

After Conversion

Iberia and the Emergence of Modernity

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Doubt in Fifteenth-Century Iberia¹

Stefania Pastore

In Jean Bodin's *Démonomanie* there is a fascinating description of a strange sort of possession: a possession by doubt. Bodin talks of this possession as something which happened to a friend of his. A daemon often came to him in the early morning and somehow planted the seeds of doubt, forcing him to 'open the Bible to find which, of all the debated religions, is the true one'.² This account took place in France in around 1567, as the country was being ripped apart by religious warfare. Bodin, as one of the foremost theorists of absolutism, would eventually put forward an external and strictly political solution to this conflict, allowing the daemon of doubt to roam free only within his conscience. Slightly later, at the opposite end of the country, from his retirement in Bordeaux, Michel de Montaigne would, reflecting on war and religious pluralism, propose a path to relativism very close to that suggested by the champion of religious tolerance Sébastien Castellion.

We are used to seeing in Montaigne, in the reflections of Sébastien Castellion or in the drastic solution put into practice by Bodin, the roots of the history of doubt and tolerance, of the path to modernity taken by a West that is faced for the first time with a divided Christianity and a multi-confessional society. Here, nation no longer equals religion, and the idea of political and religious unity within a Christian universalism has been tragically torn asunder by the Reformation's spread across Europe. Luther's confessional fracture, with its hundreds of scattered shards, and the bloody religious wars in France, pave the

1 The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) ERC Grant Agreement number 323316, CORPI project, 'Conversion, Overlapping Religiosities, Polemics, Interaction. Early Modern Iberia and Beyond'.

2 'Lire la Bible pour trouver laquelle de toutes les religions debatues de tous costez estoit la vraye'. Jean Bodin, *Démonomanie des sorciers* (Paris: Jacques du Puy, 1587 [1580]), fol. iv; there is an abridged English translation: *On the Demon-mania of Witches* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995). On this episode see Christopher R Baxter, 'Jean Bodin's Daemon and his Conversion to Judaism', in *Jean Bodin. Verhandlungen der Internationalen Bodin Tagung in München*, (ed.) Horst Denzer (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1973), pp. 1–21. Paul L. Rose, *Jean Bodin and the Great God of Nature: The Moral and Religious Universe of a Judaiser* (Geneva: Droz, 1980).

way for doubt and comparative thought in the Western tradition. This in turn leads to the advent of an inner space for an untouchable conscience that is independent of the political or civic ties that bind the citizen on the exclusively external plane. Thus were the teachings of religious Nicodemism, as well as one of the strongest and most convincing theorizations of absolutism at the hands of Jean Bodin. But the daemon of doubt, or rather the anxiety to compare the truth of faith, which possessed Bodin's friend – or perhaps Jean Bodin himself – had for quite some time been possessing a great many Spaniards.

The paths of doubt – and with it of modernity – however, rarely wind their way through the Spanish world. The main thoroughfares carved out by European philosophy do not appear to cross through Spain and the Hispanic Empire, and neither do the paths charted by the history of tolerance, or the routes of the radical thought which culminates in Baruch Spinoza and in a long tradition of radical Enlightenment.³

Whether we turn to Paul Hazard's classic account of the crisis of European conscience and the birth of a new critical conscience unhampered by dogmas and confessionalisms,⁴ or to the great master-narratives of European tolerance, from Richard Popkin's crucial history of European skepticism,⁵ to Guy Stroumsa's recent effort to spotlight the birth of religious comparativism, it is always France, Holland and England that take up center stage in historical speculation on this subject.⁶ Spain, at the most, may figure in these narratives as the place from *whence* the pathways of doubt and the routes of modernity hurriedly depart or flee, as with Yirmiyahou Yovel's Marranos, with their 'split identities' and their modernity, biological defined, as it were, by their 'Converso DNA'.⁷

3 Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

4 Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne, 1680–1715* (Paris: Boivin et Cie, 1935).

5 Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

6 Guy Stroumsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

7 Much has been written in recent years on the Marranos, and the Iberian cultural background of the Dutch diaspora has been increasingly viewed as a fertile land for radical cultural tolerance. This may be seen in the pioneering works of Richard Popkin, who was surprised to discover the Iberian Jewish, or rather Marrano, origins, of many of the 'skeptics' he studied, adding new insight, also present in Révah's work, on the Jewish-Marrano circles revolving around Spinoza. More recently, Yosef Kaplan and Yovel's work have opened up a perspective in which the Marranos, together with the much-debated concept of tolerance, appear as a

However, in these studies on the Marranos, and even more so in those on the history of the idea of religious tolerance, Spain and Europe were systematically portrayed as having parallel but distant histories, almost as if Spain remained in everyone's mind exclusively the Spain of the Inquisition, of intolerance and obscurantism, as if the identity myths and the *topoi* of the Spanish Black Legend in Europe had actually succeeded in erasing all trace of conflict, every last gasp of resistance, forcing truth and fiction to coincide.

I think it could be equally significant and fascinating to direct this investigation on the permanence and persistence of doubt to the very heart of the Spanish world: a violent and difficult world, but one where – more than anywhere else – during the Middle Ages, diversity and doubt, the many, too many one might say, certainties of faiths were experienced. Despite the sudden shut-down imposed in the late fifteenth century with the expulsion of the Jews and Muslims, the creation of the Inquisition, and the choice of a single mono-confessional identity, this world of doubt persisted. It is important not to forget the traumatic transition that led to the twin birth of the Inquisition and of a mono-confessional Spain, and to try to convey the incredulous reaction of those who had to live through it, to know what they read and what proposals left their mark. In this Chapter, I would like to recall a small part of this history of doubt in the Iberian world in an attempt to make clear how, long before Jean Bodin and Michel de Montaigne's Europe was ravaged by religious war, the paths of doubt and comparativism had already been trodden in a multi-confessional and multi-cultural Iberian world, which had had no other choice than to come to terms with the fact of multiple faiths and revelations. Very often these proposals were attempts to reconcile new certainties with old, and this frequently led to syncretic solutions which incorporated elements of the old law and the new, building bridges between Judaism and Christianity and between Christianity and Islam, stressing the elements of continuity between the two – sometimes even between the three – revealed religions. Interpretations reflecting this aspect of continuity often led to emphasis being placed on mutual affinities, while disputes and differences were set aside:

driving force of modernity. See for example Y. Kaplan, *An alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Jews of Amsterdam in Early Modern Times* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Y. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos; Split identity and Emerging Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). For the 'Marrano' shift in Richard Popkin's perspective, see Y. Kaplan, 'Richard Popkin's Marrano Problem', in *The Legacies of Richard Popkin* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), pp. 198–212. But for a global discussion that places the Iberian reality at the center, see the absolutely necessary historiographical revision by M. García-Arenal, 'Creating Conversos: Genealogy and Identity as Historiographical Problems (after a recent book by Ángel Alcalá)', *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, (2013): pp. 1–19.

the controversial doctrine of the Trinity, which alienated Jews and Muslims and made any type of rational acceptance of Christian doctrine more difficult, was usually the first element to be abandoned. The pathway to Biblicism, to Hebrew philology, and to comparativism had been opened up by the long disputes on medieval faith and the bitter confutations of converted former Talmudists. Forced to come to terms with its Jewish origins and to compare doctrines and revelations – not in far-off Constantinople but in the Aragon of the Morisco lords, a part of Spain characterized by its attempts to assimilate the two ethnic minorities – a very special part of heterodox Spanish thinking came extremely close to certain deistic standpoints that subsequently, in late sixteenth-century France and seventeenth-century Holland, were to find more ample expression.⁸

This did not mean that the drive toward syncretism was necessarily the most common outcome. Many, after due reflection and comparative consideration, opted for a form of radical skepticism, which resulted in the denial of the immortality of the soul and of the validity of all religious precepts, echoing the centuries-old theories on the three rings, or the three impostors.⁹

8 In addition to the more widely known example of Miguel Servet, I would like to mention just one other almost unknown case, culled from Inquisitorial documents, to reinforce this statement, the Greek scholar Juan del Castillo. Burned at the stake as an Alumbrado in 1537, del Castillo had developed an eclectic theory of salvation in which he mixed Origen's apocatastasis with Lutheran and Alumbrado ideas. He believed in a double revelation, both for Christians and Muslims, that would cancel all differences of faith and grant everyone salvation. The general idea that 'all will be saved' was supported by a complex theory that mixed sophisticated arguments and folk beliefs, combining Origen with the Moriscos' idea of two prophets and a single God. The example of del Castillo is particularly relevant to my argument, because it proposes an intellectual rereading of a folk idea which is typically Spanish at first, with its need to compare different laws, and largely European in its later development. I have dealt with this subject at greater length in S. Pastore, *Una herejía española. Conversos, alumbados e Inquisición (1449–1559)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons 2010).

9 There has been extensive work on the tale of the three rings and its tradition, in a certain sense opposed to and complementary to that of the three impostors. For a long-term perspective spanning from Boccaccio all the way to Lessing's Nathan the Wise, see Niewöhner, *Veritas sive varietas. Lessings Toleranzparabel und das Buch Von den drei Betrügern* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1988). For a historiographical revision that also focuses on non-European traditions, see Iris Shagrir, 'The Parable of the Three Rings: A Revision of its History', *Journal of Medieval History*, 23 (1997): pp. 163–77. The tradition of the three impostors and the mysterious book appeared at the end of the fifteenth century; see Germana Ernst, 'Campanella e il *De tribus impostoribus*', *Nouvelles de la République des lettres*, 2 (1986): pp. 144–70; and Sergio Landucci, 'Il punto sul *De tribus impostoribus*', *Rivista storica italiana*, 112 (2000): pp. 1036–71.

But hiding behind the ritual syncretism exhibited by many Spanish Conversos there often lay conscious positions that, eschewing doctrinal barriers, hinged on the idea that each individual human being was guaranteed salvation, regardless of doctrinal conflict. The forced coexistence of three religions, therefore, caused strife and violence, but also engendered a strange system of syncretic beliefs which intermingled all three monotheisms. This occurred throughout the fifteenth century, but became particularly evident after 1492, when in Spanish society there remained only new converts and officially there were no longer any Jews. The Spanish archives are brimming with the depositions of people who tried to explain to the inquisitor their belief that the three rival religions could exist, each with its own prescriptions and laws, notwithstanding the fact that each individual remained convinced that the law he or she followed was the true law.

Many of these people simply accepted that all of the three religions were true and that everyone could be saved by following the law into which they were born.¹⁰ The way this belief was often expressed was by stating that there were three revelations and three prophets, but one equivalent truth. In 1480, for example, one Converso man from Zaragoza explained to the inquisitors that he believed in Christ, Moses and Muḥammad, but that 'he had less regard for Muḥammad than for the others' (*menos tenía a Mahoma que lo de los otros*), while a Granadan Morisco woman in 1556, Catalina de Quesada, explained during her inquisitorial trial that there is only one God and one law, and the difference was due to the fact that God gave the law to the Christians with his right hand and to the Jews and Muslims with his left. This fact, she explained, made a difference only in the way of writing (from left to right for Christians, from right to left for Muslims and Jews) but nothing more.¹¹

Whatever the case, doubt had made deep inroads into the Castilian communities; joined with a habit for comparing and questioning, it animated coexistence in the villages, and, later on, filled the inquisitors' papers with accusations. This was both a popular and an intellectual phenomenon, whose roots and consequences have not been fully explored, except with regards to its folk and syncretic aspects, in Stuart Schwartz's groundbreaking 2008 study.¹² I

10 See Chapter 11 by Mercedes García-Arenal in this volume.

11 'que Dios era criador de todas las cosas y que avia repartido la ley a los christianos y a los moros y a los judios. A los christianos con la mano izquierda y a los otros con la derecha. Y por eso unos escriben hazia delante y los otros hazia tras'; Catalina de Quesada, *Morisca de Granada*, 1556. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid [AHN], Inquisición, leg. 4519-3, exp. 13.

12 Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

am strongly convinced of the circularity of these kinds of skeptical approaches to religion and wish to stress not only the folk but also the intellectual branches, which are very closely intertwined.

On the other hand, I am convinced that, instead of subscribing to the idea of a sort of genetic propensity toward doubt on the part of the Marranos, we have to understand this propensity in its particular historical context. I do not believe that every convert, each Converso or Marrano, was genetically endowed with the seeds of doubt. Rather, I believe that Spain, long before other countries in Europe, became a place where the problem of belief and religious belonging, in a multi-confessional society, came to be the problem *par excellence*.

Before I come to my main argument I must make a few preliminary remarks. The first regards a terminological issue. I will be using the word skepticism with reference to a very special context, Spain and Italy in the sixteenth century, and in this context I am referring to skepticism mainly as a kind of religious skepticism, the expression of doubts, that is, concerning the truth of conventional religion, especially as regards the afterlife, rather than skepticism which questions the possibility of truly knowing anything.

Doubts over the truths of faith and the deepest-held of beliefs, that of the immortality of the soul, weighed heavily upon the late-medieval Iberian world. In Spain the mixed and multi-religious atmosphere, which gave rise to encounters, clashes and polemics between the three revealed religions, had engendered a particularly attentive and receptive environment in which religious doubt had become an integral part of a tendency toward interreligious polemics and comparative thought. The fifteenth century opened with one of the longest and most famed disputes, that of Tortosa, where from 1412 to 1414 Christian theologians and Jewish rabbis faced off in public for over a year-and-a-half, drawing on Bible interpretation and syllogisms.¹³ In Tortosa, as on numerous other occasions, the most controversial points of the text of the Bible were discussed and analyzed, and rabbinical glosses and Christian interpretations were carefully examined and contrasted in polemics that made full use of the philological and philosophical tools of the day. Moreover, the reality in Spain was one in which commentaries on Aristotle and philosophical rationalism had circulated far and wide since the thirteenth century, and where the commentaries of Averroes had passed from Cordoba to Toledo across a Christian-Muslim frontier that was still extremely porous and permeable, long

13 Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain. Vol. 2, The disputation at Tortosa (1413-1414)* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society 1966), vol. 2, pp. 170-243.

before 1217 and before the Paris editions.¹⁴ Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*, perhaps the most important written attempt to reconcile Talmudic glosses with classical philosophy, was read and appreciated in Castile, and not just within the confines of the Jewish communities. It is highly significant that during this very period Christians' curiosity about Maimonides was such that one of the leading families among the Spanish nobility, the house of Mendoza, commissioned a version of it in Spanish from the Converso Pedro de Toledo, who worked on the project from 1419 to 1432.¹⁵

Christian preachers and Jewish rabbis alike lashed out at what they saw as an excessive tendency toward philosophical rationalism and the use of Aristotle or Averroes to overcome the contradictions of the Bible. In around 1411, right in the midst of a bloody anti-Jewish campaign, Vicente Ferrer was warning against the new schemes of the Antichrist, who with great 'rhetorical subtlety' was calling to 'place your faith in arguments'.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Yitzhaq ben Moshe Aram, one of the most interesting Hispanic-Jewish thinkers in the period prior to the expulsion, was in turn to be found speaking out against how

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- 14 See the volume by Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (eds.), *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), wherein the latest contributions to the topic have been collected and discussed, underscoring the centrality of the Iberian world in the transfer of knowledge from Arabic to Latin Averroism.
- 15 Moshe Lazar (ed.), *The Text and Concordance of B.N. Madrid, Ms. 10289. M. Maimonides' Mostrador e enseñador de los turbados (Pedro Toledo's Spanish Translation)* (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1987); and Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, (ed.) M. Lazar (Culver City: Labyrinthos, 1989); also D. Rosenblatt, 'Mostrador e Enseñador de los Turbados: The First Spanish Translation of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed', in *Studies in Honor of M.J. Bernardete* (New York: Las Américas Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 47–82; and Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in his World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
- 16 Vicente Ferrer, *Sermones sobre el Anticristo*: 'E los siervos del Anticristo començaran a fablar por manera de encantadores e dirán muchas sotilezas con actoridad falsa e farán muy muchos argumentos. E desque ayan dicho los del Anticristo, querrán fablar los maestros e non podrán e dirán: – 'Me, me' ... Agora – ¿Queredes buen consejo? Que aunque los maestros callen, que vós estedes firmes en la fe cathólica; non querades poner vuestra fe en argumentos non en razón alguna, assí como si te fuesse hecha cuestión cómo que Padre e Fijo e Spíritu Santo non es sinon un Dios, tú dirás: – 'Yo lo creo, pues mi Señor Ihesú Christo lo ha dicho e los apóstoles lo han predicado'. E así dirás: – 'Non tengo yo mi fe en argumentos, ca yo lo creo, pues mi Señor lo dixo, pues El no puede mentir nin ser engañado non engañar. E, assí, yd en ora mala con vuestros argumentos'. Cited in Pedro Cátedra, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura en la edad media. San Vicente Ferrer en Castilla (1411–1412)* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1994), pp. 542–43.

heavily Aristotelian rationalism in the vein of Averroes had, as a folk tradition, permeated the culture of the Castilian Jewish community, distancing it from the truths of faith.¹⁷

According to an anonymous dialogue that circulated widely in fifteenth-century Castile, the *Coloquio entre un cristiano y un judío*,¹⁸ it was once again argued that this excess of philosophical analysis would lead the Jews, and along with them a great many Christians, into to the most dangerous of doubts, namely as to the mortality of the soul.

Reasoned from a clearly Christian perspective – the problem was neither as clear nor as pressing in the Talmudic literature – what was singled out as among the worst ‘ways to go astray’¹⁹ once again pointed to a mixed environment that was only intellectually oriented in appearance. In the eleventh chapter the Christian launches into his decisive attack on Judaism, accusing some Castilian Jews of being firm believers in the nonexistence of the hereafter, of paradise and hell, which was a serious test for laws and social conventions. Without the fear of a day of reckoning, of rewards or punishments for the acts of this life, ‘man has no reason to be good before evil.’²⁰ Thus, in the fast-paced morals of the dialogue, an essentially religious problem becomes first and foremost a social one. The response put in the mouth of the Jewish character was disconcerting to be sure: this was but a folk phenomenon with no sway on the learned communities of Castile. The Castilian rabbis and *letrados* believed in and upheld the existence of an afterlife with reckoning and punishment. It was the less educated Jews who denied the immortality of the soul, based on a single line from the Psalms. At this point the argumentation of the dialogue bursts apart into a whole range of complex nuances: the Christian does not seem convinced by this explanation that the mortality of the soul is just a folk phenomenon, but rather holds it to be rooted in high Judaism itself. Indeed, it is the sages themselves who suggest it with their glosses that are too subtle and

17 Isaac ben Moses Arama, *Akeydat Yitzchak: Commentary of Yitzchak Arama on the Torah*, (trans.) Eliyahu Munk (Brooklyn: Lambda, 2001); and B. Septimus, ‘Yitzhaq Arama and Aristotle’s Ethics’, in *Jews and Conversos at the Time of the Expulsion*, (eds.) Yom Tov Assis and Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-toldot Yiśra’el, 1999), pp. 1–26. A very similar opinion is to be found in Solomon Alami, *Iggeret Musar*, who accused ‘those scholars who attempted to interpret the Scriptures in the Greek manner and clothe it in Greek dress. They believed that Plato and Aristotle had brought us more light than Moses our master’. The text is cited in *The Judaic Tradition*, p. 398.

18 Aitor García Moreno (ed.), *Coloquio entre un cristiano y un judío* (London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary, University of London, 2003).

19 ‘maneras de yerros’; García, *Coloquio*, p. 148.

20 ‘non vale al onbre ser más bueno que malo’; García, *Coloquio*, p. 148.

refined, modifying the meaning of the Bible. It is not a matter of ignorance but just the opposite: it is excessive philosophy that gets in the way of interpreting divine law and leads to disbelief. Moreover, the desire to compare and contrast different interpretations leads to a space in which all religious belonging appears to be erased: 'all those with knowledge of your law, you are all heretics and poor believers in the law, since you are neither good Jews nor good Christians'.²¹

The polemical intentions here are clear, and are connected to the wide circulation in Castile of 'high' texts like those of Maimonides, or even to the extent of what has rightly been called 'popular Averroism'. But clearer still is the anonymous author's fear of infection: doubt spreads and slithers from one community to the next, and Jews who are no longer Jews nor Christians are perhaps more terrifying still than actual Jewish believers. Once again this is a widespread and trans-confessional fear. Throughout the 1400s a great number of rabbis, when condemning the Castilian community's lack of adherence to Judaism, identified the cause as this mixed environment where conversions and passage from one faith to another had shaken the certainties of one and all. As they saw it, this had led many to attempt to overcome the logical incongruence between the two opposing faiths, both of which claimed to be the sole truth, through the juxtaposition and rational analysis of their foundational texts.²²

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the forms of heterodoxy in fifteenth-century Spain and the numerous groups that seem to have drawn closer to doubts concerning the truths of faith. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the common element that ties them together and plainly sets them apart from what was to take place in Europe or in the Italian Peninsula: these were multi-confessional communities where contact and comparison with the other revealed religions of the Iberian Peninsula was the principal motor driving doubt and criticism with regard to one's own confession.

Thus, the so-called Durango heretical movement, which might appear reminiscent of elements of the European heresies of Wycliff and Huss, in Spain seems to have evolved through a careful comparison with Islam and the forms of revelation associated with it. Indeed, many followers ended up crossing over

21 '... todos los sabidores de vuestra Ley que todos sodes erejes e malos en la creencia de la Ley, ca nin sodes bien judíos nin bien cristianos'; García, *Coloquio*, p. 148.

22 Baer, *A History of the Jews*, vol. 2, p. 253.

into Granada and converting to Islam, and were well received in the Naşrid Kingdom.²³

Doubt arising from comparison and contrast seems to have also motivated one of the most intriguing radical movements in fifteenth-century Spain – one which the Franciscan Alonso de Espina denounced as a community of ‘Sadducees’ – which emerged from a mixed and strongly intellectual environment wherein Christians and Jews compared one another’s truths, only to arrive at a form of religious skepticism bordering on materialism.²⁴ It was a syncretistic vision partway between Judaism and Christianity, combined with magical and astrological elements, which held that the texts of the Scriptures were profoundly corrupted. It decried Christian ‘fides’ as a ‘hoax’ (a term that closely echoed that used in the medieval tradition of the three impostors),²⁵ and had a strong impact on public opinion due to the mixed Jewish-Christian rituals practiced by part of the community. A further echo comes from Shlomo Ibn Verga’s famous *Shevet Yehuda*, which in pondering the bitter trials and tribulations besetting Spanish Jewry, provides what is considered one of the first and most detailed tellings, after Boccaccio, of the parable of the three rings.²⁶

However, doubt quickly trickled from these readings of Averroes and Aristotle, and the ideas suggested by Maimonides, down into people’s everyday life. In either case the texts had long-lasting consequences, and were not to be confined to scholarly discussions. The widespread consequences of Averroism can be traced, as demonstrated by Francisco Márquez Villanueva, in numerous

23 Darío Cabanelas Rodríguez, ‘Un franciscano heterodoxo en la Granada nasrí. Fray Alonso de Mella’, *Al-Andalus*, 25 (1950): pp. 233–50, and also, with a perspective I myself do not share, Iñaki Bazán Díaz, *Los herejes de Durango y la búsqueda de la Edad del Espíritu Santo en el siglo xv* (Durango: Museo de Arte e Historia, 2007).

24 Alonso de Espina, *Fortalitium fidei contra Iudeos, Sarracenos, aliosque Christiane fidei inimicos* (Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1485). On this episode, see Mario Espósito, ‘Une secte d’hérétiques à Medina del Campo’, *Révue d’histoire ecclésiastique*, 32 (1936): pp. 350–60.

25 ‘Sexto quod fides catholica erat quedam truffa, et quod nihil aliud erat in hac vita nisi nasci et mori’; Espósito, *Une secte d’hérétiques*, p. 356.

26 I am citing from the Spanish translation, Shlomo ibn Verga, *La vara de Yehudah. Sefer Šebet Yehudah*, (ed.) María José Cano (Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1991), see the introductory pages of Y. Baer therein, *Sefer Shebet Yehuda* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1957), pp. 12–15. For a global discussion focusing on the multicultural heritage of medieval Spain, see Friederich Niewöhner, ‘Are the Founders of Religions Impostors?’, in *Maimonides and Philosophy: Papers Presented at the Sixth-Jerusalem Philosophical Encounter*, (ed.) Shlomo Pines and Yirmiyahu Yovel (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), pp. 233–45, wherein the chapter becomes a response to Maimonides.

literary works from the period,²⁷ as well as in the often Lucretius-like naturalism of Juan Ruiz's *Libro del Buen Amor*.²⁸ In the same way, Maimonides is disseminated and made popular through literary works such as the *Visión Deleytable*, which, too, revolves around the dizzying chapter on the non-existence of God. Here, the intellect is led to explain how, faced with the world's unfathomable and irrational nature, and the fact that *todo es caso ynçierto e ventura mudable* (all is uncertain chance and shifting fortunes), one comes to the conclusion that 'man was made for nothing more than to die, and after death there is nothing at all'.²⁹

The mass conversion and violent baptisms imposed upon Spanish Jews, and their abrupt shift from one belief system to another, created countless pockets of disbelief and skepticism, of hybrid visions that attempted to hold together differing sets of dogmas and truths.

The chronicler Hernando del Pulgar offers us a glimpse of this moment in his description of the confusion that reigned as the families of Toledo attempted to maintain both old and new beliefs, old and new habits, where each person believed and followed a law of their own:

In the city of Toledo several men and women were found who conducted Jewish rituals in secret, and who, out of great ignorance and endangering their souls, followed neither one law nor the other; indeed, they were not circumcised as Jews, as is mandated by the Old Testament, and although they observed the Sabbath and fasted on some Jewish fasting days, they did not observe every single Sabbath, nor fasted on all fasting days, and if they carried out one ritual they failed to carry out another, such that they were guilty of falsehood according to either one of the two laws. And in

27 Francisco Márquez Villanueva, 'El caso del averroísmo popular español (hacia la Celestina)', in *Averroes dialogado y otros momentos literarios y sociales de la interacción cristiano-musulmana en España e Italia. Un seminario interdisciplinar*, (ed.) André Stoll (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1998), pp. 33–54.

28 C. Heusch, 'Juan Ruiz and the heterodox naturalism of Spain', *Romanic Review*, 103 (2012): pp. 11–47, on an interesting heretical group in León.

29 'el omne non se fizo synon para morir, e después de la muerte non ay cosa alguna'; Alfonso de la Torre, *Visión deleytable* (ca. 1450), (ed.) J. García López (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1991). Luis Girón Negrón has written at length on the radicalness of a similar text and its textual dependence on Maimonides, in *Alfonso de La Torre's Visión Deleytable: Philosophical Rationalism and the Religious Imagination in 15th Century Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), which goes so far as to discuss atheism. However, see also Harm den Boer, 'The *Visión deleytable* under the Scrutiny of the Spanish Inquisition: New Insights on converso literature', *European Judaism*, 43 (2010): pp. 4–19.

some houses it was found that the man observed some Jewish ceremonies, and the wife was a good Christian, and one son and daughter were good Christians, and another held Jewish opinions. And in a single house there were diverse beliefs, and they all covered for one another.³⁰

With much harsher vehemence against the Jews, an anonymous pamphlet that began to circulate in the late 1400s likened them to *Alboraique* (al-Burāq), the mythical hybrid animal believed to have carried Muhammad up to heaven.³¹ Beyond choosing one faith or the other, the Conversos would have ended up distancing themselves from all three of the revealed religions, as underscored by the court chronicler himself. It was with this same hybrid nature, and with considerable difficulty, that the Cathedral of Seville's anonymous woodcarver must have sought to sculpt the two monsters in the choir, each an amalgam of different fauna, represented devouring a skull. Below them, as if to guide the reader through this indirect representation and to leave a permanent record of the infamy of the Conversos of Seville, the carver chose to explain the meaning of this iconographic image to the reader, glossing it as 'Alboraiques'.³²

As hybrid beings who participated in different and irreconcilable natures and realities, it was among the Conversos that religious doubt took root most strongly, to a certain extent becoming an integral part of their identity as converts. This evidence, which is by no means exhaustive, points to the fact that religious doubt emerged in Spain as a variant of the broader Judaizing heresy, which is precisely how it was classified and interpreted by the Inquisition. Several years ago, in a wonderful study on a well-to-do Converso family from

30 'Se hallaron en la çibdad de Toledo algunos onbres e mugeres que escondidamente fazian ritos judaycos, los quales con grand ynorancia e peligro de sus ánimas, *ni guardavan una ni otra ley*; porque no se çircunçidaban como judíos, segund es amonestado en el Testamento Viejo, e aunque guardavan el sábado e ayunavan algunos ayunos de los judíos, pero no guardavan todos los sábados, ni ayunavan todos los ayunos, e si façían un rito no façían otro, de manera que en una y en la otra ley prevaricavan E fallóse en algunas casas el marido guardar algunas çerimonias judaycas, y la muger ser buena christiana, e el un jijo y hija ser buen christiano, y otro tener opinión judayca. E dentro de una casa aver diversidad de creençias, y encubrirse unos de otros'; Hernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Católicos Reyes don Fernando y doña Isabel* (Madrid: Juan Mata Carriazo, 1943), p. 210 (emphasis mine).

31 David M. Gitlitz, 'Hybrid Conversos in the *Libro llamado el Alboraique*', *Hispanic Review*, 60 (1992): pp. 1–17.

32 Agustín Bustamante García, 'Alboraique, un dato iconográfico', *Archivo español de arte*, 70 (1997): pp. 419–25.

Seville, the Benadevas, Ollero Pina noted how the women were charged with Judaizing relapses in the intimate realm of the home. These accusations were connected to domestic or culinary rituals and habits, such as changing the linens and lighting candles on Fridays, for example. The men, on the other hand, were almost across the board accused of disbelief.³³ As had already taken place in the mixed community of Medina del Campo, the contrast between the different Scriptures and truths had the potential to bring about a wholesale rejection of faith.

A significant number of Spanish Conversos, hunted down and brought to trial by the Spanish Inquisition with the charge of Judaism – as ‘Judaizers’ – confessed that they believed neither in the Christian nor the Judaic religion, and stated instead their belief that nothing exists after death. They believed, it emerges from their trials, that human experience comes down to the acts of living and dying; nothing more, they stated, than ‘to live and die’ (*no hay sino nacer e morir*), or to even ‘to live and die like beasts’ (*nacer e vivir como bestias*).

Scholars of Jewish communities used to refer to this way of thinking as popular Averroism. It may be that the roots of this skeptical attitude are found in the rationalistic beliefs that grew out of Averroes’ commentaries on Aristotle. However, throughout the fifteenth century it became extremely common, enjoying a particular popularity in the Converso communities, but also among the so called Old Christians, as Edwards demonstrated in 1990.³⁴

The phenomenon must have been readily noticeable, and not limited to the Spanish Conversos, judging from how, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Maese Rodrigo chose to devote an entire treatise to refuting those who, as ‘beastly Sadducees’, denied the immortality of the soul, and with it Heaven and Hell, and God’s justice and judgment, even pronouncing with their blasphemous lips the words *en este mundo no me veas mal pasar: que en el otro no me veras penar* (in this world you will not see me upset, nor will you see me suffer in the next).³⁵

33 José Antonio Ollero Pina, ‘Una familia de conversos sevillanos en los orígenes de la Inquisición, los Benadeva’, *Hispania Sacra*, 40 (1988): pp. 547–86.

34 John Edwards, ‘Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria circa 1450–1500’, in *Religion and Society in Spain, c. 1492* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996). See also C. John Sommerville, ‘Debate: Religious Faith, Doubt and Atheism,’ *Past and Present*, 128 (1990): pp. 152–55; and Edwards, ‘Reply’, pp. 155–61. On this problem in the Muslim world see Patricia Crone, ‘The Quranic Mushrikūn and the Resurrection’, *Bulletin of SOAS*, 75 (2012): pp. 445–72; and *Bulletin of SOAS*, 76 (2013): pp. 1–20.

35 ‘y aun no poca lumbre a algunos ciegos obstinados de contraria condicion que no trascienden sus corporales sentidos: ni alcançan con su entendimiento que ay anima: y de

Religious disputes, forced coexistence, but also the presence of dialogue had smoothed the path for what would later become modern comparativism. In any case, doubt emerged in a mixed environment, where two religious confessions confronted one another and exchanged views. These ideas could take on complex forms, as those observed in the community of Medina del Campo, or they could find expression at a popular level. In any case the circulation between high and low culture seems to have nourished and kept alive a phenomenon which I believe should receive more attentive and sustained scrutiny.

It is, crucially, also a phenomenon that is heavily Spanish. To perceive this fact clearly and to understand just how unique and novel it was, I think it is crucial to compare and contrast with what was taking place during this same period in the nearby Italian Peninsula. In Italy this discussion appears to have remained confined to a purely philosophical and intellectual level. The thesis that the soul was mortal, as held by the Converso Juan de Lucena upon returning from Rome,³⁶ was the subject of heated debate among intellectuals, and filled up the pages of learned dialogues and scholarly debates. It did not circulate among perplexed new converts divided between the two laws, but in the academies and schools. Such was the case, for example, of the 'cult' that the Milanese ambassador in Rome described to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, which was discovered soon after the conspiracy of 1468, and arose around the Roman Academy of Pomponio Leto. It was made up of 'learned youths, poets and philosophers' who 'were of the opinion that there was no other world than this, and that once the body died the soul died too, *et demum* that all was naught

aquí como bestiales saduceos niegan haber espíritu: y deste error se derruecan en negar la inmortalidad del alma. E como puersos [sic, *puercos*] hablan consejas ajenas y contrarias a la pura y santa ley de dios, diciendo ser semejante el fin de los hombres al fin de las bestias: creyendo que el alma racional perece como la bestial. De donde se sigue que niegan el parayso y el infierno: y la justicia y juicio de dios. E con estos descomulgados errores sueltan las riendas en su desfrenada, mas muerte que vida y osan decir con su prophana boca en este mundo no me veas mal pasar: que en el otro no me veras penar'; Rodrigo Fernández de Santaella, *Tratado de la inmortalidad del alma* (Seville: J. Kromberger, 1503); the treatise, in the shape of a dialogue, has forty-five chapters and is dedicated to the Count of Cabra D. Diego Fernández de Cordoba.

36 Juan de Lucena, *Diálogo de vita beata* [1463], see Bertini's edition, *Testi spagnoli del xv* (Turin: Gheroni, 1950). The text has traditionally been interpreted as a Castilian remake of Bartolomeo Facio's original text, when in fact it actually contains a great number of other extremely interesting elements, among them the (rather unconvincing) chapter on the immortality of the soul. For a detailed analysis of the text, see Pastore, *Una herejía española*, pp. 85–116.

but for paying heed to pleasure and delight'.³⁷ The controversy was rekindled by Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae*, and Rome's prohibition on broaching the subject of the soul's mortality did little to silence the debate. This is a long and largely well known story, of which it is perhaps only worth highlighting that, unlike in Spain – where over the course of the course of the 1400s an intensely popular version of Averroism developed – in Italy Averroism was essentially a scholarly doctrine that was very clear-cut and recognizable in philosophical terms.

An all-encompassing study gathering together possible encounters and exchanges between these two worlds has yet to be conducted. What were the impacts, for the Italy of scholarly Averroism, of such encounters with the less precisely defined Jewish Averroism, and with Judeo-Spanish Biblical and rationalist culture? We know that ties between the University of Padua and the Ferrara Jewish community were close and constant. We also know that Ferrara's Jewish printing presses published a series of key texts in the Judeo-Spanish anti-rationalist debate, which shows the extent of a controversy that seems to spill out beyond Iberia and follow the path of the Sephardic diaspora. We are also beginning to suspect that part of this Spanish culture of skepticism and disbelief was to influence on texts seemingly very distant from the philosophical and theological debates such as *Rime* and chivalric romances, which were the Spanish publishing industry's best sellers in Italy in the early 1500s.³⁸

Thus, it comes as no surprise that at a time in Italy when Converso refugees were pouring in, fleeing from the Inquisition – some of them in search of their own Jewish roots, and some just looking for a safer, calmer place to live – in popular speech the term Marrano slowly became a synonym of 'unbeliever'. Likewise, a telling expression came to characterize the muddled and dubious

37 'docti gioveni, poeti et philosophi ... tenevano opinione che non fusse altro mondo che questo, et morto il corpo morisse l'anima, *et demum* che ogni cosa fusse nulla se non attendere a tuti piaceri et voluptà'; cited in Eugenio Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1966), pp. 324–25. There was also a reference to the theory of the three impostors: 'Dicevano che Moyses era stato un grande inganator de homini con sue leze et Christo un seductore de populi et Machometo homo de grande ingegno, che se tirava dreto tuta gente per industria et malitia sua, sicche era grande mancamento ali moderni docti sequir tal leze e norme se non viver al suo modo' (They said that Moses was a great deceiver of men with his law, and Christ a seducer of peoples, and Mohamed was a man of great intelligence who pulled all the people along with him by his cunning and malice, and so it was a great impediment to modern men of learning to follow these laws and rules instead of living life in their own manner), p. 325.

38 This is part of ongoing research that I have only been able to partially illustrate in this article.

religiosity of Spaniards in early sixteenth-century Italy, namely the ‘Spanish *peccadillo*’.³⁹ Over the course of thirty years this expression evolved from a rather nasty way of alluding to Spaniards’ judaizing Conversos to a supposedly inherent anti-Trinitarianism, typical of the new converts from Judaism and connected to a syncretistic and comparative predisposition, and eventually to an attitude of open disbelief, an almost seventeenth-century atheism.

There is always a measure of risk involved when trying to write history based on stereotypes, especially in such a case as this, which is so closely connected to the anti-Spanish period in Italian history, and to a lurking anti-Judaism. This situation means that, in many cases, they were defamatory and decontextualized accusations lacking any real ideological depth, and were at times even interchangeable and reciprocal. Still, I believe that delving a bit deeper into these two harsh epithets used against the Spanish can help us to understand the extent to which this forgotten world, buried under the later-imposed self-image of a uniformly Catholic Spain, could open up new and fascinating horizons. Indeed, it reveals just how much representations of the Spanish in this period, however exaggerated and stereotyped, were a far cry from the image of the sanctimonious, pious Spaniard, which would later prevail in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Starting in the last decades of the fifteenth century, Spain’s presence in Italy became firmly entrenched, through a process that was doubly connected to the Catholic Monarchs’ new brand of confessional politics. 1492, the year of the Jews’ tragic expulsion from the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, and 1505, the year the Iberian Jews were expelled from Portugal, represented the two peak moments in a flow of immigration that was to continue from then on, in response to the Tribunal of the Inquisition’s waves of repression.⁴⁰ The problem of the fleeing Iberian Conversos was a global one, but in Italy and in Papal

39 Stefania Pastore, ‘Il ‘peccadiglio di Spagna’: incredulità, scetticismo e politica imperiale nell’Italia del primo Cinquecento’, *Rinascimento*, 53 (2013): pp. 3–37; and also ‘From Marranos to Unbelievers: The Spanish Peadillo in Sixteenth-Century Italy’, in *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, (ed.) M. Eliav-Feldon and Tamar Herzig (Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 79–93.

40 A comprehensive study of Spanish immigration in Italy has yet to be undertaken. However, the information that has been gathered to date does seem to favor interpreting it in the light of the repressive politics afoot in Spain. See Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro, ‘Una realtà nazionale composita: comunità e chiese spagnole a Roma’, in *Roma capitale (1447–1527)*, (ed.) S. Gensini (Pisa: Pacini, 1994), pp. 473–91; Vaquero Piñeiro, ‘Valencianos en Roma durante el siglo xv, una presencia en torno a los Borja’, in *El hogar de los Borja* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2001), pp. 185–98; and Alessandro Serio, ‘Modi, tempi e uomini della presenza hispana a Roma nel primo Cinquecento (1503–1527)’, in *L’Italia di Carlo V. Progetti, politiche di governo e resistenze all’impero nell’età di Carlo V. Atti del Congresso Internazionale* (Rome: Viella, 2003), pp. 433–76.

Rome it became readily visible, right before the people's eyes. The violent realism of the famous *Retrato de la Lozana andaluza* offered perhaps the most beautiful portrait, though surely the wildest and most lively, of the Converso community in Rome, located between Campo dei Fiori and Piazza Navona. The *Lozana*, a picaresque account of a Spanish courtesan in Rome, was published anonymously in 1529 by Francisco Delicado, another fleeing Cordovan, perhaps escaping from the Inquisition itself. In Rome the lovely Lozana paraded about, along with the rest of the Spanish women who lived there as refugees *desde el año que se puso la Inquisición* (since the year the Inquisition started), with their makeup and their hybrid tongue, the cooking tests that earned Lozana, who cooked with oil like all the other Conversos, the title of queen of wit and dissimulation.⁴¹ It was a community teeming with shops, exchanges and new freedoms, where the Jews, 'many of them, and friends of ours ... are on good terms with the Christians' (*muchos, y amigos nuestros ... tratan con los cristianos*). Even the most famous *conversa* in Spanish literature had a shifting and changing identity, which, in the context of Italy, found new spaces and new possibilities of expression, safe from the dangers of the Spanish Inquisition. With all her nerve and cunning, Lozana would claim to be Castilian, Andalusian or Turkish, depending on the circumstances and the people she was dealing with. This must have been a particularly vibrant and readily identifiable commonplace in the Italian Peninsula at the outset of the sixteenth century. Her male counterpart is Ariosto's Negromante, who 'from land to land in order to hide / changes his name, attire, language or nation / Now he is Giovanni, now he is Pietro; sometimes he pretends to be / Greek, others from Egypt, others from Africa / And truth be told he is a Hebrew by origin, / Of the ones who were kicked out of Castile'.⁴²

41 In *mamotretos* VI and VIII of *La lozana andaluza*, Lozana, who has just arrived in Rome, is forced to pass a cooking test before being accepted by the other Spanish women, who want to find out whether she is 'one of ours', for example, of Jewish or Old Christian origin. I am citing from the edition of Giovanni Allegra (trans.), Francisco Delicado, *La lozana andaluza* (Madrid: Taurus, 1985), but see also the important introduction to the edition by Bruno Damiani, as well as the latter's monograph, Damiani, *Francisco Delicado* (New York: Twayne, 1974). On Delicado and the Converso problem, consult Francisco Márquez Villanueva, 'El mundo converso de *La Lozana andaluza*', *Archivo Hispalense*, 171–73 (1973): pp. 87–97; and Ruth Pike, 'The conversos in *La lozana andaluza*', *Modern Languages Notes*, 84 (1969): pp. 304–08. Also addressing these topics, in a dense article full of intriguing reflections, is James Amelang, 'Exchanges between Italy and Spain: Culture and religion', in *Spain in Italy: Politics, Society and Religion (1500–1700)*, (ed.) Thomas Dandelot and John A. Marino (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 433–55, to which I refer the reader for a much richer picture of the cultural encounters and exchanges between Italy and Spain in this period.

42 'di terra in terra per nascondersi / Si muta nome, abito, lingua e patria / Or è Giovanni, or

The identity of the Spanish, and in particular of the Spanish Conversos – ready to return to Judaism as soon as they set foot on Italian soil, but also willing to shift their identity and adapt once more, to stay in Italy or to head toward the Levant – is an identity in constant flux, which changes in accordance with their surroundings and circumstances. And this is the perception cruelly held by the majority of Italians, that some come to Rome to try their luck and restart a career cut short in Spain, while some knock on the door of the Apostolic Penitentiary and then return to Spain with an absolution that will allow them to evade the Inquisition and start over.⁴³ Thus, behind every Spaniard there is a possible second identity, an impostor.

We may recall from the classic study by Farinelli how the word ‘marrano’ – which Minturno explained *non fu italiano ma della gente loro istessa il trovatore* (was not Italian but found by their own people) – entered into the mainstream Italian lexicon in the mid-1500s.⁴⁴ It became the most widely used insult against Spaniards of all walks of life. Although initially coined as a derogatory term for an ethnic and religious group with varying degrees of Jewish ancestry, a stain on the much sought-after ‘blood purity’ of the Spanish, in Italy it quickly came to be used as a general synonym for hypocrite, impostor and traitor. Lack of faith and an uncertain identity was also taken as a sign of betrayal, of religious, political and interpersonal infidelity. Recall how the ghost of the betrayed Argalia shouted at the Spanish knight Ferraù, ‘You faithless *marrano!*’⁴⁵ Contemporary chronicles from Italy tell of numerous cases in which duels were called or fights broke out over a Spaniard being called a ‘marrano’, in the sense of a traitor.

Naturally, the insult ‘marrano’ also applied to the many Spanish political representatives whose policy from the 1520s to the 1550s was altogether

Pietro; quando fingesi / Greco, quando d’Egitto, quando d’Africa / E è per dire il vero giudeo d’origine, / di quei che fur cacciati di Castilia. Ariosto, ‘Il Negromante’, in *Commedie*, (ed.) Andrea Gareffi (Turin: UTET, 2007), p. 553 (act two, scene one).

43 The archives of the Vatican’s Penitentiary have only recently been reopened to the public. An overview published before it was opened to the public – and harshly condemned by the Roman Curia, who revoked the author’s status of ‘Monsignore’ – is that of Filippo Tamburini, *Santi e peccatori. Confessioni e suppliche dai Registri della Penitenzieria dell’Archivio Segreto Vaticano (1451–1586)* (Milan: Istituto di propaganda libraria, 1995), pp. 300–02; and Tamburini, *Ebrei, Saraceni, Cristiani. Vita sociale e vita religiosa dai registri della Penitenzieria Apostolica (secoli XIV–XVI)* (Milan: Istituto di propaganda libraria, 1996), substantially re-explored in his most recent article ‘Inquisición española y Penitenciaría apostólica’, in *Historia de la Inquisición en España y América* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2000), vol. 3, pp. 207–24.

44 Arturo Farinelli, *Marrano. Storia di un vituperio* (Geneva: Leo S. Olschki, 1925), p. 9.

45 ‘A Ferraù parlò come adirato, / E disse: ah mancator di fe, marrano!’

different than the warm and placid pro-Papal alliances that were to characterize the second half of the century. During these years, from the sack of Rome to Carlos V's final attempts to reach a doctrinal agreement with the Lutherans, the critic Baldassare Castiglione used the label Marrano against Carlos V's secretary, Alfonso de Valdés,⁴⁶ as well as the Imperial ambassadors in Italy, and in particular the *arcimarrano* Diego Hurtado de Mendoza and his successor, Juan Manrique de Lara. Even Carlos V himself was referred to as a Marrano, by his implacable enemy Gian Pietro Carafa, who later became Paul IV.⁴⁷ In this tale of slurs and stereotypes, of clichés and prejudices that seem to repeat themselves over and over, there is actually an important break. Between 1530 and 1540, the epithet Marrano, without losing its ethnic and religious connotations, would gradually take on the meaning of nonbeliever. Even Luther, in his *Table Talk*, refers to Alexander VI as *ein maran qui plane nihil creditit*.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, in his lengthy invective in verse, Aretino's ex-secretary Niccolò Franco likened the former's skepticism and unbelief to that of the Spanish: 'But you don't believe it, and all I say is in vain: nor does it surprise me, as the Spanish who do not believe are also called Marranos'.⁴⁹ This is yet another nuance, which, significantly, will also come to apply to the expression 'Spanish *peccadillo*'. Ariosto, too, in his Satire of Pietro Bembo, used the expression as an explicit allusion to anti-Trinitarianism, joking about the vices of tutors:

And beyond this note, the Spanish
peccadillo harmed him so, that he does not believe
in the unity of the Spirit the Father and the Son.⁵⁰

46 From the controversy following the publication of Alfonso de Valdés' *Diálogo de las cosas acaecidas en Roma*, which may be reconstructed based on documents published in A. de Valdés, *Obras completas*, (ed.) Ángel Alcalá (Madrid: Turner, 1996); in particular, 'Respuesta del conde Baltasar Castiglione, nuncio en España, a la carta de Valdés de agosto de 1529', ap. III.

47 According to ambassador Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, among other things Carafa accused Carlos V of being a 'fementido engañador, puto judio i otras virtudes'. See the Letter to Granvelle of 13 December 1549, in *Algunas cartas de don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza escritas 1538–1552* (ed.) Alberto Vázquez and R. Selden Rose (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 143.

48 M. Luther, *Discorsi a tavola*, (ed.) L. Perini (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1969).

49 Niccolò Franco, *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* (Lanciano: R. Carabba, 1916), pp. 52, III.

50 'Et oltra questa nota, il peccadiglio / di Spagna gli danno anco, che non creda / in unità del Spirito il Padre e il Figlio'; Ludovico Ariosto, 'Satira VI A Messer Pietro Bembo', in *Opere*, (ed.) Mario Santoro (Turin: UTET, 1989), vol. 3, pp. 425.

More than thirty years later, this accusation would have undergone a semantic drift of the same sort as the term 'marrano'. A scathing text by Annibale Caro dating from the 1540s relates the story of a Spaniard who went to a priest to confess his sins, only to come right back again to say that he had forgotten one small sin – *a peccadillo* – 'not believing in God'.⁵¹

The examples could go on, but I believe that, beyond the obvious difficulties involved in following the course of a stereotype – for example, in the France of Catherine de Medici, *marrano* was a French insult for Italians – what is nonetheless clear is that in the collective imagination of Italy at the time, the world of the Spanish was seen as one of hypocrisy and affectation, the result of too many religious identities and too many truths in which to believe. It mattered little whether the seeds of doubt that spurned the sharp intelligence of the newly converted, forced to pass from one truth to another, were the Trinitarian doubt of Ariosto's satires, or the more radical doubt of 'not believing in God', recorded by Annibale Caro. The fact of the matter is that the image of the Spanish in Italy was connected to the pluralism of Spain's cultural roots, in other words, with the fact of its new converts from Islam and Judaism. It was an identity born of the mixing of different creeds, capable of undermining the foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps this was in search of the common roots of the three monotheistic faiths, or perhaps it was in fact a much more radical form of contesting the truthfulness of any religious law. The traumas of fifteenth-century Spain, the passage from the old law to the new, the forced conversions, and the breakup of a core identity based on community and religious membership, gave rise to a new way of living the phenomenon of faith, one which was unwittingly modern. This is reflected, to a certain extent, in the semantic drift from *Marrano* to 'nonbeliever', and the changing uses of the expression 'Spanish *peccadillo*'.

Surprises are surely in store for whomever should attempt to carefully trace the evolution of these expressions, which would add a key piece to the puzzle of heresy in Italy. In this context, a movement such as the one that grew up around the charisma and teachings of the Spaniard Juan de Valdés, a powerful member of the Imperial party and spiritual teacher, engendered offshoots, the

51 A. Caro, *Commento di ser Agresto da Ficaruolo sopra la prima ficata del padre Siceo* (1538): 'E parmi che abbi fatto come quello spagnuolo che, quando si fu confessato di tutti i suoi peccati, ritornò al confessore a dire che s'era dimenticato d'uno peccadiglio, e questo era di non credere a Dio'. For more on this expression, which once caught the attention of Benedetto Croce, and on its profound implications for attempts to flesh out an attitude that was very different from the religious conformism typical of Iberian multiculturalism, see Pastore, 'Il "peccadiglio di Spagna".'

most radical of which would lead to positions closely related to the trends of fifteenth-century Spain. Among these were Girolamo Busale and Giulio Basalù, who went from believing 'only in that which is the same in both laws, namely the Hebrew and the Christian', to the conviction that religion was nothing more than the 'invention of well-off men'.⁵² And this was at the very time in which the most mysterious book of all time, the *Treatise of the Three Impostors*, was beginning to crop up in Italy.⁵³

Through forms and channels that I believe remain wholly unexamined, a brand of skepticism, which took root through beliefs that until now have been regarded as belonging to the common folk, found new forms of expression in late Renaissance Italy. Comparativism, the need to compare and contrast diverse laws and revelations, made up the bedrock and the most characteristic, typically Iberian element of this trend, born out of the extremely unique conditions of debate and controversy in fifteenth-century Spain. It is a story that has yet to be told, but one which I believe will reveal a 'southern way', an Iberian-Italian route that is still completely undiscovered. It is another path toward the story of European religious tolerance and comparativism, wherein the Iberian experience proved to be a remarkable and violent laboratory for interfaith disputation and debate.

52 'solo quello che concordava nell'una e nell'altra legge, cioè hebrea et cristiana'; 'inventione di huomini al ben vivere'. The stances of Busale and Basalù have been dwelt on at length by Aldo Stella in *Dall'anabattismo al socinanesimo nel Cinquecento veneto. Ricerche storiche* (Padua: Liviana, 1967), pp. 33–38, pp. 75–83; and Stella, *Anabattismo e antitrinitarismo in Italia nel XVI secolo* (Padua: Liviana, 1969), pp. 15–43; and *passim* L. Addante, *Eretici e libertini nel Cinquecento italiano* (Rome: Laterza, 2010), pp. 25–30; and, from a broader perspective, Massimo Firpo, *Tra alumbrados e 'spirituali? Studi su Juan de Valdés e il valdesianesimo nella crisi religiosa del '500 italiano* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1990).

53 For more on this now vast topic, see at least Ernst, 'Campanella e il *De tribus*', pp. 144–70; and S. Landucci, 'Il punto sul *De tribus impostoribus*', *Rivista storica italiana*, 112 (2000): pp. 1036–71.