
Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain

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Universal history is the history of a few metaphors.
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SEX HAS BECOME AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR TOPIC among historians. Whether because of changing methodologies (social history, the anthropological and the postcolonial turns, gender and queer theory) or the shifting desires of popular audiences, scholars are finding more meaning in the sexual interaction of their subjects than ever before. Some interactions, of course, are more interesting than others. Above all, historians seek sex that destabilizes categories and violates taboos. There is no doubt that the approach has been fruitful. The historiographies of colonial Latin America, of British, French, and German imperialism, and especially of race relations in the United States have all been enriched by studies too numerous to footnote, studies that explore sexual fears in order to understand how societies imagine their boundaries.

But sex has its dangers as well. The first of these is its universality, and the near universality of the many prohibitions that attend it. It is perhaps because so many societies have defined themselves through such similar strictures on sexuality that anthropologists and not historians were the first to explore their mysteries. Insofar as the sexual metaphors and rules through which societies describe themselves are widely dispersed in space and time, they seem a clumsy barometer for the transformations with which historians are often occupied. A second danger is closely related: we moderns tend to project backward our world-weary certainties, making sex pregnant with anachronism. Thus, for example, our experience of sex as the site at which nature and culture meet to produce “race” is often elevated to a general rule.¹ Rarely do we let ourselves be moved to wonder by the scandals of a distant age.

Like every article long in the making, this one has been shaped by the comments of many readers and audiences. Though unnamed, it is to them that my greatest thanks are due. Thanks, too, to the anonymous readers for the *AHR*, who put much obscurity to flight. A fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities supported the beginnings of this article, and a Mellon fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences hastened its conclusion. Traces of Sara Lipton’s many readings and generous intelligence (as well as her published work) are everywhere upon it. Finally, this article should be considered one half of a conversation with Jane Dailey, who works on similar issues an ocean and half a millennium away.

¹ See Homi Bhabha, “Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,” in Bhabha, *The Politics of Theory* (Colchester, 1983), 194: “the body is always simultaneously inscribed in both the economy of pleasure and desire and the economy of discourse, domination and power . . . It follows that the epithets racial or sexual come to be seen as modes of differentiation.” Compare Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York, 1993), 167–68; and Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester, 1990), 203, “sex is at the very heart of racism.”

The pages that follow confront these dangers. They explore the power of ancient and enduring sexual metaphors across a period of rapid change in the way Christians living in the medieval Iberian Peninsula thought about religious classification. From the late eleventh century to the end of the fifteenth, significant populations of Jews and Muslims lived under Christian domination in the lands we now call Spain. Their coexistence was not easy, for each of the three religious communities felt at risk, both physically and spiritually, from the others. That coexistence can best be described as a punctuated equilibrium: long periods of constant but functional conflict separated by episodes of widespread violence. Sex was one of the primary languages through which that conflict was articulated, and we will follow its inflection from the late thirteenth century, through the massacres and mass conversions of tens of thousands of Jews that took place across the Iberian Peninsula in 1391 and into the fifteenth century. Our fulcrum, 1391, is an important date in Jewish and Spanish history. From a Jewish point of view, it was a cataclysmic year that witnessed the greatest loss of Jewish souls in the Middle Ages and (in retrospect) marked the beginning of the end for Spanish Jewry. It would become a cataclysm of a different sort for Christians as well, the origins of a crisis of classification ("Who is a Jew?") that has seemed to many Spanish historians a "principal cause of the decadence of the Peninsula."² The crisis will be less familiar to most readers than those that accompanied, for example, the emancipation of African Americans in the U.S. South, the emancipation of Jews in modern Europe, or colonialism's (de)stabilization of racial categories. It was, however, every bit as sharp and every bit as productive. In fact, one of its products, according to some historians, was the birth of racism itself, specifically of racial anti-Semitism.³ But we will not begin with that position. Let us instead approach the subject of sex with an adolescent innocence, in the hope that we might yet be surprised by the past.

WE WILL START WITH THE UNIVERSAL. Medieval people, like their predecessors and successors, had a number of common metaphors to hand with which to imagine themselves as a sexual community. Probably the most familiar is the image of society as a human (generally male) body, as in St. Paul's "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12) or John of Salisbury's "body politic."⁴ But this corporatist image, so

² The quote is from Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos Españoles*, 3 vols. (1882; rpt. edn., Mexico City, 1982), 1: 410.

³ See most recently George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J., 2002), chap. 1. The argument has a long bibliography, on which see David Nirenberg, "El concepto de la raza en la España medieval," *Edad Media: Revista de historia* 3 (Spring 2000): 39–60.

⁴ For an early fifteenth-century example of such a metaphor from Iberia, see St. Vincent Ferrer, *Sermons*, José Sanchis Sivera and Gret Schib, eds., 6 vols. (Barcelona, 1932–88), 1: 140: "The head is Jesus Christ. The locks of hair that fly above it are the secular lords, who fly above poor people and above towns and cities by virtue of the lordship that they have; the ears are the confessors . . . the nose that smells are the devout Christians who smell the virtues of Jesus Christ . . . the mouth that eats the meat are the rich people . . . the feet that sustain the body are the laborers, for they sustain us and from their [labor] live the rich and the lords and all others." For a later (1449), richer, and more systematic use of the metaphor, see Alonso de Cartagena, *Defensorium unitatis christianae*, P. Manuel Alonso, ed. (Madrid, 1943), for example, at 150–51. The most recent commentary on the *Defensorium* is that of Bruce Rosenstock, "Alonso de Cartagena: Nation, Miscegenation, and the Jew in Late-Medieval Castile," *Exemplaria* 12 (2000): 185–204.

important in medieval politics and theology, was seldom sexualized for the purpose of delineating religious difference. Perhaps this is because the logic of the imagery (organic diversity as a functional aspect of vitality) militated against the automatic exclusion of groups like Jews and Muslims that played recognizable roles in the social order. Or perhaps it is because the image was autonomous, lacking an "other" body capable of producing sexual danger.⁵ Whatever the reason, a second corporal image for the Christian community was more widespread in Christian thought and art, and more central to the sexual imagination of society. This was *Ecclesia*, that is, the church personified as a woman. The image provided a strong foundation for a discourse of anxiety about interfaith sex, and this for two reasons. First, unlike the more political corporatism described above, the non-Christian was firmly excluded from *Ecclesia*. A long tradition of artistic and textual production presented *Ecclesia* as the positive antipode to *Synagoga*, the personification of Judaism.⁶ Second, *Ecclesia* was understood in sexualized terms as the bride of Christ. In this sense as in so many others, she was the heir of Jerusalem/Israel, whom the prophets had so often characterized as God's beloved spouse. Sentimental readers will think immediately of the Song of Songs, whose erotic imagery has been commented on by Jew and Christian alike. The more puritanical might recall Hosea, commanded by God to marry a harlot so that he might better empathize with God's wrath over the infidelity of Israel, His chosen bride. Both the bitter and the sweet make amply clear the power of sexual and marital metaphors to describe the exclusive relationship that a monotheistic God expected to have with his people. Monotheism was best imagined as monogamy, idolatry as promiscuity.⁷

But *Ecclesia* was a collective representation. Her erotic charge needed to be fragmented if it was to compel fidelity at the level of the individual. That fragmentation was achieved early. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, for example, urged every (male) Christian to care for his wife's body, and to guard her purity, just as Jesus guarded his own wife *Ecclesia*.⁸ It was an analogy well suited to sustaining the vast interpretive edifice necessary for the linking of collective religious identities to the sexual body of the individual. Perhaps for this reason, the many medieval Iberian texts concerning sex between Christian and non-Christian rarely invoked the collective corporatist metaphors. Instead, they took as their point of departure the (much less studied) individualized analogies. As in Ephesians, these analogies treated the patriarchal family, not the body, as the foundational metaphor

⁵ The organic imagery may also have attenuated the negative valence of sexuality by presenting it as a necessary function of the natural body. Thus prostitutes, when they are explicitly included in such imagery, are assigned a vital role as "drains" of excess male lust. See Jacques Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution* (Oxford, 1988), 81, 103; Francesc Eiximenis, *Lo Crestià*, Albert Hauf, ed. (Barcelona, 1983), chap. 574, p. 155 and following.

⁶ See most recently Sara Lipton, "The Temple Is My Body: Gender, Carnality, and *Synagoga* in the Bible Moralisée," in *Imaging the Self, Imaging the Other: Representations of Jews in Medieval Visual Culture*, Eva Frojmovic, ed. (Leiden, 2002), and the bibliography contained therein.

⁷ Although this article was written without its benefit, I have since discovered the delightful analysis of Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), chap. 1. The bibliography on the erotic imagery of the Song of Songs is enormous. See, for example, E. Ann Matter, "Il matrimonio mistico," in *Donne e fede: Santità e vita religiosa in Italia*, Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri, eds. (Bari, 1994), 43–60; Judith S. Neaman, "The Harlot Bride: From Biblical Code to Mystical Topos," *Vox benedictina* 4, no. 4 (1987): 277–306; Gerson Cohen, "The Song of Songs and the Jewish Religious Mentality," in *The Samuel Friedland Lectures, 1960–1966* (New York, 1966), 1–21.

⁸ Epistle to the Ephesians 5.25–33.

for Christian community. The metaphors were common throughout the Christian Middle Ages, but I will restrict myself to a few Iberian examples. King Alfonso the Wise of Castile put it this way: "Since Christians who commit adultery with married women deserve death, how much more so do Jews who lie with Christian women, for these are spiritually espoused to Our Lord Jesus Christ by virtue of the faith and baptism they received in His name."⁹ Every Christian woman, wed or unwed, was the bride of Christ through baptism. God had a sexual interest in all Christian women. As His wives, their bodies represented the extension of His authority and community, the point at which His honor as Father and husband was at risk. Because of this, women's bodies could become the site of fears concerning God's honor and that of His church.

Christian women were not just God's wives. They were also His daughters. Imagine—St. Vincent exhorted Christians in a sermon against prostitution—that the king had a daughter. Even if she consents with pleasure to have sex with you, do you not betray the king in lying with her? Would you not deserve to be drawn and quartered? The king is Jesus Christ: are prostitutes not His daughters? "Yes, surely, for he has engendered them in baptism, just as he has engendered you and all other [Christians]."¹⁰ God's "engendering" of the Christian family was of course central to the metaphor, and it too was understood in explicitly sexual terms. "Jesus every day impregnates the Church, and the womb is the baptismal font, and he sends there his semen from heaven." It is therefore the obligation of every Christian woman to honor father and mother, Jesus Christ and Holy Mother Church.¹¹ It is also their spousal duty to honor Him as husband, a duty all the greater because of the immense disparity of status between divine groom and human bride. "If a king takes the daughter of a poor laborer as wife, and she leaves him and goes off with villains, she would be considered a great whore."¹²

In all of these analogies, the emphasis is on a sexualized God. Occasionally, this sexuality is gendered feminine.¹³ Much more often, however, God is a paterfamilias, whether as husband or as father, with rights over His "family." The violation of those rights diminishes His honor, and constitutes an insult both to Him and to his "household," that is, to the entire Christian community. Of course, God's rights and His honor extend far beyond the sexual, and St. Vincent, like many other medieval preachers, talked frequently of the obligation to honor God in every action.¹⁴ Judging from the space allotted to it in his sermons, however, sex played as large a role in the divine economy of honor as it did in the human one.

⁹ *Siete partidas* 7.24.9. The translation is Dwayne E. Carpenter's, *Alfonso X and the Jews: An Edition and Commentary on Siete Partidas* 7.24 "De los judíos" (Berkeley, Calif., 1986), 35. For the punishment of Muslims, see *Siete partidas* 7.25.10, briefly discussed in Carpenter's "Minorities in Medieval Spain: The Legal Status of Jews and Muslims in the *Siete Partidas*," *Romance Quarterly* 33 (1986): 283.

¹⁰ Vincent, *Sermons*, 1: 190–91, Feria V; 2: 18, In die sancti Iohannis.

¹¹ Vincent, *Sermons*, 1: 121, Feria VI. In 3: 263, Sabbato [post dominicam XIV post Trinitatem], he uses the same image to explain why Jews and Muslims, who are not baptized, are not children of God.

¹² Vincent, *Sermons*, 2: 231–32. A similar analogy is used in 2: 153.

¹³ Vincent, *Sermons*, 3: 179, urges all Christians to be attracted by God's beauty and to seek to lie with Him, just as they would seek to lie with a beautiful woman.

¹⁴ See, for example, his sermon on "In omnibus honorificetur Deus," in Vincent, *Sermons*, 1: 111–22.

These metaphors of marriage and reproduction defined the Christian community in a number of related ways. They represent the Christian community as a family of brothers and sisters tied to God through overlapping bonds of marriage and paternity. The limits of the community are marked by strict endogamy. Muslims and Jews are not God's children, since they have not undergone God's engendering baptism.¹⁵ They are explicitly excluded from the kin group, and should therefore (as Alfonso put it) have no sexual contact with it, lest such contact establish a kinship in the flesh that dishonored the more vital kinship in the spirit.

The analogy of sexual honor had an additional virtue, for it described the Christian community's claims to privilege and allegiance in the same terms that individual Christians used to describe the claims of their own families.¹⁶ In this sense, the analogy served to bridge the gap between the individual and the collective.¹⁷ In sociological terms (I am adapting Georg Simmel), the discourse of honor functioned to stabilize "the cohesion, standing, regularity, and furtherance of the life processes" of a social group, and to isolate it from other groups or classes. It did so by appealing to the individual's "conviction that the maintenance of his honor constitutes his most intrinsic, most profound and most personal self-interest." This is what made honor, according to Simmel, "one of the most marvelous, instinctively developed expediences for the maintenance of group existence."¹⁸

There were a number of other ways in which the theology of Christian sexual honor reinforced the Christian community's sense of a coherent and cohesive identity. One of these was as object of collective punishment. Within the economy of honor in which God and medieval Christians functioned, insult required vengeance. A late fourteenth-century altar painting (retable) from Santa Maria de Sixena reminded worshipers that this vengeance could be aimed at the individual transgressor. It depicted a woman kneeling at Communion, her throat gushing blood where the Eucharist had slit it. In the neighboring panel, we see the reason for the wafer's aggression: the communicant had just taken leave of her Muslim lover.¹⁹

Much more often, however, punishment was aimed not merely at the sinner but at the totality of the collective that was dishonored and corrupted by the sin. The instruments of God's discipline were plague, famine, civil war, and other horrors.²⁰

¹⁵ Vincent, *Sermons*, 3: 263.

¹⁶ The literature on honor, gender, and family structure is vast. See, for example, the recent contribution by Petrus Cornelis Spierenburg, "Masculinity, Violence, and Honor: An Introduction," in *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America*, Spierenburg, ed. (Columbus, Ohio, 1998). For an Iberian example, see Mark Meyerson's ongoing work in Valencia, for instance, "'Assaulting the House': Interpreting Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Violence in Late Medieval Iberia," in *Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Middle Ages*, Aminadav Dykman and M. Taccioni, eds. (University Park, Pa., forthcoming).

¹⁷ There were other analogies available that were less "sexualized" than the family analogy, but these too were generally implicated in the same logic of honor. Consider, for example, the analogy of baptism as an oath of fealty, requiring the Christian's loyalty and willingness to uphold the honor of his lord (Vincent, *Sermons*, 3: 111).

¹⁸ Ute Frevert, *Men of Honor: A Social and Cultural History of the Duel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 47; Georg Simmel, *Soziologie*, 5th edn. (Berlin, 1968), 403–06.

¹⁹ Museo de Arte de Catalunya, inv. no. 15916, attributed to Jaume Serra. See José Gudiol and Santiago Alcolea i Blanch, *Pintura gòtica catalana* (Barcelona, 1986), 51, no. 110 (illustration on p. 224).

²⁰ Hence the municipal governments of Valencia worried, in 1335, about the public health

Again, St. Vincent was a systematic exponent of this logic. In a number of his sermons, he listed six particularly dishonorable sins that provoke God's punishing anger: reliance on witches and fortune-tellers; blasphemy; ignoring God's feasts (Sundays and holidays); failing to bring gamblers, usurers, and other thieves of God's goods to justice. The fifth sin (and the one that often received the most space) was negligence in the repression of prostitution. If the populace wished to avoid divine punishment, it must locate any brothel outside the town. It must allow no concubines or public women in its midst, for if even just one man should have a concubine, "it is something very dangerous for the community." Had not St. Paul explained that, on account of one concubine alone, an entire "city was corrupted, and suffered great plagues"? "Do you not know that a little leaven corrupts the entire dough?" "Therefore, eject the prostitute into the street, for on her account so many plagues have come upon you."²¹ Finally, the sixth point: segregate Jews and Muslims, and have nothing to do with them. Do not even light their fires, for it was in just such a seemingly innocent transaction that "a young Christian girl was raped by a Jew." Proper attention to these six issues, according to St. Vincent, would guarantee the health of the city and allow its inhabitants to say: "In the holy dwelling I ministered before Him."²²

It is not so much the content of this catalog of vice that concerns us here as the images that were called upon in this and other sermons in order to express the dangers that sexual sins posed to the community. A little yeast in a large mass of dough, one sick sheep infecting the flock, a spoiled apple rotting the entire bin: all these analogies supported models of corruption and contagion that raised the consequences of individual sin to the level of the community. In this sense, anxieties about sexual honor helped to define the Christian community as a collective with "natural" boundaries whose integrity needed to be maintained if disease was to be avoided. Here, too, then, the language of sexual honor worked "to express both the exclusive nature of the allegiance and the confused social experience."²³

implications of sins taking place within their jurisdiction, "for which sins, so enormous and grave . . . our lord God . . . gives great whippings, even canings." See Archivo Histórico Municipal, Valencia (hereafter, AMV), Lletres Missives (Ll.M.), g³-1, fol. 51v (November 1335).

²¹ Vincent, *Sermons*, 3: 111–13. The Pauline citation is from 1 Cor. 5. Elsewhere, St. Vincent draws on different analogies from the world of fermentation: "Corruption of the populace: for if there is a woman, concubine, or [sexual] friend of someone in the town, the entire town is corrupted . . . , and one such person can corrupt more than all the others can cure." He goes on: "If you have 1,000 apples in a bin, and one is rotten, all the others will rot . . . thus one bad person corrupts the good ones." Such corruption angers God, so that he sends us plague (*Sermons*, 2: 217–19). Similarly, *Sermons*, 3: 140: one bad apple can corrupt the whole container, and even all the good apples together cannot cure the one that is rotten.

²² "In habitacione sancta coram ipso ministravi." The reference is to Ecclesiasticus 24.10–11: "In the holy tent I ministered before Him/ and thus became established in Zion. In the beloved city he has given me rest,/ and in Jerusalem I wield my authority."

²³ The quote is from Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (1973; New York, 1982), viii. Her work is of obvious relevance here, although I believe it is quite significant that the metaphors I have described are not those preferred by her theory, of Christian society as a body. Rather, the emphasis in my sources is on society as an aggregate of individual units bound together by the intimately related forces of kinship, common honor, and a shared vulnerability to each other's disease. See also Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Boston, 1966), 122–28; and her more recent "Rightness of Categories," in *How Classification Works: Nelson Goodman among the Social Sciences*, Douglas and David L. Hull, eds. (Edinburgh, 1992), 239–71.

In other words, the sexualized boundaries inscribed on the bodies of women in order to demarcate familial honor could be generalized to heighten the cohesion of larger units of society. This resulted in something of a hierarchy of sexual sins. Moral reformers like St. Vincent seldom ranked systematically the sins they preached against, but they clearly feared some adulteries more than others. For example, because priests touched Christ's Eucharistic body in the Mass, the clerical concubines whose bodies corrupted those hands dishonored Christ doubly: "You, woman, who grant your body to a cleric . . . commit a greater sin by lying just once with him than if you granted it to all the other men in Aragon *in specie*."²⁴ And of course, forms of sexual activity that might normally be tolerated could be perceived as dangerous at specific times, such as during plagues or Lent. But the type of sexual sin that elicited by far the most sustained and extensive concern, and that was considered to be the greatest "dishonor to God and to the Catholic faith," is the one that concerns us here: intercourse between God's friends and His enemies, that is, in this case, between Christians and Muslims or Jews.

It was largely (but not exclusively) to prevent such intercourse that throughout the Middle Ages Christian theologians (as well as Muslim jurists and Jewish rabbis) emphasized the importance of maintaining sexual boundaries between the three religious groups. These boundaries might be said to constitute the "skin" of the sexualized body social. But it is important to remember that, unlike skin, these boundaries did not have a fixed location, meaning, or function in society. Rather, they were dynamic, displaceable, and highly responsive to the changing needs of the societies that produced them.

At some level, ancient and medieval legislators, whether Christian or Jew, were well aware of this. The Babylonian Talmud wrestles with the fact that the biblical passage on which Jewish restrictions on intermarriage were based applied explicitly only to intermarriage with people from seven nations that had ceased to exist shortly after the conquest by the Israelites of the Holy Land, more than a thousand years before.²⁵ The Talmudic passage treats the evolution of sexual boundaries in historical time and shows a full awareness that the sexual boundary can be extended to all kinds of nonsexual interaction. The passage even articulates the logic by which such movement occurs. Because sex and marriage can be positioned along a continuum of social and cultural relations and types of exchange, prohibitions on sex and marriage can be moved along that continuum as well: private association may lead to sex, hence association is forbidden. And of course, all these sexual boundaries were related to the more fundamental religious one: "With all the things against which they decreed the purpose was to safeguard against idolatry . . . [They made a decree] against their bread and oil on account of their wine; against their wine on account of their daughters; against their daughters on account of

²⁴ Vincent, *Sermons*, 1: 190–91, Feria V.

²⁵ Babylonian Talmud, 'Avoda Zahra 36b, Soncino translation: "The biblical ordinance [against intermarriage] is restricted to the seven nations [of Canaan] and does not include other heathen peoples; and [the schools of Hillel and Shamai] came and decreed against these also . . . Perhaps the biblical ordinance refers to an Israelite woman in intercourse with a heathen since she would be drawn after him, but not against an Israelite man having intercourse with a heathen woman, and they [court of the Hasmoneans] came and decreed even against the latter . . . The decree of the Hasmoneans was against intercourse but not against private association, so they came and decreed even against this."

another matter.”²⁶ The medieval Jewish scholar Maimonides put it more bluntly when he wrote that prohibitions on exchange and social interaction between Jews and non-Jews were established as a “precaution, lest such [social] intercourse should lead to intermarriage.” The logic is strikingly similar to that of a formulation famous in anthropology: “A continuous transition exists from war to exchange, and from exchange to intermarriage, and the exchange of brides is merely the conclusion to an uninterrupted process of reciprocal gifts, which effects the transition from hostility to alliance, from anxiety to confidence, and from fear to friendship.”²⁷

Medieval Christians read little Talmud and less anthropology, but they would have recognized this logic as their own. They, too, shared the sense that seemingly innocent forms of exchange might lead to the effacement of difference, and thereby to more dangerous exchanges. The canon lawyer Johannes Teutonicus made the point quite wittily when asked: why are Christians allowed to talk to Jews but forbidden to eat with them? The reply: talking is one thing, but eating? Who knows what can happen between courses.²⁸ And they, too, used anxiety about the integrity of sexual boundaries to underwrite any number of practices of discrimination and identification.²⁹ When, for example, the “Jewish badge” was imposed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the distinction was justified as necessary in order that easy identification might prevent sexual intercourse across religious lines. The same logic was repeated later in the century by King Alfonso, and is frequent in Iberian legislation:

Many errors and offensive acts occur between Christian men and Jewish women and between Christian women and Jewish men as a consequence of their living together in cities and dressing alike. In order to obviate the errors and evils that might result from this situation, we consider it proper and decree that all Jewish men and women living in our kingdom wear some sort of mark upon their heads so that all may clearly discern who is a Jew or a Jewess.³⁰

²⁶ Babylonian Talmud, ‘Avoda Zahra 36b. Compare *Sifrei on Numbers*, sec. 131, where the Israelite descent into the worship of Ba’al begins with the search for bargains in Gentiles’ shops, through a shared cup of wine during negotiation, to sex with the young shopwoman.

²⁷ Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Sefer Kedushah XII.2. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Rodney Needham, ed., James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and R. Needham, trans. (Boston, 1969), 67–68.

²⁸ See Johannes’s gloss to Gratian’s *Decretum*, C.28 q.1 c.14 (Omnes deinceps clerici), s.v. Iudeorum: “Sed quare loquimur cum eis cum nec comedamus cum eis? Sed de hoc redditur ratio: quia maior familiaritas est in cibo sumendo quam in colloquio, et facilius quis decipitur inter epulas, ut xxii. q.iii. Unusquisque (C.22 q.4 c.8).” My thanks to Ken Pennington for help with this reference. There are a number of studies on the status of non-Christians in canon law pertaining to marriage. See most recently Paul Mikat, *Die Judengesetzgebung der merowingisch-fränkischen Konzilien* (Opladen, 1995); James A. Brundage, “Intermarriage between Christians and Jews in Medieval Canon Law,” *Jewish History* 3 (1988): 25–40; Walter Pakter, *Medieval Canon Law and the Jews* (Ebelsbach am Main, 1988), 263–91.

²⁹ The frequency of miscegenation between Christian and Jew would be cited, for example, to justify the expulsion of Jews from Anjou and Maine in 1289 and from the French royal domains in 1308 and 1322. See William C. Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia, 1989), 182; David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), 53.

³⁰ *Siete partidas* 7.24.11; Carpenter, *Alfonso X*, 36.

In short, many medieval Christians believed, as so many other societies have done, that the transition from “other” to “self” (in this case, from infidel and alien to Christian and kin) would culminate in sexual union. Because of this, the entire process of spiritual identification and integration could be most powerfully represented in terms of the sexual act, a process bluntly described by St. Paul: “You surely know that anyone who links himself with a harlot becomes physically one with her (for Scripture says, ‘the pair shall become one flesh’); but he who links himself with Christ is one with Him, spiritually.”³¹ This is why medieval Christian anxieties about identification and, ultimately, about the integrity of the self were so often expressed in sexual terms. It is also why, for Christian, Jew, and Muslim alike, the question was always where to draw the line to best interrupt this continuum. No matter where these boundaries were drawn, they were sexual in the sense that they justified themselves as safeguards against sexual danger. But they could be constructed in all kinds of places, and the place chosen could have a tremendous effect on intergroup relations. If, as in the Talmudic example, any and all associations were thought to lead to sex, then total segregation was necessary; if only wine drinking were dangerous, then anxiety could focus there.

THUS FAR, I HAVE BEEN OUTLINING the common logics and enduring metaphors of sex that medieval Christian (as well as Jewish and Muslim) communities used to help define and identify themselves as a collective, and to heighten the barriers of honor with which that collective surrounded itself. But the specific outcome of these logics within a given society was highly variable, always dependent on the peculiar shape and physiological needs of that social body. So let us now focus on the sexual vanities and vulnerabilities of Christian Spain in concrete time, namely before 1391 and after. Where did our subjects imagine their society to be sexually most at risk? How did they seek to defend that society from the sexual dangers that assailed it? It is through such questions that the sexual will become historical, capable of revealing the passions of a particular time and place.

So where, in the century before 1391, did Christians fear that their religion was sexually most at risk? Anxiety over the integrity of sexual boundaries can alight in many different places: on children, wives, slaves, widows, even (as in the case of the Spanish Civil War) on nuns. The particular form the anxiety takes depends not so much on the quantitative reality of sexual interaction (anxieties need not correspond to the real) but on far more complicated cultural logics, whose outcomes can be quite surprising. For example, the previous section described how the metaphor of marriage facilitated the convergence of familial and communal honor upon

³¹ 1 Cor. 6: 16–17. The relationship between sexual and spiritual kinship could be explored further through the literature on consanguinity. See the material collected by James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987), 356 nn. 155–56; “Marriage and Sexuality in the Decretals of Pope Alexander III,” in *Miscellanea Rolando Bandinelli Papa Alessandro III*, Filippo Liotta and Roberto Tofanini, eds. (Sienna, 1986), 71. Compare, for example, Gratian’s ambiguity on whether a prostitute can marry a former client (James Brundage, “Prostitution in the Medieval Canon Law,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1 [Summer 1976]: 844) to Thomas Aquinas’s ruling that a Christian who sponsored a non-Christian for baptism was barred on grounds of consanguinity from marriage with the convert. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales* 6.3.2, Raimondo Spiazzi, ed., 8th edn. (Rome, 1949), 120–21. My thanks to Mark Jordan for this last reference.

female sexuality in the theological and social imagination of medieval Christians. Given this convergence, we might expect a good deal of concern about the possibility that married or marriageable women might engage in interfaith adultery. In fact, such concern is almost entirely absent from the archival or the literary record. In the few court cases involving such accusations that I have found, the charges end up being dismissed.³² Acquittal is the theme, as well, in Alfonso the Wise's *Cantigas de Santa María*, where the Virgin intervenes to save a young wife falsely accused by her mother-in-law of intercourse with her Muslim slave: a rare literary example of such concern in a culture where, it should be remembered, the presence of male Muslim slaves in Christian households was common.³³

Those few texts that do focus on the desire of married Christian women for non-Christians tend to do so playfully, in the context of "frontier adventures." An Aragonese chronicle, for example, tells about one Count Don Rodrigo, who was engaged in a border skirmish with a Muslim king. Before turning his horse to flee, the king dropped his trousers and showed the count his penis: "What do you think of this," he boasted, and disappeared. Hearing the story from her husband at the dinner table, the count's wife conceived a desire for the Muslim and determined to join him, setting in motion an elaborate plot. The tale narrates the count's many travails, which included being locked in a chest by his wife, who had intercourse upon it with the Muslim and then presented it to him as a post-coital present. In the end, the count avenges himself, and the highly literary trickster narrative concludes on a didactic note: not with a moral about the dangers of miscegenation but with the text of certain prayers the count had found useful in his tribulations.³⁴ This sense of the sexual fluidity of the frontier is typical of a number of literary sources. "Mi padre era de Ronda y mi madre de Antequera," one poem begins. That is, my father is from a Christian town and my mother from a Muslim one. Romances like "Mariana y el moro Galván" remind us a bit less explicitly that the reverse could also be true. But the possibility of this type of sexual interaction seems to have provoked little anxiety. Even Alfonso the Wise, the author of the law cited above

³² For example, when the Muslim Çalema Abinumen was accused of sexual relations with Arnaldona, the wife of Ramon d'Aguilar, of Lleida, Ramon denied any knowledge or suspicion of the deed, and the charges were dismissed. Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó, Cancilleria (Barcelona) (hereafter, ACA: C), 876: 60v–62r (April 2, 1344), cited by Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, *Els sarraïns de la corona catalano-aragonesa en el segle XIV: Segregació i discriminació* (Barcelona, 1987), 31; published by Josefa Mutgé Vives, *L'aljama sarraïna de Lleida a l'edat mitjana: Aproximació a la seva història* (Barcelona, 1992), 298–302. Of course, the motives for such denials need have little to do with innocence or guilt. The Jew who struggled with a naked Gentile he found hiding under his wife's bed chose to believe his wife's story that the man had given her his pants and shirt to repair, since if he doubted her she would be forbidden him by Jewish law. Solomon ben Adret (RaShbA), *She'elot u-Teshuvot* 1: no. 1187, cited by Yom Tov Assis, "Sexual Behavior in Mediaeval Hispano-Jewish Society," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds. (London, 1988), 47. There are exceptions. Samuel Bon Aloor, a Jew of Tafalla in Navarre, was killed by the Christian Pere Xemeniz in 1376 when he found the Jew in bed with his wife. See Béatrice Leroy, "Les difficultés de la communauté juive navarroise, observées par les officiers du royaume, au XIV^e siècle," in *Exile and Diaspora: Studies of the Jewish People Presented to Professor Haim Beinart*, Aaron Mirsky, et al., eds. (Jerusalem and Madrid, 1991), 54. Leroy calls the case "unique."

³³ *Cantigas de Santa María, de Don Alfonso el Sabio*, Real Academia Española, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1889), 2: 262–64.

³⁴ Biblioteca de Catalunya (Barcelona), ms. 353, fols. 29v–32r. The manuscript is from the fifteenth century, and has been noted (for very different purposes) only by Martín de Riquer, "Una versión aragonesa de la leyenda de la enterrada viva," *Revista de Bibliografía Nacional* 6 (1945): 241–48.

forbidding Christian women from having sex with non-Christians, could be relaxed enough to write a poem about a Christian woman who fights sexual duels with a Muslim knight on the frontier. She exhausts and defeats the brave Muslim but not before he wounds her with his "little lance."³⁵

None of this is meant to suggest that Christian society approved of such intercourse. To the contrary, we know that it could be savagely repressed, and the legal punishment for it was death.³⁶ The point is only that, regardless of its quantitative reality, such intercourse did not form an important focus of public concern or anchor a rhetoric of anxiety about sexual boundaries between religious communities. Another sexual boundary does, however, emerge as particularly fraught in the medieval Iberian sources before 1391, and that is the one between Christian prostitutes and non-Christian men.

I have written elsewhere at length about the role of prostitutes in regulating relations between Muslims, Christians, and Jews in fourteenth-century Spain, and will therefore state the point baldly here.³⁷ Within this discourse of honor built on analogies of marriage and the family, concern focused on women who were outside the bounds of both those institutions. The archives are full of accusations charging Jewish and Muslim men with breaking the law against sexual intercourse with Christian prostitutes. In essence, prostitutes became the focal point for anxiety about sexual frontiers, the site at which dishonor threatened the Christian community. Prostitutes were the only Christian women routinely burned or strangled for the crime of sexual intercourse across religious boundaries, and they themselves knew that, if accused, they faced the flames unless they could exculpate themselves by proving that the non-Christian appeared Christian. Because markers of identity were for them a matter of life and death, prostitutes came to play the role of specialists in the recognition (and ideally, the rejection) of religious difference.

The story of Alicsend de Tolba and Aytola the Sarracen is a good example of this role. Alicsend was a Christian prostitute who visited a shepherds' camp in 1304. After some time, Lorenç the Shepherd ("Lorenç Pastor") went to the Muslim called Aytola the Sarracen ("Aytola Sarray") and asked him if he wouldn't like to have intercourse with Alicsend. Aytola objected that he was a Muslim and that he had no money, but Lorenç offered to loan Aytola the money and "told the said moor to say

³⁵ For examples of such romances (which are admittedly fifteenth-century), see *Romancero viejo (antología)*, María Cruz García de Enterría, ed. (Madrid, 1987), nos. 41, 54, 56. There is much recent work on the literary image of the Muslim. For a panoramic view, María Soledad Carrasco Urgoiti, *El moro de Granada en la literatura (del siglo XV al XX)* (Madrid, 1956), remains useful. For Alfonso's poem, *Cantigas d'Escarnho e de mal dezir dos cancioneiros medievais galego-portugueses*, Manuel Rodrigues Lapa, ed., 3d edn. (Lisbon, 1995), 36, no. 25. See also David Ashurst, "Masculine Postures and Poetic Gambits: The Treatment of the Soldadeira in the *Cantigas d'Escarnho e de mal dezir*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 74 (1997): 1–6.

³⁶ The risks were more theoretical than real in that, apart from prostitutes, virtually no Christian women were executed for the crime. I know of only one case, involving a nun and a Jew in Mallorca. Nevertheless, the punishments were feared. In 1311, Prima Garsón fled her home in Daroca when rumors implicated her in an affair with a Muslim named Ali, burned at the stake in her absence. After her capture, a medical exam proved her virginity and therefore her innocence (as well as the unfortunate Ali's), none of which had served to assuage her initial terror. See ACA: C, 239: 32v, 95r, 125r, 205v; ACA: C, 241: 117r.

³⁷ The next two pages summarize material from my *Communities of Violence*, chap. 5, to which the reader is referred for references.

that his name was Johan, to speak in [illegible], and to say that he was from the port." The deception ended when Alicsend "recognized that he was a moor in his member" and screamed for help. Aytola fled, and Alicsend denounced both him and Lorenç for falsity and deviousness "in dishonor of God and of the Catholic faith."³⁸ In this case, it is Aytola's expulsion from Alicsend that identifies him as alien, an "otherness," which not coincidentally is somatized and recognized in his sexual member by the prostitute in her role as protector of God's honor.

This emphasis on the prostitute as incarnation of the sexual boundary between religions is perhaps the most distinctive feature of pre-1391 sexual moral economy. Insofar as this "social system" focused responsibility for maintaining the sexual integrity of religious boundaries on the prostitute, it construed sexual danger as narrowly as possible, and thereby freed a relatively large proportion of public and private space for interaction and exchange across religious boundaries. Before 1391, in other words, the prostitute's discipline (and the disciplining of prostitutes) sufficed to guarantee Christian confidence in the security of sexual frontiers. So long as the prostitute did her job, Christian and non-Christian could work together, gamble and drink together, even sleep in the same house, without triggering sexual panics.

Remaining within this "functionalist mode" for a moment, what is most striking about this system is its stability, or, rather, its ability to respond adequately to social change. I proposed earlier that the discourse of collective sexual honor functioned to stabilize "the cohesion, standing, regularity, and furtherance of the life processes" of the Christian community. We should therefore expect that heightened instability or incoherence in that cohesion would induce, one, a heightening of the language of sexual honor and a sharpening of the sexual boundaries through which that language inscribes itself in social life, and two, a more insistent demarcation of religious difference. This expectation is not disappointed. Consider, for example, the reactions of Iberian Christians to the murderous advent of the bubonic plague in 1348, and to its remorseless return decade after decade over the centuries that followed. Plague was believed to be (among other things) the result of disorder in Christian society, expressed in terms of insufficient attention to the honor of God and of His privileged people.³⁹ It is therefore not surprising that outbreaks of plague were often greeted with a host of moral reforms, including the heightened seclusion of prostitutes and increased concern with the dangers of interfaith sexuality.⁴⁰ At an extreme, Christians' attempts to augment the distance between Christian and non-Christian as a means of assuaging God's anger could lead to

³⁸ ACA: C, Procesos, new numeration 12/14 (1304), fol. 2v, testimony of Pedro, "fil d'en Enegot Saragoça." Unfortunately, the advice as to how Aytola should speak is illegible. For another case of a Muslim using the name "John" to pass as a Christian, see ACA: C, 528: 285r-v, February 28, 1334. The formula about dishonor of God is used often in cases of blasphemy or interfaith sexuality.

³⁹ For more extended discussion, see the epilogue to Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*. Compare René Girard's claim that in primitive societies "contagious disease is not clearly distinguished from acute internal discord," in "Generative Scapegoating," in *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formations*, Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, ed. (Stanford, Calif., 1987), 84, 90.

⁴⁰ Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno has shown that prohibitions on such intercourse were almost invariably reissued during times of famine and plague. See *Pueblo, poder y sexo: Valencia medieval (1306-1420)* (Valencia, 1992), 75. Contemporaries were quite explicit about the association. For example, the bishop of Valencia wrote to the town council in 1351 condemning the presence of Christians in the Muslim and Jewish neighborhoods of the city lest "by their sins, our lord God all-powerful might wish to send

outbreaks of extensive violence against the Jews: the massacres of Jews in 1348 are a notorious example. More commonly, Christians might demarcate what they believed to be “proper boundaries” through more stylized violence. Hence the Jews complained in 1354 that “without any reason they injure, harass, stone, and even kill the Jews living in the said kingdoms and lands, the said Christians declaring that because of the sins of the Jews there come mortalities and famines, and committing the said harms against the Jews so that the said pestilences might cease.”⁴¹

This logic quickly lost its violent force as the plague became familiar, another of a number of routine calamities. But the link between crisis and heightened concerns with interfaith sexuality did not disappear. We see it, for example, during the civil war that consumed Castile in the 1360s and culminated in the murder of King Peter “the Cruel” by his half-brother Henry of Trastámara. According to the propagandists of his rivals, Peter was a “cuckoo,” a Jewish baby snuck into the royal cradle by the queen, who had supposedly given birth to a girl and feared being dismissed for failure to produce an heir. This explained Peter’s cruelty and his bad government. For complex reasons, such “hybridity” stories tended to collect around nodes of violent resistance to monarchy.⁴² But the point here is a simpler one. This was a society in which complaints about disorder, the subversion of hierarchy, or the erosion of privilege were often written in the shorthand of interfaith sex. It is in such crises of status, and not in the furtive meetings of star-crossed lovers, that we should locate the occasional outbursts of moral indignation (such as Seville’s complaint in 1371 that the law of witness made it virtually impossible to convict Jews caught in adultery with Christians, or the plea of the cities assembled in parliament in 1385 about the proper protection of Christian women) that punctuate the century before 1391.⁴³

Despite these crises, what is most characteristic of the system is its equilibrium. Heightened fears about pollution and the coherence of the body social might

pestilences about the land.” AMV, *Manuales de Consells*, A-10, fol. 25 (October 7, 1351). Such arguments are frequent in the documentation.

⁴¹ See the texts mentioned in Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 239 n. 29. Add to those Real Biblioteca de El Escorial ms. ç.III.18, fol. 35r–v, where Prince Pere of Ribagorça writes to the pope in 1354 that “whenever God’s omnipotent hand afflicts the people with some pestilence, mortality, famine, or poor harvest, many of the country folk hold the ignorant opinion that this happens because of the sins of the Jews,” and indiscreet men exploit this belief in order to foment riots against the Jews, “deducing what is infamous, that once the Jews are banished, these pestilences, deaths, famines, and poverty will cease.”

⁴² On Peter, see Maurice Kriegel, “Histoire sociale et ragots: Sur l’ ‘ascendance juive’ de Ferdinand le Catholique,” in *Movimientos migratorios y expulsiones en la diáspora occidental*, Fermín Miranda García, ed. (Pamplona, 2000), 95–100. The partisans of Prince Charles used similar charges against his half-brother, the future “most Catholic king” Ferdinand, during the civil war in mid-fifteenth-century Aragon. And long before Peter, in Castile, Alfonso VIII’s nobles were said to have saved king and kingdom by murdering his lover, a Jewess who had gained a dangerous ascendancy over him. See among other sources the *Crónica de 1344*, Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), ms. 10,815, fol. 145r–v.

⁴³ In 1371, the municipal council of Seville complained of a law that they claimed allowed a Jew to be convicted of adultery with a Christian woman only if a Jew witnessed the crime, and stipulated that the accusing husband be executed if he could not thus prove his accusation. The king responded by granting that Jews could be convicted of adultery on the basis of only Christian witnesses, if those witnesses were unimpeachable. See Isabel Montes Romero-Camacho, “El antijudaísmo o antisemitismo sevillano . . .,” in *Los caminos del exilio*, Juan Carrasco, ed. (Tudela, 1996), 106. For the Cortes of Valladolid in 1385, see *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y de Castilla*, Manuel Danvila y Collado, ed., 5 vols. (Madrid, 1863), 2: 322, law 3, against Christian women who live with Jews and Muslims.

momentarily sharpen attention to possible lapses in the enforcement of sexual boundaries, or result in changes like that of 1371 in Seville, which altered the laws concerning the witnessing of interfaith adultery. But such episodes did not cause Christian society to question its basic confidence in the integrity of those sexual boundaries or to propose their dramatic reconstruction. The massacres and mass conversions of 1391 did.

THROUGHOUT THAT YEAR, Christian rioters attacked Jews in town after town across the Iberian Peninsula.⁴⁴ Thousands of Jews were killed, many thousands more converted to Christianity. Their conversion seemed at first miraculous to Spanish Christians. In the city of Valencia, for example, so many Jews sought baptism that the clergy feared running out of chrism. But the priests returned from supper to find vessels that they had left empty now overflowing. "Consider for yourself," the town council wrote the king, "whether these things can have a natural cause. We believe that they cannot, but can only be the work of the Almighty."⁴⁵ This sense of wonder was eventually replaced by a very different reaction. By the late fifteenth century, many Christians considered the conversions a disaster that threatened the spiritual health of the entire Christian community. The converts and their descendents were now seen as insincere Christians, as clandestine Jews, or even as hybrid monsters, neither Jew nor Christian. They converted merely to gain power over Christians, to degrade, even poison, Christian men and to have sex with Christian women. Some went so far as to see this insincerity as a product of nature. Baptism could not alter the fact that the Jews' blood was corrupted by millennia of mixture and debasement, indelibly saturated with a hatred of everything Christian. Hence purity of blood laws were needed to bar the descendents of converts from any position of power or privilege, and "natural Christians" were encouraged not to intermarry with them. Further, the danger of secret Judaizing warranted the establishment of institutions (such as the Inquisition) to identify, reform, or extirpate those at risk, and eventually justified the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ The massacres and mass conversions still await their monograph. Among the many articles on the subject, see, for Castile, Emilio Mitre Fernández, *Los judíos de Castilla en tiempo de Enrique III: El pogrom de 1391* (Valladolid, 1994); and for the Crown of Aragon, the articles of Jaume Riera i Sans: "Los tumultos contra las juderías de la corona de aragon en 1391," *Cuadernos de historia* 8 (1977): 213–25; "Estrangers Participants als Avalots contra les jueueries de la Corona d'Aragó el 1391," *Anuario de estudios medievales* 10 (1980): 577–83; "Els avalots de 1391 a Girona," in *Jornades d'història dels jueus a Catalunya* (Girona, 1987), 95–159. On Jewish reaction to the massacres, see most recently Ram Ben Shalom, "Sanctification of the Name and Jewish Martyrology in Aragon and Castile in 1391: Between Spain and Ashkenaz" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 70 (2001): 227–82.

⁴⁵ See the list of miracles in AMV, Ll.M., g³-5, fols. 20v–22v, dated July 14, 1391, published in José Hinojosa Montalvo, *The Jews of the Kingdom of Valencia* (Jerusalem, 1993), 332–34, no. 11. The letter presents to the king the exculpatory claim that the massacres were a "misteri divinal" accompanied by many miracles and wonders.

⁴⁶ Many of these claims were first put forth explicitly in the polemics surrounding a revolt in Toledo in 1449. See Eloy Benito Ruano, "El memorial contra los conversos del bachiller Marcos García de Mora (Marquillos de Mazarambroz)," *Sefarad* 17 (1957): 314–51; and "La Sentencia-Estatuto de Pero Sarmiento contra los conversos toledanos," *Revista de la Universidad de Madrid*, 4th series, 6 (1957): 277–306. For a slightly later example of such claims, see the treatise known as the "Alborayque": *Tratado del Alborayque*, Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), ms. 17,567; and Moshe Lazar, "Anti-Jewish and Anti-converso Propaganda: Confutatio libri Talmud and Alborayque," in *The Jews of Spain and the*

Beneath the setting sun of Iberian Jewry, these later events cast a long backward shadow. Historians of medieval Iberia have therefore tended, like students of so many other “failed emancipations,” to take continuities of hatred for granted. In their writings, new discriminations arise refurbished from the ashes of the old, rendered immortal either by the unchanging character of the persecutor (the anti-Semite remains at heart an anti-Semite) or of the persecuted (the convert remains at heart a Jew).⁴⁷ I do not propose to confront the full force of that historiography here but to chip away at its foundations with a series of blunt questions. First, how did the generation of Christians that came of age in 1391 and the quarter century following imagine the consequences of the massacres and conversions they had wrought? Why, as it turns out, were they so unconcerned with convert religiosity and so concerned about sex with Jews? Were their sexual concerns the same as those of their ancestors and descendants? If not, what can such differences teach us about, specifically, the emergence of Old Christian enmity toward converts and, more generally, about the function of sexual boundaries in systems of discrimination and classification?

The mass conversions of 1391 did provoke an important Christian “identity crisis,” one that would sharply constrict the space available for religious diversity in the Peninsula. But this was a very different crisis from the later ones that would transform Iberia into a land of inquisitors and pure blood statutes. The concern of Christians in the years after 1391 was not that religious identity was unchanging but rather the opposite, that the disappearance of the Jews and the emergence of the *conversos* would undermine the distinctive value and meaning of Christian identity. Correspondingly, their attention was not focused on the religious practices of the converts or on establishing differences between Old Christian and New but on reinforcing the still more fundamental boundary between Christian and Jew.

Listen, for example, to King Joan I of Aragon in 1393. Writing to a number of his most important cities, he informed them that it had become impossible for “natural Christians,” that is, not the converts, to tell who was a convert to Christianity and who was still a Jew. Henceforth, converts were to be forbidden to live, dine, or have conversation with Jews. The Jews were to be made to wear more conspicuous badges and Jewish hats, so “that they appear to be Jews.” The king ended the letter with his most emphatic point: “And we order and desire that if any of these said Jews are found with a Christian woman in a suspicious place, in order

Expulsion of 1492, Lazar and Stephen Haliczer, eds. (Lancaster, Calif., 1997), 153–236. Lazar provides an edition of the text based on the Bibliothèque Nationale de France ms. Esp. 356. For an example of the literature that arose on how to deal with the “heretics,” see Andrés de Miranda’s treatise addressed to the Catholic monarchs on the need for an Inquisition: Escorial ms. Cast. a.IV.15.

⁴⁷ For an example of the first position, see Ben Zion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition* (New York, 1996). For the second (far more common), see 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 Sefardí de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha*, Ricardo Izquierdo Benito, ed. (Toledo, 1993), 82–83: “Está claro, para cualquiera que sea sensato, que los judíos bautizados masivamente en 1391 no podían sentirse integrados en la sociedad cristiana.”

to have carnal copulation with her, let them both be burned without mercy.”⁴⁸ Similar admonitions would be continually repeated in the decade that followed.

The letters were probably triggered by the case of Saltell Gracia, a Jew of Barcelona who was that week being tried for “promenading in Christian dress and under guise of that dress having sex with many Christian women.”⁴⁹ The case resonated, however, with preexisting concerns, which helps to explain the quite extraordinary fact that, from this particular, the king and his advisers hurried to articulate a general collapse of the normal processes of identification and classification in the wake of the mass conversions. The king stipulated a number of solutions to the problem, and their differential reception is interesting. First, he ordered that the social and physical distance between convert and Jew be increased through segregation. The order was roundly ignored. (In fact, the clearest attempt to increase residential segregation at this time, by the archbishop of Zaragoza, actually predates the king’s letters and was strongly opposed by the monarchy.)⁵⁰ Second, the king demanded that the Jews be marked even more visibly. Authorities took to this option with gusto, “hypermarking” the remaining Jews by forcing them to dress in more distinctive clothes and increasing the size of the badge they were obliged to wear. Within a month of the king’s letter, the queen had to issue another, ordering that no additional distinctions be imposed on the Jews of Valencia, since they were already “sufficiently marked,” and additional clothing regulations would lead them to abandon the city.⁵¹ Finally, the more fundamental point from which the others drew their power: the king demanded greater vigilance toward and punishment of sex between Christian women and Jewish men.

Such letters make clear that concern with sexual boundaries rose to the forefront of Christian consciousness in the very first moments of mass conversion. But the practical implications of that concern, and the political uses to which it could be put in ordering society, were very much open to negotiation. The problem of segregation provides a good example. Since the Fourth Lateran Council, if not earlier, church and (less frequently) secular authorities had preached and legislated the ideal of complete residential segregation of Christians and Jews, often invoking the danger of sexual mixing as justification. But throughout this period, the ideal, though frequently invoked, remained unimplemented.⁵² As the example of Zara-

⁴⁸ ACA: C, 1964: 108v–109v, August 18, 1393, addressed to Tortosa, published in Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1929–36), 1: 716–18, no. 456. The Tortosa letter should be viewed together with those to Barcelona (see José-María Madurell Marimón, “La cofradía de la Santa Trinidad, de los conversos de Barcelona,” *Sefarad* 18 [1958]: 72–77) and Girona (unedited, ACA: C, 1960: 120v–121v). A similar letter to Morvedre is dated April 4, 1396 (ACA: C, 1911: 46r–v, 2d numeration). See also Riera, “Judíos y conversos,” 83.

⁴⁹ ACA: C, 2030: 80r–v (August 23, 1393): “quod ambulans in habitu christianorum et sub ipsis habitus velamine habuit rem carnalem cum pluribus mulieribus christianis.”

⁵⁰ In early 1393, the archbishop of Zaragoza claimed that Christians could not “be well” near Jews, and he began excommunicating those who lived (as they always had) near the streets of the Jewish quarter. His position was not popular and threatened to foment a riot, or at least such was the pretext with which the queen ordered him to desist. See ACA: C, 2030: 47r–v (March 14, 1393).

⁵¹ ACA: C, 2030: 136v–137r (September 3, 1393): “prou son senyalats,” published in Hinojosa, *Jews of the Kingdom of Valencia*, 440, no. 191, see also nos. 218, 231, 235. In 1397, the tables would be turned, with King Martí revoking Queen María’s severe statutes concerning Jewish dress: ACA: C, 2190: 30r–31v (July 10, 1397).

⁵² For Castile, the best evidence for this comes from complaints in Cortes. See José María Monsalvo Antón, “Cortes de Castilla y León y minorías,” in *Las Cortes de Castilla y León en la Edad*

goza and other cities suggests, the necessity of sharp spatial or residential segregation did not become more obvious to most Christians in the generation after 1391, despite heightened concerns about sex.⁵³ In 1403, the town council of Lleida (Lérida) even revoked its statute banning converts from the Jewish quarter, claiming that it had been issued at the request of the Jews in order to inconvenience Christians.⁵⁴

This still relatively permeable religious topography was transformed by the preaching of St. Vincent. He was the most important evangelist of the day and the impresario of the massive effort undertaken by papacy and monarchy in the early fifteenth century to reform Christian spirituality and to achieve the conversion of all the Jews of the Peninsula. His sermons were heard by hundreds of thousands, Christian and infidel alike, and thousands of Jews converted at his exhortation.⁵⁵ His motivations were multiple, ranging from apocalypticism to the politics of papal schism, and do not concern us here. For our purposes, it is enough to note that in and through his preaching the logic of segregation was transformed from a marginal and often contested strategy into the central metaphor of a well-ordered Christian polity. Beginning with his first preaching campaign in Murcia, St. Vincent urged the separation of Jews and Muslims from Christians so as to avoid the deadly sin of “conversation,” by which he generally meant sexual intercourse. The Murcian council issued statutes to implement his plans (although they later exempted the Muslims from their prohibitions), and these were approved by King Ferdinand as

Media: Actas de la primera etapa del Congreso Científico sobre la Historia de las Cortes de Castilla y León, 2 vols. (Burgos, 1988), 2: 145–91; Pilar León Tello, “Legislación sobre judíos en las Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y Castilla,” in *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1968), 2: 55–63. For the Crown of Aragon, the archives allow us to witness the negotiation in much closer detail. Compare, for example, King Alfonso’s edicts stipulating the need to create separate Jewish neighborhoods in Cervera (for instance, ACA: C, 519: 98v–99r [May 9, 1328], 475: 116v [June 21, 1328]) with his issuing of licenses to Jews allowing them to live in Christian neighborhoods (see ACA: C, 433: 24r–v [October 14, 1328], 462: 201r–v [June 9, 1333]).

⁵³ In Mallorca, for example, converts were allowed to choose whether to remain living in their old homes in the Jewish quarter among Jews or to rent them out and move into traditionally Christian neighborhoods. A notary recorded the choices immediately after the mass conversions. See José María Quadrado, “La judería de la ciudad de Mallorca en 1391,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 9 (1886): 294–312. A short time later, the city received a letter from King Joan, urging that *conversos* not cohabit with Jews, “car lur conversació a present no poria esser sens perill e gran dampnatge.” ACA: C, 1994: 186v–187r, cited in Riera, “Judíos y conversos,” 83.

⁵⁴ Arxiu Municipal de Lleida, Llibre d’Actes no. 404 (1402–03), fol. 91r. In Castile, the lull in segregatory legislation between 1391 and 1405 has often been noted. The 1405 ordinances of Valladolid reiterated the demand from the Cortes of Palencia (1313), Toro (1371), and elsewhere that Jews wear badges, complaining that Jews “wear clothes and go about as Christians.” See Emilio Mitre Fernández, “Notas en torno a las disposiciones anti-judías de las Cortes de Valladolid de 1405,” *Proceedings of the Seventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1981), 4: 115–22.

⁵⁵ The bibliography on St. Vincent is vast. On the specific topic of his mission to the Jews, see Vicente Beltrán de Heredia, “San Vicente Ferrer, predicador de las sinagogas,” in *Miscelánea Beltrán de Heredia* (Salamanca, 1972), 225–33; Antonio C. Floriano, “San Vicente Ferrer y las aljamas turolenses,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 84 (1924): 558–80; Juan Torres Fontes, “Moros, judíos y conversos en la regencia de Don Fernando de Antequera,” *Cuadernos de Historia de España* 31–32 (1960): 60–97; Francisca Vendrell de Millás, “La actividad proselitista de San Vicente Ferrer durante el reinado de Fernando I de Aragón,” *Sefarad* 13 (1953): 87–104; Francisca Vendrell de Millás, “La política proselitista del Rey D. Fernando I,” *Sefarad* 10 (1950): 349–66; José María Millás Vallicrosa, “En torno a la predicación judaica de San Vicente Ferrer,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 147 (1958): 189–98; and especially Pedro M. Cátedra, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura en la Edad Media: San Vicente Ferrer en Castilla (1411–1412)* (Salamanca, 1994).

a way of eliminating the “many pimpings and adulteries between Christians and Jews.”⁵⁶

It is a symptom of the sway later events hold over our imagination that we have not been struck by the highly specific contours of the concerns expressed by St. Vincent’s sermons. Like King Joan’s letters of twenty years earlier, they focus not so much on the beliefs or religious identity of the converts but on the physical and social proximity of Jew to Christian, a proximity that threatens the very process of religious identification and classification. Moreover, the perils of that proximity are not expressed in terms of sincerity of belief or confessional allegiance but in terms of dangerous social and sexual intimacy. Unlike the later period, the solution proposed here has little to do with the policing of *converso* orthodoxy. What is advocated is a prophylactic heightening, through marking and segregation, of the physical distance between Christian and Jew.

Like Kings Joan and Martí, St. Vincent was clearly concerned that the converts were not being properly educated as Christians, but such an explicit focus on the religiosity of the converts was as rare in his sermons as it was elsewhere during this period.⁵⁷ Much more often, he stressed not the integration of the convert but the segregation of the Jew, and this in explicitly sexual terms. Of course, St. Vincent was very much concerned with sexual offenses of any kind, and he was convinced that sexual appetites were becoming increasingly deviant in his day. Nowadays, he complained, Christian men “want to taste everything: Muslims and Jews, animals, men with men; there is no limit.”⁵⁸ But he was especially concerned about what he perceived to be an explosion of sex between Christians and Jews. In 1415, he told a Zaragoza audience that “many Christian men believe their wife’s children to be their own, when they are actually by Muslim and Jewish [fathers].” If the citizens did not put a stop to such interfaith adultery, he warned, God would do so through plague. His sermon provoked a sexual panic. Christian patrols searched the streets, on the lookout for predatory Jews or Muslims in search of Christian women. One Muslim was seized, found with “iron tools for . . . forcing open doors” in order to obtain Christian women for Muslim men. Another was arrested after witnesses claimed to have seen him fleeing a Christian woman’s room by the flat rooftops one night. So many charges were brought that the responsible judicial official was accused of fomenting a riot against the Muslims and the Jews.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ The widely imitated Murcian statutes were issued on March 24, 1411: “Friar Vincent . . . has opened our eyes to the errors in which we live, and especially to the dealings and gatherings [*congregaciones*] that we . . . make with the Jews and the Moors, through which we sinned mortally each day against God.” The second clause of the ordinance bars Christian women from Muslim and Jewish neighborhoods. Royal confirmation of the ordinance stressed the danger posed by the presence of Christian women in Jewish neighborhoods. See Torres Fontes, “Moros, judíos y conversos,” 95–96. On Vincent’s preaching in Murcia, see Julián Zarco Cuevas, “Sermón predicado en Murcia por S. Vicente Ferrer,” *La Ciudad de Dios* 148 (1927): 122–47.

⁵⁷ For one example, see AMV, Manuals de Consells, A-25, fol. 79r, published in Hinojosa, *Jews of the Kingdom of Valencia*, 487–88, no. 288 (April 12, 1413). There, St. Vincent exhorts the town council to force the dispersal of the many *conversos* whose homes were clustered in the old Jewish quarter and resettle them in Old Christian neighborhoods, so that they might learn proper conduct from Old Christians. The councilors do adopt the plan, but the extent of its implementation is unclear. Note that there were no Jews living in Valencia, so that the difference between Christian and Jew could not be heightened merely through the Jews’ more stringent segregation.

⁵⁸ Vincent, *Sermons*, 1: 224, “Sabbato [post pentecostes].”

⁵⁹ ACA: C, cr. Fernando I, box 22, no. 2764: “That he knew for certain that Jewish and Muslim men

According to St. Vincent, the problem was one of ambiguous identities. Jews and Muslims were living among Christians, dressing like Christians, even adopting Christian names, so that "by their appearance they are taken and reputed by many to be Christians."⁶⁰ The solution he advocated was one of heightened marking and segregation. So powerful was his reasoning that it convinced the pope, the kings of Castile and of Aragon, and innumerable town councils and municipal officers to attempt the most extensive efforts at segregation in the Middle Ages. We have already encountered the example of Murcia, where sexual danger was used to justify the segregation of Jew from Christian. Within six months, the strategy had spread across the Peninsula. In Castile, late in 1411:

the queen [regent] . . . reached Valladolid with the king her son, and found there Friar Vincent, who preached every day his marvelous sermons, and criticized frequently the living of Muslims and Jew among Christians, saying that they should be separated, both from conversation with Christians, and from their dwellings, because this was said to be the cause of very great and very ugly sins. And the queen, taking this upon her conscience, issued a proclamation throughout her province, that wherever they were, [Jews and Muslims] should be given places apart.⁶¹

Similar actions were taken in the Crown of Aragon, where King Ferdinand I implemented measures virtually identical to those of Queen Catherine in Castile.

The architects of these measures expressed themselves in traditional terms. King Ferdinand, for example, stipulated that respectable Christian women found in the Jewish quarter would be fined. Christian prostitutes, on the other hand, would be whipped: 100 lashes, the rough equivalent in Iberian jurisprudence of the death penalty.⁶² But although the form was traditional, its intent and effect were revolutionary. No matter how heavily she was whipped, the prostitute no longer sufficed as a boundary between Christian and Jew: total segregation was necessary. The ideal was to prohibit all exchange:

were having relations with Christian women, to such an extent that many Christian men thought that they had sons by their wives who were theirs, when [in fact] they were by Moors and by Jews." Dated the last day of April [1415?], by Nicholau Burgés, procurator and syndic of Zaragoza. We have the text of a similar sermon given in Castile in 1412: "And first, there is no conversing with them in their homes, for Christians and infidels should not dwell in the same house, for luxury is an infectious evil, and many think they are sons of Jews but are [sons] of Christians, and vice versa. And just as Jews and Muslims are different from Christians in their law, so they should be different in their habitations." Colegio del Corpus Christi de Valencia, ms. 139, fol. 113, cited in Cátedra, "Fray Vicente Ferrer y la predicación antijudaica en la campaña castellana (1411–1412)," in "*Qu'un sang impur . . .*": *Les Conversos et le pouvoir en Espagne à la fin du moyen âge*; *Actes du 2^{ème} colloque d'Aix-en-Provence* (Aix-en-Provence, 1997), 30–31.

⁶⁰ The original: "por su aspecto son havidos e reputados por muytos seyer cristianos, senyaladament entre qui no son conosciados." From a letter written by the sworn men of Zaragoza after hearing a sermon by St. Vincent, dated January 28, 1415. ACA: C, cr. Fernando I, box 8, no. 919.

⁶¹ *Crónica de Juan II*, ms. of the Biblioteca Colombina (Seville), 85–5–14, fol. 176r. See also P. Cátedra, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura*, 134–35.

⁶² ACA: C, 2416: 60v–63v (March 20, 1413). The fine for married women was 50 florins, for single women the loss of their clothes. I have found relatively few instances of Muslims and Jews involved with Christian prostitutes in the fifteenth century. One case involved a Muslim from Zaragoza (1451), another a Jew from the same city (1484) who apparently quoted St. Jerome when apprehended. Both are reported in María del Carmen García Herrero, "Prostitución y amancebamiento en Zaragoza a fines de la Edad Media," *En la España Medieval* 12 (1989): 311–12.

Jews and Muslims should be separate, not among Christians. Do not tolerate infidel doctors, do not buy victuals from them, let them be walled up and enclosed, for we have no greater enemies. Christian women may not be their wet nurses, nor should [you] eat with them. If they send you bread, throw it to the dogs. If they send you live meat, accept it, but not dead, for Holy Scripture says of these sins: "Do you not know that a little leaven corrupts the entire dough?" (I Cor. V). And say of the whore of Corinth . . .⁶³

Note again how here the powers of corruption and plague that St. Paul attributed to the whore of Corinth are used to represent the dangers of all forms of exchange with infidels. If authorities fail in preventing such exchange, St. Vincent warned, the wrath of God would fall upon them and their cities.

In the interest of separating Christian from non-Christian, Jews were to be moved to segregated neighborhoods and severely restricted in their market and economic activities.⁶⁴ Trade between Jew and Christian was forbidden: in some towns, Christians even refused to sell Jews food. Because few Jewish neighborhoods were completely segregated, entire communities were evicted from their homes, "with boys and girls dying from exposure to the cold and the snow." A later Jewish chronicler called the discriminations of 1412–1416 "the greatest persecution that had ever occurred." And as in 1391, one of the consequences of this persecution was the mass conversion of tens of thousands of Jews to Christianity.⁶⁵

MY EMPHASIS IN THE PRECEDING NARRATIVE is highly selective. I have stressed, for example, sexual sensibilities, while ignoring millenarian impulses, papal politics, the spiritual inclinations of kings, and many other topics of tremendous importance in structuring Jewish-Christian relations in the period 1391–1416. But the goal of my narrative is not to provide an adequate causal explanation of the period's events. I am not arguing, for example, that sexual concerns were the "primary reason" for the campaigns of segregation and evangelization. I seek only to demonstrate two much simpler points: that St. Vincent and his contemporaries chose to express in sexual terms their sense that they were living through a crisis of religious identification, and that their choice is meaningful. The language of sexual danger was invoked both as a symptom of the crisis and as a potent cure for it, simultaneously and somewhat paradoxically fortifying boundaries (through, for example, segregation)

⁶³ Vincent, *Sermons*, 3: 13–14.

⁶⁴ Although some have sought to minimize the impact of these policies by claiming that they were rarely implemented, the ACA preserves plenty of evidence of their implementation vis-à-vis the Jews, and of the violence and dislocation that this implementation caused. Muslims, on the other hand, though often named in the edicts, were apparently often exempted, sometimes formally (as in the case of Murcia), sometimes informally. The evidence for Castile, as in all things having to do with governance in this period, is much sparser than that of Aragon, but what there is suggests that the decrees were enforced. See, for example, the document from the Archivo Municipal de Alba de Tormes published by Carlos Carrete Parrondo in *Fontes Iudaeorum Regni Castellae*, 6 vols. (Salamanca and Granada, 1981–), 1: 30–31.

⁶⁵ Solomon Alami, *Iggeret Musar*, Adolf Jellinek, ed. (Vienna, 1872), 10b; Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer Yuhasin ha-Shalem*, Herschell Filipowski, ed. (London, 1857), 225b; Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11 vols. (Leipzig, 1890), 8: 111 n. 2. For a Christian (*converso*) chronicler's report of hardship and conversions by both Muslims and Jews, see Alvar García de Santa María, *Crónica de Juan II*, cited above in n. 61 (see also the edition in the Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España, vols. 99–100).

and marking them as breached. But even though sex may have been both symptom and cure of the crisis, it was not its cause. The new anxieties were not the result of any increase in the amount of sexual contact between Christians and Jews. Accusations of sexual intercourse involving Christians and Jews were actually much more rare in the period 1391–1416 than they were during the two decades preceding the massacres. Apart from that of Saltell Gracia, the only significant case I know involved a convert who put his wife to work as a prostitute in the Jewish brothel of Zaragoza.⁶⁶ An interesting story but not sufficient stimulus for interfaith sexual panic.

What, then, provoked this sense of sexual crisis? Modern commentators have tended to ignore this question, assuming either that the language of crisis and of sex was a pretext for discriminatory pressure intended to further evangelization or (more frequently), that if there was a real crisis, *converso* Judaizing was its cause. St. Vincent and his sponsors certainly hoped and anticipated that their program of sexually justified segregation would result in the conversion of many Jews and Muslims to Christianity.⁶⁷ But treating such a powerful aspect of a culture's imagination as merely strategic teaches us little about how it gains its power or how it functions within society. As for the second and more important point, what is most striking about the generation of 1391 is its relative disinterest in *converso* orthodoxy and orthopraxis, the very issues that would come to characterize the later period. Certainly, officials did patrol the boundaries of faith. In Morvedre, for example, royal officials entered the Jewish quarter during Passover, 1393, and fined the (few) converts they found participating in "Jewish Easter" with their relatives.⁶⁸ But from 1391 to 1410, their chief concern seems to have been the prevention of *converso* emigration to non-Christian lands where they might return to Judaism.⁶⁹ In other words, officials were more concerned with open apostasy than with what we might understand as Judaizing, and did not equate the two. To the extent that there was concern about Judaizing, it tended to be projected on the Jews themselves, not on the converts. The Jew Jacob Façan, for example, was accused of encouraging his *converso* son to emigrate to North Africa, and of delivering *matzah* to converts in Sogorb. The converts who allegedly received the *matzah*, on the other hand, were not charged.⁷⁰ Christian authorities did worry that converts lingered in their old

⁶⁶ ACA: C, 2237: 39r–v (July 6, 1408). The king complained that this not only dishonored God but was also against nature, for even animals protect their mates from the sexual advances of others. ACA: C, 2312: 113v–114r (July 14, 1408), apparently concerns a number of Jews of Calatayud who had been imprisoned for having sexual intercourse with this woman.

⁶⁷ For a rare recognition of the strategic function of the legislation against Jews and Muslims, see the words of the child-king Juan II in 1411, "The goal for which these penalties were imposed is reached when the said infidels convert to the holy faith." Baer, *Die Juden*, 2: no. 277. See also Riera, "Judíos y conversos," 72.

⁶⁸ "Pascha judahica," that is, Passover. See ACA: Mestre Racional, 393: 36v, 38r–v.

⁶⁹ The concern here was partly with apostasy, partly with the fact that the converts took their wealth with them. There is a great deal of documentation concerning such emigration. On emigration to North Africa, see Haim Zeev Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews of North Africa*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1974, 1981), 1: 384–88. For emigration to the Holy Land, Ben Zion Dinur, "A Wave of Emigration from Spain to the Land of Israel after the Persecutions of 1391" [Hebrew], *Zion* 32 (1967): 161–74; Joseph Hacker, "Links between Spanish Jewry and Palestine, 1391–1492," in *Vision and Conflict in the Holy Land*, Richard I. Cohen, ed. (New York, 1985), 114–25.

⁷⁰ ACA: C, 1906: 64r–66r (May 10, 1393). Published by Baer, *Die Juden*, 1: 705–11, no. 451; Hinojosa, *Jews of the Kingdom of Valencia*, 423–25, no. 164. See also Mark Meyerson, "The Jewish

sensibilities, but voiced those worries rarely.⁷¹ This is in striking contrast with the litany of complaints about Judaizing that would arise in the 1440s, especially when we consider the fact that in the 1390s the thousands of converts who had entered Christianity by force and without catechism almost certainly had little sense of how to practice their new religion.

The perception of crisis was provoked not by the converts' "Jewish" practices but by a much more complex phenomenon: the mass conversion's destabilization of an oppositional process of identification by which generations of Christians had defined themselves theologically and sociologically against Jews and Judaism. It is well known that Christianity had since its earliest days used the Jew to represent the anti-Christian, mapping polarized dualities, such as spiritual-material, allegorical-literal, sighted-blind, redemptive-damning, godly-satanic, good-evil, onto the pairing Christian-Jew.⁷² As Rosemary Ruether, one of the most mordant historians of this process, described it: "It was virtually impossible for the Christian preacher or exegete to teach scripturally at all without alluding to the anti-Judaic theses. Christian scriptural teaching and preaching per se is based on a method in which anti-Judaic polemic exists as the left hand of its christological hermeneutic."⁷³ Ruether was primarily concerned with the first, formative centuries of Pauline Christianity, but her observation holds true for later periods as well. Indeed, in the Middle Ages, the phenomenon is so pervasive as to pass almost unperceived. The polarized pair Christian-Jew provided medieval theologians and their audiences a powerful hermeneutic through which to comprehend and classify their constantly changing world, with phenomena perceived as dangerous mapped onto the negative pole of the opposition. Issues as diverse as the rise of universities, the shift from parchment to paper, the increasing emphasis on the apostolic poverty of clergy, a perceived increase in simony, reliance on lawyers: these "innovations" and many more were characterized as "Judaizing." Perhaps the most fateful (and well known) of these characterizations were economic. Theologians reacted to what they perceived to be dangerous aspects of the new profit economy by labeling them as materialist and "Jewish." In Sara Lipton's words, "Moneylending . . . is not condemned because it is exclusively or even primarily a 'Jewish' activity; rather, because moneylending is condemned, it becomes in the sign system . . . a 'Jewish' activity."⁷⁴

Again, St. Vincent provides us with examples. He "Judaized" those who sought

Community of Murviedro (1391–1492)," in Lazar and Haliczzer, *Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492*, 132–33. In a related case, however, Joan did order his subjects to cooperate with the inquisitor Barthomeu Gaçó, who was inquiring against necromancers and "malicious converts who hold the erroneous sect in their depraved hearts." ACA: C, 1927: 101r–v (November 7, 1393), published by Johannes Vincke, *Zur Vorgeschichte der Spanischen Inquisition* (Bonn, 1941), no. 144.

⁷¹ In 1398, King Martí expressed concern that converts met with Jews to observe the Sabbath, and that "many frequently Judaize [*judaytzant*]." He ordered all officials to aid the inquisitors "to extirpate the aforesaid errors." ACA: C, 2229: 60r (February 4, 1398). In 1400, he decreed that *converso* observance of any Jewish holiday would be punishable by a fine of 100 sous, and encouraged the inquisitors in their search for such practices. ACA: C, 2173: 115r (August 12, 1400).

⁷² For an example from St. Vincent, see *Sermons*, 3: 311.

⁷³ Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1974), 121.

⁷⁴ Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible Moralisée* (Berkeley, Calif., 1999), 45.

secular learning, who “for the sake of a little knowledge want to be called Rabbis.”⁷⁵ He translated Christian spiritual dangers into Jewish idioms in order to sharpen the point for his audiences, as here, on the perils of infrequent confession: “just as the Jews took great care to wash the vessels (taques), 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.”⁷⁶ And he stressed the “Jewishness” of usury and avarice in order simultaneously to reinforce the carnal materialism of the Jews and to criticize Christians who lend at interest as “Judaizers”:⁷⁷ “today, nearly everything is avarice, for almost everyone commits usury, which used not to be done except by Jews. But today Christians do it too, as if they were Jews.”⁷⁸

Ruether argued that the projection of all carnality onto the Jews made Christianity blind to its own “bodiliness.” “Christian spiritualization becomes false consciousness about its own reality, fantasizing its own perfection and unable to cope with its own hypocrisy.”⁷⁹ As we have just seen, the opposite is also true. The negative pole of “Judaism” provided a powerful diagnostic tool for Christians to identify and condemn “carnal tendencies” within their society and themselves. It thereby threatened to “Judaize” any Christian who, for example, practiced usury, confessed infrequently, or enjoyed secular learning.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, it is certainly the case that the projection of carnality on the Jews facilitated the repression (to echo Ruether’s psychologizing language) of Christian anxiety about a great deal of “materialism” and “carnality” in their own beliefs and practices.⁸¹ It is thanks to the power of such projection, for example, that neither St. Vincent nor his audience was confused when in one breath he derided what he described as the Jews’ “carnal” belief that proper piety brings reward in the form of health and good harvests and in the next threatened Christians with famine and plague if they did not enforce segregation.⁸² Of course, these projections had little to do with “real Jews” or “real Judaism,” and the hermeneutic they were part of did not require the presence of living Jews to function (of this, late medieval England and France are proof). But the existence of living Jews gave foreign flesh to these negations of the Christian and thereby heightened Christian society’s sense of its own coherent identity.

In the Iberian Peninsula more than in many other regions of Europe, medieval Christians defined themselves sociologically, as well as theologically, against the

⁷⁵ Vincent, *Sermons*, 6: 104.

⁷⁶ Vincent, *Sermons*, 5: 221.

⁷⁷ This particular projection flourished into modernity. It is only “since Auschwitz,” to quote Dan Diner, that “common linguistic usages such as the description of phenomena from the sphere of circulation as Jewish have forfeited their dubious claim to reality.” (The claim may prove unduly optimistic.) See his “Reason and the ‘Other’: Horkheimer’s Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Mass Annihilation,” in *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives*, Seyla Benhabib, et al., eds. (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 337.

⁷⁸ Vincent, *Sermons*, 5: 147.

⁷⁹ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 160.

⁸⁰ “[To] call someone a Jew amounts to an instigation to work him over until he resembles the image.” Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York, 1972), 186.

⁸¹ Compare Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 187: “What is pathological about anti-Semitism is not projective behavior as such, but the absence of reflection in it.”

⁸² As he did in a sermon from 1414, Biblioteca de Catalunya, ms. 476, fols. 136v–153v, in Josep Perarnau i Espelt, ed., “Els quatre sermons catalans de sant Vicent Ferrer en el manuscrit 476 de la Biblioteca de Catalunya,” *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics* 15 (1996): 109–340.

Jews. Individually and collectively, they asserted their honor as members of God's privileged people by contrasting themselves to the dishonored Jew.⁸³ Theologically, as St. Augustine had put it, the Jews' abjection in comparison with Christians was witness to the truth of the latter's faith.⁸⁴ But the performance of this contrast also became fundamental to the representation of Christian political and social privilege. The logic of sexual privilege and sexual boundaries discussed above provides a particularly important example of such sociological differentiation.⁸⁵ There were, however, countless others. At a political level, for example, community privilege could be asserted through juxtaposition with Jews. When King Peter the Ceremonious attempted to raise funds for his expedition to Sardinia and Sicily in 1378, the town council of Valencia replied that the imposition of arbitrary taxation "is nothing other than to make a jewry out of each of his municipalities . . . , and we will not give way to such a demand, for we would rather die than be made similar to Jews."⁸⁶ And just as the erosion of corporate privilege could threaten to turn a municipality into a Jewry, so the erosion of honor could Judaize the individual Christian. St. Vincent himself frequently complained of Christians who believed that failure to avenge an injury "would be a dishonor to me, for they would say of me: 'Oh, the madman! Oh, the Jew!'"⁸⁷ To withdraw from the economy of violence was tantamount to withdrawing from the fraternity of honorable Christian males. It was, in other words, to become "Jewish."

Christian identity and Christian privilege were defined by insisting on their distance from the Jew (and the Muslim). The performance of that distance could take place in countless venues: in the taking of vengeance or the paying of taxes, in the choice of foods or sexual partners, in law (as in the preferential treatment of Christian witnesses) and in ritual (as in the enclosure and stoning of Jews during Holy Week), to list but a few.⁸⁸ It is through the repeated performance of this essential distance that the symbolic capital of Christian honor and privilege was amassed.

The mass conversions of 1391 threatened the performance of Christian identity because they raised the possibility of a world without Jews. Many in the generation after 1391 worked to make that world a reality: a few by urging the slaughter of the

⁸³ The Muslim played an important role in this process as well, but that is a subject for a different article.

⁸⁴ The literature on the point is vast, but see most recently the chapter on Augustine in Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1999).

⁸⁵ Particularly important in that so many other distinctions were mapped onto the sexual one. For a formulation of the point derived from Lévi-Strauss, see Stanley Tambiah, "Animals Are Good to Think and Good to Prohibit," in Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, 1985), 169–70.

⁸⁶ The original reads: "no és als sinó fer juheria de cascuna de ses universitats . . . a aytal demanda no darem loch, car més amam morir que ésser semblants a juheus." AMV, LI.M., g²-4, 108v (October 26, 1378), cited in Dolors Bramon, *Contra moros y judíos* (Barcelona, 1986), 67.

⁸⁷ Vincent, *Sermons*, 1: 42: "It would be a dishonor to me, for they would say of me: 'Oh, the madman! Oh, the Jew! He isn't up to avenging the death of his father!'" 1: 93: "You aren't up to avenging yourself, for you have the heart of a Jew"; 1: 155: "Oo, they will say that you are a Jew!"; 3: 16: "'Why didn't he kill him?' They will say: 'because he has the heart of a Jew!'" 5: 190: "Oo, the Jew!" "Oo, the others will insult me."

⁸⁸ For an extended treatment of the Holy Week example, see my *Communities of Violence*, chap. 7, and "Les juifs, la violence, et le sacré," *Annales: Histoire, sciences sociales* 50 (1995): 109–31.

unconverted;⁸⁹ others, such as the citizens of Barcelona and Valencia, by banning Jews from their cities in perpetuity; still others, like St. Vincent and his supporters, by mounting a program of evangelization intended to achieve the full conversion of the infidels.⁹⁰ These were exhilarating times for a Christian society trained to see the advent of the Messiah in the conversion of the Jews.⁹¹ But they were also unsettling, destabilizing Christian identity in two important ways. First, the messianic “disappearance of the Jews” promised to eliminate the living representatives of a negative pole vital to the coherence of Christian self-understanding. Second, the emergence of the converts as an intermediate class produced a rapid narrowing of the social space that had previously separated Christian from Jew, and a consequent perception of the erosion of Christian privilege.

When the converts of 1391 emerged from the baptismal waters, they immediately occupied a good deal of the cultural “no man’s land” that had hitherto divided Christian and Jew. On the one hand, they enjoyed all the privileges of the Christian. The convert Francesc de Sant Jordi put it a bit hyperbolically in a letter to the Jew Shaltiel Bonafos: “Those who have emerged from the waters of baptism, from the fountains of salvation, are firmly established upon golden pedestals. They are all personages. In their courts and in their palaces there are ivories and monkeys and peacocks and dwarves; they divested themselves of their soiled attire . . . and donned the garments of salvation.”⁹² Of course, we know that the vast majority of converts remained poor, without peacock or dwarf. But their status had improved in the sense that even the lowliest could now throw rocks at Jews during Holy Week, have sex with Christian prostitutes, or marry Christian women, and many of them did. In the early sixteenth century, after the forced conversion of many Muslims to Christianity, the town council of Valencia complained that the Christian brothel was so crowded with Moriscos seeking to exercise their new sexual privileges that Old Christians could not get in the door. We have no such official record from the Jewish conversions a century before, but we do have plenty of complaints from individuals such as the Valencian Jaume Roig, who wrote a poem denouncing his former concubine for allowing herself to be penetrated by the “hatless rod” of his *converso* rival.⁹³

⁸⁹ See, for example, the charges made circa 1393 against Antoni Rieri of Lleida, who was accused, among other things, of preaching that the prophesied time had arrived “in which all the Jews should be killed, so that henceforth no Jew should remain in the world.” Jaume De Puig i Oliver, “La *Incantatio studii ilerdensis* de Nicolau Eimeric, O.P.,” *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics* 15 (1996): 47. Lleida was the scene of anti-Jewish violence just a few years later, perpetrated by “some children of iniquity seeking the destruction of the Jewry of that city, which . . . we have just established.” ACA: C, 2232: 95v–96r (October 25, 1400).

⁹⁰ Vincent’s messianic inspiration is well known. On apocalyptic currents in the Peninsula, see José Guadalupe Medina, *Las profecías del anticristo en la Edad Media* (Madrid, 1996), 232–47; José María Pou y Martí, *Visionarios, beguinos, y fraticelos catalanes (siglos XIII–XV)*, with an introduction by Juana María Arcelus Ulibarrena (Madrid, 1991).

⁹¹ See most recently Robert E. Lerner, *The Feast of Saint Abraham: Medieval Millenarians and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 2001), especially chap. 7, on 1391 and Francesc Eiximenis’s millenarian ideas.

⁹² Hebrew text in Frank Talmage, “The Francesc de Sant Jordi-Solomon Bonafed Letters,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Isadore Twersky, ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 345. The biblical allusion is to 1 Kings 10: 22. The translation is from Eleazar Gutwirth, “Habitat and Ideology: The Organization of Private Space in Late Medieval *Juderías*,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 9, no. 2 (1994): 208.

⁹³ I know of the complaint about Moriscos through conversation with L. P. Harvey. For Jaume

Yet at the same time that converts enjoyed the privileges of the Christian, many of them still lived in close social, cultural, and physical proximity to their former coreligionists. The converts often occupied, as they had before their conversion, houses in or near the Jewish quarter. For many years (and certainly throughout the period that concerns us here), their financial affairs remained hopelessly entangled with those of their earlier communities of faith. And of course, they had Jewish relatives with whom they might need to communicate for any number of reasons. Some even had Jewish spouses to whom they remained legally married.⁹⁴ Such proximity undercut the radical distinction between the two groups and thereby destabilized the foundations of Christian privilege and identity. It was this destabilization, this narrowing of the gap between Christian and Jew, that Old Christians were reacting to when they complained that it was now impossible to distinguish Christian from Jew. Many converts perceived the problem as well. When a handful of Zaragozaan *conversos* living in a Jewish neighborhood evoked the orders of segregation in the hope of having their much more numerous Jewish neighbors evicted, they were seeking to heighten the distance on which their new privileges depended.⁹⁵ The same logic motivated their invasion, together with other Christians, of the Jewish quarter. When, in the course of that invasion, the son of Jerónimo de Santa Fe stabbed a Jew, he was not merely acting out the excessive zeal of a convert. He was performing his claims to Christian honor and privilege in the idioms of his new religion.⁹⁶

Once again, the point was most succinctly articulated by St. Vincent himself: "For he will never be a good Christian who is a neighbor of a Jew." Such "neighborliness," he went on to say, dishonored God and put Christian society at risk of famine, plague, and other manifestations of divine displeasure.⁹⁷ St. Vincent and his sponsors sought to reinstate the necessary distance between Christian and Jew in three ways. One focused on the religiosity of the *conversos*, seeking to integrate them as fully as possible into "Old Christian" society and thereby distance them from "Jewishness." A second strategy was to sharpen the boundaries between all Christians and Jews through a massive program of segregation. The third possibility was that of eliminating the Jewish antithesis to Christianity altogether, by

Roig's lament ("[V]os calà lo seu pern descapolat"), see Joan Roís de Corella, *Obres completes*, Vol. 1: *Obra profana*, Jordi Carbonell, ed. (Valencia, 1973), 57. The poem is also cited in Bramon, *Contra moros y judíos*, 167. The poet is admittedly of a later generation than the one that concerns us here.

⁹⁴ For examples of these and other ambiguities of status, see David Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain," *Past and Present*, no. 174 (February 2002): 1–39.

⁹⁵ The case is discussed in Francisca Vendrell de Millás, "En torno a la confirmación real, en Aragón, de la pragmática de Benedicto XIII," *Sefarad* 20 (1960): 1–33. Less dramatic but equally meaningful are the "distancing" actions of converts like Gil Roiz Najari, who successfully petitioned to have an entrance to the Jewish quarter of Teruel moved so that he would have no contact with Jews. See ACA: C, 2391: 102r–v (March 16, 1416).

⁹⁶ ACA: C, 2389: 111r–v (November 20, 1415): "We have just heard with displeasure how a few days ago, entering into one of the Jewries of the city of Zaragoza, called Barrio Nuevo, Master Gerónimo de Sancta Fe and some other converts and Christians . . . provoked in the said Jewry great rumor and scandal, causing riot and scandal against the Jews of the said *aljama*, and a son of the said Master Gerónimo stabbed a Jew." Compare ACA: C, 2389: 110r–v, 112r–v (November 20, 1415).

⁹⁷ The original is: "car nunca será bon christià, lo qui és vehí de juheu." Biblioteca de Catalunya, ms. 476, fols. 136v–153v, in Perarnau i Espelt, "Els quatre sermons," 231–32.

achieving the conversion of all remaining Jews to Christianity. The least important of these, if the surviving evidence is any guide, is the first. It is not with the *conversos* but with the segregation of Jews, and with their elimination through evangelization, that the generation after 1391 was most concerned. Both these responses, segregation and evangelization, were nourished by the fertile imagination of a society confronted for the first time by the possibility that the differences by which it defined itself might actually disappear. The evangelizing millenarianism of the age is a vital symptom of this imagination, and its study can teach us a great deal about the crisis of identification that I have been describing. But the period's sexually charged segregationism is equally vital and equally instructive.

THESE "SEXUALIZED" ATTEMPTS TO STABILIZE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY completely reversed one of the fundamental attributes of the pre-1391 interfaith sexual economy. Instead of narrowing the region of sexual risk in the interest of freeing space for other forms of interaction, they generalized that risk in order to achieve segregation. But in light of the future, there is an important negative observation to be made. The worries of St. Vincent's generation were sexual, but they had little to do with reproduction, and even less to do with race. They do not seem to have feared that mixed intercourse would compromise the transmission of Christian identity or result in offspring that inadequately reproduced Christian values. Christian law codes, for example, clearly stipulated that children born of a mixed union were fully Christian and were to be raised as such.⁹⁸ These laws were confidently enforced. In 1401, for example, the Christian Antoni Safàbrega declared on his deathbed that he had once had an adulterous relationship with a Muslim woman named Axa, who had been married to a Muslim named Adambacaix. She was now deceased, but on the strength of Antoni's confession Christian authorities seized Adambacaix's son Mahomet and sent him away to be raised Christian.⁹⁹ A similar confidence underlay St. Vincent's reproach to Christian men for having sex with Muslim prostitutes. Under such circumstances, the father's obligation to baptize the child could not be fulfilled, and the offspring's damned soul would clamor against its Christian progenitor on Judgment Day.¹⁰⁰ These are not the actions of a society anxious about the biological reproduction of religious identity.

In other words, St. Vincent and his contemporaries drew on the language of sex to widen the separation between Christian and Jew. But they did not invoke it in order to sharpen the line between Old Christian and New, even though a sharp distinction between what quickly came to be called "natural" Christians and converts might have helped to render the converts' proximity to Jews less threatening. The point is worth emphasizing. In the mid-1430s, a number of people

⁹⁸ For a Castilian example, see *Fuero Real*, Book III, 8.3. For a Catalan one, *Costums de Tortosa*, VI.1, paragraphs 12, 14, 17, 18.

⁹⁹ For a description of the case, see Ferrer i Mallol, *Els sarraïns*, 27–28, citing ACA: C, 2132: 114v–115r, 121r–v, 139v–140r. For an example involving children born of a Jewish woman, see the question addressed by Yehuda ben Wakar, personal physician to the regent of Castile Don Juan Manuel, to Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel of Toledo circa 1320. [Responsa 18.13.] Compare Baer, *Die Juden*, 1.2: 138–39.

¹⁰⁰ Vincent, *Sermons*, 5: 250.

began to articulate the view that converts and their descendents were essentially different from (that is, worse than) “natural” Christians and therefore (among many other things) unmarriageable. Such a view represented a profound shift from the anxieties about intercourse that I have been describing up to this point. This new taboo was based not on the fear that sexual proximity to “Jewishness” endangered the present by offending God but that it endangered the future by corrupting the “breeding stock.”

These “reproductive strategies” for stabilizing the privileges of Old Christian identity acquired a great deal of influence in the later fifteenth century. It is therefore all the more important to point out that, in the years following the mass conversions of 1391, they were virtually unknown. We can find a few documented examples of attempts at discrimination.¹⁰¹ One of the more interesting comes from a sermon St. Vincent preached in 1414, against the great sin of those Christian women who “disdain the Jewess who has become Christian, and refuse to go with her to Church . . . And there are others who do not wish to give [the converts] their daughters and sons in marriage, because they had once been Jews.” He urged these women not only to associate with the converts but also to marry them, for they were “brothers in Christ.”¹⁰² These are interesting, but rare, exceptions among a mass of documentation. Such complaints would suddenly become widespread in the 1430s.¹⁰³ But they were alien to the long generation that came of age in the aftermath of the massacres of 1391.

These contrasts are significant. We have traced the development of a system of group differentiation based on a logic of displaceable sexual boundaries: a logic capable of representing the myriad distinctions that Christians (as well as Muslims and Jews) held sacred in this multi-religious society, and of responding with hydraulic power to the slightest change in pressure on these distinctions. Even across half a century of dramatic religious and social change, that sexual logic was sufficient to the task of convincing Christians that their most basic classifications remained vital and stable. From this perspective, the disappearance of that confidence in the middle of the fifteenth century suddenly requires a great deal of explanation. Why, beginning in the 1430s and 1440s, was a sexual logic replaced by a reproductive one? This is a difficult question, not least because the language of reproduction abounds in “false friends” and deceptive continuities with the language of sex. I will leave it for the future. But at least we can now see that the answer will not be found in any easy continuity. The eventual sexual segregation and “re-Judaization” of the *conversos* through an ideology of reproduction was not the result of a straightforward extrapolation of earlier sexual discriminations and identities, or of some ineluctable process by which societies always recreate their

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Enrique III of Castile’s exhortation to the town council and citizens of Burgos in 1392, “that you should treat [the *conversos*] like brothers, and they should partake of your privileges and liberties and good usages and customs.” Mitre Fernández, *Los judíos de Castilla*, 83. The town council of Valencia claimed in 1402 that a convert’s accusation against a Valencian Old Christian was not to be believed, given that the converts “retain the accustomed calumnies of their ancient infidelity, which they have not yet purged from their character.” See Agustín Rubio Vela, *Epistolari de la València medieval* (Valencia, 1985), 279–80.

¹⁰² Perarnau i Espelt, “Els quatre sermons,” 257–59, lines 2380–2455.

¹⁰³ On the emergence of this logic in the 1430s and 1440s, see my “El concepto,” and “Mass Conversion.”

essential “other.” It was, rather, the outcome of a highly creative historical transformation. Sexual danger provided the mortar for the new barriers that this society would erect between its most vital categories, as it had for the old. But the substance, location, and meaning of these boundaries were radically different than before. Our conclusion is simple, if not particularly uplifting: the walls with which societies divide themselves need rebuilding by each generation’s hands.

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