Swimming the Christian Atlantic

Judeoconversos, Afroiberians and Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century

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CONTENTS

VOLUME 17/1

List of Maps and Illustrations vii
Acknowledgements ix

Introduction 1

Maps 19

PART ONE

Chapter One
Otherness and Identity: Judeoconversos, Judaism, Afroiberians and Christianity 25

Chapter Two
The Free and Not so Free, the Christian and Not so Christian 85

Chapter Three
Some Incidents in Cartagena de las Indias 121

Chapter Four
Masters and Slaves under the Stare of the Cross 169

Chapter Five
Slaves and the Downtrodden Religion of their Masters 209

Chapter Six
Jailed Judaizers and their Jailers' Servants 245

VOLUME 17/2

Chapter Seven
Esperanza Rodriguez: A Mulata Marrana in Mexico City 283

PART TWO

Chapter Eight
The Racial Imagination in the Writings of (Ex-)Conversos ... 337

Chapter Nine
(Re)Reading the Old/New World in the 1640s: The *Relación* of Antonio de Montezinos 379

Postscript 479

Appendix
An Unpublished Letter from Antonio de Montezinos 505

Bibliography 513

Index 541

INTRODUCTION

> From the beginning, the natives offered resistance to the Spanish, worried that they "would corrupt and alter their ancient customs; they called [the Spanish] 'seafoam,' fatherless people, men without repose, who cannot stay in any one place to cultivate the land to provide themselves with food."
>
> —Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, 103

> There are those who say [Panama] derives from [...] the Cuna Indian phrase *panna mai* (far away), in the hope that Spanish soldiers asking where gold was located would be told *panna mai* (far away) in the hope they would go "far away."
>
> —Caesar E. Farah, *An Arab's Journey to Colonial Spanish America*, 24, n. 74

> The French missionary Jean-Baptiste Labat [whose travel narratives have informed countless scholars] designed sugar mills and waterworks in the slave plantations of Martinique; in the islanders' memories, he lived on as a spook to frighten children.
>
> —Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds*, 139

> The entire history of ethnic struggle, victory, reconciliation, fusion, everything that precedes the definitive ordering of rank of the different national elements in every great racial synthesis, is reflected in the confused genealogies of their gods, in the sagas of the gods' struggles, victories, and reconciliations.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, II, 20

Despite the expansive title of this book, I seek to explore in it a few specific matters through a series of chapters that were originally independent essays but hopefully now comprise contiguous studies. First and foremost, I try to understand the way in which a trio of dominated groups within the Spanish and Portuguese empires—Judeoconversos, Afroiberians and Amerindians—perceived one another and interacted with each other. A growing body of studies analyzes the vertical relations between each of these subject populations or a combination of them and the dominant socio-political elites of Spain and Portugal. Though I investigate the political, religious and social contexts in which individuals from these subaltern groups circulated in the Atlantic world of the seventeenth century, I am more concerned with the less-studied horizontal relations *between* members of the dominated groups. This book presents not a sweeping overview of the three groups of Conversos,

those who had recently become Christian. Rather, it entails a series of chapters on textual moments and physical sites of interaction between members of these groups. The chapters that follow present an immanent view, exploring mostly statements and sentiments of members of these groups themselves. Amerindians, in particular as seen through the eyes of Judeoconversos and Sephardic Jews (or Sephardim), feature most prominently in the book's final and longest chapter and I confess that their role is smaller throughout the remainder of the text.

Among my goals in this project, I wanted to further delineate how the racial attitudes that we associate with the dominant elite circulated as well among members of dominated populations in the *sistema de castas*, the caste system of the Spanish and Portuguese empires. These empires were in many respects the first European examples of what Nicholas Dirks calls "the ethnographic state."[1] It remains important to nuance certain forms of physical and ideological domination as not merely monolithic, top-down, hegemonic systems but as more diffuse circulatory patterns. Yet, while it is clear that the racial imagination flowed across sociological borders of the caste system, it is critical not to ignore the realities of societal power differentials, how they function and what they mean. Alida Metcalf's work on colonial go-betweens importantly shifts focus from the stereotypically dyadic relations of White Europeans with native Others to the triadic relations that depended on the mediation of third parties who were often mixtures of the other two forces and therefore to some degree foreign *and* bound to both.[2] Though serving empire in different ways, though constituted in different ways as admixtures of the European Christian and the non-European Other (and containing pluralities within each group), both Judeoconversos and Afroiberians functioned as cultural and political intermediaries, taking advantage of their status for their own benefit but also suffering accordingly.

Secondly, I have been interested in 'Black-Jewish relations' over the *longue durée* and wanted to know whether the topic as a twentieth-century topos has any parallel or roots in a century that in many respects saw the rise of the globalized, multicultural world we know today. The answer appears to be both positive and negative, as I discuss briefly in

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[1] Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 43–60, 125–227.

[2] Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500–1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 2.

the Post-Script, though this study explores only one moment of this trajectory. An analysis of racial discourse in the lives and writings of Judeoconversos permits a useful triangulation between its appearance and meaning among both Catholic Iberians and open Jews, just as Afroiberian statements regarding 'Jews' or 'judaizers' allows comparison with those stemming from White Iberians, giving a sense of the fluidity of discourses of Othering while delineating the differences of their usages within specific communities. In this study I aim to take what often passed for exoticism in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship, to reclaim the encounter with the Other as a moment of hope, the laying out of exempla as themselves ripe with promise, however often disappointed.

Fuzziness, omissions and limits notwithstanding, I take it for granted that talk of an Atlantic world makes conceptual and methodological sense, particularly with regards to the Spanish and Portuguese empires. Paradoxically, though many studies of the Atlantic world-in-formation treat its origins in and structuration through religious discourse, it is easy to forget this in the face of its eminently political identities. Yet the basic analytical ground of the Atlantic world—the populated coasts of western Europe and West Africa, the populated eastern shores of South and North America and the Caribbean islands, if not deeper into the hinterlands of the four abovementioned continents—is the fact that Catholicism and, not long after, Protestantism were made into, in the synopsis of anthropologist Webb Keane, "what Marcel Mauss would have called a 'social fact.' [. . .] Christianity, its ideas, institutions, social formations, political identities, hopes, desires, fears, norms, and practices, both everyday and extraordinary, *exist* for an [sic] remarkably large and varied number of people."[3] As is well known, though it bears repeating, the Atlantic world was to a great extent discovered, constructed and defended as a *Christian* space, something I seek to re-emphasize even while attending to certain groups that resisted or remade that definition. Beginning with the Spanish *Reconquista*, whose mentality and methods were spurred by and spurred expansionist Catholicism, the great challenge posed to Christendom by the new worlds discovered overseas and conquered comprised nothing less than the rethinking of Christianity in the face of non-Christians, defined, in motion, as non-Europeans,

[3] Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 29.

people who were not White. This new stage in what Peter Van der Veer calls "the globalization of Christianity," this combination geographic, ethnographic, theological, psychological and intellectual cataract itself marked the beginning of modern Europe, erected in opposition to the Other(s), now said to be on the other side of the cataract.[4] The early colonial empires, including those of the Atlantic sphere, entailed spaces conceived and policed from the perspective of political theology.

From the perspective of Judeoconversos (if not Jews as well), Amerindians and Africans, the seventeenth century Atlantic remained all too monolithically Christian. Working from Atlanticist premises, recent scholarship has sought to undo the assumptions of nationalist historiographies—English, Dutch, Spanish, Jewish/Israeli, etc. (African American?)—that tend to proffer exceptionalist theses for the nation of each historiographical tradition. Yet, as Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has argued, Catholic and Protestant colonizers shared the view that the New World and its inhabitants posed a satanic challenge requiring a crusade of forcible chivalric cleansing, if not extirpation.[5] Barbara Fuchs also posits a shared culture of conquest among the various European colonizing powers.[6] A number of other scholars have contributed to our understanding of the web of transnational and transcontinental symbologies that helped configure the polities, societies and cultures of the Atlantic.

As recent scholarship has shown, despite top-down efforts at homogenization and social engineering, the polyglot world created in the wake of the overseas expansion of Europe is not just a retrojection of today's consciousness. Indeed, the top-down efforts in certain respects resulted from this very cosmopolitanism. The medieval world that was ever so gradually dissipating was one that prized homogeneity, feared and even hated outsiders, foreigners, others. The seventeenth century, on which this book focuses, witnessed the continued playing out of the seismic confrontations and couplings erupting throughout the sixteenth century,

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[4] Peter Van der Veer (ed.), *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[5] Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550–1700* (Standford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

[6] Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Similar linkages of Old and New World conceptualizations and methods of conquest were offered by Jonathan Boyarin in an unfortunately still-unpublished book manuscript, "Jews, Indians and the Identity of Christian Europe" that I first read in 1996.

an era treated by now in numerous seminal works of scholarship. It behooves us to remember, however, just how far-reaching the repercussions were in Euro-American discourse and daily life. The assumptions of caste and race (and class) were ubiquitous. They led to the fact that from 1580 to 1820 the vast majority of immigrants to the Americas arrived involuntarily. Regarding the period between 1580 and 1640, according to David Eltis, 67 percent of the immigrants were slaves, 6 percent servants (indentured servants or contract migrants) and 1 percent convicts, while between 1640 and 1700 65 percent were slaves, 18 percent servants and 2 percent convicts.[7] The original inhabitants of nearly every American colony first served for the most part as a source for slaves or forced labor for the extraction of the natural resources of what had been their homelands.

The caste system that created race and races was precisely a biopolitics, one invented in the late Middle Ages by an expansionist and expanding Christendom that in order to construct the community's boundaries increasingly measured the conflated circulation of blood and money, sanctity, purity and worth; blood became "the site and marker of theological […] investments."[8] It was, to paraphrase Bruno Latour, a network, constructed by communities of jurists, scientists, political authorities, theologians, clerics, writers, law enforcement experts who claim to have 'discovered' it in nature (though they had in fact constructed it, a confused fusing "of 'nation' with religion, of religion with ancestry, and of ancestry with political loyalty"). Yet, despite its intensely social and political manifestations, they paradoxically "dissimulated its impact upon the fabric of society."[9] Race was/is both real and constructed, "much more than an illusion and much less than an essence."[10]

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[7] David Eltis, "Identity and Migration: The Atlantic in Comparative Perspective," in *The Atlantic World: Essays on Slavery, Migration, and Imagination*, ed. Wim Klooster and Alfred Padula (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005), 111.

[8] Gil Anidjar, "Blood Works: The Fluidity of the Bio-Political c. 1449," paper, conference on Cultural Mobility, Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin, May 2004 (forthcoming in the conference proceedings), 11; idem, "Lines of Blood: *Limpieza de Sangre* as Political Theology," in *Blood in History and Blood Histories*, ed. Mariacarla Gadebusch Bondio (Firenze: Sismel Edizioni il Galluzzo, 2005).

[9] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 49, with a quote inserted from Irene Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions, Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 119.

[10] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 40. And not, therefore, a "phantasm," as Silverblatt has it (*Modern Inquisitions*, 18). Without wanting to enter into an enormous

Nonetheless, my study will not delve into the ancient or medieval story of European attitudes and behavior toward Africa, Africans and Amerindians, all explored in a steadily growing body of literature. Neither is there space to survey the history of the Atlantic slave trade or the resulting diaspora of enslaved and liberated Africans in Europe, the Americas and elsewhere and its demographic, political, cultural faces; nor the parallel destruction of Amerindian societies and cultures and the transformations of the world of the survivors—topics investigated by increasingly numerous authors. Nor will I devote much space to the ways in which those who (were) converted to Catholicism and their descendants, including, most centrally, the Judeoconversos, were constructed as tainted, poorly-Christian or even anti-Christian race. My analysis, of course, depends on many of these studies and I will refer to them where pertinent, but they are of necessity not central.

While the fixing of racial categories may have reflected merely bureaucratic imposition through the caste system, as R. Douglas Cope has argued,[11] consciousness of racial difference permeated daily life and discourse high and low, print and oral, as I hope to show. Racism and racialism were not solely impositions from some monolithic governmental apparatus. For an example of the kind of racialism purveyed by Catholic preachers, seeking to bolster the orderly society desired by both Church and Crown, see Irene Silverblatt's treatment of the Quechua sermons delivered over the course of the early seventeenth-century by Francisco de Avila and Fernando de Avendaño in and around Lima. The sermonizers explicitly and repeatedly lay out for their Amerindian audiences the significance of the different 'races' in the new global hierarchy: Spanish, Black and Amerindian, as well as Jews, Muslims (*moros*), and Turks.[12] Quito's bishop, Pena Montenegro, held that as far as intelligence and rationality went, "Peruvians (along with Mexicans and Chileans) were somewhere in the middle—distinct, on the one hand,

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and dangerous topic, race/ethnicity is real, i.e., "natural," insofar as different population groups often manifest different biological conditions: immunities to particular diseases or lack thereof, manifest specific patterns of disease (lactose intolerance, Sickle Cell Anemia, Tay-Sachs disease, etc.). Different population groups might also manifest statistically-notable somatic uniquenesses: eye shape, particularly light skin, height, etc. The problem—racism—arises from, itself entails a socio-cultural response to such axiologically meaningless natural differences.

[11] R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

[12] Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions*, 101–15.

from the more polished natives of China and Japan and, on the other, from the savages who 'run around naked in the jungle.'"[13]

This kind of top-down racialism has received extensive coverage by scholars. What I will argue, however, is that whether they agreed or not, many 'ordinary' people seem to have been quite aware of racialist thinking, if not participants in it themselves. Those subject to the caste system—Mulatos, Mestizos, Judeoconversos—also wielded it for their own ends in constructing their own identities and for constructing the identities of others in defending, competing with or confronting them.

The topics at hand perhaps conjure a mood as much as an analytic modality, a dark mood, informed by cruelties, brutalities, the stuff of nightmares so horrific as to make the averting of the eyes in Maimonidean negative theology seem by comparison a game of coquetry. Attack dogs such as mastiffs used against women and children, sometimes just for sport. Men, slaves, of course, hung by their testicles as a form of control and cruelty. People, including youths, burned while still alive as punishment for upholding the wrong form of religion. I think of the life story of Cataline de Erauso, even if it is part self-mythologizing, remarkable not just for its rip-roaring woman's escape from oppressive Catholic femininity, its casual violence and globe-trotting, its confusion of gender (and sexual?) identity, but for the seeming unremarkability of it all.[14] This is Cortes with the sex left in and the official, 'state' police action left out. Survivors and sociologists have taught us about the upside-down world of the Nazi concentration or death camps. Was the early modern Atlantic a long-term equivalent for many of its inhabitants?

All this derives in part from the frontier terrain in question; frontiers ethnic, cultural and territorial, the unimagined, unintended spawn of physical movement, for Europeans (and Africans in different ways), new possibilities allowed by the distance from the centers of the old and 'real' world. It resulted from ports, meeting points, nodes of transit, movement, circulation, gathering. Joseph Penso de la Vega, a late-seventeenth-century writer whose family had managed to leave Spain for the Netherlands, where he lived and worked amid Amsterdam's relatively

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[13] Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions*, 111.

[14] Catalina de Erauso, *Lieutenant Nun: Memoirs of a Basque Transvestite in the New World*, trans. Michele Stepto and Gabriel Stepto (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

new Sephardic community, penned a typically Baroque sequence of novellas with a typically Baroque title reflective of current realities: *Rumbos peligrosos, por donde navega con titulo de Novelas, la çosebrantes nave de la temeridad temiendo los peligrosos escollos de la censura surca este tempestuoso mar*. This might be translated as something like: Dangerous Routes by which the Capsizing Ship of Recklessness, with the Title of Novellas, Navigates, Sails the Tempestuous Sea, Fearing the Dangerous Reefs of Censor.

I am reluctant, however, to over-prioritize colonial frontiers or particular continental littorals or places frequented by ships. Ports have no monopoly on clashing, hybridity, violence. Certainly speed itself is a marker of modernity. I think of the rapidity of spreading trends. Black slaves imported as aesthetic appurtenances as far as the courts of the Hapsburgs and Sweden, by the sixteenth century; 'judaizers' hiding and hounded as far as São Tomé or Goa or the Philippines.[15] Perhaps this too is nothing remarkable. I consider the extremity and near-constant difficulty of life for most people in and around Europe, 'the center': the daily lives of the peasantry, the Chmielnicki massacre of thousands of Jews, Protestants and Catholics battling furiously and eating each other's organs in urban France (granted, an acute moment) or more routinized

[15] Judaizing as a charge had a long history before the Spanish Inquisition. There is debate about whether its usage remained consistent with earlier understandings. To 'judaize' meant for non-Jews "to adopt the customs and manners of the Jews," especially religious practices (Shaye J.D. Cohen, "'Those Who Say They Are Jews and Are Not': How Do You Know a Jew in Antiquity When You See One?" in Shaye J.D. Cohen and Ernest S. Frerichs [eds.], *Diasporas in Antiquity* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 32). Though not considered a crime in the ancient world, 'judaizing' seems to have functioned, already soon after its neutral coinage by ancient Greeks, as a term of demarcation, identification, categorization. It served to place one in an agonistic contest between ethnicities and beliefs. Rabbi Yitsḥak Arama (1420–1494), familiar with the inquisitional mentality and its consequences, used the term to refer to "performing acts which were customary among Jews with the intention of being a Jew and returning to Judaism" (Arama, *Akeidat Yitsḥak* [Salonika, 1522], Deut., 262a; translation from Haim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial: the Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, Hispania Judaica, no. 3 [Jerusalem: The Magnes Press/The Hebrew University, 1981], 24, n. 15). Historically it had not always been so easy to distinguish Jews and Christians and *that* was precisely the problem requiring from the medieval period on social constructions distinguishing the two (dress codes, spatial segregation, extreme ideational opposition, etc.). Scholar Karen King defines Christian orthodoxy as the delicate balance between being too Jewish and not Jewish enough. On the medieval history of the term 'judaizing,' see Róbert Dán, "'Judaizare'—The Career of a Term," in R. Dán and A. Pirnát (eds.), *Antitrinitarianism in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1982), 25–34.

French 'state' violence: the drawing and quartering of thousands of smugglers (though France is hardly alone on this score).

It might well be that precisely the escape from the known forms of violence and misery in the Old World led to the creation of new forms, acted out upon new Others. While a proud and patriotic scholarship of a seemingly long-distant age produced surveys of the grand narratives of discovery and conquest, a la Samuel Eliot Morrison's chipper two-volume account, post-modern sentiments only a quarter-century later have rediscovered the pessimism of the Spanish Baroque, yielding the equally modern noir perspective of Josiah Blackmore's study of shipwreck narratives.[16] The social interactions and mutual imaginings explored within the following pages stem from the transportation of people and peoples under the coercion of governments as well as freely in search of better opportunities. That is, what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls "geometrical space," a "homogeneous and isotropic spatiality" of distance and ocean, turned into, produced what he calls "anthropological space."[17] Physical movement and cultural translocation helped produce a discourse of "disruptive impulses," in the words of Robert Harbison, characterized "by an interest in movement above all, movement which is a frank exhibition of energy and escape from classical restraint." Shuttling between the old and the new, Harbison speculates that the Baroque may have suited the colonial scene so well because it "thrives on contradictions and flowers in those perverse enterprises which try to insert contrary motives into a prescribed format, prefiguring European genres as the medium for rambunctious native imagination. In fact the authoritarian intentions of the Baroque seldom entirely conceal its origins in anxiety and spiritual conflict."[18]

My analysis contains sections that offer local histories and others that convey more global surveys and therefore almost inevitably it leaps between continents over the span of several centuries. Of necessity, I have flattened out many geographical and temporal differences,

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[16] Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America*, vol. 1: *The Northern Voyages, AD 500–1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), vol. 2: *The Southern Voyages, 1492–1616* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Josiah Blackmore, *Manifest Perdition: Shipwreck narrative and the Disruption of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

[17] Quoted in Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

[18] Robert Harbison, *Reflections on Baroque* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1, 187; Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 114, 128.

for instance, between the Iberian peninsula and the Iberian colonies, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. This may seem cavalier or methodologically unsound, but local factors notwithstanding, discourse about race and ethnicity was remarkably global and fluid. Obviously, differences can be found in, say, attitudes toward master-slave relations between Iberian metropole and colony, and demographic concentrations of slaves or New Christians created loci of particular legislative or inquisitorial concern. Yet in many ways daily life in Lima was not very dissimilar to life in the Castilian town of Cuenca, while life in villages or in the countryside was even more alike. It is telling that many of the Franciscans who went to missionize in the New World got training in the isolated rural precincts of Spain. Some Jesuits were even known to refer to the backwaters of Europe as "los Indies de por acá/the Indies here."[19] Many of the incidents of conflict between Judeoconverso masters and Afroiberian slaves bear a remarkable similarity to those that transpired in Protestant or Muslim households, at least according to Inquisition documents.[20] The reason for this similarity is the almost structural, overdetermined nature of religious and caste tensions that unfold simultaneously in the private domestic and public institutional spheres. I argue that from the perspective of some kinds of relations a vertical overview reveals as much as highly local ground-level studies. I also tack back and forth between social and literary sources. The use of two methodological approaches helps prevent the kind of one-dimensional perspective that I feel results from an exclusive focus on *either* source type. I take the above approaches because I am interested in the confluence and mutual vexations of personal subjectivities with the objective structures of the world; of intimate experience with solid, stolid law; of the emotional life with the logic of systems. These approaches entail my methodological response to some of the interpretative challenges in doing history—defining scales and units of analysis, identifying relevant textual records, defining and treating facts

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[19] Carlos Ginzburg, *Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 15. He cites Adriano Prosperi, "'Otras Indias': Missionari della controriforma tra contadini e selvaggi," in *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura: Convegno internazionale di studi (Firenze, 26–30 giugno 1980)* (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1982), 205–34.

[20] See, for instance, the cases brought in James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 96–101.

while interpreting the frames that determine their very constitution—as laid out by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt.[21]

Partly responsible for the homogeneity of caste and religion as factors in social interaction was the global surveillance apparatus of the Inquisitions of Spain and Portugal, encouraged by the leadership of the Catholic Church, serving the political aims of a monarchy and culture seeking uniformity. Some recent scholars emphasize the Inquisition's existence as part of the machinery of state rather than of the church bureaucracy, though to the victims the difference may have been relatively unimportant.[22] What is more important is the very nature of the Inquisitions as an institution for the policing of political-theology. In a theistic society, heresy, because it violates divine law, also violates civil law. Religious dissent is therefore both a sin and a crime. Irene Silverblatt nicely sums up the purpose the Inquisitions: "to clarify cultural blame: to specify and bring to judgment those among the [...] inhabitants who held contrary beliefs or engaged in life practices perceived to threaten the [...] state."[23] Through the lens of documents produced by the machinations of the various early modern Inquisitions, particularly those of Spain and Portugal, one can illuminate the lives and thought of New Christians of Jewish and African origin in the Iberian homelands and colonies as they interacted with one another or merely regarded one another.

Inquisition trial records yield a plethora of information about how Judaism and Christianity intersected with caste to shape the interactions and mutual understandings, or misunderstandings, of Judeoconversos and Afroiberians within the orbit of the Iberian empires, and sometimes beyond. I first became inspired to search through Inquisition materials for information on these themes due to the work of Solange Alberro, who uncovered and analysed such information briefly, in the course of study about Blacks and Mulatos in Mexican Inquisition documents and in slightly modified form as part of her general exposition of the

[21] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 14–16; see also ch. 2 ("Counterhistory and the Anecdote").

[22] Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Irene Silverblatt, "Colonial Conspiracies," *Ethnohistory* 53,2 (Spring 2006): 260–1.

[23] Silverblatt, "Colonial Conspiracies," 261.

Inquisition in Mexico.[24] In many respects the first half of this study should be considered an expansion and adjustment of her intriguing findings. Inquisition documents, read properly, can tell us a great deal about relations between the subaltern groups of the Iberian Atlantic.

As groups, Judeoconversos, Afroiberians and Amerindians shared relatively similar experiences under the Catholicism imposed upon them and thus somewhat parallel subject positions in the Spanish and Portuguese empires. At the same time, the ethnically-oriented policy vision of the crown and local elites frequently arrayed these various New Christian groups against each other. Individual Judeoconversos, Afroiberians or Amerindians thus found themselves facing a range of possible stances toward one another which revolved around accepting or rejecting dominant constructions of 'Judaism' or 'Judeoconversos,' 'Africans' or 'Blackness,' 'Indians' or 'primitivity.' The chapters to follow lay out the theo-political patterning of these intergroup relations as manifested in numerous cases of day-to-day interaction and textual projection. Members of these subaltern groups wielded dominant stereotypes about Others in order to establish their own identities, in order to position themselves to best advantage, in order to assert control over the parameters of the relationships in which they found themselves with members of the other groups. It must be remembered that the stereotypes in question often were manufactured and disseminated by elites whose interest lay precisely in ensuring the marginalization and disempowering of subalterns. Hence the uniqueness of subaltern mimicry of elite prejudice, which complicated this prejudice by altering it while wielding it from the vantage point of the Others' relatively weak subject position and which at times resisted it through a pragmatic or even empathetic recognition of mirrored suffering.

Much of the following material was originally formulated in the 1990s, as part of my dissertation, which became my first book, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For methodological reasons, I decided to jettison everything pertaining to Conversos, limiting my treatment in the dissertation

[24] Solange Behocaray de Alberro, "Negros y mulatos en los documentos inquisitoriales: rechazo e integración," in Elsa Cecilia Frost et al (eds.), *El Trabajo y los Trabajadores en la Historia de México: Ponencias y comentarios presentados en la Reunión de Historiadores Mexicanos y Norteamericanos, Pátzcuaro, 12 al 15 de octubre de 1977* (Mexico City/Tucson: El Colegio de México/University of Arizona Press, 1979), 144–49; idem, *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571–1700* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), 467–72.

and book to open Jews. Having returned to these chapters a decade or so later, I am gratified to find that in at least some respects I was on the right track, as corroborated by various works published in the meantime by others. In particular, I see my study as a complement to the recent work done by scholars such as Diana Luz Ceballos Gómez, Barbara Fuchs, Luz Adriana Maya Restrepo and Irene Silverblatt. If, on the other hand, anything here has been said already, please forgive me for repeating it.

The text unfolds as follows:

In chapter 1, I set out some of the religious, political and ethnic configurations that help forge the identities of Judeoconversos and Afroiberians and that lead to the complex, almost necessarily ambivalent relations between the various newly-Christian populations under discussion. Finally, I give a brief history and contextualization of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions whose paper trail informs so much of this study.

Chapters 2 through 7 constitute a series of explorations of day-to-day ethnology, describing interactions between Judeoconversos and Afroiberians from a variety of angles. These chapters alternate between thematic analyses and microhistorical studies, but share a strong reliance on Inquisition records as source material. Chapter 2 entails a look at relations between Judeoconversos and free Afroiberians, often determined by the contradictory socio-economic and religious trajectories of members of the two groups and the tensions and hostilities that resulted. Free Afroiberians often expressed interest in becoming Catholic but, more importantly, were assimilated in ways into the Catholic organization of society, both conceptually and in practice. This included the adoption of or coming to share perceptions of Judeoconversos and (crypto-)Judaism. For their part, despite their persecution, Judeoconversos saw themselves as White and at times wielded anti-Blackness as a means of maintaining their own sense of honor. On the other hand, members of each group might recognize the parallel outsiderness they shared and evoke it in order to build common ground, a phenomenon pursued also in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In chapter 3, I offer a case study exploring the parallels and explosive contacts that unfolded between a pair of Mulatos, a Judeoconverso and the local Inquisition of Cartagena de las Indias in the 1620s and 1630s. The two Mulatos, the free Diego Lopez and the slave Rufina, discussed and spied on those they suspected of being Marranos. They were also both involved in circles of magical practitioners. Arrested by

the Cartagena tribunal of the Inquisition, Lopez offered denunciations of numerous Judeoconversos, particularly Blas de Paz Pinto, a fellow surgeon. The colorful events that link Rufina, Lopez and Pinto offer further evidence of how members of these different subaltern groups sought to survive and thrive despite the theo-political web that attempted to keep them in their societally-assigned places and that also often brought them into direct confrontation with one another.

In chapter 4 the focus on difference narrows to a discussion of the not infrequent conflicts that arose between Judeoconverso masters and their Afroiberian slaves. Here the theo-politics of empire coalesced within numerous private domestic spheres, in a nearly structural manner that operated similarly on the Iberian peninsula or in obscure corners of the empire. Slaves seeking their freedom, to improve their servile conditions or to harm or antagonize their masters often resorted to the Inquisition as a lever, charging their masters as judaizers. Some of these denunciations stemmed from the sincere Christianity of the slave, others from the calculated manipulation of Christian values and dictates. Slaves performed unofficial surveillance for the Inquisitions, producing evidence that might prove useful should the slave or local inquisitors need it. From the vantage point of the masters, their suspect identity as New Christians or illicit and often oppositional Marranism engendered certain pressures regarding those who worked in their households. Slaves might be discouraged from things Christian, power exercised over them to minimize their distance from the masters' subject position, yet they were greatly feared for the potential power this very distance could unleash onto the lives of the masters from church-state authorities.

Chapter 5 provides a glimpse into relations of an opposite order. Here bonds of pragmatism or affection brought Afroiberian slaves and their Judeoconverso mistresses into various kinds of unity, however tenuous and tentative. Some Judeoconverso masters entrusted their slaves with knowledge of their crypto-Jewish practices, some even invited their participation in them. Some slaves also evinced strong loyalty to their masters, defending them against accusations of judaizing, serving them in the face of inquisitional persecution, aiding them in contravention of inquisitional dictates.

Following on this theme, in chapter 6 I address some episodes in which Judeoconversos imprisoned by the Inquisitions and Afroiberian slaves who worked either for the Inquisitions or for the prisoners themselves collaborated to transmit messages to and from jail, subverting the

inquisitional drive for secret proceedings. In this context Judeoconversos and Afroiberians seem to have collaborated as subalterns resisting their common oppressor. Yet, as always, these cases reveal the ambivalence and ambiguity of motivation, desire and manipulation, the difficulty of trust that characterized both masters and slaves in their relations with one another.

In chapter 7, I focus on the life of Esperanza Rodriguez, born in Seville toward the end of the sixteenth century, the daughter of a Judeoconverso father and an African slave mother. In the Judeoconverso household where she herself served as a slave, the young Rodriguez learned about crypto-Jewish beliefs and practices. She later moved to the Americas, eventually settling down in Mexico City. There, she circulated among the city's crypto-Jews, many of them her relatives. When the inquisitional authorities cracked down on alleged Marranos in the early 1640s, Rodriguez found herself arrested, along with her three daughters. Based on the Inquisition record of her trial, among other documents, I explore Rodriguez's experiences within the Mexico City crypto-Jewish community and the significance of her newfound religion and kin network. The riveting, troubled life of this vibrant and ambitious woman of color is set amid the context of colonial Iberian theo-politics, in order to evoke the manifold meanings 'Jewishness' held for many Afroiberians oppressed by the Atlantic slave system.

Part Two of the book moves into more literary terrain. Chapter 8 comprises a survey of the writings of Conversos and former Conversos in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries insofar as they treat Blacks and/or Mulatos and Amerindians. I compare these (ex-)Converso mentions of the new Others within the expanding European system to similar mentions in the wider European discourse. While manifesting some subject positions distinct to the (ex-)Converso predicament, much of this literature's view of Blacks and Amerindians shares in the racial imagination that flowed across national, ethnic borders.

In chapter 9 I conduct an extended close reading of the fairly well-known narrative of Antonio de Montezinos, which describes his purported meeting with a group of 'Jewish Indians' from the lost tribe of Reuben in Nueva Granada (present-day Colombia). Taking the narrative seriously as a theo-political fantasy by an (ex-)Converso, I scrutinize it in the context of ethnological and historical literature on the Amerindians of the colony, as well as compare it with theo-political 'discovery' narratives concerning American appearances of the Virgin Mary. Like these creole Catholic texts, Montezinos' narrative wields the tropes of

the dominating conquerors, including the dominant racial imaginary, in order to subvert them and the rhetorical order of things that grounds and results from the imperial caste system. Readers are forewarned that this chapter is lengthy enough to have entailed publication on its own. I hope its obvious belonging with the other material of this book will encourage forgiveness.

Some quick terminological remarks. I use the term Afroamerican in the hemispheric sense. I often use the term Afroiberian, but in truth the degree to which an individual or a particular historical collective was more African than Iberian or the specificities of being Afro-Mexican rather than Afro-Brazilian, for instance, remains needing the kind of unpacking that I don't supply. I touch on some of these matters in chapter 1. Briefly, however clumsily, it can be assumed that the more recently individuals arrived in the Americas from Africa or the more refreshed collectives were with newly arrived slaves or the more intent or resistance/escape individuals or collectives were, the more African we can say they were, or rather, the more Congolese, Yoruban, Fon, Angolan and the like. Because I am dealing with the Iberian world, I have chosen to use the Spanish/Portuguese *mulato* rather than the English mulatto/mulattoes, which has a foreign ring to it.

When it comes to Conversos of Jewish Descent, I follow Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's sensible and oft-quoted distinction between New Christians and Marranos.[25] Those who maintained Jewish beliefs and practices—keeping in mind the wide range that these took after decades and centuries without much if any refreshment from living normative Jewish communities—comprised a subset of the New Christian population. Sometimes this subset was stronger and more numerous as a percentage of the entire New Christian population; often it was rather miniscule. While I touch on some of these issues in the first chapter, I refer readers to Yerushalmi's still unsurpassed relevant methodological meditations.[26] I am very careful to distinguish Jews from Judeoconversos. When I use the former term it never refers to Judeoconversos who are living, regardless of their inner feelings, outwardly as Catholics. When I use the term Judeoconverso it is as a synonym for New Christian, meaning there is no implication regarding religious loyalty; it is a

[25] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso, A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981 [orig. 1971]), 11–12.

[26] Yerushalmi, *Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, 1–42.

purely sociological category. When discussing an individual Converso or group of Conversos still loyal to Judaism, I use the terms Marrano or crypto-Jew as synonyms.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations from languages other than English are my own. When I quote primary material that has been directly quoted in secondary sources, I note as much: "*cited in* Medina, *Inquisición en Cartagena*, 23" or "*quoted in* Baião, *Inquisición em Portugal e Brasil*, 85."

Inquisition sources contain all the orthographic inconsistencies of writing in an age before standardization. Within quotes I have kept this non-standardized spelling, even of proper and place names, as it appears in the original Spanish or Portuguese. When relating what is said to have occurred within such documents I use the present tense, the mode of conveying that which must remain eternally textual. I have chosen to leave all spellings and capitalization, or lack thereof, as they appear in the original. Readers are forewarned, therefore, that proper names may appear in different spellings and may not correspond to their modern manifestations. I have maintained the flavor (or lack thereof) of the original 'legalese' to be found in Inquisition documents and have not 'improved' the language or style. Since such was the stylistic choice of the Inquisition functionaries, I thought it worth retaining. I do not try to reconstruct scenarios in 'the real world' that are known to us only through depositions given by numerous, often contradictory witnesses in theo-judicial chambers.

For the sake of space I do not provide the original Spanish or Portuguese of Inquisition documents that I cite, unless there is some specific confusion or reason to highlight an aspect of the original formulation. For the sake of readers familiar with these languages, however, I provide the original when citing the more ornate and often obscure language of literary sources.

I capitalize ethnic, caste and/or racial markers, such as Mulato, Judeoconverso, etc. However, distasteful or ridiculous they may seem to us now (though perhaps not to enough of 'us'), these were categories constructing reality. Though the monikers originated by outsiders seeking to describe—or insult—another group, the latter often then picked up the terminology as a means of self-description. My capitalizing them aims to remind us of their status as proper nouns, where not capitalizing them—mulato, mestizo, black—strikes me as allowing them to seem natural, while also not granting them the same kind of legitimacy as terms such as French, Catholic or Jewish.

Earlier versions of some of the following chapters appeared in print. Material from several chapters originally appeared in "Cristãos-novos, judaísmo, negros e cristianismo nos primórdios do mundo atlântico moderno: uma visão segundo fontes inquisitoriais," in *Diálogos da conversão: missionários, índios, negros e judeus no contexto ibero-americano do período barroco*, ed. Lúcia Helena Costigan (Campinas, SP [Brazil]: Unicamp, 2005), 155–84. An earlier version of chapter 8 was published as "Blacks, Jews and the Racial Imagination in the Writings of Sephardim in the Long Seventeenth Century," *Jewish History* (Haifa University) 19,1 (Winter 2005): 109–35.