

MASS CONVERSION AND GENEALOGICAL MENTALITIES: JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY SPAIN*

It is both well known and worthy of note that Sephardim (that is, the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain) and Spaniards shared an unusually heightened concern with lineage and genealogy in the early modern period. The Spanish obsession with *hidalguía*, Gothic descent, and purity of blood has long constituted a stereotype. Think only of Don Juan's father, mockingly portrayed by Lord Byron: 'His father's name was José — *Don*, of course, / A true Hidalgo, free from every stain / Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source / Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain'.¹

The Sephardim, too, were criticized on this score almost from the moment of exile. The (Ashkenazic) Italian David ben Judah Messer Leon, for example, ridiculed the eminent exile Don Isaac Abarbanel's claims to royal pedigree, scoffing that Abarbanel 'made of himself a Messiah with his claims to Davidic descent'.² That the exiles' emphasis on lineage flourished nonetheless is evident, not only in the splendid armorial bearings of Sephardic

* I took up this topic in response to an invitation from the History Department of the University of California, Los Angeles. Its revision was stimulated by comments from the audience there, as well as at Indiana University, at the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis, and at Maurice Kriegel's seminar at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Sara Lipton urged me to rethink my arguments, Eliezer Lazaroff and Talya Fishman helped me navigate the seas of rabbinics, and a Mellon Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford provided the calm in which to do so.

¹ Lord Byron, *Don Juan*, I.v.9.

² On Abarbanel (1437–1508), see B. Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman and Philosopher*, 5th edn (Ithaca, 1998); the Davidic claims are discussed at p. 3 and p. 266, n. 6. On David, see Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, *Between Worlds: The Life and Thought of Rabbi David ben Judah Messer Leon* (Albany, 1991). For this passage, see *Israelitische Letterbode*, xii (1886–7), 88; Tirosh-Rothschild, *Between Worlds*, 269. Lawee's recent study of Abarbanel has a thoughtful discussion of the issue of lineage in Abarbanel's thought: Eric Lawee, *Isaac Abarbanel's Stance toward Tradition: Defense, Dissent, and Dialogue* (Albany, 2001), chs. 1–2.

tombs in Venice or Livorno,³ but also in the communal statutes of congregations in Italy and the Netherlands.⁴ And just as Spaniards asserted that their unstained nobility set them above other nations, so Isaac de Pinto could attempt to counter Voltaire's negative portrayal of Jews by arguing that Sephardic nobility made '[a] Portuguese Jew of Bordeaux and a German Jew of Metz appear two beings of a different nature!'⁵

The historical 'origins' of this emphasis on lineage are among the most polemical issues in the scholarly literature on Spanish and Sephardic identity. Rather than multiply examples, consider only that of Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, a writer so central to Spanish historiography that the Royal Academy of History is named in his honour. When he wrote in 1887 that 'the fanaticism of blood and race, which we probably owe to the Jews . . . was then hideously turned against them',⁶ he was reiterating an already ancient claim: that the Jews were the inventors of the

³ On the tombs, see Mair J. Bernardete, *Hispanic Culture and Character of the Sephardic Jews* (New York, 1953), 44, 79, 82. Not all Sephardic tombs, however, were so ornate: those of Salonica are relatively unadorned. And tomb style may owe as much to local Christian practice (the tombstone carvers were often Christian) as to any 'Sephardic style'.

⁴ In Amsterdam, for example, offspring of mixed Sephardic–Ashkenazic marriages were barred from burial in the communal Sephardic cemetery. The burial statutes are discussed in Miriam Bodian, '“Men of the Nation”: The Shaping of *Converso* Identity in Early Modern Europe', *Past and Present*, no. 143 (May 1994), 69; and in Yosef Kaplan, 'The Self-Definition of the Sephardic Jews of Western Europe and their Relation to the Alien and the Stranger', in Benjamin Gampel (ed.), *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391–1648* (New York, 1997), 126, 143.

⁵ Isaac de Pinto, *Apologie pour la nation juive, ou réflexions critiques sur le premier chapitre du VII^e tome des œuvres de M. de Voltaire au sujet des juifs* (Amsterdam, 1762). De Pinto pointed out that the Sephardim were 'scrupulous not to intermingle . . . by marriage, nor by covenant, nor by any other means with the Jews of other nations'. Translations from *Letters of Certain Jews to Monsieur Voltaire, Concerning an Apology for Their Own People and for the Old Testament*, 2nd edn, trans. Philip Lefanu (Covington, Ky., 1845), 26. See also Kaplan, 'Self-Definition of the Sephardic Jews', 140; Bodian, 'Men of the Nation', 48; and esp. Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York, 1970), 180 ff. For prohibitions on intermarriage, see Kaplan, 'Self-Definition of the Sephardic Jews', 142. Examples of similar sentiments (though with different underlying logics) could be multiplied: see, for example, B. N. Teensma, 'Fragmenten uit het Amsterdamse convolut van Abraham Idaña, alias Gaspar Mendez del Arroyo (1623–1690)', *Studia Rosenthaliana*, xi (1977), 149; Bodian, 'Men of the Nation', 73; Yosef Kaplan, 'The Sephardim in North-Western Europe and the New World', in Haim Beinart (ed.), *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1992), ii, 252, n. 42.

⁶ The quotation is from his letter to Valera, 17 October 1887: *Epistolario de Valera y Menéndez Pelayo*, ed. Miguel Artigas Ferrando (Madrid, 1946), 408. See also Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos Españoles*, 3 vols. (Madrid, 1882; repr. Mexico City, 1982), i, 410; ii, 381.

exclusionary logic of lineage that would later be used in Spain to oppress them. Within the context of Spanish history, the opinion has been embraced by writers as diverse as Américo Castro and his arch-enemy Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz.⁷ Conversely, an equally diverse group of Jewish scholars (which includes Yitzhak Baer, Cecil Roth, Haim Hillel Ben-Sason, Yosef Yerushalmi, Benzion Netanyahu, and Yosef Kaplan) has strenuously argued the opposite thesis, that these ideas were invented by gentiles (in this case Iberian Christians) as a way of denying converts from Judaism full membership in the Christian spiritual and social communities they sought to enter. Only later would they be adopted by the same Sephardic Jews who had earlier been their victims.⁸

The debate may seem abstruse, but it draws its heat from a moralizing logic of genealogy that is of vital importance in the long history of Jewish relations with other peoples. If the Jews gave birth to 'racism' and the spirit of exclusion according to birth, then is there not a certain exculpatory irony in the fact that their own monstrous children turned so violently against them? Hence the unceasing efforts of anti-Jewish polemicists, ranging from Appian to Hitler, to comb ancient biblical and rabbinic texts in order to identify the Jews as the inventors of racist exclusivity; and the equally timeless attempts of Jewish apologists from Philo to the present to defend the 'chosen people' against the charge.⁹

⁷ A convergence pointed out by B. Netanyahu, *Toward the Inquisition* (Ithaca, 1997), chs. 1, 5. Sánchez-Albornoz, for example, cited approvingly Castro's arguments about the Jewish origins of the Inquisition before invoking the vocabulary of race and of nineteenth-century racial theory in order to arrive at very similar conclusions about other Jewish and *converso* attributes: see Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, *España: un enigma histórico*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires, 1962), ii, 16, 255.

⁸ Kaplan, in a number of his articles, is only the latest to suggest that the Sephardic diaspora drew these ideas from the 'repertory of concepts . . . that had been used against them by their [Iberian] oppressors': Kaplan, 'Self-Definition of the Sephardic Jews', 128. He offers no justification, however, for this position. For a less pointed intervention on related themes, see Henri Méchoulan, 'The Importance of Hispanicity in Jewish Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam', in Bernard Dov Cooperman (ed.), *In Iberia and Beyond: Hispanic Jews between Cultures* (Newark, Del., 1998).

⁹ Some twentieth-century eugenicists and racists went so far as to praise the Jews as the inventors of racism, at the same time, of course, that they advocated discrimination against them: see, for example, Alfred Schultz, *Race or Mongrel: A Brief History of the Rise and Fall of the Ancient Races of Earth* (Boston, 1908). The insistence on the Jewish invention of racism continues in contemporary historical writing: see, for example, Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore, 1996), 100–15. Less systematic, but equally wrong-headed on this score, is Winthrop Jordan,

Both these positions assume that ideas about lineage have a discrete and essential origin in a particular culture or people, whence they are transmitted from donor to recipient cultures across space and time. Both are, in other words, philogenetic, depending on genealogical models of cultural exchange that reproduce, but do not explain, the logic of lineage whose rise they claim to clarify.¹⁰ In this sense, modern historians of the subject remain methodologically very close to their medieval precursors, whose pens worked so diligently to trace the lineages of kingdoms, people, and ideas into the primordial past (by which they generally meant the historical landscape of either the Hebrew Bible or Greek myth).¹¹

The present study will take a different approach, arguing that the emphasis on lineage amongst Spaniards and Sephardim is not a product of the 'genetic' transmission of ideas from one culture to another, but rather the outcome of a specific historical process of conflict in which lineage became a newly meaningful way of thinking about religious identity amongst Christians and Jews alike. Its specific arguments are threefold: (1) that the conversion to Christianity of many thousands of Jews caused by the massacres, forced disputation, and segregations that marked the period between 1391 and 1415 produced a violent destabilization of traditional categories of religious identity; (2) that in the face of this destabilization Jews, Christians, and *conversos* created new

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White over Black (New York, 1977), where he attempts to place ancient Jewish exegesis of the curse of Ham at the origins of a genealogical history of racism. For criticism of Jordan, see the bibliography in Benjamin Braude, 'The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods', *William and Mary Quart.*, liv (1997), 129–30.

¹⁰ Given Nietzsche's and Foucault's success in redefining the meaning of the term 'genealogy', it is important to note that here, and throughout, I am using the term 'genealogical' in its traditional, non-Foucauldian, sense. Indeed the philogenetic historiographies this article describes are very much of the type against which they were reacting. Following Nietzsche, Foucault (somewhat confusingly) used the term 'genealogy' to describe his antithetical alternative to such historiographies, history as an 'anti-genealogy' that does not 'go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things . . . [that] does not resemble the evolution of a species or map the destiny of a people': see Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in Donald Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca, 1977), 154, 162; Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société: cours au Collège de France, 1976* (Paris, 1997), 10.

¹¹ Cf. Alfonso de Toledo, *Inventionario*, ed. Philip Gericke (Madison, 1992), which confidently identifies the inventors of technical innovations like the mule and the fork, and of cultural ones like heresy. The genre was not specifically a late medieval one: see, for example, the writings of Isidore of Seville.

forms of communal identity by engaging in a dynamic and dialogic process of rereading their own traditions and those of their rivals, and that over the course of the fifteenth century (that is, from the massacres of 1391 to the generation of the expulsion of 1492) this process elevated genealogy to a primary form of communal memory; and (3) that in each of these communities this genealogical form of collective memory gave rise to new forms of historical consciousness and historical writing, some of which continue to characterize the historiography of Spain and its Jews.

By focusing on the social context of the fifteenth-century Iberian peninsula, I do not mean to imply that this was either the first or the only time that history and genealogy met, wooed, and were wed. On the contrary, theirs is a common romance, with conflict a frequent go-between. Nor am I suggesting that lineage was unimportant to Jews and Christians before the events of 1391. The genealogical genre is represented in the foundational texts of both religions (that is, the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament), and both had long and complex traditions of thinking about the topic. For the Jews, *yhus*, or lineage, had important ritual implications before the destruction of the Temple, and the issue was treated extensively in early rabbinical texts. More specifically in medieval Sepharad, important rabbinic dynasties had long used genealogies in the struggle amongst themselves for authority and prestige. In his *Book of Tradition*, for example, the twelfth-century scholar Abraham ibn Daud of Toledo gave several important families noble pedigrees. Families like the Albalias and the Ibn Ezras, he assured his readers, 'are of royal blood and descended from nobility, as evidenced by their personal traits'.¹²

Such strategies, and the genealogies they produced, were common to the entire western diaspora, in Ashkenaz as well as Sepharad.¹³ Further, although such claims might lend a patina of prestige, they carried no legal force, and they were also sometimes

¹² Gerson D. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition by Abraham ibn Daud* (Philadelphia, 1964), 79, 98. See also Joseph Shatzmiller, 'Politics and the Myth of Origins: The Case of the Medieval Jews', in Gilbert Dahan (ed.), *Les Juifs au regard de l'histoire: mélanges en l'honneur de Bernhard Blumenkranz* (Paris, 1985). Ibn Daud rooted this nobility in an account of the Diaspora: 'When Titus overpowered Jerusalem, his lieutenant in charge of Spain requested him to send some of the nobles of Jerusalem': *ibid.*, 59.

¹³ Similar stories were told about the Kalonymos family, for example, whose influence underlies the Ashkenazic collection known as the *Sefer Hasidim*.

ridiculed.¹⁴ In the early fourteenth century, Rabbi Shelomo ben Abraham ben Adret of Barcelona, the leading rabbinic authority of his day, made clear just how little *halakhic* (legal) weight genealogical investigations should have. Responding to a case in which litigants attempted to bar two brothers from giving testimony on the grounds that they had a slave ancestor, Adret responded that ‘all Jewish families must be held as fit and emanating from the children of Israel’; and, he added, ‘if we take seriously the authors of such libels, there will not remain a single family [in Israel] that will be considered fit from the standpoint of ancestry’.¹⁵

Among the Christian European nobility genealogy had long played a more important role than it had done amongst the Jews, one that for a variety of reasons became critical (as well as better documented) in the fourteenth century. In Western Europe this period saw the widespread adoption of armorial bearings, the development of heraldry, and the dissemination of the ‘family tree’ as a standard way of representing lineage.¹⁶ Also, within each of the peninsular kingdoms specific pressures contributed to the particular flavour of genealogical concerns. In Aragon, for example, the growing pressure of taxation led to an explosion of *procesos de infanzonía* in the first half of the fourteenth century, by which thousands of people attempted (generally successfully) to show their descent from tax-exempt minor nobility. In Castile, on the other hand, the civil wars of mid-century had resulted in a new royal dynasty which drew its grandees from an (almost) entirely new circle of families. In that kingdom, it was the high nobility who displayed the greatest genealogical creativity as it attempted to establish its *bona fides*.¹⁷

¹⁴ As a descendant of the Kalonymide dynasty wrote c.1320 in Catalonia, about a man who boasted of his lineage, ‘yet perhaps his family was the youngest from among those of whom it is written: “they ravished the women in Zion” on the bitter day, in the time of oppression’: R. Kalonymos, *Even Bohan* (Lemberg, 1865), 24 ff., 35 ff., cited in Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1961), ii, 19. The quotation is from Lam. 5:11; Kiddushin 71b.

¹⁵ B. Netanyahu, ‘The Racial Attack on the *Conversos*: Américo Castro’s View of its Origin’, in Netanyahu, *Toward the Inquisition*, 34, citing RaShbA, *responsum*, no. 386. RaShbA may have been alluding to Maimonides, who went further, suggesting ironically that anyone given to making such accusations was himself suspect of mixed ancestry, because a true Jew would not make such a charge: see *Mishneh Torah*, *Sefer Qedushah*, ch. 19 (V.17).

¹⁶ The literature on all these topics is vast. For a recent and particularly illuminating example, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *L’Ombre des ancêtres* (Paris, 2000).

¹⁷ For Castile the classic work is Salvador de Moxó, ‘De la nobleza vieja a la nobleza nueva: la transformación nobiliaria castellana en la baja edad media’, *Cuadernos de historia*, iii (1969). See also Adeline Rucquoi, ‘Être noble en Espagne aux XIV^e–XVI^e

In both religious communities, in other words, ideas about lineage were always present and never stable. But although in both communities lineage was clearly important at the level of the family, the dynasty, and the individual line, in neither did it emerge as a central form of cultural memory or communal identification establishing a group identity before the fifteenth century.¹⁸ Genealogy was not yet being put to the task of producing narratives or systems of knowledge around which large-scale political, social, religious, or ethnic entities might cohere.

The fourteenth century drew to a close with a wave of anti-Jewish violence unparalleled in the Middle Ages. In the massacres of 1391, thousands or tens of thousands were killed, and a much greater number converted. Reuven, son of the famous Rabbi Nissim Gerundi and a survivor of the massacre, 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, Córdoba, Valencia, Barcelona, Tàrraga, 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 [that is, converted].¹⁹

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siècles', in Otto Gerhard Oexle and Werner Paravicini (eds.), *Nobilitas: Funktion und Repräsentation des Adels in Alteuropa* (Göttingen, 1997). For Infanzones in Aragon, see Elena Lourie, 'Seigneurial Pressure and the *salva de infanzonia*: Larués, Marcuello and Yeste (1300–1329)', *15 Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón*, section 1, vol. 5 ('El Poder Real en la Corona de Aragón') (Zaragoza, 1996).

¹⁸ I am here using the term 'cultural memory' in more or less the sense elaborated by Jan and Aleida Assmann, whose work builds upon the studies of collective memory by Aby Warburg and by Maurice Halbwachs: see *Aby Warburg: Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, ed. D. Wuttke and C. G. Heise (Baden-Baden, 1979); Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris, 1925). See also Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1992); Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich, 1999).

¹⁹ In Abraham Hershman, *Rabbi Isaac 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', *Jornades d'història dels jueus a Catalunya* (Girona, 1987), 156. See also the letter of the prominent rabbi and courtier Hasdai Crescas included in the much later work, Shelomo ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah*, ed. Me'ir ben David ha-Kohen Wiener (Hanover, 1854/1924), 128. Not even contemporaries of the events attempted to determine the exact proportion of Jews killed or converted. In the case of Girona,

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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 both Castile and Aragon. In their place, converted by force and without catechism into Christians, appeared a new, and in some senses intermediary, religious class, that of the 'New Christians', or *conversos*.²⁰

The migration of such a large number of Jews into the body of Christ catalysed a series of reactions whose complexity and dynamism is perhaps comparable to those that marked the debates (so fateful for later Jewish-Christian relations) between Jewish and gentile followers of Jesus in the first formative century of Christianity. Underlying these reactions (of which the turn towards genealogy was only one) was a crisis of classification and identity, whose first symptoms became evident almost immediately. In 1393, for example, the king of Aragon wrote to a number of towns complaining that it had become impossible for 'natural Christians' (that is, not converts) to tell who was a convert to Christianity and who was still a Jew. The king proposed segregation and heightened marking of Jews as a solution. 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 Jewish hats, so 'that they appear to be Jews'.²¹ But

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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, Barcelona (hereafter ACA), Chancery MS 1902, fos. 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.

²⁰ The literature on 1391 is too extensive to summarize here. For Castile, a beginning can be made with Emilio Mitre Fernández, *Los judíos de Castilla en tiempo de Enrique III: el pogrom de 1391* (Valladolid, 1994); and, for the Crown of Aragon, with the articles by Jaume Riera: 'Los tumultos contra las juderías de la Corona de Aragón en 1391', *Cuadernos de historia*, viii (1977); 'Estrangers Participants als Avalots contra les juderies de la Corona d'Aragó el 1391', *Anuario de estudios medievales*, x (1980); 'Els avalots del 1391'.

²¹ ACA, Chancery MS 1964, fos. 108^v-109^v, 18 Aug. 1393, addressed to Tortosa [= Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1929/1936), i, 716-18, no. 456]. Other cities received similar letters: see, for example, ACA, Chancery MS 1960, fos. 120^v-121^v; MS 1911, fo. 46^{r-v}, 2nd numeration. Cf. *ibid.*, MS 2030, fos. 136^v-137^r (3 Sept. 1393), 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*) [= José Hinojosa Montalvo, *The Jews of the Kingdom of Valencia* (Jerusalem, 1993), 440, no. 191; cf. also nos. 218, 231, 235].

it is in the sermons of St Vincent Ferrer that this crisis of classification and identification received its most elegant and powerful formulation, and came in due course to justify the second great wave of conversionary pressure that swept the peninsula in the years 1412–15.

St Vincent, together with the papal court in Avignon and the monarchs of Castile and Aragon, professed to desire nothing less than the mass conversion of the Jews and Muslims of Spain, a goal he and his allies pursued through a programme of preaching, mandatory disputations, and discriminatory legislation.²² His motivations, as well as those of the popes and monarchs who supported him and of the populace that so warmly embraced his mission, were complex. But there is no doubt that they were all very much concerned by the ways in which the existence of a group of Christians living in proximity (social, cultural, and physical) to Jews undercut the radical distinction between the two groups, a distinction believed to be crucial to the identity of both communities. In the words of St Vincent himself, ‘he will never be a good Christian, who is neighbour to a Jew’. Proximity destabilized an essential aspect of Christian identity, dishonoured God, and put Christian society at risk of famine, plague, and other manifestations of divine displeasure.²³ Equally dangerous was the fact that it made accurate identification difficult. The situation was so grave, St Vincent suggested to a Castilian audi-

²² On the disputation, see Antonio Pacios López, *La disputa de Tortosa*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1957); Jaume Riera i Sans, *La crònica en Hebreu de la disputa de Tortosa* (Barcelona, 1974). The literature on Ferrer is too vast to summarize. For his activities in Castile, see, most recently, 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); Pedro Cátedra, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura en la edad media: San Vicente Ferrer en Castilla (1411–1412)* (Salamanca, 1994). On his activities in the Crown of Aragon, the various articles of Vendrell de Millás remain important: see esp. Francisca Vendrell de Millás, ‘La actividad proselitista de San Vicente Ferrer durante el reinado de Fernando I de Aragón’, *Sefarad*, xiii (1953).

²³ ‘Car nunca será bon christià, lo qui és vehí de juheu’. The quotation is from a sermon given in 1414: see Biblioteca Catalunya, Barcelona, MS 476, fos. 136^v–153^v, edited by Josep Perarnau i Espelt, ‘Els quatre sermons catalans de sant Vicent Ferrer en el manuscrit 476 de la Biblioteca de Catalunya’, *Arxiu de textos catalans antics*, xv (1996), 231–2. Note that earlier in the sermon Vincent chastises the Jews for what he describes as their materialistic belief that proper piety brings reward in the form of health and good harvests.

ence in 1412, that ‘many are thought to be the children of Jews, but are really Christian, and vice versa’.²⁴

St Vincent Ferrer and his sponsors sought to reinstate the necessary distance between Christian and Jew in two ways: first, by converting as many Jews as possible to Christianity; and second, by sharpening the boundaries between Christians and those (ideally few) Jews who would inevitably remain in Christian society until the end of time. The programme, in a word, was segregation.²⁵ With the aim of separating Christian from non-Christian, Muslims and Jews were to be moved to segregated neighbourhoods and severely restricted in their market and economic activities.²⁶ These measures clearly advanced the goal of evangelization by encouraging beleaguered non-Christians to convert. But we should not forget that they also reflected, and justified themselves by invoking, increased anxiety about the stability of group boundaries after the mass conversions of 1391.

Whatever the motivations of this segregation, its effects were clear. Entire communities converted to avoid being barred from their trades and expelled from their homes. Others found shelter in caves and huts, ‘with boys and girls dying from exposure to the cold and the snow’. Writing years after these events, Abraham

²⁴ ‘And above all there should be no communication with them in the home, for Christian and infidel should not dwell together in the same house, for it is an evil which is contagious, that is, luxury, for many are thought to be the children of Jews, but are really Christian, and vice versa. And therefore just as Jews and Muslims are different from Christians in law, they should be different from them in habitation’: Colegio del Corpus Christi de Valencia, MS 139, fo. 113; in Càtedra, ‘Fray Vicente Ferrer y la predicación antijudaica’, 30–1.

²⁵ Contemporaries understood themselves to be responding to St Vincent’s call for heightened segregation. The *Crónica de Juan II* (Biblioteca Colombina, MS 85-5-14, fo. 176^r), for example, presents the edict of Valladolid as Queen Catherine’s response to his preaching on the subject. At a more local level, numerous surviving letters from municipal authorities allow us to perceive how the sermons stimulated segregation in the towns St Vincent visited: see, for example, A. Floriano, ‘San Vicente Ferrer y las aljamas turolenses’, *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, lxxxiv (1924).

²⁶ Royal edicts ordering the segregatory measures can be found in, for Castile: Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, ii, 263–70, from Escorial, MS Z.1.6, fos. 139^v–141^v; and for Aragon: ACA, Chancery MS 2416, fos. 60^v–63^v (20 Mar. 1413). See also Pope Benedict XIII’s bull of 11 May 1415 and its confirmation (for the Crown of Aragon): *ibid.*, MS 2395, fos. 122^r–176^v, published in F. Vendrell de Millás, ‘En torno a la confirmación real, en Aragón, de la pragmática de Benedicto XIII’, *Sefarad*, xx (1960). For a Castilian example of the implementation of residential segregation, see *Fontes Iudaeorum Regni Castellae*, ed. Carlos Carrete Parrondo, 8 vols. (Salamanca, 1981–98), i, 30–1, on Alba de Tormes. For an Aragonese example, see ACA, Chancery MS 2370, fo. 109^{r-v} (12 June 1414), where the violence of the process is acknowledged (and reprimanded) by the king.

Zacuto called the discriminations of 1412–15 ‘the greatest persecution that had ever occurred’. Shelomo Alami described this as a period when ‘the sky was covered with a cloud [so heavy] that it blocked the passage of any prayer to God’. Both Christian and Jewish sources tell us of the rabbis attempting to penetrate this cloud by praying tearfully in the graveyards: ‘At the hour when the world requires mercy, the living go and rouse the souls of the righteous, and cry on their graves’. But the souls of the righteous did not waken, or if they did, they failed to rouse the intercession of the patriarchs. By 1415, a new generation of *conversos* had entered Christendom.²⁷

It is not the terror of these massacres and segregations, real as it was, nor even their scale that I want to emphasize here, so much as the classificatory dilemmas they created for Jew and Christian alike. The mass conversions raised, for the first time, systemic doubt about who was a Christian and who was a Jew. At their simplest, these were questions about who had actually converted. Particularly when conversion took place in an atmosphere of mob violence, it could be difficult to ascertain who had in fact been baptized, though the classification was obviously a crucial one, given the inquisition’s interest (at least in the Crown of Aragon) in relapsed converts.²⁸ But the problem of identifica-

²⁷ The quotations from Hebrew sources are from Shelomo Alami, *Igeret musar*, ed. Adolf Jellinek (Vienna, 1872), 10b; Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer Yuhasin ha-Shalem*, ed. Herschell Filipowski (London, 1857), 225b; Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11 vols. (Leipzig, 1890), viii, 111, n. 2. A Christian (*converso*) chronicler noted reports of hardship and conversions by both Muslims and Jews: Alvar García de Santa María, *Crónica de Juan II de Castilla*, ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo y Arroquia (Madrid, 1982). (Documentary evidence of these abounds in the registers of the Archive of the Crown of Aragon.) For practices of prayer among the rabbis, see the discussion of *Zohar* III 70b in Moses ben Jacob Cordovero, *Or Yakar*, XIII, 64, where he describes the digging of trenches over the bodies of the righteous. The text is transcribed and analysed in the brilliant dissertation of J. H. Chajes, ‘Spirit Possession in Early Modern Jewish Culture’ (Yale Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1999), 49, 52. Such a practice seems to be described in Diego de Colmenares, *Historia de la Insigne Ciudad de Segovia y compendio de las historias de Castilla*, 3 vols. (Segovia, 1637), ii, 134–5, when the author refers to the ‘miserable people, who threw themselves on the graves of their dead’ when the edict of expulsion’s deadline arrived in 1492.

²⁸ Even the queen of Aragon had trouble interceding with the Inquisitors on behalf of her servant Mira, arrested in 1401. The Jewess had never been baptized, the queen explained, because the priest did not show up to carry out the ceremony. Besides, Mira’s accusers now confessed to having lied. Nevertheless, much time and several stern letters passed before she was freed: see ACA, Chancery MS 2338, fo. 1^r (30 Sept. 1401); MS 2174, fo. 26^{r-v} [= Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, i, 772–4].

tion extended far beyond doubts about whether an individual had been baptized or not, for ambiguity could arise in any number of settings.

Topographically, for example, converts from Judaism (and Islam) often remained in the same homes and neighbourhoods (that is, in Jewish and Muslim quarters) that they had occupied before their conversion. In this sense St Vincent was right: the New Christians really were neighbours of Jews.²⁹ The converts' fiscal status, too, was indeterminate. Because they were made to assume a proportionate share of the debts and tax obligations of the Jewish community they left behind (obligations that often had maturities of several decades), the converts were often lumped into fiscal groupings separate from both Jewish *aljamas* and the 'Old Christian' municipalities.³⁰ The result was not only that the converts would retain close financial ties with their former coreligionists for at least a generation, but also that they would form confraternities and tax collectives quite distinct from those of their adopted brethren in Christ. The meanings of this 'interstitiality' were neither clear nor stable. For example, if the formation of *converso* confraternities seemed at first a laudable and even necessary step in the neophytes' incorporation into the body of Christ, it soon began to seem a dangerous symptom of separatism, and by mid-century it had become a primary locus for violent conflict between Christians Old and New.³¹ Whatever the shifting

²⁹ Quadrado published an example of an early stage in this process, where shortly after the massacre the converts were asked whether they wished to remain in their old homes or move to Christian neighbourhoods; the majority opted to stay: see José María Quadrado, 'La judería de la ciudad de Mallorca en 1391', *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, ix (1886). Authorities soon sought to segregate converts from Jews, but distinctively *converso* parishes remained a feature of urban topography in many Iberian cities (Barcelona, Córdoba, Seville, Toledo, Valencia) up to the sixteenth century.

³⁰ In the Aragonese archives, documents concerning the creation of institutions for *converso* self-government are legion. To cite but two examples, see ACA, Chancery MS 2186, fo. 55^v (1408), giving the *converso* leadership of Barcelona the right to call all *conversos* together for the purposes of community business; and *ibid.*, MS 2193, fos. 116^v–117^r (1400), which establishes the procedure by which the *conversos* of Montblanc are to contribute to their outstanding share of the Jewish *aljama's* tax burden. Numerous individual complaints about indeterminate fiscal identity can be found in the archives as well.

³¹ In Valencia the confraternity of St Christopher was founded in 1399 (ACA, Chancery MS 2191, fos. 143^v ff. = *Colección de documentos inéditos del Archivo General de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Próspero de Bofarull y Mascaró, Manuel de Bofarull y de Sartorio and Francisco de Asís de Bofarull y Sans, 41 vols. (Barcelona, 1847–1910), xli, no. 92, pp. 117–28); in Barcelona that of the Holy Trinity in 1405 (ACA, Chancery MS 2915, fos. 47^r ff. = *Colección de documentos inéditos*, ed. Bofarull y Mascaró *et al.*,

(cont. on p. 15)

valencies of these intermediate statuses, it is clear that these were significant moves in a highly corporate world very much attuned to such distinctions.

Marriage provided another context for the blurring of boundaries, and one central to the formation of any discourse of lineage. What happened, for example, if only one spouse in a marriage converted? To the rabbis, the answer was clear: the sanctified marriage remained valid, even if, in the words of Adret, the Jewish spouse should flee the convert as one 'would a serpent' in order to avoid giving birth to a 'child of violence' who might oppress the Jews.³² Under pressure of events, Christian authorities came to permit similar ambiguities. During the 1391 massacres in Girona, for example, a husband who had just converted sent messengers to the tower where his Jewish wife was still being besieged by the mob, asking her to return to him, under the condition that she not interfere with his observing the Christian faith. (She refused.) Conversely, when Samuel Baruch's wife Aldonça converted to Christianity in 1391, her father (also a convert) publicly presented his son-in-law with two possibilities: convert to Christianity and continue the marriage, or alternatively, remain a Jew but still keep her as his wife, without prejudicing her Christian faith.³³ By 1415, Pope Benedict XIII had

(n. 31 cont.)

xli, no. 93, pp. 129–40); in Mallorca that of St Michael in 1410 (ACA, Chancery MS 2271, fos. 54^r–57^v; MS 2416, fos. 120^v–126^v): see, for example, José María Madurell Marimón, 'La cofradía de la Santa Trinidad, de los conversos de Barcelona', *Sefarad*, xviii (1958). In 1419 King Martin dissolved the Valencian confraternity, on the grounds that it perpetuated a dangerous division between Old and New Christians and fomented heterodoxy, though he rescinded the order shortly thereafter: see Archivo del Reino de Valencia, Bailía MS 1145, fo. 211^{r-v} (12 Apr. 1419); Jaime Castillo Sainz, 'De solidaritats Jueves a confraries de conversos: entre la fossilització i la integració d'una minoria religiosa', *Revista d'història medieval*, iv (1993), 197–8. We know less about the establishment of such confraternities in Castile, but more about the later conflicts they engendered, most spectacularly in Toledo. In a particularly vivid anecdote from 1465, for example, King Enrique tried to 'bring about friendship between two confraternities [of Toledo], one of converts, the other of Old Christians, who were at odds with one another. And he turned them into one, and joined the brethren himself as a member, in order to make peace between them': see 'Los Anales de Garcí Sánchez, jurado de Sevilla', ed. José de Mata Carriazo, *Anales de la Universidad Hispalense*, xiv (1953), 50. The attempt failed, and violence in Toledo continued into the 1470s.

³² Shelomo ben Abraham ben Adret, *She'elot u-teshuvot*, no. 1162. 'Child of violence' is my translation of the phrase *ben paritz*, an allusion to Dan. 11:14.

³³ Luis Batlle y Prats, 'Un episodio de la persecucion judía de 1391', in *Per a una història de la Girona jueva*, ed. David Romano, 2 vols. (Girona, 1988), ii, 614–17 (the article was originally published in 1948); Gabriel Secall i Güell, *La comunitat hebrea de Santa Coloma de Queralt* (Tarragona, 1986), 118–19.

formalized such choices by taking an unprecedented position in canon law, allowing all couples in this situation to continue living together for a year from the date of conversion, so that the Christian spouse might convince the recalcitrant partner.³⁴

Of course, concerns about the sincerity of conversion complicated the issue of classification further. For example, the year limit to mixed marriages makes clear that 'hybrid' situations were meant to be temporary, but in fact the problem continued for generations, whenever an 'insincere' or 'judaizing' convert married a 'sincere' one. One early sixteenth-century *responsum* (rabbinic legal opinion) tells of a *conversa* who abandoned her nursing son and her husband in Valencia by escaping through a window. She now wanted to marry a Jew who had repented as she had, and asked the rabbis if she needed a divorce. On the other hand, Pope Pius II authorized an annulment for the *converso* Pedro de la Caballería in 1459, on the grounds that his wife was a heretic who had been taught to judaize by her mother. 'Pedro, a true Catholic, is prepared to endure . . . every danger of death rather than consummate a marriage of this sort, lest [any] begotten offspring follow the insanity of the mother, and a Jew be created out of a Christian'.³⁵

Finally, the multiple expulsions, migrations, conversions, and apostasies that marked the fifteenth century made the classification of an individual's belief a central problem for all three of the religious communities of Iberia (though the Muslim case will not be discussed here).³⁶ Even those Jews who most adamantly refused to convert could experience a destabilization of their

³⁴ See, for example, ACA, Chancery MS 2374, fo. 77^{r-v} (5 Feb. 1415).

³⁵ *Responsa Yakin u-Bo'az*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1782), ii, no. 19; ASV, Reg. Vat. 470, fo. 201^{r-v} [= Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, 8 vols. (Toronto, 1988-91), ii, 1051, doc. no. 856]. Although Pius's letter has been interpreted as exhibiting a sense of hereditary Jewishness, its logic appears quite different once we realize that Pedro de la Caballería was himself a *converso*. The problem here is one of pedagogy and nurture, not inheritance. Cf. Stephen Krueger, 'Conversion and Medieval Sexual, Religious, and Racial Categories', in Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken and James A. Schultz (eds.), *Constructing Medieval Sexuality* (Minneapolis, 1997), 169 ff.

³⁶ A telling Muslim example, however, is that of Juan de Granada. Born Mahoma Joffre in Aragon in the mid-fifteenth century, he converted to Christianity and joined a military troop on its way to fight on the Granadan frontier. He then settled in Granada as a Muslim. Eventually he left Granada, joining a Christian troop on the frontier and again (!) receiving baptism. Later he returned to his village in Aragon as a Muslim, where he lived for several years before being recognized and denounced to the Inquisition. Because Mahoma's long absence made him suspect, his relatives repeatedly interrogated him about his religion and observed his behaviour closely:

(cont. on p. 17)

identities, because they were often forced to move to avoid physical violence, conversionary pressures, or the designation of certain cities (such as Barcelona or Valencia) as *judenrein*. The parents of Abraham Rimoch, for example, fled Barcelona with their young son after the massacres of 1391, taking refuge in Barbastro. Some twenty years later, after being forced to ‘debate with the pope and his sages’ at Tortosa, Abraham fled again to avoid conversion: ‘I left my house and abandoned my possessions, wealth, and fortune, my sons and daughters, my family, friends, and belongings’. Such refugees found themselves needing to re-establish their reputations at a time when Jewish and Christian communities alike were particularly suspicious of newcomers. As Rabbi Shelomo da Piera put it:

when the persons who have escaped the sword . . . wander and go away . . . it would not be believed by mere hearing that these people have not converted, unless it is from scribes or from written testimonies which testify their being just, signed by well-known people who are ‘known at the gates’.³⁷

Da Piera’s observation suggests that these massive dislocations stimulated the search amongst Jewish leaders for new ways to document individual identity. Similar processes are evident in Christian communities as well,³⁸ and the problem would become even more acute with the conversions and expulsions of the later fifteenth century. Consider the autobiography of Luis de la Isla, a thirty-year-old blind *converso*, as narrated to the Inquisition of Toledo in 1514. As an eight-year-old he had left the town of Illescas (near Toledo) for North Africa in the expulsion of 1492. From there he had travelled to Venice and Genoa, being baptized while in Italy. He returned to Spain in 1496 when converts were still being readmitted and then, again in Italy in 1506, started attending Synagogue in Ferrara. From Ferrara he moved to Salonica, Adrianople, and Constantinople, still as a Jew, then to Alexandria, where he lived as a Christian among Catalan merchants. In Alexandria he came into conflict with the local Jewish community, which reproached him for choosing Christianity

(n. 36 cont.)

dress, attendance at mosque, consumption of wine, fasting during Ramadan, in particular. See María Luisa Ledesma Rubio, *Vidas mudéjares: aspectos sociales de una minoría religiosa en Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1994), 63–103.

³⁷ On Rimoch, see Frank Talmage, ‘Trauma at Tortosa: The Testimony of Abraham Rimoch’, *Mediaeval Studies*, xlvii (1985), 383. For Shelomo da Piera, see below, n. 42.

³⁸ In the early fifteenth century, for example, some parishes began keeping special records of Jewish baptisms.

‘when he came from so honourable a lineage as those of Illescas’. It was there, too, that he lost his sight and decided to return, first to Naples, then to Valencia, and finally Toledo, where he voluntarily confessed to the Inquisition.³⁹ Such movement across geographic and religious space would characterize the experience of many Sephardim well into the seventeenth century. The classification of these ‘travellers’, and the fixing of their identities, would require new forms of memory and written record.⁴⁰

Confronted by these displacements, problems of intermediacy and crises of classification, Jews, Christians, and *conversos* turned more or less simultaneously to lineage as one means of re-establishing the integrity of religious categories of identity. In doing so, each group drew largely upon its own traditions, but each was also aware of, and responding to, the changes taking place in the others’ genealogical imaginations. In the interest of narrative clarity I will treat each of these groups separately, beginning with the Jews. But in so doing I do not intend to imply any priority of invention, nor to give the impression that the responses can be adequately understood independently of each other.

The Sephardic rabbinate responded to the crisis by adapting two closely related genealogical strands long present, but largely neglected, in rabbinic tradition. Both strands are already evident in a legal opinion written by Adret nearly a century before 1391, responding to a question about why the Talmud had made no provision for divorcing a Jewish woman from an apostate (*meshumad l-‘avodah zarah*). Adret emphasized that even in the extreme case where an apostate woman gives birth to a gentile son, the son is nevertheless *Yisra’el kasher u-mezuham*, that is, kosher, but loathsome.⁴¹ Both the ideas implicit in this ruling, (1) that an apostate’s child is still *Yisra’el kasher*, and (2) that the child’s lineage is nevertheless in some sense flawed, were amplified in rabbinic reaction to the mass conversions. But both, it should also be stressed, assign a place of vital importance to genealogy.

This importance is easiest to see in the case of post-1391 writers who came to emphasize genealogy as a way of guaranteeing a

³⁹ Fidel Fita, ‘El judío errante de Illescas’, *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, vi (1885).

⁴⁰ The Inquisition archives from which accounts such as that of Luis de la Isla are drawn were themselves a response to that challenge.

⁴¹ Adret, *She’elot u-teshuvoth*, no. 1162.

sound lineage devoid of taint. Thus we see the appearance after 1391 of phrases like ‘of a family of believers’ or ‘of a good family’ in routine documents such as letters of recommendation, meaning that the bearer was of a family that had not converted in the persecutions. Rabbi Shelomo da Piera addressed the issue explicitly in the letter already cited above: ‘it would not be believed by mere hearing that these people have not converted, unless it is from scribes or from written testimonies which testify their being just’. Da Piera therefore developed a formula: ‘for X, who is from the sons of good residents of this land, from those who are known to be faithful, decent, and untainted (*kasher*)’. A letter written in 1412 on behalf of Meir b. R. Todros b. R. Hasdai stated that Meir was ‘very afraid lest they should think or suspect him to be one of the converts . . . therefore he begged us to give evidence of his untaintedness and this is the certificate of purity of this young man’.⁴²

Meir’s anxiety may have been due to the fact that such instruments of ‘genealogical memory’ were clearly being deployed in the interests of asserting the superiority of individual lineages. The *Menorat ha-Ma’or*, an ‘advice manual’ written by Isaac Aboab I at the end of the fourteenth century, reflects this concern:

A man must be very careful not to trip over a woman who is not fitting for him, so that she not be like a leprosy in his flesh, and that he not have children by her, who are not fitting. As we read in the last [*pereq*] of *Qidushin* . . . every man who marries a woman not fitting to his station, it is as if he married in a house of salt, etc. And in the heavens they pray for him and cry: ‘Woe to him that damages his foundations and introduces a defect in his lineage and marries a woman who is not his equal!’⁴³

On the other hand, at the level of the collective, rather than that of the individual lineage, the rabbis used genealogical arguments to emphasize the continuing ‘Jewishness’ (and hence, marriageability) of the converts. Their arguments were based upon a distinction between *anusim*, forced converts, and willing apostates. Maimonides had famously ruled that, under certain condi-

⁴² The examples are drawn from Gutwirth’s invaluable article: E. Gutwirth, ‘Lineage in XVth Century Hispano-Jewish Thought’, *Miscelánea de estudios arabes y hebraicos*, xxxiv (1985), 86–7. Gutwirth is translating from Heinrich Brody, R. Salomon da Pieras *Leben und Werken* (Berlin, 1893), 18, 22, 24–5.

⁴³ Isaac Aboab, *Menorat ha-Ma’or* (Jerusalem, 1961). I cite from the sixth treatise, ‘on marriage’, which also describes how the origin and conclusion of each lineage are sealed by the name of God. For a seventeenth-century Ladino translation of the passage, see the ‘Almenara de la Luz’, in *Antología Sefardí, 1492–1700*, ed. María del Carmen Artigas (Madrid, 1997), 283.

tions, there was no guilt in renouncing Judaism under threat of force, so long as one intended to continue carrying out the commandments and fled the land of oppression at the first opportunity. The convert remained a Jew, for God forgave the *'anus*.⁴⁴ The crucial variable here was the convert's intention.

Sephardic rabbis writing after 1391 followed this tradition, but came to rely less on intention and more on lineage. We can trace this transformation across their *responsa* on the subject. Rabbi Yitzḥaq ben Sheshet Perfet (b. 1326), who fled Valencia for North Africa in 1391, upheld the Jewishness of the forced converts, on the grounds that, (1) 'God forgives the forced convert', (2) 'Israel, although he has sinned, is still Israel',⁴⁵ and (3) as Maimonides had said, it is better to live for the commandments than to die for them. But for Yitzḥaq their status as Jews and *'anusim*, rather than apostates, depended on their secret observance of the commandments and upon their willingness to flee the land of their oppression whenever flight was possible. In other words, it still depended upon individual intention.⁴⁶ For his successor, R. Shim'on ben Tzemaḥ Duran (RaShBaTz, 1361–1444), a Mallorcan rabbi who had also fled the massacres of 1391, individual volition was of less importance. R. Shim'on argued that it was impossible to know the secrets of the human heart, and so the *conversos* should not be judged negatively for their seeming unwillingness to emigrate from Spain.⁴⁷ His son, Rabbi Shelomo ben Shim'on Duran (RaShBaSh, c.1400–67), ruled further that even the 'uncircumcised sons' of converts, that is, second- or third-generation converts who knew nothing of Judaism, remained Jews unless, knowing their origin, they deliberately chose to forget it.⁴⁸ Shelomo's son Tzemaḥ agreed in turn, coining the phrase 'Israel, even uncircumcised, is circumcised [*mahul*]'.⁴⁹ And Tzemaḥ's brother, Shim'on II (1438–after 1510), again

⁴⁴ Citing BT Nedarim 27a, 'Avoda Zarah 54a, Yoma 85a.

⁴⁵ Citing BT Sanhedrin 44a, '*Af-'al-pi she-hata' Yisra'el hu*'. See Ya'aqov Katz's article of the same title in *Tarbiz*, xxvii (1958).

⁴⁶ RIBaS, *She'elot u-teshuvot* (Constantinople, 1546–7; repr. Vilna, 1839), no. 4, 11. See, on this subject, M. Slae, 'References to Marranos in the *Responsa* of R. Isaac Bar Sheshet', *Annual of Bar-Ilan University*, vii–viii (1970).

⁴⁷ TaShBeTz, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1738–41), i, no. 63, ii, no. 63.

⁴⁸ RaSBaS, *She'elot u-teshuvot* (Livorno, 1742), no. 29. See esp. Moisés Orfali, 'La cuestión de la identidad judía en el *Maamar ha-Anusim* (Tratado de los conversos forzados) de RaShBaSh', in José María Soto Rábanos (ed.), *Pensamiento medieval hispano: homenaje a Horacio Santiago-Otero*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1998), ii.

⁴⁹ *Responsa Yakin u-Bo'az*, i, no. 107. Cf. Nedarim 31b.

agreed, supplying the necessary genealogical logic: 'For these converts, during their sojourn in the lands of the gentiles, contracted the majority of their marriages amongst themselves. Only a minority contracted marriage with the sons of Edom'. Further, Shim'on II argued, the *conversos* kept good track of their lineages. Therefore not only are they to be considered Jews, but those who claim to be Kohanim, that is, of priestly lineage, are to be considered such.⁵⁰ These rulings were of critical importance in answering questions about marriage law, inheritance, and ritual, and they come up again and again in *responsa*. Generally (though not always) the emphasis on lineage in these *responsa* is inclusionary: that is, the rulings affirm the continued Jewishness of the converts, stressing their strict endogamy and their clear genealogical memories, even though we know from other sources that many *conversos* who escaped to Muslim lands and returned to Judaism could not, for example, remember their family's Hebrew name.⁵¹

To summarize, over the course of the fifteenth century we can speak of two emerging genealogical emphases amongst the Sephardic rabbinate, the one stressing the purity of certain lineages, the other insisting on the genealogical integrity and continued Jewishness of the converts and their descendants. These were substantial shifts of emphasis, requiring a rereading of rabbinic legal traditions. At times their advocates even found it necessary to draw on non-legal traditions in order to make their points, as when Tzemaḥ ben Shelomo borrowed from Qabbalah in order to argue that the offspring of a gentile and a female apostate from Judaism is still a Jew.⁵² But important as these developments were, neither of them necessarily leads to the positions (like those of Isaac de Pinto about the genealogical superior-

⁵⁰ *Responsa Yakin u-Bo'az*, ii, no. 31, no. 3.

⁵¹ For an example of such reaffirmation from the late sixteenth century, see Moshe di Trani, *Teshuvot MaBIT*, ii, no. 40. For a more negative view, see Joseph Trani's *responsum* of 1604. This *responsum*, and a number of others, are discussed in Simon Schwarzfuchs, 'Le Retour des marranes au judaïsme dans la littérature rabbinique', in Carlos Barros (ed.), *Xudeus e conversos na historia*, 2 vols. (Santiago de Compostela, 1994), i. We know, from *responsa* asking whether a Hebrew name is necessary for a *get* (divorce) or a *ketubbah* (marriage contract), that onomastic memory was not always good.

⁵² *Responsa Yakin u-Bo'az*, i, no. 107: 'The merciful one changes the seed of the gentile [to Jewish seed] in the womb of the daughter of Israel, as it says [Ezek. 23:20], "the flow of horses you have caused to flow". In accord with their saying there that the son that comes from your daughter is your son'.

ity of Sephardim as a class over other Jews) with which this article began. Indeed, the new emphasis upon genealogy among Iberian Jews might have been limited to the sphere of *halakhah*, to be applied only to specific legal questions arising within Jewish communities, were it not for its resonance with the debate that arose in *Christian* society over the proper classification of the *conversos*. Where did they fit within the then crucial polarity between Christian and Jew?

During the first generation after 1391 the Christian establishment was relatively tolerant of ambiguity, perhaps out of the conviction that it would resolve itself through catechism and acculturation. But towards mid-century, Christians began to characterize the converts in increasingly genealogical terms. This turn to lineage may well have been a reaction to the much more competitive landscape confronting Old Christians as the floodwaters of baptism receded, for the converts took advantage of many opportunities that had been forbidden to them as Jews. To give but one Aragonese example, Fernando de la Cavallería, a prominent Jew of Zaragoza, emerged from the baptismal font in 1414 to occupy the position of royal treasurer, one of the most important in the court. Two of his kindred baptized with him ascended to only slightly less prestigious posts; all three had offices forbidden to Jews in the Crown of Aragon since the late thirteenth century. In Castile, Jewish access to positions in the world of royal finance endured longer, but conversion nevertheless opened entirely new avenues for office-holding and advancement.⁵³ Pablo de Santa María, who had converted in 1390, became not only bishop of Burgos (a position in which his son succeeded him), but chancellor of Castile and León and tutor of the Crown Prince Juan II, as well as executor of King Enrique III's last will and testament. Old and New Christians competed not only for office, but also for marriage alliances at the highest level. The *conversa* Estenza Coneso, for example, married Alfonso de

⁵³ A great deal has been written on the converts' immigration into political, administrative and ecclesiastical offices. For Castile, an influential article is Francisco Márquez Villanueva, 'Conversos y cargos concejiles en el siglo xv', *Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos*, lxiii (1957). María del Pilar Rábade Obradó studies a number of *converso* office-holding families in *Una elite de poder en la corte de los Reyes Católicos: los judeoconversos* (Madrid, 1993). Manuel Serrano y Sanz, *Orígenes de la dominación española en América*, i, *Los amigos y protectores de Cristóbal Colón* (Madrid, 1918), remains useful for Aragon. On the persistence of Jewish office-holding in Castile, see Clara Estow, *Pedro the Cruel of Castile, 1350–1369* (Leiden, 1995), 158.

Aragón, the (illegitimate) son of the king.⁵⁴ On a less exalted plane, the Valencian poet Jaume Roig penned a bitter poem denouncing his lover Caldesa for allowing herself to be 'penetrated by the hatless rod' of his (circumcised) *converso* rival.⁵⁵

These famous examples could be multiplied at great length. They are cited here merely to give a sense of the rapid ascension of converts to positions of power and influence within the Spanish kingdoms, positions from which, as Jews, they had been officially barred for the past hundred years. Their ascensions took place in the fiercely factional and competitive world of court. The flavour of this world is perhaps best captured in the poetic agon of the day, which produced anthologies of verse packed with genealogical maledictions like those addressed to Pedro Méndez, whose ancestry was said to be 'one quarter *marrano* [that is, convert] / and three quarters sodomite'. More specific were the Jewish ancestors attributed by Rodrigo Cota to Diego Arias: 'by one grandfather Avenzuzén / by the other Abenamías, / by the mother Sophomías, / by the father all Cohen'.⁵⁶ Translated from poetic to practical diction, lineage became an even sharper weapon. In 1434 King Juan II of Castile suppressed a plot to rob and murder the *conversos* of Seville.⁵⁷ In Aragon the tactics are less violent, the evidence more abundant, but the picture is the same. In 1433 Queen Mary decreed on behalf of the converts of Barcelona that no legal distinction should be made between 'natural' Christians on the one hand and neophytes and their descendants on the other.⁵⁸ The following year King Alfonso had to bar

⁵⁴ *Libro verde de Aragón*, ed. Isidro de las Cagigas (Madrid, 1929), 14–16.

⁵⁵ The Cavallería clan still awaits its monograph, but see the bibliography in Baer, *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, ii, 464–5. On the Santa María family, see Francisco Cantera Burgos, *Alvar García de Santa María y su familia de conversos* (Madrid, 1952). For Jaume Roig's lament ('vos calà lo seu pern descapolat'), see Juan Roís de Corella, *Obres completes*, i, *Obra profana*, ed. Jordi Carbonell (Valencia, 1973), 57. The poem is also cited in Dolors Bramon, *Contra moros y judíos* (Barcelona, 1986), 167.

⁵⁶ These and other examples are quoted in Cristina Arbós, 'Los cancioneros castellanos del siglo xv como fuente para la historia de los judíos españoles', in Yosef Kaplan (ed.), *Jews and Conversos: Studies in Society and the Inquisition* (Jerusalem, 1985), 77–8. See also Francisco Cantera Burgos, 'El cancionero de Baena: judíos y conversos en la poesía cortesana del s. xv', *Hispanic Rev.*, xlv (1976).

⁵⁷ *Crónica del Halconero de Juan II*, ed. José de Mata Carriazo (Madrid, 1946), 152. For additional sources, and a characteristically conspiratorial account of the events, see B. Netanyahu, *Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (New York, 1995), 284–92.

⁵⁸ ACA, Chancery MS 3124, fo. 157^{r-v}: 'separatio aut differentia nulla fiat inter christianos a progenie seu natura et neophytos . . . et ex eis descendentes'.

efforts in Calatayud to impose disabilities on neophytes; in 1436, the councillors of Barcelona moved to bar converts and those whose parents were not both 'Christians by nature' from holding the office of notary; in 1437 the town council of Lleida attempted to strip all brokers who could not demonstrate at least four generations of 'natural Christian' lineage of their office and licence.⁵⁹

In attempting to counter such stratagems, the converts and their allies turned to the highest levels of the Church as well as to the king. The Council of Basel made its position clear in 1434:

since [the converts] became by the grace of baptism fellow citizens of the saints and members of the house of God, and since regeneration of the spirit is much more important than birth in the flesh . . . they 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.⁶⁰

And again in 1437, responding to an appeal from the converts of Catalonia and Valencia, Pope Eugenius IV condemned those 'sons of iniquity . . . Christians only in name', who suggested that recent converts be barred from public office and who 'refuse to enter into matrimony with them'.⁶¹

The arguments of these 'sons of iniquity' ran sharply counter to a long theological tradition that saw in the Pauline epistles a clear statement that in the body of Christ there was neither 'Jew nor Greek'. Instead they based themselves on a logic that claimed for itself the testimony of nature. Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, writing in c.1438, provides a clear example of this evolving logic, with its increasing naturalization of cultural characteristics. You could always tell a person's roots, he explains, for those who

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, MS 2592, fos. 21^r-22^v; *Privilegios y ordenanzas históricos de los notarios de Barcelona*, ed. Raimundo Noguera de Guzmán and José María Madurell Marimón (Barcelona, 1965), doc. 57; Pedro Sanahuja, *Lleida en sus luchas por la fe (judíos, moros, conversos, Inquisición, moriscos)* (Lleida, 1946), 103-10 (p. 105 for the text of the ordinance). See esp. Jaume 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 Sefaradí de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha* (Toledo, 1993), 86-7.

⁶⁰ J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 31 vols. (Florence, 1759-93; repr. Graz, 1961), xxix, 100.

⁶¹ Vicente Beltrán de Heredia, 'Las bulas de Nicolás V acerca de los conversos de Castilla', *Sefarad*, xxi (1961), 37-8. Recall that the Council of Basel (quoted in n. 60 above) had included an exhortation to the *conversos* that they marry Old Christians: 'curent & studeant neophytos ipsos cum originariis Christianis matrimonio copulare'.

descended from good stock were incapable of deviating from it, whereas those of base stock could not transcend their origins, regardless of whatever money, wealth, or power they might have obtained. This could be proved, he suggests, by an experiment. 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 would delight in agricultural pursuits, while the son of the knight would take pleasure only in feats of arms and equestrianism: 'This nature procures'.

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 the villainy from which he descends . . . That is why when such men or women have power they do not use it as they should.⁶²

The first surviving theorizations about the negative nature of the *conversos*' Jewish lineage were made in Toledo, during a rebellion against the Castilian monarchy in 1449. The Toledans and their sympathizers claimed that converts were motivated only by ambition for office and 'carnal lust for nuns and [Christian] virgins', and that *converso* physicians poisoned their Christian patients in order to get hold of their inheritance and offices, 'marry the wives of the Old Christians they kill', and stain their 'clean blood' (*sangre limpia*).⁶³ They argued that Jewish ancestry (that is, Jewish blood) conveyed canniness and an unusual talent for enriching oneself at the expense of non-Jews, and predisposed one to corruption and viciousness in positions of power.⁶⁴ To

⁶² Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, *Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho*, ed. E. Michael Gerli, 4th edn (Madrid, 1992), 108 ff.: 'asi lo verás de cada día en los logares do bivieres, que el bueno e de buena raça todavia retrae do viene, e el desaventurado de vil raça e linaje, por grande que sea e mucho que tenga, nunca retraerá sinón a la vileza donde desçiende . . . Por ende, quando los tales o las tales tienen poderío no usan dél como deven, como dize el enxiemplo: "Vidose el perro en bragas de cerro, e non conoçió a su compañero"'. Jews and *conversos* are nowhere mentioned here, but given the conflict over *converso* office-holding developing in Toledo at about this time, Alfonso Martínez doubtless had them very much in mind.

⁶³ These accusations are taken from a fifteenth-century manuscript by an anonymous author whose relationship to the Toledan rebels is unclear. See 'Privilegio de Don Juan II en favor de un Hidalgo': Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, MS 13043, fos. 172-7; and the edited text: *Privilegio de Don Juan II en favor de un Hidalgo* (Biblioteca de autores españoles, clxxvii, Madrid, 1964), 26.

⁶⁴ The view that Jewish blood conveyed enmity to Christians was not exclusively Spanish, but was rather pan-European. Cf., for example, Francisco de Vitoria's view with Martin Luther's argument that the Jews' poisonous hatred of Christians 'has penetrated through blood and flesh, through marrow and bone, and has become their entire life and nature. And as little as they can alter flesh and blood, marrow and

counter this 'genetic' tendency the Toledans proposed what later would come to be called a purity of blood statute: descendants of converts were to be banned from holding public office.⁶⁵

Although these arguments were aimed at the *conversos*, it was upon the Jews that they focused, for it was by mapping a set of 'Jewish' cultural characteristics (enmity towards Christians, 'subtlety', financial acumen) onto a genealogy said to reproduce them that they sought to disenfranchise the converts as 'Judaizing Christians'. To that end, they turned to biblical genealogies and to arguments from later history, in order to represent the Jews as a lineage corrupted through hybridity.

Some writers, such as Alonso de Espina, verged on a polygenetic approach, putting the corruption at the very origins of human history. Espina related the lineage of Jews to the offspring of (1) Adam with animals, and (2) Adam with the demon Lilith. As a result of these unions, he wrote, Jews were of the lineage of demons and of monsters, the mule and the sow their adoptive mothers.⁶⁶ Others, like the author of a treatise called the *Alborayque* (c.1455–65), used biblical accounts of Israelite migration to make similar arguments. The Jews are a mixed lineage, an amalgam of Edom, Moab, Amon, Egypt, and more. The author employed the Alborayque, the composite Qur'anic beast (part horse, part lion, part snake, etc.) who carried Muhammad to heaven, as a symbol of the *conversos*' monstrously hybrid nature. The converts are not only Alborayques. They are bats, unclassifiable as animal (wings) or bird (teeth); they are a weak alloy rather than pure metal. These unnatural mixtures support the conclusion that, as heirs of the Jews, the *conversos* and their

(n. 64 cont.)

bone, just so little can they alter such haughtiness and envy: they must remain thus': see Francisco de Vitoria, *Relectio de Indis* (Madrid, 1960), 30; *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Ernst Ludwig Enders, 67 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1832–81), liii, 481.

⁶⁵ The statute is published in Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, ii, 315–17. On these texts, see esp. Eloy Benito Ruano, 'La "Sentencia-Estatuto" de Pero Sarmiento contra los conversos Toledanos', *Revista de la Universidad de Madrid*, vi (1957); Eloy Benito Ruano, 'D. Pero Sarmiento, repostero mayor de Juan II de Castilla', *Hispania*, xvii (1957); Eloy Benito Ruano, 'El Memorial del bachiller Marcos García de Mora contra los conversos', *Sefarad*, xvii (1957).

⁶⁶ Alonso de Espina, *Fortalitiium fidei, Consideratio*, ii (Nuremberg, 1494), fo. 79, col. d. See Alisa Meyuhás Ginio, *De bello iudaeorum: Fray Alonso de Espina y su 'Fortalitiium fidei'* (Fontes Iudaeorum Regni Castellae, viii, Salamanca, 1998), 16–17. See also Netanyahu, *Origins*, 83; Ana Echevarria, *The Fortress of Faith: The Attitude towards Muslims in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Leiden, 1999), 167.

descendants could never be classified as Christian.⁶⁷ Other scholars placed the corruption even later. One influential tradition maintained that since Titus had put no Jewish women aboard the ships that carried the survivors of the siege of Jerusalem into the Diaspora, the males had taken Muslim or pagan women to wife, so that their descendants were not real Jews but bastards, without claim to the covenant.⁶⁸ These 'natural histories' sought to explain why the reproduction of Jewish cultural attributes should be understood as embedded in the reproduction of the flesh. In this sense, they provided the theoretical underpinning for the new genealogical boundaries, such as the doctrine of purity of blood, being established between Christian and 'Jew'.

Jews and *conversos* responded to these polemics in a variety of ways, many of which centred on the production of 'counter-genealogies'. To begin with the Jews, we can speak of an even greater emphasis on lineage at the level of the individual and the family, much along the lines described above in Da Piera and Aboab. Thus, while Alami could still protest against differentiating lineages in 1415, by 1480 Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Shem Tov's position may have been more typical:

If a person is of pure blood and has a noble lineage, he will give birth to a son like himself, and he who is ugly and stained [of blood?] will give birth to a son who is similar to him, for gold will give birth to gold and silver will give birth to silver and copper to copper, and if you find some rare instances that from lesser people sprang out greater ones, nevertheless in most cases what I have said is correct, and as you know, a science is not built on exceptions.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ 'Tratado del *Alborayque*', Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, MS 17567: 'si los metales son muchos . . . segun la carne, quanto mas de metales de tantas heregias'. The quotation is from fo. 11^r. The negative imagery of mixed species in the treatise leads ineluctably to its conclusion: a prayer that the 'clean' lineages of the Old Christians not be corrupted through marriage with the New. See, now, Moshe Lazar, 'Anti-Jewish and Anti-*Converso* Propaganda: Confutatio libri Talmud and Alboraique', in Moshe Lazar and Stephen Haliczzer (eds.), *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492* (Lancaster, Calif., 1997). Lazar provides an edition of the text based on Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS Esp. 356.

⁶⁸ A number of fourteenth-century polemics stressed the hybrid nature of the Jewish people: see Josep Hernando i Delgado, 'Un tractat anònim *Adversus iudaeos* en català', in *Paraula i història: Miscel·lània P. Basili Rubí* (Barcelona, 1986), 730; José María Millás Vallicrosa, 'Un tratado anónimo de polémica contra los judíos', *Sefarad*, xiii (1953), 28. These can almost be read as a deliberate inversion of Jewish narratives such as Abraham ibn Daud's 'story of the four captives'.

⁶⁹ Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Shem Tov, *Derashot* (Salonika, 1525; repr. Jerusalem, 1973), 14a, col. b; cited in Gutwirth, 'Lineage in XVth Century Hispano-Jewish Thought', 88. Cf. Shelomo Alami's attack upon those who emphasize lineage: Alami, *Igeret musar* (c.1415).

We need not attribute Shem Tov's metallurgically flavoured brand of Aristotelian *Naturgeschichte* directly to the influence of Christian treatises like the *Alborayque*, for such arguments had a very long history, but their rise to prominence among Iberian Jews in the mid-fifteenth century is doubtless not a coincidence.

Even more marked is the rise of a 'national' genealogy among the Sephardim that sought to counter a number of the claims of the Old Christian polemics. Expanding upon traditions that traced the origins of certain families to the nobility of Jerusalem, Sephardic polemicists began to insist upon the noble Judaeian origins of the entire Iberian diaspora. The claims were not entirely new. Moses ibn Ezra, for example, had invoked them centuries before in order to explain why Spanish Jews excelled all others in poetry, and Ibn Daud mentioned them as well. During the Maimonidean controversy David Qimḥi had suggested that Iberian Jews were all descended from Judaeian nobility, whereas Ashkenazic Jews came from less distinguished provinces of Palestine.

Fifteenth-century Iberian Jews took up these hitherto relatively peripheral arguments, repeated them with more urgency, and extended them further. For example, a letter supposedly written by Toledan Jews at the time of Jesus' mission was produced in Toledo at roughly the same time as the anti-*converso* riots. The letter (which was claimed to have been translated from the Aramaic at the command of Alfonso X 'the Learned') sought to establish that the Toledan Jews had been settled in Spain long before the Diaspora, and had in fact opposed the execution of Jesus by their coreligionists in the Holy Land.⁷⁰ Efforts to bolster such claims continued right up to the expulsion. In Murviedro, for example, a tombstone was discovered purporting to be that of Adoniram, a high official of King Solomon. On the eve of the expulsion the grammarian Moses ben Shem Tov ibn Ḥabib visited the same cemetery and deciphered an inscription for the minister of war of the biblical King Amatzya of Judah.⁷¹

These attempts to free the Sephardim from the charge of corrupt lineage, as well as to decide, and to claim for them a lineage

⁷⁰ Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, MS 838, fo. 3^{r-v}: 'Carta que fiz traducir de caldeo en latin e romance el noble rey don Alfonso que la vila de Toledo conquiro e yaze en el armario del aiuntamiento de Toledo'.

⁷¹ Francisco Cantera Burgos and José María Millás Vallicrosa, *Las inscripciones hebraicas de España* (Madrid, 1956), 297–8, 303–5. These are also discussed in Shatzmiller, 'Politics and the Myth of Origins', 59.

superior to that of other Jews, reached their peak in the aftermath of the expulsion of 1492. The exiles Yitzḥaq Abarbanel (in his 1493 commentary on the Book of Kings) and Shelomo ibn Verga both incorporated forms of the legend into their works. In the apologetic history of Jewish persecution, the *Shevet Yehudah*, Ibn Verga has his fictional ‘Friar Thomas’ explain to ‘King Alfonso’ that when Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 BCE) conquered Jerusalem, he allotted the precinct of Jerusalem that contained the nobility ‘of royal lineage’ to his allies Hispano and Pirro. The latter shipped the inhabitants back to Sepharad,

with the consequence that the Jews who are today in your kingdom are of royal lineage, and a great majority of them, from the lineage of Judah . . . There is no other recognizable lineage, and only among these unfortunate Jews is their origin recognizable . . . Is it not an honourable thing that, because they have not mixed with other gentile peoples, their origin and lineage is recognizable?⁷²

Such a lineage, King Alfonso exclaims, was greater even than that of the Goths, for it alone could know its origins. Upon the polemical stage Ibn Verga has constructed for them his characters perform for us the fusion of Iberian and Jewish myths of origin, the competitive comparison of genealogical memories.⁷³ These

⁷² Shelomo ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda*, ed. ‘Azri’el Shohet and Yitzhak Baer (Jerusalem, 1946), 33–5. See also Enrique Cantera Montenegro, ‘Negación de la “imagen del judío” en la intelectualidad hispano-hebrea medieval: el ejemplo del *shebet yehuda*’, *Aragón en la edad media*, xiv–xv (1999), 270. Capsali, too, stresses that the Jews of Toledo ‘had not been present in the land of Israel at the time of Jesus’: Elijah Capsali, *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, ed. Aryeh Shmuelevitz, Shlomo Simonsohn and Meir Benayahu, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1975–83), ch. 60. A number of Christian chronicles accept the claim as true (for example Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS Esp. 110, ‘Breve compendio de las crónicas de los reyes de España’, fo. 2^v). Even the anti-*converso* polemicist Bernáldez cited approvingly the ancient origins of Toledan Jews: Andrés Bernáldez, *Historia de los Reyes Católicos don Fernando y doña Isabel*, in *Crónicas de los reyes de Castilla desde don Alfonso el Sabio, hasta los católicos don Fernando y doña Isabel* (Biblioteca de autores españoles, lxx, Madrid, 1878), ch. 93, though elsewhere (ch. 90) he stresses that the Jews ‘in this age are derived, both in lineage as in contumacy’, from the Jews enslaved by Titus.

⁷³ The exclamation of ‘Alfonso’ is quite revealing in that it represents an explicit moment of comparison of the two evolving claims (Gothic and Sephardic) to distinguished lineage. Other writers attempted to derive one from the other. Thus the Christian author of BN Paris MS Esp. 110, ‘Breve compendio de las crónicas de los reyes de España’, could write to King Ferrante I of Naples in 1492 that the Goths (*Godos*) were brave in battle because they were descended from the tribe of Gad (fo. 4^v). The fictional Spanish king in Shelomo ibn Verga’s *Shevet Yehudah* had made the same claim (see previous note). On Ferrante, see David Abulafia, ‘The Crown and the Economy under Ferrante I of Naples’, in his *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean, 1100–1500* (Aldershot, 1993); David Abulafia, ‘The Role of the Jews in the Cultural Life of the Kingdom of Naples’, in Nicolò Bucaria (ed.), *Gli Ebrei in Sicilia dal tardoantico al medioevo: studi in onore di Mons. Benedetto Rocco* (Palermo,

characters, moreover, are not Jews, but a friar and a 'Gothic' King of Spain whose dynasty's claims to expertise in such matters were frequently and loudly asserted throughout Europe.⁷⁴ What better dramatization of the dynamics behind the formation of Sephardic genealogical pretensions, and of the interdependence between the genealogical imagination of Christian and Jew?

For the *conversos*, the confrontation with the exclusionary genealogical arguments of the Old Christians was rather more complicated. Some *converso* writers, for example, objected that nobility was to be found more in an individual's deeds than in his ancestry. Others, like the leading expert in chivalry and heraldry of the age, Mosén Diego de Valera, asserted that non-Christians too (whether pagan, Muslim, or Jew) had their noble lineages, and that a non-Christian aristocrat's nobility only increased when he accepted the true faith. In the specific case of converts from Judaism, Valera was prepared to add a further argument: they could stress the collective honour of their lineage and boast of descent from God's chosen people.⁷⁵ As he wrote in his *Mirror of True Nobility* (1441): 'God chose this lineage for His own as the most noble', by which he meant both that God had chosen the Jews as His people and that Christ had chosen this lineage to provide His flesh.⁷⁶ The offspring of mixed mar-

(n. 73 cont.)

1998). Ferrante's policies were characterized as philo-Semitic by some contemporaries: see Alexander Marx, 'The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain: Two New Accounts', *Jewish Quart. Rev.*, original ser., xx (1908), 251.

⁷⁴ See, for example, the claims made by the *converso* Bishop Alonso de Cartagena on behalf of the king of Spain at the Council of Basel: Alonso de Cartagena, *Discurso sobre la preeminencia* (Biblioteca de autores españoles, cxvi, Madrid, 1959), 208. By the sixteenth century similar claims were made, not just about the king's lineage, but about that of the entire 'nation'. Cf. the king's words in *Shevet Yehudah* with those of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, who wrote that, thanks to Spain's purity of blood laws, there was no Christian nation 'where it was easier to recognize who was noble, and of good and clean caste [that is, without Muslim or Jewish ancestry], and those who were of suspect faith, which in other nations is obscured': Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Quinquagenas de la nobleza de España* (Madrid, 1880), 281, cited in Américo Castro, *Los Españoles: cómo llegaron a serlo* (Madrid, 1965), 105.

⁷⁵ See, for example, the words attributed to Alonso de Cartagena by Juan de Lucena, *De vita beata*, in *Opúsculos literarios de los siglos XIV–XVI*, ed. Antonio Paz y Melia (Madrid, 1892), 147–8. Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *La clase social de los conversos en Castilla en la edad moderna* (Madrid, 1955), 159, and Américo Castro, *The Structure of Spanish History* (Princeton, 1954), 558, quote the same passage. Castro, of course, uses the passage as evidence for the Jewish origins of purity of blood and the obsession with genealogy, 'something different from the Castilian Christian's awareness of seigniorial grandeur and the urge to attain it'.

⁷⁶ Mosén Diego de Valera, *Espejo de la verdadera nobleza*, in *Prosistas castellanos del siglo XV*, ed. Mario Penna (Biblioteca de autores españoles, cxvi, Madrid, 1959), 103:

(cont. on p. 31)

riages (like Valera himself) could go so far as to maintain both Christian and Jewish nobility. In the struggle for prestige no claim was too far-fetched, not even that of the famous convert Pablo de Santa María, bishop of Burgos, who was rumoured (by his descendants?) to stem on his father's side from King David, and on his mother's from the most Gothic kings of Spain.⁷⁷

Fantastic claims aside, the central contention here was that the *conversos'* Jewish lineage was what distinguished them, for that lineage had provided God and His mother with their own genealogy. Pro-*converso* authors returned constantly to the theme, and argued that to cast aspersions on the Jewish lineage of Jesus and Mary was tantamount to dishonouring God.⁷⁸ Such an argument, however, was a double-edged sword, for it opened the *conversos* to the charge of 'judaizing'. Christian theologians had long agreed, if not from the days of St Paul then from shortly thereafter, that to emphasize the merits of descent according to the flesh, and especially of descent from the Chosen People, was an error characteristic of the carnally minded and spiritually blind Jews. In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek. This is what Alonso de Oropesa, the General of the Jeronimite order and director of the proto-Inquisition established in Toledo in 1462, meant when he wrote that 'to pretend to introduce . . . difference or preference between one nation or another in the faith of Christ would be to

(n. 76 cont.)

'este linaje escogió para sí por el más noble'. The literature on *converso* ideas about nobility, and particularly about Diego de Valera, is considerable: see, most recently, E. Michael Gerli, 'Performing Nobility: Mosén Diego de Valera and the Poetics of *Converso* Identity', *La Corónica*, xxv (1996); Jesús D. Rodríguez Velasco, *El debate sobre la caballería en el siglo XV* (Salamanca, 1996); Ottavio di Camillo, 'Las teorías de la nobleza en el pensamiento ético de Mosén Diego de Valera', in Ana Menéndez Collera and Victoriano Roncero López (eds.), *Nunca fue pena mayor: estudios de literatura española en homenaje a Brian Dutton* (Cuenca, 1996).

⁷⁷ The story derived from Trastamaran propaganda during the civil war against King Pedro 'the Cruel', according to which Alfonso XI's wife, Maria of Portugal, unable to produce a male heir, had exchanged her newborn daughter with a Jewish couple for their baby boy, the future Pedro the Cruel. The girl, brought up Jewish, then gave birth to Pablo. On this legend, see Maurice Kriegel, 'Histoire sociale et ragots: sur "l'ascendance juive" de Ferdinand le Catholique', in Fermín Miranda García (ed.), *Movimientos migratorios y expulsiones en la diáspora occidental: terceros encuentros judaicos de Tudela* (Pamplona, 1998), 96.

⁷⁸ See, *inter alia*, Fernán Díaz (Relator of Juan II), 'Instrucción', in Alonso de Cartagena, *Defensorium unitatis christianae*, ed. P. Manuel Alonso (Madrid, 1943), appendix II, 351–5. The converts' possession of the blood of Jesus and Mary remained a standard argument in defence of *converso* rights well into the modern era: see, for example, Jean-Antoine [Juan Antonio] Llorente, *Histoire critique de l'inquisition*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1818), i, 24.

diminish the perfect unity of Christendom . . . to the imperfection, yoke, and servitude that characterized the Old Testament, and therefore constitutes judaizing'.⁷⁹ Oropesa was in fact writing a defence of the *conversos*, and his point was aimed at those who advocated discrimination against them, but the logic proved much more influential in the other direction.

Nearly every treatise written to defend the *conversos* from discrimination on the basis of descent (and there were many) manifests this tension, tacking constantly between the seemingly contradictory positions that the origins of the converts should be forgotten and that they descended from a distinguished lineage. But the problem is most starkly visible in the records of that terrifying arbiter of judaizing, the Inquisition, where *conversos* were frequently accused of the error of glorying in their lineage. Occasionally the charges concern some positive belief, such as being of the opinion that those who descended from the tribes of Israel could not die poor, because 'that blessing remained to them from God when He spoke with Moses' (referring to the Deuteronomic blessings); or of interpreting Paul's 'First the Jew and then the Greek' as meaning that New Christians should be preferred over Old in the distribution of offices and honours. But frequently the accusations stemmed from 'street polemics', that is, from *converso* responses to insults aimed at their ancestry. Aldonza Romeu, for example, was reported for having replied to an insult with 'we come from a better lineage [*generación*] than you do, for we descend from the lineage of the Virgin Mary and you descend from the lineage of the gentiles'.⁸⁰ The *converso*

⁷⁹ Alonso de Oropesa, *Luz para conocimiento de los gentiles*, ed. Luis A. Díaz y Díaz (Madrid, 1979), 628 ff., 649. No edition of the Latin text is available. See also Moshe Orfali, 'Oropesa and Judaism' [in Hebrew], *Zion*, li (1986); Maurice Kriegel, 'Alonso de Oropesa devant la question des conversos: une stratégie d'intégration hiéronymite?', in Battesti Pelegrin (ed.), 'Qu'un sang impur . . .', 14.

⁸⁰ Encarnación Marín Padilla, *Relación judeoconversa durante la segunda mitad del siglo XV en Aragón: La Ley* (Madrid, 1988), 14–15. See also *Records of the Trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real I (1483–85)*, ed. Haim Beinart, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1974–85), i, 391; Yolanda Moreno Koch, 'La comunidad judaizante de Castillo de Garcimuñoz, 1489–1492', *Sefarad*, xxxvii (1977), 370. The Deuteronomic blessing is only one example of the biblical warrant for robbing Christians in which *conversos* were suspected of believing. Another was the charge made by Bernáldez, *Historia de los Reyes Católicos*, ch. 44, that the command to rob the Egyptians during the Exodus was believed by *conversos* to apply to them. For an example of apparently *converso* devotional poetry which refers to 'Christians of Israel', and stresses the shared lineage of the converts and the Virgin Mary, see Pierre Vidal, 'Mélanges d'histoire, de littérature et de philologie catalane', *Revue des langues romanes*, 4th ser., ii (1888), 354–7; and the commentary in Jaume Riera i Sans, 'Contribució a l'estudi del conflicte

retort crystallized into an aphorism: ‘Cristiano de natura, cristiano de mala ventura’ (a Christian by nature is an unfortunate Christian). According to the (rather tortured) logic of defence lawyers, such words, if indeed uttered by the accused, were merely spoken in ‘melancholy’ at the insults to which the convert was being subjected. The accused were only reminding their tormentors that ‘there is no difference between Jew and Greek . . . for both are men [*sic*] in Christ Jesus our lord’, and that before the ancestors of ‘cristianos de natura’ were converted in antiquity, they had been idol-worshippers of ‘mala ventura’, just as much in need of the cleansing waters of baptism as any Jew.⁸¹ They had not, in other words, intended to judaize by implying the superiority of *converso* lineages over Old Christian ones.

Like the Jews, the *conversos* reacted to Old Christian genealogical strategies of polemic by responding in genealogical terms, emphasizing the nobility of their lineage. In the case of the *conversos*, however, this response facilitated the projection upon them of Old Christian anxiety about the ‘Jewishness’ of the genealogical turn. The Jewishness of the converts was said to be nowhere more evident than in their emphasis on lineage. In the words of one of their enemies, ‘they had the presumption of pride, that there was no better people in the world, nor more discreet, nor more intelligent, nor more honoured than they, because they were of the lineage of the tribes of Israel’. By locating the origins of the logic of lineage in the *conversos*’ Jewish roots, Old Christian writers like the author of these lines (Andrés Bernáldez) sought to justify the institution of genealogical discriminations in the form of the Inquisition and purity of blood statutes, and at the same time to project responsibility for these innovations upon their victims.⁸² Such genealogical displacements were a central aspect of Christian anti-Jewish and anti-*converso*

(n. 80 cont.)

religiós dels conversos jueus (segle xv)’, in *IX Congreso di Storia della Corona d’Aragona: La Corona d’Aragona e il Mediterraneo*, 4 vols. (Naples, 1978–82), ii, 411–14.

⁸¹ ‘Non est diferencia judey e greu . . . que omnes virii sunt in Christo Ihesu domino nostro’ (a strained conflation of Rom. 10:12 and Gal. 3:28): Marín Padilla, *Relación judeoconversa*, 60–7.

⁸² Bernáldez, *Historia de los Reyes Católicos*, 600: partial translation in David Raphael, *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles* (North Hollywood, 1992), 65. The charge was extremely common. Cf. Alfonso de Palencia, on the *conversos* as ‘a nation apart, which everywhere refuses contact with the Old Christians’: *Crónica de Enrique IV*, 3 vols. (Biblioteca de autores españoles, cclviii, Madrid, 1973–5), ii, 93–4. The constant use of the word *nación* to describe the *conversos* is evidence of the widespread nature

apologetics. A century before, St Vincent had attributed the invention of his segregationist measures to the Jews themselves.⁸³ The Toledan rebels of 1449 made similar claims, arguing that Moses had originated the prohibition on the descendants of converts occupying positions of power.⁸⁴ The strategies of some of the modern historians invoked in the opening of this article are not significantly different.

This is of course ironic, but it is also entirely systemic, part and parcel of the long-established hermeneutic strategies by which Christians categorized not only people, but also ideas, as Christian or Jewish. Alonso de Oropesa's claim that an emphasis on genealogy was Jewish is but one example of the techniques by which theologians since Paul had used dualities such as Christian–Jew, spiritual–carnal, allegorical–literal, redemptive–damning, sighted–blind, in order to map the negation of the Christian onto the Jew. The space between these poles was a space of danger and heresy, a 'judaizing' middle ground that no good Christian should occupy. By essentializing the anti-Christian and projecting it onto what has come to be called 'the hermeneutic Jew', Christian exegetes developed a powerful method of theological critique.⁸⁵ Within this discourse, 'incorrect' Christian belief

(n. 82 cont.)

of the idea. See, for example, *Records of the Trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real I*, ed. Beinart, ii, 30; Haim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial: The Inquisition in Ciudad Real* (Jerusalem, 1981), 168.

⁸³ 'And if I say this, Jews, it should not be burdensome to you, for that is what your own law desires, and ours, and it is good logic that since you want to be separate from the Christians in faith, you should be separate from them in conversation': Colegio del Corpus Christi de Valencia, MS 139, fo. 113, cited in Cátedra, 'Fray Vicente Ferrer y la predicación antijudaica', 30–1. This last point, that Christian proposals were motivated by the same goals as the Jews' Mosaic laws, is similar to Innocent III's justification for the Jewish badge at the Fourth Lateran Council: that it enforces Moses' ruling about fringes on garments.

⁸⁴ Thus in 1449 the 'Bachiller Marquillos' defended the exclusion from office of the descendants of converts, writing that 'In the time when the Mosaic law and its ceremonies were kept by God's command, the Jews made an ordinance that if people of other nations or laws should convert to the Mosaic Law they should have no property or office until a certain generation . . . and it is true that anyone who obtains a law against another, however unjust it might be, is bound to receive it against himself'. See an edition of the treatise in Eloy Benito Ruano, *Los orígenes del problema converso* (Barcelona, 1976), 116. Cf. Fernando del Pulgar's comment to Pedro González de Mendoza: 'Now [the converts] are paying for the prohibition Moses made for his people that they not marry gentiles', cited by Américo Castro, *La realidad histórica de España*, 3rd edn (Mexico City, 1966), 54.

⁸⁵ Here, too, there is a vast literature. For a particularly mordant presentation of the thesis, see Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1974).

or deficient Christian practice were understood as ‘Judaism’, and the (Christian) adherents of these beliefs or practices described as judaizing. Thus (to choose an example from our period) St Vincent could argue that infrequent confession made Christians ‘similar to Jews’:

just as the Jews took great care to wash the vessels, so you also take great care to wash the vessels before you drink, but often you take no care to wash the soul and the conscience through confession. And therefore in this way you are similar to the Jews.⁸⁶

But such discursive techniques had, for the previous thousand years at least, been deployed in a universe in which the boundaries between Christian and Jew were relatively clear. Their consequences were very different in the genealogically ‘judaized’ world patrolled by the Inquisition in the late fifteenth century. There, ideas that had previously been projected onto an unreal ‘hermeneutic Jew’ now found a lineage and a name in the combustible flesh of the *converso*.

The result was a mapping of ‘Jewish ideas’ onto the ‘Jewish’ lineages of individuals through genealogical investigation and inquisitional accusation. ‘Jewish’ lineages were plentiful. Responding in 1449 to the purity of blood statutes of the Toledan rebels, Fernán Díaz, the Relator of Juan II, had pointed out that there was scarcely a noble house in Spain that had no *converso* in its family tree. If Jewishness were attached to blood, the Relator warned, genealogy would become a weapon of the weak and the nobility of Iberia would be destroyed.⁸⁷ Non-Spaniards were more than willing to agree. ‘Spain is not pleasing’, Erasmus wrote in 1517, ‘because it is full of Jews’ (though Germany and Italy also had too many Jews for Erasmus’s taste, and England too many riots). One French pamphleteer claimed in the 1590s that ‘[t]he Catalans, those of Castile and Portugal are Jews, those of Galicia and Granada Muslims, their prince is an atheist’. Another described Philip II as a ‘demi-More, demi-Juif, demi-Sarrazin’.

⁸⁶ St Vincent Ferrer, *Sermons*, ed. Josep Sanchis Sivera and Gret Schib, 6 vols. (Barcelona, 1932–88), v, 221.

⁸⁷ For the Relator’s text, see de Cartagena, *Defensorium unitatis christianae*, ed. Alonso, appendix II, 351–5. Note that, although the Relator condemns the anti-*converso* aspects of this genealogical approach, he nevertheless utilizes genealogical arguments as well, referring constantly to the converts as of the lineage of Christ. This seemingly contradictory strategy is common in pro-*converso* texts. On the Relator, see *inter alia* Nicholas Round, ‘Politics, Style and Group Attitudes in the *Instrucción del Relator*’, *Bull. Hispanic Studies*, xlvii (1969).

A French dictionary from 1680 defined *Marrano* ('Marrane') as 'an insult we apply to Spaniards, which means a Muslim'.⁸⁸

Nor were 'Jewish ideas' wanting. Since the classification of a practice or 'idea' as Jewish or Christian was determined largely by relating it to the lineage of the person who held it, almost any practice or position could be presented as Jewish if the accused could be shown to have descended from Jews. Returning to the example above, pride in one's lineage could be evidence of judaizing if that lineage contained Jews, or appear perfectly orthodox if not. The classification of practices and ideas and the logic of genealogy depended upon each other. When the two did not coincide, the tension is revealing. One confused Muslim witness to the Inquisition said he had heard two Christians swear 'by the law of Moses', but since he knew them to be 'cristianos lindos' (that is, 'Old Christians') he did not know if they did so 'burlando o de veras' (in mockery or sincerely).⁸⁹

Such tension was also productive, for 'Jewish' classifications could break free of their genealogical moorings and attach themselves to formerly orthodox 'Old Christian' activities. This logic was applied by the Inquisitors, not only to vestiges of what they viewed as Jewish religious ceremonial, but also to a range of philological, historical, and hermeneutic practices, many of them associated with the new humanism. (The Inquisition's attack on the use of Hebrew philology in biblical criticism is a particularly obvious and well-studied example.) By 1533, even the son of the then Inquisitor General, Rodrigo Manrique, could write to the self-exiled humanist Luis Vives: 'You are right. Our country is 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'.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Arturo Farinelli, *Marrano (Storia di un vituperio)* (Biblioteca del Archivum Romanicum, 2nd ser., x, Geneva, 1925), 53, 56, 66–7; Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmus y España*, 2 vols. (Mexico, 1950), i, 90; ii, 74 ff.; Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum*, ed. P. S. Allen et al., 12 vols. (Oxford, 1906–58), iii, 6, 52. On these and other views of Spaniards, see J. N. Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain* (Ann Arbor, 2000), 236–40. 'Portuguese', too, would eventually become a synonym for 'Jew' throughout Western Europe.

⁸⁹ Marín Padilla, *Relación judeoconversa*, 109.

⁹⁰ Henry de Vocht, 'Rodrigo Manrique's Letter to Vives', in his *Monumenta Humanistica Lovaniensia: Texts and Studies about Louvain Humanists in the First Half of the XVIth Century: Erasmus, Vives, Dorpius, Clenardus, Goes, Moringus* (Louvain, 1934), 435. See also Enrique González González, 'Vives, un humanista judeoconverso en el exilio de Flandes', in Luc Dequeker and Werner Verbeke (eds.), *The Expulsion of the Jews and their Emigration to the Southern Low Countries* (Louvain, 1998), 77.

One might say that the genealogical definitions of community that Spain had constructed had turned her into an inescapably hybrid land. To deal with this paradox Spaniards filled vast archives with documents designed to free one's lineage of Judaism (such as proofs of purity of blood and of *hidalguía*) and to judaize those of others (such as inquisitional records, and genealogical pamphlets like the *Tizón de la nobleza* and the *Libro verde de Aragón*).⁹¹ At the level of ideas, the same anxiety produced a genealogical type of cultural history that sought to separate 'Jewish' from 'Christian' ideas. The products of this type of history were typically lists of supposedly Jewish cultural attributes. According to the bishop of Córdoba in 1530, for example, Jewish attributes included heresy, apostasy, love of novelty and dissension, ambition, presumption, and hatred of peace. These lists sound as fantastic as Borges's Chinese encyclopedia, but they too were the product of a systematic historical method, one that sought in genealogy the secret to an understanding of the origins and transmission of ideas.

Of course this 'genealogization' of history was not only a Christian (or even an 'Old Christian') phenomenon.⁹² Jews, too, produced an explosion of historical and apologetic writing in the fifteenth century, much of which seems to draw on very similar genealogically inflected strategies of historical and philological argumentation. Indeed this tendency is so marked that it may provide us with yet another perspective from which to understand the rapid development of Jewish historiography in the period. Yosef Yerushalmi has famously argued that the trauma of the Spanish expulsion was the principal factor in stimulating the

⁹¹ The 'libros verdes' (Green Books), in particular, were a popular genre of genealogical aspersion that often combined genealogies of supposedly *converso* families with lists of those condemned by the Inquisition and with anti-Jewish polemical texts. They were banned in Aragon as 'pessimorum detractionum originem' in 1623, presumably to little effect. For an edition, see n. 54. For the ban, see *Consultationis resolutio grauissimorum doctorum . . . condemnans Auctorem libelli famosi nuncupati el Verde* (Zaragoza, 1623). The *Tizón*, on the other hand, was a more stable text, written (presumably by the Cardinal Archbishop of Valencia, F. Mendoza y Bovadilla) as part of the polemic over the implementation of purity of blood in the mid-sixteenth century. For a recent edition, see *El tizón de la nobleza* (Madrid, 1992).

⁹² Although a number of *conversos* (most famously Pablo de Santa María, Alonso de Cartagena, and Alvar García de Santa María) wrote history, the task of identifying a New Christian 'historiographic voice' tends too easily to turn into precisely the kind of genealogical fetishism criticized in these pages. For that reason, and because much of their work is still in need of editing, *converso* historiography will not be discussed here.

writing of history, a genre until then largely neglected in the Diaspora. It is certainly true that history streamed from the pens of first-generation Sephardic exiles like Shelomo ibn Verga, Abraham Zacuto, Elijah Capsali, Abraham ben Salomon de Torrutiel Ardutiél, Yosef ben Tzadiq of Arévalo, and others.⁹³ But the historical sensibilities of these Sephardic writers owed as much to their genealogical mentalities as to their exilic experience, and in this sense the creation of a ‘Sephardic historiographic mentality’ predated the expulsion by several generations.

The importance of genealogy as a template for post-exilic Jewish historical narrative is evident, for example, in Abraham Zacuto’s adaptation for historiographic purposes of pre-existing genealogical genres such as *shalshalaot ha-qabbalah*, ‘chains of tradition’, a genre whose task it was to assign a lineage to ideas. Hence the title of his most innovative work, the *Sefer Yuhasin ha-Shalem*, the ‘sound book of genealogies’ (1504).⁹⁴ But it is equally evident in a good deal of writing from throughout the fifteenth century, for writers such as Zacuto and Ibn Verga were inheritors of a genealogical approach to culture developed in Jewish apologetics (and we must remember that history and apologetics were inseparable in this period) a century before the expulsion, in response to heightened Christian (and Muslim) polemical insistence on Jewish cultural hybridity and corruption. Fifteenth-century Sephardic apologists sought to turn the tables upon their attackers by adopting modes of historical argument that stressed the purity of Jewish belief and practice in contrast to the corruption of originally Jewish concepts in their rivals’ culture. To do so, they drew on traditional genres (like the ‘chains of tradition’ mentioned above) that Jews had long ago developed to ‘guarantee’ the authoritative origins and stable transmission of their traditions. But they also drew on the most up-to-date methods of their opponents.

In his *Kelimat ha-Goyim* (Reproach of the Gentiles, c.1397), for example, Profet Duran borrowed extensively from Christian humanist strategies for establishing pure archetypes of texts and concepts through critical study of manuscript transmission and

⁹³ Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982), 58–9: ‘In effect, the primary stimulus to the rise of Jewish historiography in the sixteenth century was the great catastrophe that had put an abrupt end to open Jewish life in the Iberian peninsula at the end of the fifteenth’.

⁹⁴ Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer Yuhasin ha-Shalem*, ed. Herschell Filipowski and Abraham Hayyim Freimann (Frankfurt, 1924).

corruption. In the hands of Christian polemicists, these strategies supported arguments that rabbinic Judaism represented a corruption of biblical religion and a forfeiture of the biblical covenant. Duran used the same tools to demonstrate the Jewish origins of Christian practices such as baptism in order to present these Christian practices as corruptions of a pure Jewish archetype. Shim'on Ben Tzemah Duran's *Qeshet u-Magen* (Bow and Shield) employed similar techniques against Islam, arguing for the Jewish origins of Muslim dietary and purity laws, circumcision, prayer, and pilgrimage practices. (This is, incidentally, an argument also common to fifteenth-century Iberian Christian anti-Muslim polemic, which presents Islam as a judaizing heresy.) More traditionally, both employed historical philology to demonstrate the textual, as well as the cultural, corruption of the pristine Jewish forms in the sacred writings of these later religions. Here too we are witnessing the formation of a genealogical type of cultural history, one whose polemical importance is reflected in Hayyim ibn Musa's advice, in his *Magen va-Romah* (Shield and Spear) (c.1456), that the primary mode of commentary in religious disputation should be the historical.⁹⁵

Again, it should be stressed that I am not arguing for precedence or priority of invention here. On the contrary, I am suggesting that the question of 'origin' or 'invention' in this case is a false one, itself a product of the essentializing strategies of our sources. In their attempts to respond to circumstances of mass

⁹⁵ Profet Duran, *Kelimat ha-Goyim*, in *Kitvei Pulmos le-Profet Duran*, ed. Frank Talmage (Jerusalem, 1981), 29 for example; Shim'on Ben Tzemah Duran, *Qeshet u-Magen* (Jerusalem, 1970); Hayyim ibn Musa, *Magen va-Romah* (Jerusalem, 1971). Here I am adapting the views of a number of scholars who have suggested ways in which the Yerushalmi thesis needs to be reconceived. See, in particular, E. Gutwirth, 'History and Apologetics in XVth-Century Hispano-Jewish Thought', *Helmantica*, xxxv (1984); E. Gutwirth, 'The Expulsion from Spain and Jewish Historiography', in Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds.), *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London, 1988); Robert Bonfil, 'Jewish Attitudes toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times', *Jewish Hist.*, xi (1997); David Berger, 'On the Uses of History in Medieval Jewish Polemic against Christianity: The Quest for the Historical Jesus', in Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron and David N. Myers (eds.), *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover, 1998); R. Ben-Shalom, 'Dimmui ha-tarbut ha-nošerit be-toda'ah ha-historit shel yehudei sefarad u-provens (ha-me'ot ha-shtem-esrei 'ad ha-hamesh-esrei)' (Univ. of Tel Aviv Ph.D. thesis, 1996). Lawee discusses the place of some of these precursors in Abarbanel's historical thought: Eric Lawee, 'The Messianism of Isaac Abarbanel, "Father of the Messianic Movements of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries"', in R. Popkin and M. Goldish (eds.), *Jewish Messianism in the Early Modern Period* (forthcoming).

assimilation, classificatory crises, and heightened polemical pressure, members of each religious community had available to them long and complex traditions that could sustain any number of genealogical reinterpretations. They could also draw upon those of their rivals: here the author of the *Alborayque*'s awareness of rabbinic *responsa* about 'anusim is just as instructive as (albeit much cruder than) Profet Duran's appropriation of humanist hermeneutics. As a result of these attempts, and over the course of little more than a century, previously marginal logics of lineage had moved to the centre of Jewish, *converso*, and Old Christian communal identity and memory in Iberia. 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 flood-waters of baptism receded.

The genealogical turn was itself an attempt to conceal this unfamiliarity, this rupture, by establishing new continuities, new links to family, faith, 'race', and 'nation'. This article has touched upon some symptoms of this genealogical turn, and many more could be added. But it is fitting to end with the rise of history, because of all the products of the genealogical turn in Sepharad, it alone retains its power to convince. We now, for example, treat as so much fiction the richly illuminated *ketubbot* (marriage contracts) that Sephardic families began to produce in the fifteenth century in order to celebrate their Davidic ancestry.⁹⁶ Yet we rarely quarrel with a historiography, Christian and Jewish, that has in its quest for origins long adopted the genealogical methods of the fifteenth-century polemicist. Like the 'Antiquarian historian' of Nietzsche's second 'Untimely meditation', the historian of Spain and its Jews too often 'greet[s] the soul of his nation across the long dark centuries of confusion as his own soul'.⁹⁷ The

⁹⁶ The custom of illuminating *ketubbot* seems to originate in late fourteenth-century Spain, before spreading throughout the Sephardic diaspora: see Robert Bonfil, 'The History of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in Italy', in Beinart (ed.), *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, ii, 37; Shalom Sabar, 'The Beginnings of Ketubbah Decoration in Italy: Venice in the Late Sixteenth to the Early Seventeenth Centuries', *Jewish Art*, xii-xiii (1987) [= Bianca Kühnel (ed.), *Bezalel Narkiss Festschrift* (Jerusalem, 1987)].

⁹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen, Zweites Stück: vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie*, section 3, in his *Werke in drei Bänden* (Cologne, 1994), i, 175. Thus Márquez Villanueva praises Américo Castro for his 'dialogue with Fernando de Rojas, Cervantes, Sem Tob, Quevedo, Ibn Hazm, and so many other Spaniards with

(cont. on p. 41)

preceding pages are about the history of lineage and the history of history in fifteenth-century Sepharad. But they are just as much about these shades of genealogy that have proved so difficult to exorcize from our own historical practices.

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(n. 97 cont.)

something to teach us about the common womb from which all were born'. He also remarks, 'His ultimate *telos* was nothing other than to understand dispassionately his own roots and to contribute to a collective *nosce te ipsum*'. See Francisco Márquez Villanueva, 'Presencia judía en la literatura española: relejendo a Américo Castro', in Ricardo Izquierdo Benito and Ángel Sáenz-Badillos (eds.), *La sociedad medieval a través de la literatura hispanojudía* (Cuenca, 1998), 27.