

## INTRODUCTION

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It is generally accepted that in the three decades following the 1391 pogrom against Spain's Jewish *aljamas* (neighborhoods), a third or more of Spanish Jews converted to Christianity. This mass conversion was repeated in 1492, when Spain's much reduced Jewish community was given the option of Christian baptism or expulsion. In this same year the Islamic Kingdom of Granada fell to the Christian forces and its Muslim inhabitants were soon presented with the same ultimatum: convert or leave the peninsula.

For the most part medieval Christian Spain viewed the expulsion or conversion of the two minority religions as a victory of the true faith over infidels, and this sense of triumph was nurtured during the next four centuries by clerical and secular authorities, who promoted the view that Spain was a morally and physically purer nation as a result of the 1492 catharsis. There were, of course, dissenting voices, like for example Charles IV's secretary of finance, Pedro Varela, who in 1797 recommended the return to Spain of the Jews, arguing that their business and intellectual skills would have beneficial effects on the Spanish economy; and José Amador de los Rios, whose *Judios de España* (published in 1876) attempted to reconcile his fellow countrymen to Spain's rich and influential Sephardic past. However, the prevailing view was that the Jewish and Islamic cultures had debased the peninsula and that Spain was a better place for their absence. As for the converts from Islam and Judaism, the Conversos and Moriscos,<sup>1</sup> the belief was that these formed small, insignificant minorities who had made little lasting impression on Spanish society: the Moriscos, those furtive, intransigent followers of Mohammed, had been ejected from Spanish soil in 1609 for their sins against Church and patria; while the Conversos, after posing some initial problems as secret heretics and impudent social climbers,

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<sup>1</sup> The word *converso* is Spanish for convert. It is also used to describe Jewish converts to Christianity and their descendants. It will be written as "Converso" (with a capital C) throughout this compilation. The term *morisco*, meaning Islamic convert to Christianity, will be written "Morisco."

had been stifled (through the *limpieza de sangre* laws and Inquisition prosecutions) and ingested, without a trace, into mainstream (Old-Christian) society.

This historiographical interpretation was not seriously challenged until 1948, when Américo Castro published *España en su historia*, in which the historian and philologist accorded to the Jews and Conversos a central position in Spain's medieval and early modern intellectual environment. Castro's views were soon attacked by members of the Francoist academy, who preferred, for ideological reasons, to regard modern Spain as a pure Hispano-Catholic phenomenon. When other studies were published supporting many of Castro's claims, they were either dismissed as *Castrista* (a derogatory term meaning sensationalist or perverse) or, when it became impossible to refute them, flagrantly ignored. Thus, in the wake of Castro's study, an academic cold war developed between two rival schools. One school, comprised of émigré scholars, home-based academics on the margins of the Francoist academy and some foreign (mostly American) Hispanists, spoke of a Golden Age in which the Conversos and Moriscos were culturally significant; its antagonist, a Catholic-conservative group, made up of Francoist academics and a small but significant group of like-minded foreign scholars, emphasised an homogeneous Old-Christian Golden-Age culture in which the Conversos and the Moriscos figured as little more than Inquisitorial anecdotes.

This conflict was to begin with a very low-key affair. In the fifties and sixties Spanish history was still something of an academic backwater, generating little scholarship outside the peninsula; even Spain's Golden Age was approached mostly through subjects (American colonialism, Counter-Reformation, Price Revolution...) that were viewed to have important implications for the more historically attractive environments north of the Pyrenees. Indeed, it was largely as a result of this international academic indifference to Spain's Golden Age that old historiographical prejudices remained active for so long. Fortunately this situation began to change, albeit slowly, in the post-Franco era, promoted by a more liberal Spanish academic environment as well as by an increased interest in socio-cultural themes.

Today Spain's multicultural Middle Ages attracts an enormous amount of scholarly attention, engendering studies that continue to shed light not only on the Conversos and Moriscos but also on the

related issues of individual and group identity, community violence, everyday resistance, passing and otherness, as the present collection of essays demonstrate. However, before turning to these studies, I think it appropriate to briefly situate the two communities within a broader historical context, beginning with the Conversos, who have, at least up until quite recently, generated most interest.

### *The Conversos*

As I have already stated, the Converso phenomenon begins in 1391, when, throughout the peninsula, Christian communities rose up against the Jewish *aljamas*, forcing large numbers of Jews (how many is uncertain) to convert to Christianity. Naturally, few of these early converts sincerely embraced the Catholic Church or Christian society; indeed, most congregated in Converso neighborhoods, where the Sephardic culture continued to exert a strong influence on their lives. For its part, Christian, or rather Old-Christian, Spain, did nothing to entice Conversos to the fold. Old Christians remained antagonistic towards the new converts, whom they regarded (with some justification) as lukewarm Catholics, and this antagonism grew throughout the fifteenth century as a Converso middle sort, free from the social and commercial restrictions applied to the Jews, became increasingly prominent in business and professional activities.

Those Jews who converted to Christianity in the wake of the 1391 pogrom found themselves in an advantageous position vis-à-vis both the Jewish and Old-Christian communities. As New Christians they were no longer subject to the restrictions that had hampered Jewish merchants and professionals. As literate men (all Jewish males were required to gain a basic level of literacy in order to read the Torah), often with a sound knowledge of trade and finance, and with important contacts in Jewish financial and mercantile circles, they were able to compete at an advantage with an Old-Christian urban community. A number of these new converts accumulated large fortunes, which they used to advance their social positions within their cities. One method of social advancement was through the purchase of administrative offices within the church and local government; another method was to form marriage alliances with that other *arriviste* group, Castile's

new nobility—families like the Ayala, Mendoza and Manrique, who, through wise political maneuvering, had risen rapidly to the top of Spain's fifteenth-century social hierarchy.

The Conversos' increasing commercial and social prominence in Castile's urban centers inevitably led to clashes with the Old-Christian community. One of the most dramatic confrontations occurred in Toledo in 1449, where a Converso agent of the crown, Rodrigo de Cota, was made responsible for collecting an extraordinary tax levied to aid Juan II prosecute his war against a French incursion into Navarre. Pre-disposed to see this tax as an example of Converso avarice and malice, the Old-Christian community turned on its New-Christian neighbors, looting and burning their neighborhoods. Ordered to put a stop to the violence, the *alcalde mayor*, Pedro Sarmiento, merely used his power to inflame anti-Converso feeling even further, and to introduce a statute, the *sentencia-estatuto*, prohibiting Conversos from occupying public office—that is to say from comporting themselves as nobles.

The Toledo statute (now recognized as the first *limpieza de sangre*, or pure blood, law) was soon followed by other similar legislation, preventing Conversos from entering city councils, cathedral chapters, universities and noble and religious orders on the grounds that they were of Jewish provenance and thus second class Christians. At the same time agitation grew for an inquisitorial body to investigate a Converso community suspected of being insincere neophytes. In 1480 the first tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition was established in Seville. Others followed in rapid succession, their task to root out Judaism from the New-Christian community.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> One of the subjects most debated in Converso studies is the Catholic Monarchs' reasons for establishing their own Inquisitorial body (as opposed to utilizing the papal Inquisition council that had existed since the thirteenth century). Was the institution created to root out Judaizing or for other, more devious, reasons? Benzion Netanyahu, for example, believes that there were very few Crypto-Jews within the Converso community by the middle of the fifteenth century and that the Judaizing problem was used as a pretext to attack the Conversos as a whole, reducing their economic and political status. However, this argument is sustained only by ignoring or rejecting important documentation, not least of which are the fifteenth-century chronicles by both the Conversos' detractors and their sympathisers. It is instructive to note that while the Converso writers Alvaro de Palencia, Fernando de Pulgar and Juan Ramirez de Lucena berated the Inquisition for its inhumanity towards the New Christians, all three men recognized that Judaizing was prevalent in the Converso community, especially in Andalucía, where, Palencia noted, "the belief in the coming of the fallacious Messiah was widely extended among the Conversos." Fernando de Pulgar also indicated that Judaizing was widespread in the south of Spain, when, in attacking Inquisition brutality

A major obstacle in attacking this problem, or so it was believed, was the continuing presence of a large Jewish community in the peninsula, eager to entice the *anusim* (forced ones) back to the fold. And so in 1492 the Jews were ordered to convert to Christianity or leave Spain (Castile and Aragón) with whatever belongings they could carry. Some seventy or eighty thousand chose to leave; perhaps an equal number converted to Christianity. These unhappy converts now joined an older body of New Christians assailed by *limpieza de sangre* proscriptions and Holy Office persecution.

In the first forty years of Holy Office activity, it is reckoned that some three thousand Conversos were sent to the stake, accused of practicing the Jewish faith. Many thousands more were subjected to lengthy prison sentences and dispossessed of their property. However, after 1520 the rate of prosecutions declined quite considerably and this has led a number of historians to posit the view that the New Christian community had to a large degree been assimilated into the majority religion and culture by the mid sixteenth century. This view requires some qualification. For one reason or another, accusations of Judaizing declined after 1520, but this does not necessarily imply that the Conversos had become loyal subjects or good Catholics. It is noteworthy that all the major movements for reform in early modern Spain were either driven by Conversos or heavily supported by them. The *alumbrado*, or illuminist movement, which erupted in central Castile in the second decade of the century, was almost totally composed of Conversos, who rejected Catholic dogma for mystical and quietist religious practice. The

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and rapine, he wrote, "as the Old [Christians] are here [in Seville] such bad Christians, the New [Christians] are such good Jews... I believe that there are ten thousand girls who, because from birth they never leave their homes, neither hear nor know any other doctrine, but follow that [Judaism] which they observe their parents practicing indoors." There is no reason to believe that these chroniclers' views on Converso Judaizing were not shared by the Catholic Monarchs and that the royal couple saw the Holy Office as a means of eradicating an important religious problem. This is not to say, of course, that this was the only reason for the creation of a Spanish Inquisition. The Crown was also aware that Old-Christian antagonism towards the tightly knit Converso urban communities could, and did, lead to violent confrontations. Having gained power after a four year civil war, Ferdinand and Isabel were naturally sensitive to the issue of civil discord and saw in the Inquisition a means of institutionalizing and controlling an urban problem that was always in danger of escalating into disruptive civil uprisings. The measure undoubtedly created enormous distress within the Converso communities, attacked by rapacious and corrupt Inquisition officials. However, we should not jump too readily to the conclusion that this was the Catholic Monarchs' underlying intention in creating the Inquisition council.

Comunero revolt of 1521, an attack on a Crown that accrued political power at the expense of its nobility and urban patrician class, attracted a disproportionate number of Converso artisans and merchants to its ranks. Above all, Spain's Erasmian movement, which entered the peninsula with Charles I's Flemish court in 1517, was dominated by Converso professionals, both at court and in the universities, especially at the recently founded Complutense University, at Alcalá de Henares.

In assuming an Erasmian humanist mantle, Converso scholars were able to attack Catholic practice with a certain amount of impunity, at least at first, when the Flemish humanist enjoyed the support of powerful secular and clerical figures at court, including the Inquisitor General Alfonso Manrique. However, the Erasmists' situation deteriorated abruptly in the 1530s, as the Spanish monarch, now Emperor Charles V, became increasingly sensitive to the political dangers of a vociferous religious reform movement. With the Inquisition once more on the attack, the predominantly Converso Erasmian movement went underground, voicing its disquiet between the lines of humanist essays or through creative fictions, especially the picaresque novel, a particularly Converso genre.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> When I say Converso genre, I do not mean merely that at its forefront were Converso writers, as this would hardly distinguish it from any other branch of Spanish Golden-Age literature (see note 11). What I mean is that picaresque fiction revolves around Converso, or barely disguised Converso, anti-heroes. The multiple misadventures of these marginal figures gave their creators an opportunity to paint a bleak picture of contemporary Spanish society, cynically attacking social mores and debunking Old-Christian pretensions to noble, honorable character. The works are laden with intertextual messages, aimed at what Mateo Alemán described as the "discreet reader," many of them allusions to the protagonists' Converso roots. While we have little biographical information on most of these authors (for obvious reasons), the information we do have usually points strongly to Converso backgrounds. It is particularly noteworthy that many of the authors were from medical backgrounds, as medical practice was virtually a Converso monopoly in early modern Spain. Mateo Alemán, author of *Guzmán de Alfarache* was from a well known Seville medical clan suspected of being Converso. Francisco López de Úbeda, author of *La pícaro Justina*, was also a physician (from Toledo), as were Jerónimo de Alcalá Yáñez (*El donado hablador*) and Carlos García (*La desordenada codicia de los bienes ajenos*). García, from Zaragoza, moved to Paris early in his career, where he entered the circle of the Converso Elias de Montach, physician to Maria de Medici. Antonio Enríquez Gómez, author of *La vida de Gregorio Guadaña*, was not a physician. He was, however, a crypto-Jew who fled Spain for Amsterdam in 1636. The author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (a work regarded as the first example of the picaresque genre) remains anonymous, although the text itself suggests that he was a Converso with strong Erasmian sympathies. Recently Rosa Navarro has compared the text with the *Diálogo de Mercurio y Carón* and *Diálogo de las cosas acaecidas en Roma* to make a convincing argument for the Converso humanist Alfonso de Valdés

Outside the Converso humanist elite, it is difficult to determine the character of Spain's Conversos in the sixteenth century. The view that the New Christians were divided into three groups, those who Judaized, those who were sincere Christians, and those who were neither (the apathetic, sceptical and atheistic) is often put forward by historians taxed with presenting a simple answer to the vexed question of Converso identity.<sup>4</sup> However, this is a singularly misleading taxonomy, because it implies an equal and rigid division that never existed. We have no idea what proportion of Conversos considered themselves Jewish, Christian or skeptics. We do know, however, that traumatized Conversos might make a number of religious border crossings as they searched for spiritual deliverance and/or social acceptability. As for the term "sincere Christians," this suggests a religious compliance that was far from the case. While many Conversos undoubtedly regarded themselves as Christian (by the sixteenth century, the majority), their brand of Christianity (hybrid, mystical, militant) was often a calculated affront to the Catholic Church, an act of subversion rather than conformism. Finally, the division implies a disjuncture within Converso communities that was, in fact, not so readily apparent. As the Inquisition records attest, those who Judaized, those who considered themselves sincere Christians, and those who were sceptics all interrelated in the same Converso neighborhoods and, frequently, in the same Converso extended and nuclear families.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, social and cultural ties were often much more important factors in deciding a Converso's sense of self than religious ones.

The diversity of the Conversos' responses to their peculiar socio-cultural situation would seem to militate against categorizing them as a discrete group. Nevertheless, I believe the Conversos do share an important commonality: a feeling of resentment against an oppressive Old-Christian moral majority. This resentment is rarely overtly expressed;

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as the author of the work. See Rosa Navarro Durán, *Alfonso Valdés, autor del Lazarillo de Tormes*, Madrid, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> This is the view of José Faur, *In the Shadow of History: Jews and Conversos at the Dawn of Modernity*, New York, 1992, ch. 3. Stephen Haliczer divides the Conversos into three broad groups, omitting the religiously apathetic group from his typology (Stephen Haliczer, *Inquisition and Society in the Kingdom of Valencia, 1478 to 1834*, Berkeley, 1990, p. 212.).

<sup>5</sup> The many different ideologies at play in Converso extended families is clearly presented by Pilar Huerga Criado, *En la raya de Portugal: Solidaridad y tensiones en la comunidad judeoconversa*, Salamanca, 1994, pp. 277–282.

rather, it takes a number of subtle forms, from the loaded subtext of picaresque novels to acts of everyday resistance, like those described by Leonor Zozaya in “A Thorn in The Community” (essay seven). The majority of sixteenth-century Spanish Conversos may not have been Judaizers, but it would be unwise to take for granted their assimilation or conformism. Certainly, there are grounds for arguing that many Conversos considered themselves both different from and superior to their Old-Christian neighbors, and that they believed this higher status was conveyed upon them by their Jewish background. They were, after all, the heirs of God’s chosen people, who were authentic monotheists, not idol worshipers like their pagan (Gentile) counterparts.<sup>6</sup>

So far I have spoken only of the Converso phenomenon in Spain. In Portugal, the situation was somewhat different. It was here that the majority of Spain’s Jews took up residence after the 1492 expulsion order, more than doubling the size of Portugal’s own Sephardic community. At first the native Jewish community and the immigrants were allowed to practice their religion in peace. However, in 1497, under pressure from Spain’s Catholic Monarchs, King Manuel of Portugal forcibly converted his Jewish subjects. It was a move he was reluctant to make, valuing, much more so than his Spanish counterparts, the Jews’ economic potential. Thus, as an incentive to the neophytes to remain in his realm, he decreed a twenty year moratorium on investigations into their religious activities. It was during this period that many Converso traders became enormously wealthy through the booming spice and

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<sup>6</sup> This point was made by the Converso writers Alonso de Cartagena (*Defensorium unitatis christianae*) and Diego de Valera (*Espejo de verdadera nobleza*), both writing in response to the 1449 *sentencia estatuto*. For Cartagena, Christianity was a redirection and a deepening of the Jewish faith: the Old Law had merely evolved into a more ideal form. Jews who embraced Christianity were embracing an evangelical spirit that had been present in their faith, in men like Moses and Aaron. The Gentiles did not have this foundation; none of their writings made reference to the coming of the Christ or to the Trinity. They were sons who after a long absence returned home; the Jews (for which read Conversos), were daughters who had never left the paternal house. In his *Espejo*, Diego de Valera writes: “If we are looking for authorities for Jewish nobility, we can find many, for it is written in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy in speaking of the Jews: ‘What other nation is as noble? As it says, not one.’” The Converso preacher Juan de Avila (later Saint Juan de Avila) echoed these thoughts on the Jews’ superior status in his work *Audi filia*, written while he languished in the Seville Inquisition prison, accused on being an *alumbrado*. In this work Avila reminds his readers that Jesus preached only to the Jews. Later Christ’s apostles took his message further afield, “and now the preaching of Christ’s name is growing every day in distant lands, so that he is not only light for the Jews, who believed in Him, and to whom he was sent, but also to the gentiles, who were in blindness and idolatry far removed from God.”

slave trades and used their wealth to maintain a powerful Converso lobby in the Vatican. Through this lobby the Portuguese Conversos were able to resist the establishment of an Inquisition council until 1534 and stifle its activities for yet another fourteen years thereafter.

It was thus not until the mid sixteenth century, over fifty years after the Spanish expulsion, that the Portuguese Converso community began to experience serious problems with the Holy Office. As a response to this increased vigilance, many Converso families opted to immigrate back to Spain, where they hoped to escape Inquisition attention. Unfortunately, their escape coincided with an increase in Spanish Inquisition activity, promoted by a Counter-Reformation monarchy ever more obsessed with socio-religious deviance. Suspected of crypto-Jewish activity, the Portuguese immigrants naturally attracted a great deal of Inquisition attention, as a result of which convictions for Judaizing escalated. Not all of those convicted were Portuguese, however. The Holy Office's increased sensitivity to crypto-Judaism led to the exposure of indigenous Jewish cells also, like that of Quintanar de la Orden, examined by Vincent Parello in "Inquisition and Crypto-Judaism: The 'Complicity' of the Mora Family of Quintanar de la Orden (1588–1592)," (essay eight in this collection).

While the Spanish Crown was well aware that most of the Portuguese Conversos were crypto-Jews, it was disposed, on occasion, to turn a blind eye to this heresy, in return for financial aid. In 1602 Philip III applied to Rome for a bull pardoning the past heresies of 6,000 Portuguese Converso families; in return for this munificence, a consortium of Portuguese businessmen paid the Crown the enormous sum of 1,860,000 ducats. Twenty-five years later, Philip IV brokered a deal with a new group of Portuguese businessmen, who were given licence to ply their trade in Spain and its dominions for another enormous sum of money. Many of these men now gravitated towards Madrid, where for two decades or more they dominated court finance. The architect of this deal was the king's *privado*, the Count-Duke of Olivares, a particularly fervent enemy of anti-Converso attitudes and legislation.<sup>7</sup> While the Count Duke remained in power, the Portuguese financiers were protected. However, on his fall, in 1643, the Inquisition took the offensive,

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<sup>7</sup> Olivares was himself the great grandson of King Ferdinand's Converso secretary Lope Conchillos. Furthermore, his family belonged to the House of Medina Sidonia, a noble Andalusian clan that maintained close links with Seville's Converso patrician merchants.

prosecuting some of the court's wealthiest businessmen as Judaizers and stripping them of their enormous fortunes. Faced with continuous Inquisition attacks, many well-heeled members of the Portuguese business community chose to leave Spain for France and the Netherlands, taking their financial expertise with them.

With Spain's wealthy Converso businessmen in exile, Inquisition prosecutions for Judaizing slowly declined over the next century.<sup>8</sup> This did not mean, however, that the Spanish obsession with the Conversos followed suit. For this obsession was not only with Converso heresy; indeed, that was the least of it. Spain was obsessed with the Conversos' Jewish essence. If this malady were allowed to reign unchecked, it would, it was believed, infect the entire kingdom, impairing everyone's virtue and honor. Even after the Inquisition ledgers ceased to record accusations against Judaizers, even after the *limpieza de sangre* laws became no more than a bureaucratic formality, this fixation with the secret Jew remained.

For the majority of Spaniards, the Jews and the Conversos were the embodiment of alien attitudes and beliefs, the corrupters of Spanish tradition; and so, by some perverse inversion, everything foreign, different or innovative was liable to be labelled Jewish: the Spanish masons, the Spanish Enlightenment, the First and Second Republics were all associated with Jewish malfeasance; so too, in Américo Castro's view, was capitalist enterprise and intellectual inquiry in general. According to Castro, middle class activity was anathematized in Spain precisely because of its association with the Jews and the Conversos, and this rejection had grave consequences for the country's later development. It is an intriguing view, although one that is difficult to validate, much of the relevant evidence being locked up in a nation's psyche, beyond the reach of social scientists' tools of measure. What cannot be denied, however, is that the Jews and Conversos have remained a contentious issue in Spanish culture up to the present day, as the recent academic debate on their historiographical importance attests.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> With the exception of the decade 1720 to 1730, which witnessed a last major wave of prosecution.

<sup>9</sup> See my article in this collection.

*The Moriscos*

Sizeable Islamic communities existed in Christian Spain from the second wave of the *Reconquista* (in the thirteenth century) onwards. These communities were encouraged by a Spanish Crown eager to maintain the same infrastructure bequeathed to it by the retreating Islamic forces and to tap into the wealth and expertise of the Islamic society. Significantly, the Crown made no attempt to convert these Muslim denizens, known as *Mudéjares*, or change in any way their Islamic lifestyle. To do so would have run the risk of losing a valuable commodity to the Nasrid kingdom of Granada.

However, this policy of toleration towards the Muslims was seriously questioned after 1492, when the Granada stronghold fell to the combined forces of Isabel and Ferdinand. Having now destroyed the final remnants of Islamic rule on the peninsula, under the banner of "Holy Crusade," the Catholic Monarchs (a title bestowed upon the royal couple by the Pope for their crusading activity) could no longer justify their erstwhile relaxed attitude towards their indigenous infidels. Pressure now needed to be exerted on the Spanish Muslims, starting with the population of Granada, to convert to Christianity. But what form was this pressure to take? Was it to be a gradual but persistent process of proselytism and instruction, or was it to be a swift, radical act of enforced baptism? The first option was supported by Granada's civil governor, Íñigo Hurtado de Mendoza, Marquis of Tendilla, and its archbishop, Hernando de Talavera, who saw their task as one of pacification and accommodation. The second option was advocated by Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, who as primate of Castile was in a position to make his hard line opinions felt.

In 1499, the rumor began to circulate in Granada and the surrounding territory that the Cisneros camp had triumphed and that the Catholic Monarchs were about to renege on the 1492 capitulations, allowing the Muslims liberty of religious practice. Street fighting now broke out in the *Albaicín*, the Muslim district of the city, and these disturbances soon escalated into pitched battles and open rebellion. By the time this insurrection was defeated, in 1500, the Catholic Monarchs had decided upon a policy of forced conversion, at least for the Muslim population of Castile, which now included Granada; for the time being the Muslims in Ferdinand's own kingdom of Aragón remained free to practice their chosen religion.

Quite why Ferdinand chose to delay implementation of the conversion order in his own territories remains open to debate; however, the fact that many of the Aragonese and Valencian Muslims were the vassals of powerful noble families certainly played a part in the king's decision. Any act that disturbed or threatened the equilibrium of this lucrative minority would inevitably have incurred the wrath of their noble landlords, and this was something the absentee monarch clearly wished to avoid. In the event, the Aragonese and Valencian Moriscos were not converted until 1525.

Meanwhile, the majority of Castilian Muslims took the baptismal waters. In theory they were given the choice of conversion or expulsion; however, the conditions under which they were allowed to leave the peninsula were so onerous that few took the latter option. It is clear that the majority justified their apostasy as an unavoidable necessity, and in this they were supported by their religious leaders, who counselled the converts to observe Islamic practice in secret.

In the circumstances, few of the converts chose to sincerely embrace Christianity, and somewhat surprisingly very little pressure was exerted upon them to do so. Once the Muslims were formally baptized they were left mostly to their own devices, at least during the first decades of the century, when the Inquisition was busy directing its attention towards the Converso community. Curiously, Castile's Judaizers were numerically far inferior to its crypto-Muslims. However, religion was not the Inquisition's only criterion for attacking neophytes; it was also moved by political and economic considerations, and patrician Converso merchants were a far richer prize than humble Morisco laborers. Thus for a time the Moriscos were let off the hook.

This situation changed, however, in mid century, when the Ottoman Turks began to threaten Spanish hegemony in the Western Mediterranean. As tension mounted, the Spanish Crown turned its attention to its Morisco subjects, who were now perceived as potentially dangerous fifth columnists. Particularly treacherous, or so the Crown believed, were the Granadan Moriscos (located closest to the Islamic regimes of North Africa), who, despite the 1502 conversion order and other legislation banning the use of Arabic language and dress, had made little effort to adopt Christian customs or religion.

In a new bid to acculturate this community, legislation reinforcing the earlier religious and cultural proscriptions was once again introduced. Again the legislation led to an insurrection, the Alpujarra War, which raged for two years and decimated the zone's Morisco communities.

At the end of the fighting, in 1570, those Moriscos who survived found themselves either enslaved or forcibly relocated to other communities throughout Andalucía and New Castile. Philip II undoubtedly viewed the break up and transfer of these communities as a necessary first step in their Christianization. But the harsh policy appears only to have steeled the dispossessed group in its resolve to remain Islamic.

And still there remained two hundred thousand Moriscos on the Valencian coast, many of whom were known to be in contact with the Islamic communities of North Africa. Should this community also be relocated? Or was the solution more drastic still: the expulsion of all the Moriscos from Spain? It was in this atmosphere of tension and uncertainty that a number of “ancient” lead books were discovered in the city of Granada, whose contents revealed that among Spain’s first-century Christian evangelists were two converted Arabs.

The Lead Books were in fact recent forgeries by local Moriscos, who hoped to enhance their community’s prestige by presenting Arabs, a people associated with Islamic iniquity, as founding members of the Spanish church. The implication was that Moriscos also had the capacity to be good Christians and worthy Spaniards (see Mercedes García-Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, essay ten). However, it would be rash to consider this appeal for equality as the work of sincere assimilationists. The Lead Books affair was also a secret violation of Christian sacred history; an act of duplicity and defiance, through which we once again glimpse the New Christian’s Janus face.

While the consensus of scholarly opinion is that the majority of Moriscos remained crypto-Muslims up until the expulsion order of 1609,<sup>10</sup> the paucity of preserved Islamic literature from sixteenth-century Spain has conditioned us to believe that this community was a modest, un-intellectual one. However, the lack of extant literature would appear to say as much about the hazards of literary production and preservation as it does about the intellectual resources of Spain’s Moriscos. Recent studies of *aljamiado* literature (Castilian and Catalan writings in Arabic script) reveal a dispersed but active Morisco intellectual community,

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<sup>10</sup> This assumption should, however, be qualified, and is being qualified in recent scholarly studies. Separated from their religious authorities, forced to observe Islam clandestinely, it was inevitable that the Moriscos’ Islamic practice would undergo important changes in the sixteenth century. Furthermore, the Moriscos’ increasing contact with Christian belief introduced them to religious tendencies that began to inform their vision of the Islamic credo, as the *aljamiado* literature attests.

whose devotional works were often influenced by *devotio moderna* and humanist views. They also introduce us to what appears to have been an extensive cultural resistance movement, anxious to preserve the Islamic faith and customs under extremely difficult conditions.

At the same time that scholars are re-examining *aljamiado* literature, they are also reassessing the “Moorish” novels and ballads. These works (the *Abencerraje* is perhaps the most famous), written in a period directly prior to the 1609 expulsion, present the Muslims not as villains but as noble and chivalrous heroes. Up until recently examined with little attention to its socio-historic context, this genre is now increasingly taken as evidence of a certain sympathy towards the oppressed Morisco within Spanish society. Both Barbara Fuchs’ “Maurophilia and the Morisco Subject” (essay eleven) and William Childers’ “Manzanares 1600: Moriscos from Granada Head a ‘Moors and Christians’ Fair” (essay 12) address the phenomenon of maurophilia in late sixteenth century Spain. Undoubtedly the matter will receive further attention in the next years, as we commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the Morisco expulsion.

### Converso and Moriscos Studies

It was in response to the ever growing historiographical debate on the Conversos and Moriscos that I began, in 2004, to organize an annual (now bi-annual) conference, examining Converso and Morisco themes. In staging this event, I had three aims in mind: first, to create an arena in which the Conversos and Moriscos were treated as related rather than separate socio-cultural phenomena; second, to bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to discuss Converso and Morisco themes from differing academic perspectives and approaches; and third, to provide a venue for Spanish scholars to exchange views with their non-Spanish counterparts, thus helping to establish much needed formal links between foreign and native Hispanists. These same goals have also guided the *Converso and Moriscos Studies* series, which will offer, periodically, selections of our conference papers, revised and expanded for publication.

In organizing volume one of the series, I have favored a loose chronological structure, in which the essays become episodes or vignettes in a longer, complex story. The volume begins with Francisco Márquez Villanueva’s “On the Concept of *Mudejarism*,” in which the author

reflects on the problematic issue of *convivencia* (or coexistence). Márquez points out that in the Low Middle Ages, the Muslims, conscious of their limited military possibilities, established a cultural and religious pluralism which safeguarded Christian (Mozarab) communities in al-Andalus. With the Christian conquest of Toledo in the eleventh century, the Mozarab phenomenon became the Mudejar phenomenon, which guaranteed the continuity of the non-Christian minorities. The crucial problem of repopulation created a *de facto* tolerance that had nothing to do with the modern concept of liberalism, but rather with the practical necessity of group cooperation to avoid ethnic violence and chaos. This was far from an idyllic situation; nevertheless, *mudejarismo*, with all its problems, created an atmosphere of peace and prosperity during the High Middle Ages. According to Márquez, its end was not brought about by an internal crisis in its system, but by the politics of violence inaugurated by Ferdinand and Isabel and perpetuated under Habsburg rule, creating serious consequences for the peninsula during the modern age.

It might well be argued, of course, that the Catholic Monarchs were merely late protagonists in a drama whose inevitable outcome had been determined in its first act, the late fourteenth century mass conversion of the Sephardic community. This pogrom created a large, embittered Converso community, the majority of whom, at least in the immediate aftermath of the violence, remained loyal to the Jewish religion and passed their beliefs down to their children. Many of these crypto-Jews were disposed to see their plight as a necessary preliminary to the Messiah's arrival, and thus were sensitive to any phenomenon that suggested cosmic change. For these secret Judaizers, the Ottoman Turk's capture of Constantinople in 1454 was loaded with Messianic portends.

In "Seeking the Messiah," Mark Meyerson examines the effects of this event on Rodrigo Cifuentes and his family, prosecuted in Valencia in 1464 for attempting to sail for the Ottoman Empire with the aim of returning to Judaism and awaiting the Jewish Messiah. Meyerson establishes the probable veracity of the inquisitorial accusations through an examination of the defendants' Judaizing, their contacts with Jewish merchants and kinsfolk in Valencia, and their messianic ideology. The author argues that the actions of the Cifuentes family are indicative of a wider, though limited, messianic movement among Valencian Conversos, essentially penitential in nature, sparked by the fall of Constantinople. The article concludes with a consideration of how the activities

of the Spanish Inquisition in Valencia and the expulsion of the Jews created a more polarized religious milieu and contributed to a resurgence of Converso messianism at the end of the fifteenth century.

While it is certain that the majority of Jews who converted to Christianity in the wake of the 1391 attacks did so under pressure from their Christian neighbors, it would be a mistake to assume that this pogrom was perpetrated against a community united in its religious belief. A number of Jews, especially prominent among the courtier elite, appear to have long abandoned Jewish theology for an Aristotelian, rationalist outlook. Although these wealthy and well-placed Jews had no interest in Christian belief, they felt little compulsion to resist conversion. Once baptized, they paid lip service to their new religion while maintaining their rationalist credo in private, among a coterie of like-minded fellow converts. Gradually, their sceptical outlook filtered down into a Converso rank and file, where it gained adherents among an educated urban community, debilitated and assailed by religious doubts. In “If There Were God: The Problem of Unbelief in the *Visión Deleytable*,” Luis Girón locates Alfonso de la Torre’s fifteenth-century philosophical compendium within this Converso rationalist milieu. The recent discovery of an early manuscript of the work in Hebraic *aljamiado* script presents Girón with the opportunity to examine de la Torre’s rationalist vision and to advance the view that it was written by a Converso sceptic for the edification of a distressed and disoriented Sephardic (Converso and Jewish) intellectual community.

It should now be evident to everyone working on early modern Spanish culture that literary production during this period (both intellectual and creative) was dominated by Conversos.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, many scholars remain blind (sometimes perversely so) to this fact, and thus continue to interpret texts without giving due consideration to shrill undertones of Converso angst and anger. In “Converso Voices in Fif-

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<sup>11</sup> The majority of Spain’s great Golden Age literary figures were New Christians. Spanish prose fiction was dominated by Converso writers: Cervantes, Alemán, Rojas, Jorge Montemayor, Francisco Delicado, Luis Vélez de Guevara were all from Converso backgrounds. Spain’s great sixteenth-century mystics Teresa of Avila, Juan de Avila, and Juan de la Cruz were also Conversos, as were Spain’s foremost humanists, among whom were Luis Vives, Juan and Alfonso Valdés, Juan de Vergara, Brocense, Ambrosio Morales, Arias Montano, Luis de León and Juan de Malara. Conversos also predominated in early sixteenth-century theater, as Elaine Wertheimer’s essay indicates. Indeed, where substantial information on a Golden-Age writer is available, the evidence normally points to a Converso family background—unsurprisingly, given that most writers came out of Spain’s Converso-dominated professional middle sort.

teenth and Sixteenth-Century Spanish Literature,” Elaine Wertheimer discusses Converso subtext in the works of six authors, writing in Spain, Portugal and Italy. Although the paucity of information available on these writers prevents us from determining their genealogies, a close examination of their written works reveal them to be New Christians, reacting to the proliferating *limpieza de sangre* laws that threatened all with the loss of honor and status.

Spain’s *limpieza de sangre* laws divided society into pure Old Christians and tainted New ones. For a society obsessed with honor, this was a terrible stigma that affected both individuals and, on occasion, whole communities, as Juan Gil demonstrates in his essay “*Berenjeneros: The Aubergine Eaters*.” This was the nickname given to the people of Toledo in allusion to their Jewish origins, the aubergine being associated with Sephardic cuisine. In their attempt to counter this “calumny,” a number of Toledo’s intellectuals (almost certainly Conversos), fabricated histories in which they presented the city as being founded by early Greek settlers, or by ancient (Old Testament) Jews, members of a pre-crucifixion Hebrew settlement that was totally divorced from the deicide, and thus untainted.

While the Inquisition vigilance and *limpieza de sangre* laws increasingly created problems for Spanish Conversos, their counterparts in Sicily (a Spanish dependency) appeared to have fared somewhat better. In “*Sicilian Converts after the Expulsion*,” Nadia Zeldes examines this community’s relationship with the island’s Old-Christian majority. As Zeldes points out, unlike their Castilian and Aragonese brethren, the Jews of Sicily had not been subjected to mass conversion in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Thus Sicily’s Converso community barely existed before 1492, when many of the island’s Jews converted to avoid expulsion from the Spanish realm. While these *neofiti* made little attempt to integrate into Christian society, they appear to have experienced fewer problems than the Castilian Conversos vis-à-vis the Old-Christian authorities. This situation gradually changed after 1500, when the Spanish Inquisition took a prominent role in Sicilian politics. An agent of the Spanish crown, the Holy Office now attempted to bring the *neofiti*’s situation into line with that of the New Christians of mainland Spain.

Leonor Zozaya’s essay, “*A Thorn in the Community*,” also examines inter-community relations between Conversos and Old Christians; however, this time in mid-sixteenth-century Castile. Zozaya’s essay focuses on the Rodríguez family, who in the late fifteenth century had

been prosecuted in Molina de Aragón as crypto-Jews. Fifty years later members of this family, Francisco Cortés and Diego López Cortés, were once again in trouble with the Inquisition for dubious religious views and activities. While the Cortés brothers do not appear to have been Judaizers, they were uncomfortable Christians, who antagonized their neighbors with their irreligious actions and remarks. Particularly scandalous, at least to some, was Diego's manipulation of a thorn which he claimed to be from the true crown of Christ. When the thorn began to take on popular cult status, the local religious authorities and the Holy Office stepped in, not to ban its use but to incorporate it into formal religious practice. "A Thorn in the Community" introduces us to the complexities and ambiguities of both Converso identity and local religious practice.

While many Spanish Conversos continued to resist orthodox Catholic practice for many generations after their ancestors had been baptized into the religion, few Converso families actually remained Jewish practitioners for such a long period. An exception (although certainly not the only one) was the Mora family of Quintanar de la Orden. In "The Complicity of the Mora Family," Vincent Parello offers a socio-religious profile of this family that was tried by the Inquisition in 1580 for Judaizing.

The attack on the Moras occurred in the period after the Tridentine Councils, when the Crown became more rigorous in its prosecution of religious non-conformism. One result of this harder line was the relocation of the Granadan Moriscos within Castile. The aim was to divide this community into smaller, and thus less problematical, groups. However, the result was often the opposite of that desired, as the newcomers competed with Old-Christian natives for work and living space. One of the more fractious areas was the city of Seville, where in 1580 over six thousand Moriscos were congregated. In the summer of that year, in a time of famine and on the eve of the war with Portugal, popular sentiment in Seville ran against its Morisco population. It was in this extremely tense atmosphere that the Seville authorities announced that they had stumbled across a Morisco rebellion conspiracy, later known as "the Morisco uprising of Andalucía." Recently discovered sources, taken from the proceedings against the ringleaders of the uprising, allow Michel Boeglin ("Between Rumor and Resistance") to make a more precise evaluation of the nature and impact of this incident. Boeglin concludes that the "uprising" was blown up out of proportion

by a city government perpetually suspicious of a group that remained both marginal and unified.

Almost a century after Spain's Muslims had been forced to convert to Christianity, their situation continued to deteriorate. More politically powerful and socially flexible, the Conversos' position was considerably better. However, even this group was continually challenged by *limpieza de sangre* legislation that cast it as alien and ignoble. Faced with this obstacle, most New Christians chose to take the path of least resistance and lie about their ancestry. Some, however, attempted to solve the problem by changing society's mentality towards honor. Spain's Converso humanists, for example, stressed the importance of education and ability, rather than ancestry, in conveying noble status, and they pointed to the great Romans Cicero and Seneca (the latter born in Córdoba) as men who gained respect and title through their own efforts. Others saw the solution to the Converso and Morisco problem in the reworking of Spanish historiographical fictions, especially its charter myths, to give Jewish and Muslim groups a foundational role in early Christian society. In so doing, these falsifiers sought to change the society's attitude towards its New Christian minorities.

In "Jerónimo Román de la Higuera and the Lead Books of Sacramonte," Mercedes García-Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano examine the Toledan Jesuit Jerónimo Román de la Higuera, one of the principle falsifiers of Spanish historiography at the end of the sixteenth century, and his connexion with another major falsifier, Miguel de Luna, who perpetrated the Lead Books of Granada fraud in the same period. García-Arenal's and Rodríguez Mediano's study attempts to establish a parallel between both frauds, whose final objective, they believe, was to re-evaluate the role of the Arabs and Jews in Spain, promoting an historical vision that would facilitate the integration of the Converso and Morisco minorities into sixteenth-century Spanish society.

Like the false chronicles, the Moorish novels and ballads, which also began to appear at the end of the sixteenth century, appear to have been executed mostly by authors who wished to improve the image of the Morisco in Spanish society. Barbara Fuchs ("Maurophilia and the Morisco Subject") believes that the success of this genre cannot merely be explained by its exotic nature; rather, it appealed to a society that was still "hybridized" and thus receptive to Spain's multicultural past, despite its government's agenda of political centralism and ethno-cultural homogenization.

The theme of maurophilia is also explored by William Childers in “Manzanares 1600: Moriscos from Granada Head a Moors and Christians Fair.” Childers’ essay examines what might be described as an early version of the famous Moors and Christians fairs which became popular in the seventeenth century and have remained so up until the present day. However, whereas the later Moors and Christians fairs focus on the triumph of Christian forces over the Muslims, the Manzanares event, in which the Moors (Moriscos) are the chief protagonists, evokes an atmosphere of accord and accommodation. This attempt at integration was, however, frowned upon by Crown officials, appalled by the freedom granted to the town’s Moriscos to bear arms and thus present themselves as men of noble bearing. Was the Manzanares affair representative of a generalized grass roots rapprochement that ran against the Crown’s own socio-political agenda, predicated more on division than inclusion? Like Fuchs, Childers invites us to re-examine our views on Old Christian/Morisco relations in the period immediate to the 1609 expulsion.

Undoubtedly the most famous example of maurophilia is Sancho Panza’s brotherly embrace of his old friend Ricote in part two of *Don Quijote*. The question is: Did Cervantes sympathise with the Morisco Ricote as a man of liberal (humanistic) disposition, or did he empathise with him, as a fellow Converso? There are those scholars who would deny that this was New-Christian empathy on the grounds that there is no conclusive proof that Cervantes ancestors were Jews. However, I think most *Cervantistas* would now agree that the author’s background (medical and mercantile) strongly suggests Converso provenance, and that this assessment is corroborated by his works, which reveal pro-Erasmian and anti-*limpieza* tendencies. There are already a number of studies which examine what I would call Cervantes’ Converso-humanist credo. There are few studies, however, that suggest Cervantes was inspired on occasion by Jewish literary traditions, as Francisco Peña argues in “Sancho Panza and the Mimesis of Solomon.”

In his essay, Peña explores the parallels between Sancho Panza and King Solomon in *Don Quijote*. Although a number of critics have already noted allusions to Solomon in Cervantes’ masterpiece, as Peña states, no study has examined this subject in any depth. In his own study, Peña shows the rich inter-textual allusions to the relationship between the knight’s squire and the Biblical king. To grasp these subtle allusions, Cervantes sixteenth-century readers would have required a knowledge

of the numerous legends, of Jewish origin, concerning Solomon that circulated throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods.

In the final essay of this collection, "Historiography, Historicity and the Conversos," I examine the position of the Conversos in Spanish historiography since Amador de los Rios's seminal study, *Estudios históricos, políticos y literarios sobre los judíos en España*, published in 1848. I present the view that the Spanish academy's predilection for a pure or *castizo* Spain, genetically Celtiberian and spiritually Roman Catholic, has often militated against it recognizing the important contribution of the Conversos to Golden-Age culture. This failure, or reluctance, to admit the Conversos into the Golden-Age pantheon, deep rooted and pervasive during the Franco period, is still evident today, and is reflected in a mainstream history that shies clear of assessing the nature, extent and implications of the Conversos' involvement in sixteenth-century Spain's intellectual and artistic environment.

As the essays in this collection attest, the study of the Converso and Morisco phenomena is not only important for those of us focused on Spanish society and culture, but for academics everywhere interested in the issues of identity, nationalism, religious intolerance and the challenges of modernity. I hope that the *Converso and Morisco Studies* series will allow us to examine all of these subjects while addressing the two minority groups in question. Specifically, I hope it will give those of us caught up in Converso and Morisco issues the opportunity to address existing scholarship and to suggest fresh approaches to perennial concerns. To coincide with the first volume of the series, a website has been created (<http://spain.slu.edu/Conversos>), designed to provide information on the conferences and publications, as well as to encourage scholarly debate on questions related to our theme.

