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*'Get wisdom, get understanding:
Forsake her not and she shall preserve thee'*
PROV. 4:5

RETHINKING
EUROPEAN JEWISH
HISTORY

◆
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and
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As the field of Jewish history positions itself at the beginning of a new century and a new millennium, 'New Perspectives' will grapple afresh with the theoretical, topical, and methodological issues that nourish the relationship between the Jewish present and the Jewish past. We hope that *Rethinking European Jewish History* will assume a significant place in this venture—that, in questioning old assumptions, it will engage a broad range of readers in a new, imaginative, and fruitful discussion.

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Erev Shavuot 5767
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J.C.
M.R.

*Spanish 'Judaism' and 'Christianity'
in an Age of Mass Conversion*

DAVID NIRENBERG

WHO IS A JEW AND WHAT IS JEWISH?

'WHO IS A JEW, and what is Jewish?' These questions have been asked countless times by diverse people, ranging from ancient prophets to modern politicians, and we know from experience that the exclusions and inclusions they precipitate are powerful. Precisely for this reason, we should not expect a simple relationship between the questions and their answers. As Horkheimer and Adorno put it in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, '[to] call someone a Jew amounts to an instigation to work him over until he resembles the image'.¹ Today, in some areas of Jewish history, we have become so aware of what is involved in this 'working over' that it has become difficult to talk of the 'Jewishness' of Judaism. We are increasingly exhorted to think of Judaism dialogically (that is, as developing always in relation to an ambient 'other', be it 'Hellenism', 'Christianity', or 'Islam'), and even to believe, following the recent work of Daniel Boyarin, Seth Schwartz, and Israel Yuval, that without the rise of Christianity there would be no rabbinic Judaism.

The history of Iberian Jews, converts from Judaism, and their descendants has proved remarkably resistant to this remodelling. Many scholars of Judaism in late medieval Spain (an anachronistic term but a convenient one) remain convinced that their principal task is to distinguish 'what is Jewish' and 'who is Jewish' from what and who are not. Indeed the two, 'what' and 'who', are closely related to one another. The suspected 'Jewishness' of ideas or practices is confirmed by aligning them with the 'Jewishness' of the people who express or practise them. Because the several late medieval kingdoms that made up what we now call Spain were marked by mass conversions from Judaism to Christianity, this alignment is not necessarily with an individual's confessed religion. Rather, it involves a specific kind of 'working over', in which 'Jewishness' is determined by mapping actions and

¹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York, 1972), 186.

ideas onto genealogy. If investigation shows that an individual is descended from, married to a descendant of, or simply friendly with descendants of Jewish converts to Christianity, then they and their ideas can be characterized as 'Jewish'. This inquisitorial methodology of 'cherchez le Juif' has produced the 'Judaism' of much of Spanish culture, ranging from ideologies such as 'purity of blood' to literary genres such as the picaresque.² Indeed, it has even resurrected the search for the 'Jewishness' of modernity itself, a search that had for a time been discredited by its history under the Nazis.³ In fields from philosophy to psychoanalysis, scholars today happily trace the origins of concepts believed to be constitutive of modernity and post-modernity (concepts such as irony, hybridity, and scepticism) through the flesh of Iberia's converts from Judaism and their descendants.⁴

In short, students of Spain's Judaism remain convinced that, to paraphrase Vico, the production of history is best understood in the same terms as the reproduction of the species: that is, as a genealogy. Most readers can, I am sure, think of a number of theoretical critiques of such a conviction, all of which, however, it has survived, and none of which explains its peculiar strength in Sepharad. I would simply like to suggest that the genealogical conviction is itself the product of the dialogic relationship between Christianity and Judaism that it seeks to conceal, and that it is particularly strong

² Some substantiation of these claims will be provided below. For more, see David Nirenberg, 'Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain', *Past and Present*, 174 (Feb. 2002), 3–41, and id., 'Figures of Thought and Figures of Flesh: "Jews" and "Judaism" in Late Medieval Spanish Poetry and Politics', *Speculum*, 81 (Jan. 2006), 398–426.

³ On the Marranos as the 'beginning of modernization in Europe', see Richard Popkin, 'Epicureanism and Skepticism in the Early Seventeenth Century', in R. B. Palmer and R. Hamerton-Kelly (eds.), *Philomathes* (The Hague, 1971). Others see in them the cause of the 'collapse of ecclesiastical society of the Middle Ages and the rise of secularism and modernity': José Faur, *In the Shadow of History: Jews and Conversos at the Dawn of Modernity* (Albany, NY, 1992), 142. Cf. Y. Yovel on the 'special hybrid phenomenon—perhaps even sui generis' of the Marranos in his *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton, 1989), 23. Much more discrete are Yosef Yerushalmi's arguments about the non-normative nature of Marrano Judaism in *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York, 1971), 44. These arguments about the Converso origins of modernity nourish and are nourished by the stress on the Sephardi roots of Spinoza, Montaigne, and others. On the 'Jewishness' of Spinoza see, more generally, Manfred Walther, 'Spinoza und das Problem einer jüdischen Philosophie', in Werner Stegmaier (ed.), *Die philosophische Aktualität der jüdischen Tradition* (Frankfurt, 2000), 281–330, and, most recently, Willi Goetschel, *Spinoza's Modernity: Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Heine* (Madison, Wis., 2004).

⁴ See e.g. the special issue of *Parades*, 29 (2000), *Le Juif caché: Marranisme et modernité*, ed. Shmuel Trigano. For other arguments that find the origin and transmission of modern subjectivities in Marrano lineages see e.g. Jean-Pierre Winter, *Les Errants de la chair: Études sur l'hystérie masculine* (Paris, 1998), and Elaine Marks, *Marrano as Metaphor* (New York, 1996). A different juxtaposition of converts and modernity, although equally problematic, is Geoffrey Galt Harpham's 'So . . . What Is Enlightenment? An Inquisition into Modernity', *Critical Inquiry*, 20/3 (Spring 1994), 524–56.

in Spain because it is there that the mass conversions of Jews to Christianity gave that relationship a productive strength it had not had since the first centuries of the common era. Christianity and Judaism were in some sense reborn out of one another in Spain between 1391 and 1492, but both spent the century trying to repress the pangs of birth.

THE RUINS OF 1391: A CRISIS OF CLASSIFICATION

The fourteenth century in Sepharad drew to a close with a wave of Jewish conversions unparalleled in the Middle Ages. In the massacres of 1391, thousands or tens of thousands of Jews were killed, and a much greater number converted.⁵ Reuven, son of Rabbi Nissim of Gerona and a survivor of the massacres, described the damage in words he penned in the margins of his father's Torah scroll:

Wail, holy and glorious Torah, and put on black raiment, for the expounders of your lucid words perished in the flames. For three months the conflagration spread through the holy congregations of the exile of Israel in Sepharad. The fate [of Sodom and Gomorrah] overtook the holy communities of Castile, Toledo, Seville, Mallorca, Cordoba, Valencia, Barcelona, Tàrrrega, and Girona, and sixty neighbouring cities and villages. . . . The sword, slaughter, destruction, forced conversions, captivity, and spoliation were the order of the day. Many were sold as slaves to the Ishmaelites; 140,000 were unable to resist those who so barbarously forced them and gave themselves up to impurity [i.e. converted].⁶

We need not accept the accuracy of his numbers in order to recognize that these killings and conversions transformed the religious demography of the Iberian peninsula. The Jews vanished from many of the largest cities of

⁵ The literature on 1391 is extensive. A beginning can be made with (for Castile) Emilio Mitre Fernandez, *Los judíos de Castilla en tiempo de Enrique III: el pogrom de 1391* (Valladolid, 1994), and (for the Crown of Aragon) the following articles by Jaume Riera i Sans: 'Los tumultos contra las juderías de la corona de Aragón en 1391', *Cuadernos de Historia*, 8 (1977), 213–25; 'Estrangers participants als avalots contra les juderías de la Corona d'Aragó el 1391', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 10 (1980), 577–83; and 'Els avalots de 1391 a Girona', *Jornades d'història dels jueus a Catalunya* (Girona, 1987), 95–159.

⁶ In Abraham Hershman, *Rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet and his Times* (New York, 1943), 194–6. I have altered the translation in several places and accepted the emendations offered (along with a Catalan translation) by Jaume Riera i Sans in his 'Els avalots del 1391 a Girona', 156. See also the letter of the prominent rabbi and courtier Hasdai Crescas included in Shelomoh Ibn Verga's much later *Shevet yehudab*, in the German edition: *Das Buch Schevet Jehuda*, ed. M. Wiener (Hanover, 1924), 128. Not even contemporaries of the events attempted to determine the exact proportion of Jews killed or converted. In the case of Girona, for example, the royal chancery limited itself to stating that the majority converted, while another portion was killed ('major pars aljame sive habitantium in eadem ad fidem catholicam sunt conversi, et alii ex eis fuerunt gladio interempti'). See Archive of the Crown of Aragon, Chancery [ACA:C], 1902:16^v–17^r (16 July 1392), cited in Riera, 'Els avalots del 1391', 135. In his 'Letter to the Community of Avignon', Hasdai Crescas wrote of Valencia that no Jews remained there except in Murviedro.

Castile, Catalonia, Valencia, and Mallorca. In their place appeared what would come to be thought of as a new religious class, that of the 'new Christians', or Conversos.

This migration of so many souls away from Israel and into the body of Christ catalysed a series of complex reactions. Doing justice to those reactions would require, at the very least, studying the emergence over time of each of the resulting communities (Jews, converts, and Old Christians, each, of course, itself very diverse), always in relation to the others, for it is this relational or dialogic element that made the reformulation of categories such as 'Jew', 'Christian', and 'convert' so dynamic. Thus far I have only been able to pursue this goal in fragmentary ways, focusing on the histories of particular topics (such as lineage and genealogy) or particular social boundaries (for example sexual intercourse) across all three communities. Here I would like to do something slightly different, and focus on just one community, the Christian, in order to give some teeth to my claim that the mass conversions precipitated a renegotiation of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity that altered the possibilities for both.

Underlying these renegotiations was a crisis of classification, one whose first symptoms became evident almost immediately.⁷ King Joan of Catalonia-Aragon, for example, expressed concern in 1393. Writing to a number of his most important cities, he informed them that it had become impossible for 'natural Christians' to tell who was a convert to Christianity and who was still a Jew. Henceforth converts were to be forbidden to live, dine, or have conversation with Jews. The Jews were to be made to wear more conspicuous badges and hats, so that 'they appear to be Jews'. The king ended the letter with his most emphatic point: 'And we order and desire that if any of these said Jews are found with a Christian woman in a suspicious place, in order to have carnal copulation with her, let them both be burned without mercy.'⁸

⁷ For an extended treatment of this crisis, see David Nirenberg, 'Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain', *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), 1065-93.

⁸ ACA:C 1964:108^v-109^v, 18 Aug. 1393, addressed to Tortosa (= Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien, Erster Teil: Urkunden und Regesten* (Berlin, 1936), vol. i, no. 456 (pp. 716-18). Compare ACA:C 2030:136^v-137^r, 3 Sept. 1393 (= José Hinojosa Montalvo, *The Jews of the Kingdom of Valencia* (Jerusalem, 1993), nos. 191, 440; cf. also nos. 218, 231, 235), in which the queen orders that no additional distinctions be imposed upon the Jews of Valencia, since they can already be easily recognized ('prou son senyalats'), and additional clothing regulations would lead them to abandon the city. The Tortosa letter should be viewed together with those to Barcelona (see José María Madurell Marimón, 'La cofradía de la Santa Trinidad, de los conversos de Barcelona', *Sefarad*, 18 (1958), 60-82: 72-7) and Girona (unedited, ACA:C 1960:120^v-121^r). A similar letter to Morvedre is dated 4 Apr. 1396 (ACA:C 1911:46^r^v, 2nd numeration). See also Riera i Sans, 'Judíos y conversos en los reinos de la corona de Aragón durante el siglo XV', in *La Expulsión de los Judíos de España: conferencias pronunciadas en el II Curso de Cultura Hispano-Judía y Sefardí de la Universidad de Castilla-la Mancha, celebrado en Toledo del 16 al 19 de sept. de 1992* (Toledo, 1993), 71-91: 83.

The letters were probably triggered by the case of Saltell Gracia, a Jew of Barcelona who was that week being tried for 'promenading in Christian dress and under guise of that dress having sex with many Christian women'.⁹ The case resonated, however, with existing concerns, which helps to explain the quite extraordinary fact that this particular king and his advisers hurried to articulate a general collapse of the normal processes of identification and classification in the wake of the mass conversions. Joan's solution to the problem was threefold. First, increase the social and physical distance between converts and Jews. Second, mark the Jews even more visibly. Third, raise vigilance towards and increase punishment of sex between Christian women and Jewish men.

Each of these reactions deserves its own history. Here, however, I only want to stress that all shared the common tendency to achieve the desired identification of Judaism, not by distinguishing the convert as a particularly 'Jewish' Christian, but by 'hypermarking' the Jews themselves. It is this same logic that, some two decades later, produced the next campaign of mass conversion under the generalship of Vincent Ferrer. In 1411 Ferrer undertook a massive project of preaching and evangelization in Castile and the Crown of Aragon. His goals were nothing less than the spiritual reform of Christians and the complete conversion of the Jews. His motivations were multiple, ranging from apocalypticism to the politics of papal schism. But what matters for us is how he sought to achieve those goals: by stressing the terrible dangers confronting Christian society because of the insufficient clarity of the distinction between Christian and Jew. Again, Ferrer did not invoke Converso heterodoxy as a justification for his anxiety, but rather the unidentifiability of the Jew. The situation was so grave, he suggested to a Castilian audience in 1412, 'that many are thought to be the children of Jews but are really Christian, and vice versa'.¹⁰ In 1415 he told a Zaragozaan audience that 'many Christian men believe their wife's children to be their own, when they are actually by Muslim and Jewish [fathers]'. If the citizens did not put a stop to such inter-faith adultery by segregating minorities, he warned, God would do so through plague. His sermon provoked a panic, and groups of Christians began to patrol the streets, on the lookout for Jews or Muslims prowling after Christian women.¹¹

⁹ 'quod ambulans in habitu christianorum et sub ipsis habitus velamine habuit rem carnalem cum pluribus mulieribus christianis': ACA:C Violant de Bar, 2030:80^r^v, 23 Aug. 1393.

¹⁰ Colegio del Corpus Christi de Valencia, MS 139, fo. 113, cited in Pedro Cátedra, 'Fray Vicente Ferrer y la predicación antijudaica en la campaña castellana (1411-1412)', in Jeanne Battesti Pelegrin (ed.), 'Qu'un sang impur . . .': *Les Conversos et le pouvoir en Espagne à la fin du moyen âge. Actes du 2ème colloque d'Aix-en-Provence, 18-19-20 novembre 1994* (Aix-en-Provence, 1997), 19-46: 30-1.

¹¹ It is thanks to his exculpatory letter to the king that we know of these events: ACA:C cartas reales [cr.] Fernando I, box 22, no. 2764, dated the last day of April [1415?], by Nicholas Burgés, procurator and syndic of Zaragoza.

Nor was this merely vulgar paranoia. It was out of a similar concern that the king prohibited the presence of Christian women in the Jewish quarter.¹²

According to Ferrer, the problem was one of ambiguous identities. In a formulation strikingly similar to that of King Joan two decades before, Ferrer asserted that Jews and Muslims were living among Christians, dressing like Christians, even adopting Christian names, so that 'by their appearance they are taken and reputed by many to be Christians'.¹³ Again like King Joan, the solution he advocated was one of heightened marking and segregation. But if in 1393 such anxieties had resonated little with contemporaries, by 1413 they proved so powerful as to convince the Pope, the kings of Castile and of Aragon, and innumerable town councils and municipal officers to attempt one of the most extensive attempts at segregation before the modern era.

In the interest of separating Christian from non-Christian, Jews (and to a much lesser extent Muslims) had to be moved to totally segregated neighbourhoods and severely restricted in their market and economic activities. Trade between Jew and Christian was forbidden, and in some towns Christians even refused to sell Jews food.¹⁴ Entire communities found themselves evicted, 'with boys and girls dying from exposure to the cold and the snow'. Writing a century after these events, Abraham Zacuto called them 'the greatest persecution that had ever occurred'. And, as in 1391, one of the consequences of this persecution was the mass conversion of thousands who sought to avoid being barred from their trades and expelled from their homes.¹⁵

¹² e.g. ACA:C 2416:60^v-63^v, 20 Mar. 1413. The fine for married women was 50 florins, and for single women the loss of their clothes. It is worth stressing that documented cases of intercourse between Christian women and Jewish men are much rarer in the period 1391-1418 than they were in the generation before the mass conversions, at least if the vast holdings of the Archive of the Crown of Aragon are any indication. These heightened anxieties do not, in other words, correspond to a real increase in intercourse.

¹³ 'por su aspecto son havidos e reputados por muytos seyer cristianos, senyaladament entre qui no son conosciados'. The quotation is from a letter written by the jurados of Zaragoza after hearing a sermon by Ferrer, dated 28 Jan. 1415. ACA:C cr. Fernando I, box 8, no. 919. The charge of dressing like Christians and adopting Christian names was a very old one, deriving from the Lateran Council of 1215. It was frequently voiced in the 13th and 14th centuries, e.g. at the Cortes of Jerez in 1268 (art. 7).

¹⁴ Some historians have sought to minimize the impact of these policies by claiming that they were rarely implemented, but the evidence suggests otherwise. The Archive of the Crown of Aragon is full of details of the implementation, and of the violence and dislocation it caused. The evidence for Castile, as with all things having to do with governance in this period, is much sparser than that for Aragon, but what there is suggests that the decrees were enforced. See e.g. the document from the Archivo Municipal de Alba de Tormes published in C. Carrete Parrondo, *Fontes Iudaicorum Regni Castellae* (Salamanca, 1981), 30-1.

¹⁵ Solomon Alami, *Igeret musar* [Ethical Epistle], ed. Adolph Jellinek (Vienna, 1872), 10b; Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer yubasim bashalem* ['Book of Genealogies': a history of the development of the Oral Law], ed. Tsevi Filipowski (Edinburgh, 1857), 225b; Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte*

This series of mass conversions had obvious effects on how Iberian Jews thought about the question of who was a Jew. Elsewhere I have tried to follow in the footsteps of Moises Orfali, Benzion Netanyahu, and others in working through some of those developments in Jewish sources.¹⁶ But here it is the less obvious, but equally important, question of why and how these mass conversions transformed *Christian* ideas about who was a Jew and what was Jewish that interests me. To anticipate the conclusions of the next few pages: those transformations were profound, and they were not merely the result of the ambiguous religiosity or 'Jewish' practices of the converts. (Indeed, it is striking how rarely concern about the converts' religiosity was voiced in Christian sources before the 1430s.) We are dealing instead with a much more complex phenomenon: the mass conversion's destabilization of an oppositional process of identification by which generations of Christians had defined themselves theologically and sociologically against Jews and Judaism.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JUDAISM TO CHRISTIAN SELF-DEFINITION

The theological side of this process of differentiation is well known. Christianity had since its earliest days used the Jew to represent the anti-Christian, mapping polarized dualities such as spiritual-material, allegorical-literal, sighted-blind, redemptive-damning, and good-evil onto the pairing Christian-Jew. In the perhaps over-argued formulation of Rosemary Ruether, 'It was virtually impossible for the Christian preacher or exegete to teach scripturally at all without alluding to the anti-Judaic theses. Christian scriptural teaching and preaching per se is based on a method in which anti-Judaic polemic exists as the left hand of its christological hermeneutic.'¹⁷ This hermeneutic provided medieval theologians and their audiences with a powerful lens through which to comprehend and classify their constantly changing world. Phenomena that one wanted to characterize as dangerous

der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart (Leipzig, 1890), 111. Alami blamed the disaster on the pride of rich Jews: 'Those who dwell in their venerable houses have been expelled from the palaces of delight and pleasure to live in dark caverns; the worm[?] of Jacob has embraced the rubbish heaps and the Jews have to live in hovels in summer and winter to their shame . . . For having built great houses and ample and handsome upper rooms we have been expelled and dispersed over the fields and rubbish heaps . . . Most of the great Jewish nobles and officers who stand before their kings in their castles and palaces . . . forgot their Creator and constructed palaces for themselves.' Abraham Saba of Zamora provided a similar explanation.

¹⁶ Nirenberg, 'Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities', 18-22.

¹⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1974), 121.

were projected onto the negative pole of the Jewish-Christian opposition.¹⁸ To take but one example from the preaching of Ferrer: 'today, nearly everything is avarice, for almost everyone commits usury, which used not to be done except by Jews. But today Christians do it too, as if they were Jews.'¹⁹

There is much more to be said about how medieval Christians defined themselves theologically and hermeneutically against the Jews. In Spain, at least, they did so sociologically as well. Individually and collectively Christians asserted their honour as members of God's privileged people by differentiating themselves from the dishonoured Jew.²⁰ In a sense this sociological practice was already encoded in St Augustine's theological principle that Jewish abjection proves the truth of the Christian faith.²¹ But the daily performance of this contrast became fundamental to the representation of Christian political and social privilege. The logic of sexual privilege and sexual boundaries mentioned earlier provides one example of such differentiation,²² but there were countless others. Community privilege, for example, could be asserted through juxtaposition with Jews, as when town councils resisted taxes by claiming that their imposition by the king made 'a Jewry out of each of his municipalities . . . and we will not give way to such a demand, for we would rather die than be made similar to Jews'.²³ And just as the erosion of corporate privilege could threaten to turn *universitas* into *juheria*, so the erosion of honour could Judaize the individual Christian. Preachers

¹⁸ Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible moralisée* (Berkeley, 1999), 45. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 160. Compare Theodor W. Adorno, 'What is pathological about anti-Semitism is not projective behavior as such, but the absence of reflection in it': Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 187.

¹⁹ St Vincent Ferrer, *Sermons*, ed. Josep Sanchis Sivera (Barcelona, 1984), v. 147. This particular projection flourished into modernity, taking secularized form even in thinkers such as Marx (*On the Jewish Question*) and Horkheimer (*The Jews and Europe*). It is only 'since Auschwitz', to quote Dan Diner, that 'common linguistic usages such as the description of phenomena from the sphere of circulation as Jewish have forfeited their dubious claim to reality' (the claim may prove unduly optimistic). Diner, 'Reason and the "Other": Horkheimer's Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Mass Annihilation', in Seyla Benhabib, Wolfgang Bonss, and John McCole (eds.), *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 337.

²⁰ The Muslim played an important role in this process as well, but that is a subject for a different article.

²¹ On this doctrine of witness, which was perhaps the chief theological justification for the continued toleration of Jews in Christian society, see most recently the chapter on Augustine in Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1999).

²² A particularly important one, in that so many other distinctions were mapped onto the sexual one. For a formulation of the point derived from Lévi-Strauss see Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, 'Animals Are Good to Think and Good to Prohibit', in his *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 169–211: 169–70.

²³ 'no és als sinó fer juheria de cascuna de ses universitats . . . a aytal demanda no darem loch, car més amam morir que ésser semblants a jueus'. Arxiu Municipal de València (AMV), Ll. M., g³ 4, 108^v, 26 Oct. 1378, cited in Dolores Bramon, *Contra moros i jueus: formació i estratègia d'unes discriminacions al País Valencià* (Barcelona, 1981), 67.

often complained of Christians who believed that failure to avenge an injury 'would be a dishonour to me, for they would say of me "Oh, the madman, oh, the Jew!"'²⁴ According to this view, to withdraw from the economy of violence was tantamount to withdrawing from the fraternity of honourable Christian males. It was, in other words, to become 'Jewish'.

In short, Christian identity and Christian privilege in late medieval Spain were defined in large part by insisting upon their distance from the Jew. The performance of that distance could take place in countless venues: in the taking of vengeance or the paying of taxes, in the choice of foods or sexual partners, in law (as in the preferential treatment of Christian witnesses), and in ritual (as in the enclosure and stoning of Jews during Holy Week), to list but a few.²⁵ It is through the repeated performance of this essential distance that the symbolic capital of Christian honour and privilege was amassed.

The mass conversions of 1391 threatened the performance of Christian identity because they raised, perhaps for the first time in the Iberian Christian imagination, the possibility of a world without Jews. Many in the generation after 1391 worked to make that world a reality: a few by urging the slaughter of the unconverted;²⁶ others, such as the citizens of Barcelona and Valencia, by banning Jews from their cities in perpetuity; still others, like Vincent Ferrer and his supporters, by mounting a programme of evangelization intended to achieve the full conversion of the infidels.²⁷ These were exhilarating times for a Christian society trained to see the footprints of the messiah in the conversion of the Jews.²⁸ But they were also unsettling, destabilizing Christian identity in two important ways. First, the messianic

²⁴ Ferrer, *Sermons*, i. 42. Similar exclamations appear elsewhere in the *Sermons*: see i. 93 and 155, iii. 16, and v. 190.

²⁵ For an extended treatment of the Holy Week example see David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, (Princeton, 1996), ch. 7, and id., 'Les Juifs, la violence, et le sacré', *Annales: HSS*, 50 (1995), 109–31.

²⁶ See for example the charges made c. 1393 against Antoni Rieri of Lerida, who was accused, among other things, of preaching that the prophesied time had arrived 'in quo omnes iudei debant interfici, ut nullus iudeus in mundo deinceps remaneret' ('in which they all should kill the Jews, so that no Jew remain in the world henceforth'): Jaume De Puig i Oliver, 'La Incantatio studii ilerdensis de Nicolau Eimeric, O.P.', *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics*, 15 (1996), 7–108: 47. Lerida was the scene of anti-Jewish violence by Christians both old and new just a few years later: 'Segons a nostra oyda és pervengut, alguns fills de iniquitat anelants la destrucció de la juheria d'aquexa ciutat, la qual juheria en aquella havem novellament feta e manat ésser, han cominat segons se diu alsunes vegades de la destrucció sobredita' ('It has reached our ears that some sons of iniquity, desiring the destruction of the Jewish quarter of that city, which we have newly made and commanded to be established, have several times attempted, so it is said, the aforesaid destruction'): ACA:C 2232:95^v–96^r, 25 Oct. 1400.

²⁷ Ferrer's messianic inspiration is well known. See, most recently, José Guadalupe Medina, *Las profecías del anticristo en la edad media* (Madrid, 1996), 232–47.

²⁸ On this association in the late Middle Ages, see, most recently, Robert E. Lerner, *The Feast of Saint Abraham: Medieval Millenarians and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 2001), esp. ch. 7, on the effects of the mass conversions on Francesc Eiximenis's millenarian ideas.

'disappearance of the Jews' promised to eliminate the living representatives of a negative pole vital, as I have suggested, to the coherence of Christian theological self-understanding.²⁹ Second, the emergence of the converts as an intermediate class produced a rapid narrowing of the social space that had previously separated Christian from Jew, and a consequent perception of the erosion of Christian privilege.

NEW NEIGHBOURS: THE NARROWING GAP BETWEEN 'CHRISTIANS' AND 'JEWS'

This second point bears elaboration. The tens (or even hundreds) of thousands who converted over the course of this quarter-century immediately occupied a good deal of the cultural 'no man's land' that had hitherto divided Christian and Jew. On the one hand, they enjoyed all the privileges of the Christian. The convert Francesch de San Jordi (known as Astruch Rimoch before his conversion) put it a bit hyperbolically in a letter to the Jew Shaltiel Bonafos: 'Those who have emerged from the waters of baptism, from the fountains of salvation, are firmly established upon golden pedestals. They are all personages. In their courts and in their palaces there are ivories and monkeys and peacocks and dwarves; they divested themselves of their soiled attire . . . and donned the garments of salvation.'³⁰ Of course we know that the vast majority of converts remained poor, without peacock or dwarf, but even the lowliest Converso could now throw rocks at Jews during Holy Week, have sex with Christian prostitutes, or marry Christian women, and we know that many of them did.

Yet at the same time that these converts enjoyed the privileges of the Christian, many still lived in close social, cultural, and physical proximity to their former co-religionists. They often occupied, as they had before their conversion, houses in or near the Jewish quarter.³¹ For many years (and

²⁹ I do not intend here any echo of Ruether's quite different point, in *Faith and Fratricide*, 228: 'Possibly anti-Judaism is too deeply embedded in the foundations of Christianity to be rooted out entirely without destroying the whole structure.'

³⁰ Quoted in Eleazar Gutwirth, 'Habitat and Ideology: The Organization of Private Space in Late Medieval *Juderías*', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 9 (1994), 205–34: 208.

³¹ The complications this might cause were recognized early, but converts were nevertheless given considerable choice in the matter. In Mallorca, for example, they were called before a notary after the riots to declare whether they wished to remain in their old homes or rent them out and move into traditionally Christian neighbourhoods. See José María Quadrado, 'La judería de la ciudad de Mallorca en 1391', *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 9 (1886), 294–312. Shortly thereafter (on 19 August) the city would have received a letter from King Joan, ordering that Conversos should not cohabit with Jews, 'car lur conversació a present no poria esser sens perill e gran dampnatge' ('their conversation at present could not take place without great peril and great damage'): ACA:C. 1994:186^v–187^r, cited in Riera i Sans, 'Judíos y conversos', 83.

certainly throughout the period that concerns us here) their financial affairs remained hopelessly entangled with those of their earlier communities of faith. And of course they had Jewish relatives with whom they might need to communicate for any number of reasons. Some even had Jewish spouses to whom they remained legally married.³²

Such proximity undercut the radical distinction between the two groups and thereby destabilized the foundations of Christian privilege and identity. It was this destabilization, this narrowing of the gap between Christian and Jew, which 'Old' Christians were reacting to when they complained that it was now impossible to distinguish Christian from Jew. Many converts perceived the problem as well. When a handful of Zaragoza Conversos living in a predominantly Jewish area evoked Ferrer's orders of segregation in the hope of having their Jewish neighbours evicted, they were seeking to heighten the distance upon which their new privileges depended.³³ The same logic motivated their violent invasion of the Jewish quarter.³⁴ Once again, the point was succinctly articulated by Ferrer: 'The Christian who is neighbour with a Jew will never be a good Christian.'³⁵

The nervous energy provoked by this new 'neighbourliness' was tremendously powerful. We have already seen one outcome of that power: the segregations and mass conversions of Jews in 1411–16, which of course only increased the anxiety that they claimed to allay. But precisely because the space between Christianity and Judaism had for so long been important to many areas of Christian culture that had little to do with living Jews, the energy released by the bridging of that space proved productive in many areas of culture that had no straightforward relationship to Jews or Judaism. This productivity in turn transformed the possible uses and meanings of 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' in Spain. In other words, the intensive work to which contemporaries put the 'Judaizing' energy released by the mass conversions itself shaped the answers they found to newly pressing questions about who was a Jew and what was Jewish. If we want to understand why and how contemporaries answered these questions as they did, we cannot restrict

³² For examples of these and other ambiguities of status see Nirenberg, 'Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities', 13–18.

³³ The case is discussed in E. Vendrell de Millás, 'En torno a la confirmación real, en Aragón, de la pragmática de Benedicto XIII', *Sefarad*, 20 (1960), 1–33. Less dramatic but equally meaningful are the 'distancing' actions of converts such as Gil Roiz Najari, who successfully petitioned to have an entrance to the Jewish quarter of Teruel moved so that he would have no contact with Jews. See ACA:C 2391:102^v, 16 Mar. 1416.

³⁴ ACA:C 2389:111^r, 20 Nov. 1415; ACA:C 2389:110^v, 112^v, 20 Nov. 1415. Similar events occurred in other cities, such as Lerida.

³⁵ 'car nunca será bon cristià, lo qui és vehí de juheu': Biblioteca de Catalunya, MS 476, fols. 136^v–153^r, ed. Josep Perarnau i Espelt in 'Els quatre sermons catalans de sant Vincent Ferrer en el manuscrit 476 de la Biblioteca de Catalunya', *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics*, 15 (1996), 231–2.

ourselves to a search for the 'real' beliefs of converts from Judaism. We need also to pay attention to the history of the concepts through which fifteenth-century Iberian Christians articulated their concerns about 'Judaization' and put these concerns to the work of generating newly recognizable differences between 'Jewish' and 'Christian'. In this essay I will give just two examples: first (and more extensive), that of Christian poetry (which contains the earliest sustained discourse of 'Jewishness' after 1391 that I know of), and second, that of Christian politics.

PUTTING THE FEAR OF JUDAIZATION TO WORK: THE CASE OF POETRY

The *Cancionero de Baena* is often called the 'first critical anthology' of Castilian poetry. Compiled by Juan Alfonso de Baena, it contains some 600 poems composed in the courts of four Castilian kings, ranging from before 1391 to shortly after 1430, when Baena presented it to King Juan II. The anthology is critical, in the sense that each poem is preceded by a short editorial introduction noting its merits and demerits, and the whole is prefaced with a meditation on the function of poetry and the nature of the poet's art.³⁶ But what is immediately striking for our purposes is that the *Cancionero's* poets, nearly all Christian, are constantly defaming one another, and the accusation of Jewishness is prominent among the charges they hurl. They accuse each other of Jewish ancestry, of having too small a foreskin or too big

³⁶ All citations are from the *Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena*, ed. Brian Dutton and Joaquín González Cuenca (Madrid, 1993). Poems from *cancioneros* other than those in Baena's anthology are cited from Brian Dutton's *El Cancionero del Siglo XV, c.1360-1520*, 7 vols. (Salamanca, 1990-1). On the dating of Baena's work see Alberto Blecuá, "Perdióse un quaderno . . .": sobre los *cancioneros* de Baena', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 9 (1974-9), 229-66; Manuel Nieto Cumplido, 'Aportación histórica al Cancionero de Baena', *Historia, Instituciones, Documentos*, 6 (1979), 197-218, and id., 'Juan Alfonso de Baena y su Cancionero: nueva aportación histórica', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Córdoba*, 52 (1982), 35-57. The literature on the *Cancionero* is vast, but two recent collections may serve as a starting point: *Poetry at Court in Trastamara Spain: From the Cancionero de Baena to the Cancionero General*, ed. E. Michael Gerli and Julian Weiss, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* (Tempe, Ariz., 1998), and Jesús L. Serrano Reyes and Juan Fernández Jiménez (eds.), *Juan Alfonso de Baena y su Cancionero: actas del I Congreso Internacional sobre el Cancionero de Baena*, Baena, 16-20 Feb. 1999 (Córdoba, 2001). On attitudes towards Jews and converts in the *Cancionero* see (in addition to the works cited below) Stanley Rose, 'Anti-Semitism in the "Cancioneros" of the Fifteenth Century: The Accusation of Sexual Indiscretions', *Hispanófila*, 26 (1983), 1-11; id., 'Poesía antijudía y anticonversa en la poesía artística del siglo XV en España', Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1975; and Gregory S. Hutcheson, 'Marginality and Empowerment in Baena's *Cancionero*', Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1993. What follows is a much-compressed summary of arguments found in David Nirenberg, *Wie jüdisch war das Spanien des Mittelalters? Die Perspektive der Literatur*, *Kleine Schriften des Arye Maimon-Instituts* 7 (Trier, 2005), and id., 'Figures of Thought and Figures of Flesh'. Readers can refer to either of these for more of the rich bibliography on this topic.

a nose, and of heterosexual and homosexual intercourse with Jews. Indeed the collection includes many poems that insult the editor himself. 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', and yet another accuses him of eating *adefyna* (a sabbath dish, cooked overnight), 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 (the Mariscal Íñigo de Astuñiga, for example, claims that he is stuffed full of Jewish sperm).³⁷

Critics have deduced from such accusations that if a poet is attacked as Judaizing 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. The result of such logic is the conviction that, as one critic put it as early as 1871, Baena's *Cancionero* is full of 'half-converted Jews'.³⁸ Yet in many cases where we have been able to find further, non-poetic, evidence about the poets anthologized in this volume, they turn out not to be Conversos.³⁹ If we insist that a poet like Baena must have been a converted Jew, it is only because we know nothing about him outside his poetry, and we cannot imagine why else he would have been insulted as one.

³⁷ It is entirely on the evidence of these poems that Baena's status as a Converso rests. The eggplant quotes are from poems by Diego de Estuniga (no. 424) and Juan García (no. 384). The reference to *adefyna* is by Juan de Guzmán (no. 404), and the baptismal allusion by Ferrán Manuel (no. 370). For allusions to Juan Alfonso de Baena's sexual encounters with Jewesses, see, inter alia, the same poem by Juan García. For the Mariscal's insult see no. 418. (Allusions to interfaith sexual dalliance are very common in the *Cancionero*; see e.g. no. 449.) Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce considered the possibility of a Morisco as well as a Converso background for Juan Alfonso, in 'Sobre Juan Alfonso de Baena', *Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 7 (1945), 141-7. José María Azáceta opted for Converso in his *Cancionero*, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1966), pp. v, 4, and accompanying notes. Dutton and González Cuenca, the most recent editors, begin by accepting the poetic evidence of Baena's Converso status only 'provisionalmente', but end by treating it as a certainty: *Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena*, pp. xv, xviii.

³⁸ Examples of this underlying logic are legion. In addition to the works already cited, see Francisco Cantera Burgos, 'El Cancionero de Baena: Judíos y conversos en él', *Sefarad*, 27 (1967), 71-111; Julio Rodríguez-Puértolas, *Poesía de protesta en la edad media castellana: historia y antología* (Madrid, 1968), 216-24; Cristina Arbós, 'Los *cancioneros* castellanos del siglo xv como fuente para la historia de los judíos españoles', in Yom Tov Assis and Yosef Kaplan (eds.), *Jews and Conversos: Studies in Society and the Inquisition* (Jerusalem, 1985), 77-8; Gregory S. Hutcheson, "Pinning him to the Wall": The Poetics of Self-Destruction in the Court of Juan II', *Disputatio*, 5 (2002), 87-102, esp. pp. 92-5. The quote is from Théodore de Puymaigre, *La Cour littéraire de don Juan II, roi de Castille* (Paris, 1873), 131. Cf. José Amador de los Ríos, *Estudios históricos, políticos y literarios sobre los judíos de España* (Madrid, 1848), 425 ff.

³⁹ As Charles Fraker conceded in his review of Wolf-Dieter Lange's *El fraile trobador. Zeit, Leben und Werk des Diego de Valencia de León (1350?-1412?)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), in the *Hispanic Review*, 42/3 (1974), 341-3: 'Thus one more supposed New Christian gets stricken from the canon' (p. 341).

Like so much 'Judaism' in late medieval Spain, the Judaism of these Christian poets turns out to have as much to do with the history of Christian thought as with their own religious 'ancestry'. In this particular case, their insults turn out to be part of a strategic deployment of 'Judaization', developed in order to defend secular poetry from its clerical critics. Following Plato, Christian theologians from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas had attacked secular poetry as the most mimetic of literary genres, the one closest to the materiality of nature, most tightly bound to literalism and to the flesh (both marked as 'Jewish' in Christian discourse), and as such the most dangerously seductive of genres. Poetic fictions, as Aquinas put it, contain no divine truth. They 'have no purpose except to signify; and such signification does not go beyond the literal sense'.⁴⁰ Saints issued similar warnings in the Spain of Juan Alfonso de Baena and his colleagues: both Vincent Ferrer and Alonso de Cartagena (the Converso bishop of Burgos) preached about the dangers of poetry.⁴¹

Of course poetic fictions also had their late medieval defenders, most famously Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.⁴² Like these Italian notables,

⁴⁰ Suspicion of poetry has deep roots in Christian aesthetics. For the case of Augustine, see Joachim Küpper, "Uti" und "frui" bei Augustinus und die Problematik des Genießens in der ästhetischen Theorie des Okzidents', in Wolfgang Klein and Ernst Müller (eds.), *Genuß und Egoismus. Zur Kritik ihrer geschichtlichen Verknüpfung* (Berlin, 2002), 3–29; and Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XI. 18 and *De Doctrina Christiana*, II. 6 (7, 8) and IV. 11 (26). For Aquinas' claim, see his *Quodlibetal Questions*, ed. Sandra Edwards (Toronto, 1983), 7. 6. 16. Elsewhere Aquinas attempts to distinguish between poetic fictions and other more salvific ones. See in particular his discussion in *Summa Theologiae*, I. I. 9. See also *ibid.* I. II. 101 on the dependence of the ritual of the Mass on 'sensible figures'.

⁴¹ On these themes see especially Karl Kohut, 'Zur Vorgeschichte der Diskussion um das Verhältnis von Christentum und antiker Kultur im spanischen Humanismus. Die Rolle des *Decretum Gratiani* in der Übermittlung patristischen Gedankengutes', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 55 (1973), 80–106, and *id.*, 'Der Beitrag der Theologie zum Literaturbegriff in der Zeit Juans II von Kastilien: Alonso de Cartagena (1384–1456) und Alonso de Madrigal, genannt el Tostado (1400?–1455)', *Romanische Forschungen*, 89 (1977), 183–226; see also his *Las teorías literarias en España y Portugal durante los siglos XV y XVI* (Madrid, 1973). On Vincent Ferrer, and on responses by *Cancionero* poets to his preaching in Castile, see Pedro Catedra, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura en la Edad Media: San Vicente Ferrer en Castilla (1411–1412)*, *estudio bibliográfico, literario y edición de los textos inéditos* (Valladolid, 1994), 251–68. For Ferrer's Thomistic opposition to the allegorization of poetry, see Catedra's 'La predicación castellana de San Vicente Ferrer', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, 39 (1983–4), 235–309, esp. p. 278, citing Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, MS 9,433, fos. 33^v–43^r.

⁴² For a classical treatment of these issues see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), 214–27. But see also August Buck, *Italienische Dichtungsbücher vom Mittelalter bis zum Ausgang der Renaissance* (Tübingen, 1952), 33–53; Otfried Lieberknecht, *Allegorese und Philologie. Überlegungen zum Problem des mehrfachen Schriftsinns in Dantes Commedia* (Stuttgart, 1999); Alastair J. Minnis, 'The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio', in A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott (eds.), *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c.1000–c.1375* (Oxford, 1988); and Joachim Küpper, 'Zu einigen Aspekten der Dichtungstheorie in der Frührenaissance', in Andreas Kahlitz and Gerhard Regn (eds.), *Renaissance. Konzepte einer Epoche im Dialog der Disziplinen* (Heidelberg, 2006), 47–71. Among the crucial texts are the following: Dante's

Baena and his colleagues were seeking to justify and enlarge the place of non-biblical poetry within Christianity.⁴³ They did so through a theory of 'poetic grace' much like that of Dante, a theory that is articulated in Baena's prologue to the *Cancionero* as well as in its poetry. Two lines of Latin verse scrawled at the top of the first manuscript folio capture the general theme: 'Unicuique gratia est data | Secundum Paulum relata' ('To each one grace is given | according to St Paul', a paraphrase of Ephesians 4: 7).⁴⁴ The proper use of poetic language was, our poets claimed, the product of divine grace and inspiration, and through this inspiration the lay poet, if he was a *good* poet, gained access to spiritual truth.

Without benefit of Christian exegesis it is not so clear what 'Judaism' has to do with this Pauline poetics of grace. But consider, to begin with, the way in which our lay poets made their claim that the 'infused grace of God' offered them access to divine truths that escaped the sophisticated training of the theologian.⁴⁵ The poet Ferrán Manuel de Lando, for example, reminds Friar Lope del Monte that 'God chose to reveal his secrets | to simple folk, humble, heavy, and rude, | while he left the learned nude, and hid from them his glory, | as Our Saviour makes clear | in the subtle texts of his Gospel story'.⁴⁶

'Letter to Cangrande della Scala', in Dante Alighieri, *Tutte le opere*, ed. Luigi Blasucci (Florence, 1965), 341–52, where Dante draws a parallel between the multiple levels of meaning of biblical and non-biblical poetry; Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium libri*, ed. Vincenzo Romano (Bari, 1951), esp. the preface and books 14–15; and, by Petrarch, *Invective contra medicum*, ed. A. Bufano, in *Opere latine di Francesco Petrarca*, vol. ii (Turin, 1975), *Familiars*, ed. Vittorio Rossi (Florence, 1997), letter 10. 4, 'De stilo Patrum et de proportionis inter theologiam et poetiam', and *Collatio laureationis*, ed. C. Godi in 'La *Collatio laureationis* del Petrarca nelle due redazioni', *Studi petrarcheschi*, 5 (1988), 1–56. On the Castilian career of these texts see, *inter alia*, J. Piccus, 'El traductor español de *De genealogia deorum*', in *Homenaje a Rodríguez-Moñino*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1966), 59–75, and Hernando de Talavera, 'Invectivas contra el médico rudo e parlero', ed. P. Catedra, in *Petrarca: Obras*, vol. i, ed. Francisco Rico (Madrid, 1978), 369–410.

⁴³ So far as I know the only works to treat the *Cancionero de Baena* in this context are Karl Kohut, 'La teoría de la poesía cortesana en el Prologo de Juan Alfonso de Baena', *Actas del coloquio hispano-alemán Ramón Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid, 1982), 120–37: 131 n. 27, and Lange, *El fraile trovador*, 101 f.

⁴⁴ *Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena*, 1. The rubric is discussed in a number of poems, most notably those by Baena: no. 359 (p. 639), ll. 9–10, and Manuel de Lando, nos. 253 (pp. 451–2), ll. 17–24, and 257 (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 Julian Weiss, *Poet's Art: Literary Theory in Castile, c.1400–60* (Oxford, 1990), 25–40.

⁴⁵ An important example is the exchange between the poet Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino, who prided himself on his lack of formal learning, and the theologian Fray Pedro (nos. 80–3, pp. 107–13). Pedro challenges Villasandino to explain obscurities in the Apocalypse. In no. 136 (pp. 161–2) he does the same again. Villasandino's response comes in no. 137. For the Bachelor from Salamanca, see nos. 92–3 (pp. 119–20).

⁴⁶ No. 272 (pp. 472–4), ll. 21–32: 'que Dios sus secretos quiso revelar | a párvulos simples, pesados e rudos, | e a los prudentes dexólos desnudos, escondiendo d'ellos el su resplandor, | segunt verifica Nuestro Salvador | en su Evangelio de textos agudos.' The allusion is to Matt. 11: 25.

The strategic accusation of 'Judaism' is already present here, in so far as Ferrán Manuel's verse aligns the theologian with the negative example of the seemingly learned but actually blind Pharisees in the Gospels.⁴⁷ Friar Lope's position in this debate, on the other hand, reiterates the traditional condemnation of poetry as 'literal fictions' without any hint of the divine. The poet, he says, is to be classed with those who have 'never achieved knowledge of divine deeds . . . the gentile, the Jew, and the tax collector'. In his final riposte, Friar Lope turns Lando's implicit 'Pharisaization' of theologians (that is, his accusation that those who seem clothed in learning are in reality naked and blind) on its head. 'God makes bears with furry skins, and makes the ignorant wise. | But few are the wise and truly learned, who have hairy chests and thighs.' Whatever the ontological uncertainties in this world, Lope implies, one thing is clear: in theological matters his rival Lando, a mere lay poet, ranks with Jews and beasts.⁴⁸

Beyond such questions of the spiritual 'truth value' of poetry, the accusation of Judaizing proved generally useful for the development of a critical poetics itself. For example, the sense that bad poetry was often mistaken for good, and good poetry maligned as bad, could be powerfully expressed in terms of a 'Pharisaic poetics'. Thus the most influential of the poets in Baena's anthology, Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino, characterizes what he calls 'metrificadores' ('metre scribblers') as 'arrendadores' (tax collectors), and mockingly describes the king rewarding them with 'ropas con señales' (clothes with badges) like those the Jews wear.⁴⁹

Of course Baena and his colleagues did not give poetry up for lost. Instead they developed a critical framework within which to argue about its relative

⁴⁷ For the moment we are concerned only with 'Judaization' in debates about the relative value of secular poetry and theology. Accusations of Judaism are also made, however, in contexts where both sides claim explicitly theological authority. In a debate (nos. 323–8) between Franciscans and Dominicans over the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, for example, Friar Lope accuses Diego Martínez de Medina of misreading (no. 324, l. 137: 'La palabra mal entendida | mata e non da consuelo'—'The word, when badly understood, | kills rather than consoles'—a paraphrase of 2 Cor. 3: 6), calls him a hypocritical Pharisee (ll. 209–11), and suggests that 'bueno vos será juntar | con esos de Moisés | e parientes de Cohén' ('it would be good for you to join | with the people of Moses | and the family of Cohen': no. 326, ll. 61–3).

⁴⁸ See no. 273, ll. 473–4: 'Él faze los ossos con cueros lanudos | e al que poco sabe ser grant sabidor; | pocos son los sabios de sabio valor | que tengan los pechos e lomos peludos.' Ferrán responds in no. 274. Friar Lope attacks Villasandino on similar grounds in no. 117. The poem is an attack on political as well as poetic falsity, ending with a curse on those 'hypocrites' who sow discord among the magnates, and ends with the exhortation that princes 'abhor Jews' and 'honour good men' (ll. 89–96). Even here Maestro Lope may be taking aim at the poets, whose inflammatory role in royal courts seems already a literary commonplace. See for example the first lines of Diego de Valencia's poem no. 227 (pp. 266–75) on the birth of Juan II (1405), regarding the 'contendias, roídos e daño muy farto' ('contention, noise, and great damage') that arise every day over the interpretation of figurative poetry.

⁴⁹ No. 96 (pp. 122–3), ll. 28–45. Villasandino expresses his sense of an ontological crisis of poetry most clearly in another poem with less obvious 'Pharisaic' overtones (no. 255, pp. 453–5).

merits: hence the prologue to Baena's *Cancionero*, the earliest poetic manifesto surviving in the Castilian language. I have already mentioned that the prologue presents the 'infused grace of God' as the primary prerequisite for good verse. In so far as Baena's colleagues understood the poet's state of grace as legible in the poetry itself, the poem became a literary marker of its author's place on the continuum between letter and spirit, with the bad poet, the mis-user of language, understood as (among other things) a 'Jew'. Beyond divine grace there were of course other prerequisites for being a poet: knowledge of rules of metre and form; subtle inventiveness; exquisite discretion and judgement; broad reading; knowledge of a wide range of languages; familiarity with court life; nobility, or 'fydalguía', and courtesy; and always seeming to be a lover, loving whom one should, as one should, where one should. 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 and measured against this complex standard.

Juan Alfonso himself put this wittily in his poetic challenge to the poet Ferrán Manuel de Lando: 'Ferrand [*sic*] Manuel, for the public display | of your marvellous skill | in this great court of the King of Castile | Someone must give you a sting.' It is out of provocation, according to Baena, that good poetry is born. But the substance of the provocation itself should not be taken to heart: 'Ferrand Manuel, since to each | is given [poetic] grace doubled or simple, | don't let your face turn yellow | because my tongue splashes or stains you.'⁵⁰ Insult is only a picador's prod, meant to stimulate the revelation of a poet's virtues. Its 'truth claim' is not to be taken seriously.⁵¹ In this case Ferrán responds with insults, not about Baena's 'Jewishness', but about his deficiencies as a lover. He will, he claims, have sex with Baena's girlfriend. The exchange escalates along these lines, ending with Baena's infamous assertion in *cancionero* 363 that Ferrán's asshole is full of a shepherd's sperm. In the face of this response, reports the *cancionero*, Ferrán abandons the field to Baena.⁵²

⁵⁰ 'Ferrand Manuel, por que se publique | la vuestra çiençia de grant maravilla, | en esta grant cort del Rey de Castilla | conviene forçado que alguno vos pique'; 'Fernand Manuel, pues unicuique | data est graçia doblada e senzilla, non se vos torne la cara amarilla | por que mi lengua vos unte o salpique' (no. 359, p. 639, ll. 1–4, 9–12).

⁵¹ As Baena puts it in the challenge he issued to Villasandino and Lando in 1423: 'que pierdan malenconía | e tomen plazentería, | sin enojo e sin zizaña, | ca la burla non rascaña' ('Let them lose melancholy | and gain enjoyment | without anger or faction | because mockery does not cut': no. 357, ll. 28–30). The 'truth claims' of these insults deserve to be studied in the light of Jean-Claude Milner's *De la syntaxe à l'interprétation: Quantités, insultes, exclamations* (Paris, 1978), 174–223. My thanks to Giorgio Agamben for drawing my attention to this aspect of Milner's work.

⁵² See Lando to Baena, no. 360 (pp. 639–40), ll. 6–8. Baena to Lando, no. 363 (pp. 641–2). Note Baena's claim that insult is necessary for the production of poetry without defects ('sin raça e polilla': ll. 9–12). For a comment on the use of the word *raça* 'race' to signify (poetic) defect see Nirenberg, 'Race' and 'Racism' in Late Medieval Spain', in M. Greer, W. Mignolo, and M. Quilligan (eds.), *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires* (Chicago, 2007), 71–87.

Here, the idiom of poetic criticism is primarily sexual. These idioms are more diverse in the contest that follows, between Baena and the most famous of the *Cancionero* poets, Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino. Baena opens by challenging this 'rotten old man, whose ribs are made of phlegm', to a poetry contest. Villasandino, in turn, asserts that, far from being the 'fine troubador' he 'pretends' to be, Baena is a 'rustic mule' whose 'villainy' is marked on his face and in his diet of wine and garlic. He is a 'suzio cohino', a dirty Jew pig (the word plays on the proximity of Cohen and *cochino*), with the voice of a cormorant, not a poet. He knows, in short, nothing of 'this science [of poetry]', and his words are worthless.⁵³

'Cohino' here is redolent with meaning, poetic and ontological, but it is no more genealogical than any of the other assertions made in the course of this contest. Baena will respond by calling Villasandino (among other things) 'swine sputum', a drunk, an apostate gambler; Villasandino by calling Baena a bastard and a pig ('tuerto chazino', 'gruniente cochino'). These claims drew their meaning and usefulness, not from the biography of their target, but from the rules of the poetic *agon* in which they were deployed, in which provocation stimulated vulgar poetry, and that poetry revealed the relative 'state of grace' of the competing poets.

This vulgarity is, in other words, the critical by-product of our poets' theology, a way of representing the lack in their rivals of any one of their multiple prerequisites for poetry. Judaism, poetic incompetence, ignorance, rudeness, sexual deviance, even animality were the negative poles of poetic virtues: divine grace, good metre and form, learning, courtesy, love, and so on. Each of these virtues was closely related to its companions, and the terms in which they were expressed were almost interchangeable. The same is true of their attendant vices. The overlapping of these variables made possible a space of play in which claims to poetic or theological 'ciencia' could be both made and criticized in a language of extreme carnality.⁵⁴ Within this system

⁵³ 'Señor, este vil borrico frontino, | torçino e relleno de vino e de ajos, | sus neçios afanes e locos trabajos | es porque l'tengo por trobador fino; en esto se enfinge el suzio cohino | e con muchos buenos levanta baraja; e quien regelasse su parlar de graja | más negro sería que cuervo marino. || Quien non es capaz bastante nin dino | de aquesta ciencia de que se trabaja, | su argumentar non vale una paja, | nin un mal cogombro, tampoco un pepino.' ('Sir, this vile ass with a branded face | twisted and stuffed with wine and garlic | I consider on account of his foolish frenzy | and crazed works a fine troubador. This swells the head of the dirty Jew-pig, | he presumes to pick fights with his betters. Whoever heeds the words of this grackle | must himself be blacker than a sea-faring crow. || He who is unworthy and incapable | of this knowledge and art that we pursue, | his arguments are not worth a straw | nor a lousy cucumber, not even a gherkin.')

⁵⁴ See no. 270 (p. 470). Alfonso de Moraña against Ferrán Manuel de Lando. The latter had written a love poem that placed his beloved among the heavenly spheres, the work of the moon, Mars, and Venus. Alfonso responds by telling him that the planets and fortune are not enough to produce such beauty, that he will be loved (i.e. sodomized) only by Alfonso's Moor, and that he sins.

of thought Judaism was a key metaphor, a governing insult that carried with it a host of theological, linguistic, and physical implications. The same could be said of other idioms of opprobrium in the *Cancionero de Baena*, such as the frequent charges of homosexuality and sodomy, meant to imply of a poet that, as Villasandino put it, he had 'never served love'.⁵⁵ Indeed these idioms were often combined, as when the Franciscan monk and theologian Diego de Valencia wrote a poem whose rhyme scheme was made up almost entirely of Hebrew words, accusing Juan de Espanha of being a Jew with no testicles. Those critics who have focused on the poem's Hebrew vocabulary in order to argue that Friar Diego was a Converso have missed the point.⁵⁶ The discourse of Judaism, like those of sexuality or animality, was here as much a language of literary criticism as was the language of metre and form. As such it was separable from the genealogy and religious orthodoxy of its object. 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 'fydalguía': 'For your word never changes or wavers | . . . | these are the markers of a noble man | to say things and do them without any doubt.'⁵⁷

The critical accusation of Judaism developed by the poets of the *Cancionero de Baena* in the years following the mass conversions was as much about language as lineage. Some of these poets may in fact have been converts, or descended from converts, but even in such cases their 'Jewishness' in poetry had no simple relationship to their 'Jewishness' in life. Nor was theirs a 'Jewish poetics', except in the sense that it was the product of a Christian theological linguistics that understood certain aspects of language

⁵⁵ No. 140. Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino against Alfonso Ferrández Semuel: 'nunca serviste amor | nin fuste en su compañía' ('You never served love | nor were in her company'). To this charge, Alfonso Álvarez adds that his target is an apostate Jew with a big nose, a *mesbomad* (lit. 'destroyed'; the term has implications of a willing conversion from Judaism). For a suggestive study on the place of love in the production of poetry and nobility in Castile during this period see Julian Weiss, 'Alvaro de Luna, Juan de Mena and the Power of Courtly Love', *Modern Language Notes*, 106 (1991), 241–56.

⁵⁶ No. 501 (p. 343). F. Cantera Burgos is among those who move from vocabulary to sociology: 'the use he makes of his ample knowledge of Hebrew vocabulary is surprising. We would therefore not be shocked if . . . he should possess many Judaic contacts, perhaps even family': *El Cancionero de Baena*, 103. Charles F. Fraker's phrasing and conclusion are almost identical: see *Studies on the Cancionero de Baena* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996), 9–10 n. 2. But cf. Wolf-Dieter Lange's conclusive rebuttal in *El fraile trobador*.

⁵⁷ 'ca vuestra palabra jamas non se muda | . . . | Estas son señales de omne fidalgo: | dezir e fazer las cosas syn dubda' (no. 511, pp. 355–6). Of course the possibility of an ironic allusion to Jewish 'literal' understanding should not be dismissed here. Cf. however, 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' ('Being born in a vile nest | does not make the hawk worth less | nor are good examples diminished | because uttered by a Jew'): 'Proemio', in *Obras completas*, ed. Angel Gómez Moreno and Maximilian P. A. M. Kerkhof (Barcelona, 1988), 451.

(ranging from letter and literalism to mimesis and hypocrisy) in terms of Judaism and Judaizing. Our poets, in short, built both their 'Jewishness' and their literary criticism out of the terms of Christian aesthetics, epistemology, and ontology.

This tendency to evaluate Christian uses of language in Jewish terms was not new. Ever since St Paul coined the verb 'to Judaize' (*ἰουδαΐζειν*, Galatians 2: 14), the concept had served as a way of describing the danger of falling from the spiritual to the literal, from eternal truth to mere appearance in the world, from Christianity to Judaism. What the mass conversions produced in Spain was a new vertigo, a heightened sense of just how steep and slippery the slope was between Judaism and Christianity. Some, like Vincent Ferrer and his many supporters, reacted to this vertigo by attempting to eliminate the danger, working for the conversion or complete isolation of all Jews. Joan Alfonso de Baena and his poets, on the other hand, put the vertigo to work, exploiting the danger in the thrill-ride of a poetics that threatened everyone with Jewishness. It is important to notice, however, that neither sought to secure his Christian privilege at the expense of that of the converts by making it genealogical. For that, we must look to a slightly later period, and to politics rather than poetics.

PUTTING THE FEAR OF JUDAIZATION TO WORK: THE CASE OF POLITICS

Again, 'Judaism' was not a new charge in Christian politics. St Ambrose of Milan, for example, famously exhorted the Roman emperor Theodosius not to compel a bishop to pay for the reconstruction of a synagogue whose burning he had instigated. Ambrose presented the emperor's insistence on upholding the letter of the law as itself Judaizing, and reminded 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 . . .'.⁵⁸ Ambrose here implied a political 'resistance theory': monarchs who read literally, upholding the letter of the law over the demands of spirit, deserve deposition as 'Jews'.⁵⁹ The political anti-Judaism foreshadowed in this hermeneutic criticism of kings did occasionally surface in the early Middle Ages, but (for reasons we cannot

⁵⁸ 'Sancti Ambrosi Opera', in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 82 pt. 3, ed. Michaela Zelzer (Vienna, 1982), 145-77, letter 40.23 (p. 173).

⁵⁹ For a fuller account of this history see David Nirenberg, 'Warum der König die Juden beschützen musste, und warum er sie verfolgen musste', in B. Jussen (ed.), *Die Macht des Königs. Herrschaft in Europa vom Frühmittelalter bis in die Neuzeit* (Munich, 2005), 226-41, and id., 'Christian Sovereignty and Jewish Flesh', in S. Nichols, J. Küpper, et al. (eds.), *The Medieval Senses* (Baltimore, forthcoming).

explore here) it became a coherent discourse in Latin Christianity only after the turn of the millennium. The frequent application of this discourse in the later Middle Ages peopled the history of medieval rebellions with 'Jew-loving' rulers. Even the 'most Catholic monarchs' of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabel, conquerors of Granada, founders of the Inquisition, expellers of the Jews, could be accused of being descended from Jews and favouring them in their policies.⁶⁰

However old this political science of Judaizing may have been, it gained new power and utility from the increased sense of indistinction produced by the mass conversions in Spain. The 1430s was a period of fierce factionalization in Iberian politics, one that hurtled towards civil war. Within this political context, prominent factions in many town councils moved 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 strongly opposed by the monarchy, and it was condemned both by the Council of Basel in 1434 and by Pope Eugenius IV in 1437. 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 the descendants of converts, the rebels argued, and through their actions it was Judaizing society. Once these converts were barred from ever holding office or exercising power over Christians, the corruption would end and Christian society would be purified.⁶¹

These political arguments certainly transformed the potential meanings of 'Jew', 'convert', and 'Christian'. But neither their genealogical truth-claims nor the obvious sociopolitical consequences of the statutes they spawned bring us any closer to an unproblematic world of 'real' Converso 'Jewishness'. Scholars have devoted themselves to family trees and prosopographies, counting the number of Conversos in public office in order to uncover the sociopolitical 'realities' underlying Old Christian claims about

⁶⁰ On Isabel as 'protector of the Jews and daughter of a Jewess' see the account of the Polish traveller Nicolas Popplau, in Javier Liske, *Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal en los siglos XI, XII, y XIII* (Madrid, 1878). On Ferdinand, see Maurice Kriegel, 'Histoire sociale et ragots: Sur l'"ascendance juive" de Ferdinand le Catholique', in *Movimientos migratorios y expulsiones en la diáspora occidental* (Pamplona, 2000), 95-100.

⁶¹ Much of the bibliography on the Toledan revolt can conveniently be found in Ben Zion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain* (New York, 1995). The events of 1434 and 1437 are discussed in Nirenberg, 'Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities', 23-5.

the dangers of 'Jewish' government.⁶² Such research is to my mind one-sided. There were, of course, Converso politicians, just as there were Converso poets, but their existence does not suffice to explain the rise of Converso 'Judaizing' as an explosive language of political critique. We need rather to focus, once again, on the interplay between the dizzyingly blurred religious landscape of mid-fifteenth-century Spain and the conceptual lenses of Christian culture through which that landscape could be viewed.

In the case of politics, the roots of this language of 'Judaizing' lie in the same dialectical tension discussed above in connection with poetics: the tension between the visible, carnal, and literal, on the one hand, and the invisible, spiritual, and non-literal on the other. Since I took some time to sketch the long history of this tension in poetics and hermeneutics, it is worth noting that its history in political theory is just as ancient. Aristotle articulated a key discrimination, between the corporeal politics of bare life and the higher politics of the good. As he 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'.⁶³ 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.'⁶⁴ The reversal of these priorities, the placing of worldly gain ahead of a common and immaterial good, Aristotle presented as 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.⁶⁵

As part of the common currency of Hellenistic political thought, these Aristotelian distinctions were converted at an early stage into Christian terms (we have already heard an echo of them in Ambrose). Moreover, the rediscovery of Aristotelian texts and commentaries in the later Middle Ages prompted their influential and self-conscious rearticulation within Christian political theology. Fifteenth-century politicians did not, therefore, need to be readers of Aristotle (though by mid-century they could have been) in order to perceive the usefulness of the language of 'Jewish' literalist and materialist tyranny for a critique of royal power, especially not in a context in which mass conversion had lent new power to the fear of Judaizing.

⁶² See e.g. the many works on this topic by Francisco Márquez Villanueva, beginning with his 'Conversos y cargos concejiles en el siglo XV', *Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos*, 63 (1957), 503–40.

⁶³ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b; translation from *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1984), ii. 1861.

⁶⁴ *Politics* 1254b; *ibid.* 1990.

⁶⁵ See e.g. *ibid.* 1279b.

It was the power of these forms of thought, as much as the Converso status of some royal officials, that made 'anti-Jewishness' such a useful political tool in mid-fifteenth-century Castile. I would go further, and claim that it was their power that underwrote the definition of Jewishness as genealogical in what are sometimes called the earliest acts of European racist legislation, the Castilian 'statutes of purity of blood'. Consider only the justifications given for the earliest of these statutes, issued in 1449, during the revolt of the city of Toledo against King Juan II of Castile.⁶⁶ The Toledan ideologues of the revolt drew a distinction between two types of governor, those who read according to the Spirit, and those who read according to the letter (for 'the letter kills, the spirit gives life'⁶⁷), those who belong to the Church, and those who belong to the synagogue, those who are Christian humans, and those who are Jewish beasts. 'Administrators' who read like Jews, literally after the flesh, have lost the human right to participate in the *res publica*. They have become creatures of self-interest, and their power is by definition tyrannical, not sovereign.

Like many Christian political theorists before them, the Toledan rebels took Aristotle's oppositions of bare life and good life, private body and body politic, tyrant and legitimate magistrate, and grafted onto them a Pauline hermeneutic one, killing letter and life-giving spirit, animating both with the distinction between 'Jew' and Christian. They did so, not only because some of their targets were converts, but because 'Jewishness' was a well-established form for representing materialist tyranny, one that drew renewed energy from the potent confusion of bloodlines and hermeneutics produced in Castile by mass conversion and intermarriage.

Of course the existence of so many descendants of converts gave these arguments their power, and these descendants suffered the consequences of that power most acutely. But what made the arguments so explosive was their ability to threaten anyone, not only converts, with the political charge of 'Jewishness': the 'prime minister', the king, and even the pope (as one rebel theorist put it), if he ruled against the rebels. The rebels of Toledo were defeated, but their logic lost none of its utility. That utility propelled claims about the genealogical nature of the converts' Judaism to victory. Within a generation or two the Iberian body politic had produced a thick hedge of inquisition and genealogy in order to protect itself from penetration by the 'Jewish race' and its attributes.

This is obviously not the place to show how that victory was won, or to think through its many implications. Suffice it here to say that the genealogical turn

⁶⁶ These are edited in Eloy Benito Ruano, 'El memorial contra los conversos del bachiller Marcos García de Mora (Marquillos de Mazarambroz)', *Sefarad*, 17 (1957), 314–51, and 'La Sentencia-Estatuto de Pero Sarmiento contra los conversos toledanos', *Revista de la Universidad de Madrid*, 6 (1957), 277–306. The analysis that follows is based primarily on the first of these.

⁶⁷ 2 Cor. 3: 6.

was taken, and that it transformed the relationship of Judaism and Christianity. We could characterize the process as an earthquake, one that jolted Christian religiosity out of its ancient Pauline course into a new channel, this one carved by nature rather than by grace. For Jews, Conversos, and Old Christians alike, the consequences of that transformation were vast (and later for Muslims, New World natives, and Europeans of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation as well, but those are other stories). Some will reproach me for not describing these transformations here. I can only plead that this essay is merely a preliminary to their history. Its goal is to make plausible the methodological claim that we cannot study the history of Jews, Christians, or converts after the mass conversions without taking seriously the ways in which each of these categories rebuilt itself in terms of the others.

Others will object that I have stressed too heavily the importance of Christian ideas in this 'rebuilding' of convert 'Jewishness', and paid too little attention to the beliefs and actions of 'real converts'. It is true that, although in a different essay I concluded otherwise,⁶⁸ in this one I have deliberately stressed the role of specific Christian intellectual traditions in the construction of convert 'Jewishness'. Such an approach runs counter to the laudable devotion of my generation of historians to uncovering the 'agency' of the minority (in this case Jews and Conversos) within a mutually constituted history of relations between Judaism and Christianity. Pushed to polemic, my approach could be forced to imply that the power of Christian forms of thought in shaping figures of Judaism was asymmetrically massive in fifteenth-century Sepharad.

This essay, however, is not meant as a polemic but as a thought experiment, one that (in good Maimonidean fashion) therapeutically inclines ingrained habits of thought towards their contraries. Scholars of Judaism in late medieval Spain have for too long adopted the inquisitorial methods invented by their subjects, assuming that the actions of anyone who can be shown to be descended from converts are in some way essentially Jewish. Exaggeration aside, my point is merely a cautionary one. The mass conversions strained to breaking point the distinctions through which Christians and Jews understood the world. Fifteenth-century Christians and Jews did succeed in re-creating differences they thought of as essential, and even in representing their classifications as continuous with crucial dichotomies of 'Christian' and 'Jew'. We should not, however, make their claims for continuity our own, nor adapt as our own methodology the tools they used to re-create their world.

⁶⁸ 'This transformation was achieved, not by the implacable migration of ideas from one culture to another, but by the jostling of countless individuals, Jew and Christian, reorienting themselves in the strangely unfamiliar religious landscape that emerged as the floodwaters of baptism receded': 'Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities', 40.

NINE

The Social Context of Apostasy among Fifteenth-Century Spanish Jewry The Dynamics of a New Religious Borderland

RAM BEN-SHALOM

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

THE IMAGES of the anthropomorphized figures of Church and Synagogue that adorn the Christian art of western Europe, including that of Christian Spain, contain theological and social messages revealing the chasm that separated Christianity and Judaism. The Church, if not all of Christian society, tolerated the Jews out of respect for a distant legacy—in deference, if you will, to the symbolic and religious role played by the Jewish people in the ancient world. The lowly standing of the medieval Jew, by contrast, was precisely a result of his perceived betrayal of that historical agency. Such a view constituted the medieval foundations of those social restrictions designed to institutionalize the gulf between Jew and Christian. They were a practical expression of the symbols of the Church, Ecclesia, shown as a crowned woman, in contrast to the wretched representation of Synagoga, in several instances depicted as blindfolded—an obvious metaphor for the religious myopia of the Jews—and enveloped by a serpent symbolizing their demonic character. Could there be a more pointed illustration of the connection between the Jews and the Devil?¹

For centuries the Jews of the Iberian world found themselves living among a Christian majority, sharing their social, economic, and cultural existence. Certain historians have referred to this common life in Christian Spain as the *Convivencia*, or coexistence.² This was because, alongside instances of social segregation, legal discrimination, physical (and ritual) violence, compulsory religious disputations (and trials), the obligatory attendance at sermons, and

¹ See Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, 1999).

² See Thomas F. Glick, 'Convivencia: An Introductory Note', in Vivian B. Mann, Thomas Glick, and Jerrilynn Dodds (eds.), *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York, 1992), 1–9.