⁴⁵

It was in 1449, during Henry's revolt against King Juan, that we first encountered the anti-converso polemic of the Toledan rebels, with their precociously articulate statutes of purity of blood. Their politics was con-

⁴² Sancti Ambrosii, *Opera* (CESL 82, part 3 (ed. Zelzer), letters 40 and 41, pp. 145-177. Letter 40.23: *Nil boni huic imminet, rex iste Iudaicus factus est* (p. 173).

⁴³ On this process see, for example, Jordan, 'Jews'.

⁴⁴ On the accusations made by Castilian bishops against Alfonso X before Pope Nicholas III, see Linehan, 'The Spanish Church Revisited'; and *idem*, *The Spanish Church*, pp. 176, 219.

⁴⁵ On Henry's IV's difficulties, see inter alia Echevarria Arsuaga, 'La conversion'. On Isabel and Ferdinand, see note 4. above.

cisely explained in an influential treatise written by the revolt's ideologue, the 'Bachiller' Marcos, shortly before the fall of the city and his execution. The difficulty of his position made his opening choice of address was a tortured, and therefore highly revealing, one:

(I address this letter) to the Holy Father ... and to the high and powerful king or prince or administrator to whom, according to God, law, reason and right there belongs the administration and governance of the realms ... of Castile and Leon, and to all other ... administrators in the spiritual and temporal (affairs) of the universal orb, in the Church militant, which is the congregation and university of faithful Christians, (that is, those) truly believing in the birth, passion and resurrection (etc.) ... (but I do not address it to those administrators who are) the unbelieving and the doubtful in the faith, who are outside of us and in confederation (*ayuntamiento*) with the synagogue, which is to say a congregation of beasts, for since such bind themselves like livestock to the letter, they have always given and still give false meaning to divine and human scripture. (In short, I address this letter to those) attesting to the truth and saying: 'the letter kills, the spirit vivifies (2 Cor 3:6)'.⁴⁶

In the Bachelor's discriminating salutation we recognise the Aristotelian distinction between a community that exists for the mere fact of living and the 'congregation and university of faithful Christians' that lives with regard to the higher good. We recognise as well Augustine's position from *De Doctrina*, in which those who read literally become beasts of flesh. The Bachelor's marriage of Aristotle and Augustine produces a literacy test for citizenship. 'Administrators' who read like Jews, literally after the flesh, have lost the human right to participate in the *respublica*. They have become creatures of self-interest, and their power is by definition tyrannical not sovereign. We know exactly who he had in mind: the *Privado* (royal favourite) Alvaro de Luna, the King Juan II who supported him, and even the Pope, if he ended up rejecting the Bachelor's appeal and ruling in favour of the king. If no prince can be found who reads like a Christian, the treatise concludes, then the city should place itself directly under the governance of the Holy Spirit.

Onto the political oppositions of bare life and good life, private body and body politic, tyrant and legitimate magistrate, the Bachelor grafted a hermeneutic one, killing letter and vivifying spirit, and animated both with the distinction between 'Jew' and Christian. The resulting political language proved potent, for the charge of 'Judaising' in late-medieval Castile drew power from an unusually powerful confusion of bloodlines and her-

⁴⁶ Text in Benito Ruano, 'El Memorial'.

meneutics produced by mass conversions and intermarriage. Though the rebels of Toledo were defeated and the Bachelor Marcos was executed shortly after writing his treatise, his logic lost none of its political utility in the ongoing struggle over the balance of political power in Castile. That utility propelled his claims about the genealogical nature of convert Judaism to victory. This is not the place to show how that victory was won, except to say that the period after 1449 saw an explosion of treatises that drew upon sciences as diverse as medicine, metallurgy, animal breeding etc. in order to provide Israel with a natural history, a *raça*, sufficient to explain why the attributes of its children were unchangeable by God (via baptism) or King (through ennoblement).⁴⁷ Within fifty years the Iberian body politic was everywhere defended from Judaism by a thick hedge of inquisition and genealogy.

The political power of the discourse of 'judaising' quickly transformed its poetic potential. The increasingly infectious and combustible nature of *converso* flesh deprived 'Judaism' of its playful utility as a critical language. Poets in the generation after *Baena* continued to criticise poetry as 'Jewish,' but such attacks were now aimed more exclusively at convert poets, and stressed more pointedly the inescapably corrupting effects of Jewish lineage on textual practice. The Old Christian nobleman Frederico Manrique's description of the convert Juan Poeta's pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Valencia is typical, albeit unusually brilliant:

Johan Poeta, when you came / into this sacred space / you converted many consecrated things / from one thing into another ... the bull of the holy father ... turned with a loud noise / into scripture from the Talmud. / And the devoted Church itself / through the mere fact of your presence / was then contaminated / and at that moment became / a holy house of the Old Testament.⁴⁸

Conversely, poetry ceased to be for the *converso* what it once had been: a place in which hermeneutic good faith could be proven. Converts who wrote poetry in the 1460s and 70s were acutely aware that it could serve them only as a vessel for satire and self-mockery, not as a forum for assimilation into the Christian body poetic. The pen of the *converso* poet Anton de Montoro, for example, is mordantly engaged with those who consider him a Jew. In one poem even his horse abuses him as a 'killer of Christ'. In his youth, Anton de Montoro had moved in poetic circles like those of Juan Alfonso de Baena, full of hope in the emancipatory power of poetry. By the

⁴⁷ On the work accomplished by these treatises and the vocabulary of natural science that they utilise, see my 'Rasse'.

⁴⁸ [ID0219] PM1-15, c.1472.

age of 70 he had lost any such hope. As he wrote in bitter verses addressed to the queen Isabel, despite all his devotion, all his efforts to write and worship like a Christian, he was never 'able to kill this trace of the convert', never 'able to lose the name of old faggot Jew'.⁴⁹

Both these poets, Old Christian and New, were well aware of the dangers of a new world in which flesh and hermeneutics, right reading and right breeding, were wound in ever more intimate an embrace. I suspect that a careful reading of their work and that of their colleagues would help to explain, as Rodrigo Manrique put it in a letter to his friend the humanist Luis Vives in 1533, how Spain became a haunted land, 'a land of envy, pride, and ... barbarism. For now it is clear that no one can possess a smattering of letters without being suspect of heresy, error, and Judaism'.⁵⁰ But even as we call for such a reading, we should remind ourselves that there is nothing peculiarly 'Hispanic' about the potential for poetic and political Judaisation that I have been describing. It was rather the pan-Christian product of a genealogy of morals that rooted extremes of spirituality and carnality, of love and enmity, of metaphor and letter, of freedom and tyranny, in the one lineage that had produced the flesh of God and of his enemies, the lineage of the Jews.

⁴⁹ Montoro to his horse, ID6767, 11CG-995, 14CG-1074; to Queen Isabel, ID1933, MP2-81. In ID0181 PN10-33, Montoro deploys the 'killers of Christ motif' in order to threaten the Corregidor of Córdoba: *Ca el linaje que es ya visto / de grandeza y de valor / que pudo con ihesu xpisto / Podra con corregidor*. On *converso* self-mockery, see *inter alia*, Márquez Villanueva, 'Jewish 'fools''.

⁵⁰ De Vocht, 'Rodrigo Manrique's Letter', p. 435. See also González González, 'Vives', p. 77.