PROSPECTUS

For a Dissertation entitled

Mother’s Milk, Father’s Blood:
On the Transmission of Religion as Race in Early Modern Spain (1502-1614)

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in

The Study of Religion

History of Christianity

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I. Topic and Thesis

This dissertation investigates changes in theological conceptions of the transmission of religion in Renaissance Spain.\(^1\) I ask: Why did Inquisitional Christianity turn to biological rhetoric to describe the transmission of religion from one generation, or, later, one person, to the next? How and when did certain bodily fluids—blood,\(^2\) but also breast milk—become the carriers of religious ancestry? Alongside my specific historical questions, I ask: What can the emergence of the theological concept of *raza* (race) in sixteenth-century Spain, viewed from within the larger, ongoing history of Christianity, tell us about the co-constitution of “race” and “religion” in the modern West?\(^3\) How can this historical material add to or critique our own genealogies of modern subjectivity?

In order to approach these questions, I focus on what scholars sometimes call the “Morisco Century” or the “Morisco Age,”\(^4\) which begins in 1502, with the first forced conversions of Spain’s Muslim communities, and ends between 1609 and 1614, with the

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1. The definition of “religion” in this dissertation shifts according to the Inquisitional archives that I am reading. It alternately refers to a set of beliefs (*creencias*), about the nature the world and God, often translated into Inquisitional propositions (*proposiciones*); to a law (*ley*), especially concerning the nature of salvation; to a set of rites (*ritos*), ceremonies (*ceremonias*), and practices; to a “taste” (*sabor*) for certain vices; to a historical community, closely related to or forming a “sect” (*secta*), a “nation” (*nación*), a people (*pueblo*), a caste (*casta*), or a lineage (*linaje*); to one’s blood (*sangre*); to a “faith” (*fe*) at the core of a subject’s being; to the biological nature of a subject (*naturaleza*); to a diseased root (*raíz*) in a body; to a race (*raza*); and more. The word closest to “religion”—*religión*—is rare. I use the word “religion” to collect these shifting and overlapping theological definitions under one word—and to connect my investigation to the contemporary academic field of religion.


enactment of the official expulsion of those same converts. During this period, the statutes of *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity; lit: blood cleanliness) were adopted by secular and ecclesiastical institutions across Iberia, and became the theological backbone of the Spanish Inquisition. As they became official theology, the statutes underwent several key changes, including the shift to “a more rigid dual-descent model of classification,” in which not only paternal but *maternal* bloodlines were taken into account.⁵ At the same time, María Elena Martínez argues, Moriscos and Conversos (Jewish converts) were reconceived as being *essentially* Muslim or Jewish, “never fully able to rid themselves of their ancestral beliefs and therefore never capable of becoming fully realized Christians.”⁶ In order to account for the newly immutable converts, the formerly marginal Castilian word *raza* came into prominent usage,⁷ and *limpieza de sangre* re-grounded itself on a “religioracial” essentialism.⁸ Social history grounds my own research. But a driving claim of this dissertation is that historians of early modern Spain overlook crucial features of the changes that I am tracing because of their refusal to consider the problem of the transmission of religion, and so, *raza*, as unavoidably *theological*. (On the flip side, few scholars of religion have taken the Inquisition as an object of study.) *Raza* has yet to

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⁶ Ibid., 54. See also the entry for “raza” in Sebastián de Covarrubias’ *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española, según la impresión de 1611, con las adiciones de Benito Remigio Noydens publicadas en la de 1674*. Barcelona: Horta, 1943.

⁷ Ibid.

even be named as a theological concept,⁹ I argue, let alone read in terms of a specifically “Christian imagination.”¹⁰

Nor have the theological consequences of the sixteenth-century maternal turn within this imagination been explored. Why does the Inquisition’s turn to mothers as privileged sources of religion coincide with its discovery—creation—of a Muslim or Jewish essence at the core of “New Christians” (cristianos nuevos)? And what kinds of Christian practices emerge from a context in which the sacraments have become powerless to alter that essence? David Nirenberg has suggested that an intensified obsession with pure bloodlines points to “the actions of a society [or, theology] anxious about the biological reproduction of religious identity.”¹¹ But Nirenberg is writing about the fifteenth-century, a moment in which limpieza de sangre was limited to the Jewish or Christian heretical “stain” (mancha) passed from fathers to sons through blood. His account, thus, is limited to anxieties about “mixed intercourse” between a Christian and a Jew, and a man and a woman, in which the male contribution mattered most.¹² In this dissertation, I start with the observation that the addition of maternal bloodlines to Inquisitional genealogies opened the traditional father-son dyad from within: the realm of contagious contact was expanded; there were more and changed possibilities for the transmission of religion. If the new dual-descent model of classification was more “rigid,” it was also more flexible. Mothers, I

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¹² Ibid., 1074.
argue, were more than included. Milk, as a genealogical object, spread differently than blood did. Over the course of the sixteenth century, maternal acts of *nurturing*, which had been absent from Inquisitional mentalities, turned into the most vital site for the transmission of belief. A mother could transmit her stain to her son, or daughter, not only through birth, but through breastfeeding; a wet nurse, a strange woman with no ties at all to an infant, could transmit her disease, too (Chapter Two); an extraordinarily strange old woman, with no learning and no family, who nobody has ever seen or heard of, could become the sole remaining source of “Islamic” tradition in the Iberian peninsula (Chapter One); over and against ancient, familial blood, *images* of the Virgin Mary breastfeeding could make brothers and sisters of New and Old Christians (Chapter Four). In different ways, the “physical and physiological stuff” of these acts of transmission will become viewed as the timeless truth of New (and new) Christians.

**II. Methodology**

I argue that these natural, or naturalizing, histories need to be read within the history of Christianity. It is only from this vantage point, for example, that we can begin to appreciate the shock of Christians’ loss of faith in baptism that occurs in post-Tridentine Spain: baptism’s failure is not the natural consequence of converts’ unbaptizable essences (the Inquisitional thesis), nor an expression of the limits of social policing (the social historical thesis), but rather a *product of theology* (Chapter Three). More generally, I argue that it is only by inhabiting Inquisitional discourses—by risking reproducing Inquisitional categories, and reading as fully

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13 Julio Caro Baroja was one of the first historians to note the discursive overlap between theology and pathology—or what he called “pseudoreligion” and “pseudobiologia”—in sixteenth-century Spain. (Julio Caro Baroja, *Las formas complejas de la vida religiosa: religión, sociedad y carácter en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII*. Serie Textos (Akal Editor). Madrid: Akal, 1978) I question the “pseudo-.”


15 David Nirenberg has warned about the contagiousness of *limpieza de sangre* discourses: historians often reproduce the obsession with pure origins that they make the object of their study. (David
as possible from a nonsecular perspective—that we can begin to write accurately about the kinds of subjectivities produced during the Morisco Age.

Historians of Inquisitional Spain need to begin to read its bio-theological language about blood, milk, and particular female bodies, as facts for those that used and were shaped by it. Spanish historians (understandably) bent on counteracting the legacy of the Inquisition, such as Américo Castro and Francisco Márquez Villanueva, have insisted that its claims about “biology” are really about class, culture, or a pre-theological “social,” and so, “by no means racial.”

Contemporary social historians have repeated this mode of allegorical reading; in particular, by only ever reading the body—in particular, the female body—as a metaphor for the social order. These approaches miss something crucial about the ways in which rhetoric about the transmission of religion form very real bodies, and very real theologies, which exceed that rhetoric even as they are subject to it. Rather than rely on sociological decodings of limpieza de sangre, I argue, we need to approach its histories materially—in terms of theological discourses that were believed in, and generative of the bodies they describe. In turn, we need to move away from a historiographical focus on “mechanisms of exclusion,” and think instead of the uses of limpieza de sangre in terms of “self-fashioning” on both a communal and a subjective


17 This insistence is exemplified in the proliferation of the word “anxieties” in histories of early modern Spain. Two examples among many: “[Limpieza de sangre] reflects increased anxiety about the stability of group boundaries after 1391” (Nirenberg, “Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain,” 1074); “The construction of conversa and morisco bodies was inextricably linked to anxieties about sexual, marital, and reproductive relations between Old and New Christians” (Martinez, *Genealogical Fictions*, 58).

level. This can help to point historians to immanent forms of resistance, that is, to the kinds of resistant texts and bodies generated by and within Inquisitional Christianity. It can also help us to resist ready distinctions between the theological and the biological, and the metaphorical and the literal (distinctions being made by Christians in the historical, and arguably present, moment). In these veins, I argue that historiographies of the Inquisition need to begin to incorporate certain traditions of feminist and postcolonial thought in order to grasp not only the construction, but the materialization, of raced and gendered New Christians.

Following Juliet Fleming’s recent intervention into book history, I suggest that historians of early modern Spain need to work with a concept of “the archive,” or archivization. My investigation is predicated on a close engagement with archives, especially those that have been ignored or held in contempt by scholars of early modern Spain. On the official side of Christianity, I focus on transcripts of Inquisition trials, as well as memoriales and sermons written by Inquisitors. Historians of Spain have disparaged this material for being irreducibly “poisoned” (Introduction), or for being too tedious or illogical to be worthy of study; most of it sits untouched in Spanish libraries. Instead, I read manuscripts of Inquisition trials as literature defined by its unreliability. On the more unofficial side of the Inquisition, I focus on Aljamiado literature (manuscripts written in Castilian or Aragonese but using Arabic characters). The

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20 I have in mind the traditions of Frantz Fanon and Judith Butler, but also recent philosophers of blackness, such as Fred Moten.
21 Juliet Fleming, Cultural Graphology: Writing after Derrida. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016; cf. Jacques Derrida’s Archive Fever. Thinking with the archive will not free historians from perpetuating an Inquisitional transmission (or, archival) of religious essences, but it can call attention to the livingness of that tradition in our own writing.
22 This dissertation includes the first English translations of the Aljamiado literature that I am investigating.
majority of extant Aljamiado manuscripts were found stashed beneath floorboards and inside of walls by Spanish farmers renovating their homes at the end of the nineteenth century, and have received scant attention beyond Spanish-speaking philologists. I also look at Golden Age painting, which I take to be supplementary of the theological writing produced by Inquisitors and New Christians,23 and vice-versa.

III. Chapter Outlines

Preface: White Masks: A Beauty Tip for the End of the World

I undertake a short reading of a fragment of Aljamiado literature, which provides instructions for “how to whiten the face.” The fragment, which is included in a folio including other medical material, as well as eschatological prophecies, reports the advice of a physician named “Macencio,” who recommends thoroughly rubbing one’s face with bull’s blood until it becomes “free of all stains.”24 What does face-whitening have to do with limpieza de sangre? What kind of theological procedure is self-whitening? Is white the “color of salvation”?25

Introduction: Writing Impure

In my introduction, I establish the organizing questions of the dissertation by addressing a specific historiographical problem: the transmission of religion—of an identifiable religious essence contained in a subject or a community—through the Inquisitional archives that have come down to contemporary historians. First, I turn to the more familiar question of the use of Inquisitional trials. Scholars of the Conversos such as Benzion Netanyahu have insisted that the

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historiographical use of Inquisition trials could only ever be complicit with Inquisitional ideology: the trials were “a pure fiction,” a “farce,” he writes, motivated by a perennial anti-Semitism.  

Francisco Márquez Villanueva extends a version of Netanyahu’s worry, arguing that those who use Inquisition trials are themselves victims of an Inquisitional “poisoning of the sources.” Inquisitional archives are impure, that is, precisely because they obscure or erase the real Muslims and Jews buried within and beneath them. In response, the historian Mercedes García-Arenal, following Carlo Ginzburg, has argued that we use Inquisition trials “for a reason other than that for which they were originally created,” that is, by honing in on “out of the ordinary” moments in which we sense a departure from the standard script.  

I push García-Arenal’s methodology further, and suggest that we read these misfires in Inquisitional trials not as cherishable acts of minority resistance, but rather as instances in which the Inquisitional imagination resists itself. Using Netanyahu’s argument against itself, I claim that these misfirings are constitutive of Morisco and Converso subjects—of very real, embodied, forms of Judaism and Islam made out of Inquisitional Christianity—in ways that historians cannot ignore.  

In the second part of this introduction, I turn to the historiographical desire for (pure) origins in the realm of Aljamiado literature. In her introduction to the recently edited Tafsira, a sixteenth-century manuscript attributed to a figure known as the “Mancebo de Arévalo,” María Teresa Narváez Córdova repeatedly invokes “the testimonial dimension” of the Mancebo’s writing. The Mancebo generates spectacular, often farcical, descriptions of his subjects, and  

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28 “Moriscos is what they were forced to become; Muslims is what they were underneath.” See L. P. Harvey, Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 89.  
invents sources wholesale.\textsuperscript{30} And yet, Narváez writes that “if we were not paying witness to such scenes of real life, we might think such singular descriptions were pure literature.”\textsuperscript{31} Narváez reproduces the methodology of her teacher, Luce López-Baralt, whose recent \textit{The Secret Literature of Spain’s Last Muslims} promises its reader that we—those of us marked by “a pro-Morisco sympathy”—will hear in her collection, for the very first time, “the voices of the defeated.” López-Baralt uses the language of “hybridity,” but her mode of reading is built on an indivisible Muslimness at the heart of Aljamiado literature.\textsuperscript{32} Readers of the \textit{Tafsira} need it to be “pure literature,” I show, in order to stage a recovery of the \textit{real} Islamic voices that the Inquisition tried to erase; instead, I argue, it needs to be read precisely for its “lies” of purity.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Chapter One: The Young Man’s Mothers}

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I offer my own reading of the \textit{Tafsira}. I argue that the \textit{Tafsira invents} links in the transmission of “Islamic” knowledge in order to found a community of new Muslim Christians. In his prologue, the Mancebo presents us with an urgent meeting in the wake of the conversion of Aragon’s Mudéjares: the foundations of Islam are rapidly disappearing—being disappeared—from the Peninsula, the elders warn. And, so, they task the Mancebo, the Mancebo reports, with traveling in search of whatever scraps of Islamic knowledge remain in the Peninsula. The \textit{Tafsira}, the result, is built on the characters of the “Mora de Úbeda” and “Nuzayta Calderan.” Much in the vein of the \textit{Libros plúmbeos},\textsuperscript{34} these

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\item See Gregorio Fonseca’s study of the Mancebo’s \textit{Sumario}: the Mancebo lifts \textit{entire passages} from Thomas à Kempis’ \textit{De Imitatione Christi}—and puts them in the mouths of classical Islamic authorities.
\item L. P. Harvey, \textit{Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614}. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 87.
\item The \textit{Libros plúmbeos} were ancient-looking tablets found buried in the hills of Granada at the end of the sixteenth century: they were written in Solomonic Arabic script (but using a sixteenth-century vocabulary), and bore a never-before-heard gospel dictated in Arabic by the Virgin Mary to the first
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characters serve as blank slates upon which the Mancebo can discover—rewrite—tradition: they are self-authorizing fictions, whose authority can be spread through the mere fact of presence.

The Mora de Úbeda is a deeply old, deeply odd, woman, with limbs twice the size of a man’s and fingers the size of calves (“I had never seen anyone like her”), who secretly collects manuscripts, and rules Granada’s Muslims, but cannot read and never prays. Nuzzayta Calderán is an itinerant midwife and (illiterate) expert in Quranic exegesis, as well as a “maga,” a woman versed in magical cures. Nuzzayta invokes arguments with no origin in Islamic tradition, which appear to be “obviously invented nonsense,” and never loses. The Mora de Úbeda is constantly invoked as the last word in the Tafsira, and her “life story” (bidā) occupies its last chapter. The Mora’s literally unbelievable person stands in for inherited tradition. The Mancebo creates such hyperbolically powerful women—convincing impossibilities—in order to ground an otherwise sourceless “Islam.” The Tafsira locates the past of Islam in the bodies of its textual matriarchs to imagine a future for Islam (or something like it) in Iberia.

Chapter Two: The Theology of Suckling I: Suckling Damnation

In this chapter, my study shifts from the idealized use of Moriscas as privileged sources of Islam to demonizations of their bodies as sources of the same. In the sixteenth century, the idea that beliefs were blood-borne, which grounded limpieza de sangre, combined with the classical Greek idea that breast milk was “blood twice cooked.” Now, ordinary milk carried a

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36 Harvey, Muslims in Spain, 190.


38 Semen, according to the same theories, was once cooked. And the blood in question, here, was usually considered to be excess menses. The menses = milk equation was a cliché of Aristotelian-Galenic
biological, religious essence; breastfeeding became a battle line. In Juan de Pineda’s *Diálogos familiares de la agricultura Cristiana* (1589), for example, Morisca and Conversa wet nurses figure as the most potent threat to the health of a republic: be careful, one of Pineda’s characters warns, for “the blood [of New Christian wet nurses] still tastes of the beliefs of their ancestors.”

This chapter traces the emergence of the belief that breast milk carried the taste of Islam or Judaism: an infant suckled by a Morisca or a Conversa could literally drink the dregs of Islam or Judaism coursing through her milk (or blood-milk), which conversion would have failed to purify, and, so, acquire the “taste” of and for their former religions. I show that different versions of a “theology of suckling,” in which infants are fed their essence, emerge in Inquisitional literature (some Old Christians used claims of suckling to save themselves). I situate this theological change in the context of medieval European attitudes towards wet nurses, which points to the elements of class and social rank at work in Inquisitional theology.

As the Inquisition turned inward—into an accused’s unknowable depths—it also refocused its attention on the home. A disproportionate number of those tortured in the sixteenth century were New Christian women, mainly, for “reproducing Jewish or Muslim traditions in the home [and] turning the domestic domain into a space of cultural-religious [or religioracial] resistance” through cleaning, cooking, dancing, and death rituals. Physicians, as theologians,
write manuals that contain advice for testing milk for Islam or Judaism. *Limpieza de sangre*, I argue, gives way to an ideology of *limpieza de leche*: “Finding breasts pure of all infected blood and any hint of bad race (*mala raza*),” we read in an aside in a treatise otherwise concerned with arguing for the Immaculate Conception, should be a new parent’s greatest concern.\(^{43}\)

**Chapter Three: The Theology of Suckling II: Nurturing Terror**

In this chapter, I explore what I argue to be the most significant theological scandal generated by the creation of New Christian subjects marked by an essential Muslimness or Jewishness—namely, a loss of the belief in the saving, or changing, power of baptism (and by extension, the other sacraments). I consider a number of *memoriales*, letters, and sermons, such as those written by Inquisitors such as Juan de Ribera, Luis Bertrán, and Jaime Bleda,\(^ {44}\) in order to trace the belief that baptism was powerless to wipe out the original faith coursing through a Morisco’s veins (and a Morisca’s breasts). Mother’s milk remained after the “flood waters of baptism had receded.”\(^ {45}\)

I show that the Moriscos’ and Conversos’ unbaptizable “nature” was the product of theology.\(^ {46}\) I focus on the rise in written arguments for the expulsion of the Moriscos. Moriscos “drank Islam at their mothers’ breasts,” proponents of expulsion argue, and, so, there is no hope of ever converting them into real Christians. The “Pauline” dream of universal conversion was continually interrupted by converts’ milk and blood.\(^ {47}\) “[Moriscos’] children run screaming from

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\(^{44}\) Cited in García-Arenal’s “*Mi Padre Moro, Yo Moro: The Inheritance of Belief in Early Modern Iberia*.”


\(^{46}\) Mercedes García-Arenal suggests that the loss of belief in baptism is the product of philosophy—that it is connected to “deep-seated skepticism” at play in Renaissance Spain (See “*Mi Padre Moro, Yo Moro: The Inheritance of Belief in Early Modern Iberia*”).

Christians—the parents feed them this terror with [breast] milk,”writes Jaime Bleda. Or, as one frustrated Dominican domestic missionary wrote: “Terrible are the mute and deaf arguments that cry out from within [Moriscos’] veins.” This, I argue, points to another mode of resistance immanent to Inquisitional Christianity (alongside the “misfirings” we can see in Inquisition trials): the creation of converts—of New Christian bodies—that could not be fully converted.

Chapter Four: The Theology of Suckling III: The Breast of Mercy

As the Inquisition turned on mothers and mother figures, the Virgin Mary was taking over Spain. The Immaculate Conception—the question of Mary’s genealogical stainlessness, in a sense—dominated theological debate in post-Tridentine Spain. At the same time, popular cults of the Virgin proliferated throughout the Peninsula, particularly in the South (where the traces of Islam were freshest). Many of these cults centered not on Mary’s birth, but on her motherhood. Scenes of Mary breastfeeding the baby Jesus—Madonna Lactans or Virgo Lactans—were painted on walls, ceilings, doors, and altar frontals. Spanish painters became newly obsessed with the genre of Lactatio Bernardi, a variation on the Virgo Lactans that had been invented in Iberia three centuries prior, which depicts a mystical moment of Mary expressing milk across an open space into Bernard’s half-opened mouth. Building on Victor Stoichiţă’s work on “visionary experience” in Golden Age art, I turn to a painting of Bernard’s vision by Juan de Roelas (1611) in order to show the ways in which the viewer is implicated in Bernard’s

48 Cited in Garcia-Arenal’s “Mi Padre Moro, Yo Moro: The Inheritance of Belief in Early Modern Iberia.”
privileged, private moment of divine suckling. I also build on Margaret Miles’ claim that the Virgin’s “one bare breast” had become a key site and symbol of religious subjectivity in medieval Europe, and argue that these paintings work to create an experience in which the viewer is suckled by the image of Mary breastfeeding. This experience teaches the viewer that he, too, contains the “taste for prayer” that Bernard describes in his Sermon on the Song of Songs. Or, as Bernard elsewhere puts it, that “Mary bares the breast of mercy to all men.”

In the second part of this chapter, I turn to a later painting by de Roelas, The Allegory of the Immaculate Conception (1616). In addition to Mary lording a heterogeneous-looking mass of laymen, professors, and friars, the canvas features Saint Catherina of Siena holding a shield with the phrase “En la leche lo mamé” (“I suckled [faith] in the milk”) inscribed on it, as well as the surprising image of an ordinary woman breastfeeding. In a recent study, Felipe Pereda suggests that de Roelas is giving the viewer a glimpse of a more ideal empire, a Spain that would be “watered with spiritual milk,” not “carnal blood,” which would be founded on Mary’s motherhood. This would be not be “the Spain of blood and milk,” but a Spain of blood or milk. The idea of a community of homogalaktoi extends back to Aristotle’s Politics. In more Castilian terms, de Roelas’s republic would be made up of hermanos de leche (“milk brothers”

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52 Ibid.
55 See Bernard’s “On the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”
56 Felipe Pereda, “‘Hermanos de leche’: Sangre carnal, leche espiritual, y la política de la Inmaculada Concepción, ca. 1600.” Lecture, Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Madrid, Spain, June 17, 2015.
De Roelas’s Allegory is based on an enormous procession celebrating a statue of the Virgin that took place in Seville on June 29, 1615: “All colors of people were present,” one eyewitness writes. Pereda argues that this is a first instance of religious diversity being materialized as skin color in Spanish art.
or “siblings”). Rather than reifying ancient ties, linking son to son to son, Mary’s milk would make naturales—naturals, in the national sense—out of strangers. Building on Gil Anidjar’s work on the formation of national communities, and trading “blood” for “milk,” I argue that breast milk emerges as “a vulnerable property, the shared substance of a (possible) community of Christians.” Painted allegories such as de Roelas’s can push us to rethink the inevitability of blood as the link between embodied lineages—to genealogize Inquisitional genealogizing.

**Conclusions: Kant’s Germs, or, the Race to the End**

Historians have recently begun to trace the afterlife of the Inquisitional imagination in the Morisco diaspora following the *Expulsión*. María Elena Martínez’s *Genealogical Fictions* is one of the first studies to pursue the life of limpieza de sangre through its colonial translations to the Americas. Few scholars have attempted to trace the translations of limpieza de sangre in and to modern western—Christian—Europe. Towards a conclusion, I take seriously Gil Anidjar’s claim that there is no “outside” to the Christian conception of the transmission of religion—one incarnation of which is focus of this dissertation—for the constitution of modern subjectivity. Moving beyond sixteenth-century Spain, I focus on Immanuel Kant’s four essays (explicitly) on race, which have led some scholars to christen Kant the “inventor of race.” In his largely ignored 1785 “Determination of the Concept of a Human Race,” Kant posits the existence of “germs” (Keime) implanted by nature in a “stem-species” (Stammgattung) in order

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58 Tamar Herzog, “‘A Stranger in a Strange Land’: The Conversion of Foreigners into Community Members in Colonial Latin America,” *Social Identities* 3, no. 2 (June 1, 1997): 247–64.
61 Martínez’s *Genealogical Fictions* is the most recent and most persuasive example.
63 Ibid.
to account for the permanence of race. Once activated by external factors, Kant writes, these germs are irreversible. The current human beings that most closely resemble the “stem-species,” or original race, he claims in passing, are white and blond.65

In a recent study, Theodore Vial has argued that far from being marginal, Kant’s “theory of race” is integral to his “teleological account” of the world, which, in turn, grounds his moral investment in nature’s long, but inevitable, arc towards perpetual peace.66 Kant’s use of “race” to ground his teleological, or better, eschatological, assumption, I argue further, can be linked to his more famous idea that beauty reveals to us that nature is organized for our cognitive powers.67 In a mood both more theological and more polemical than Vial, J. Kameron Carter shows that whiteness (which Carter reads as non-Jewish) is essential to Kant’s vision of coming human perfection.68 Kant “deracializes” whiteness, renders it flawless, and sexless, so that it can become the color of the human species itself. By reading Kant alongside sixteenth-century Inquisitional archives, I do not mean to identify the origins of Enlightenment “racism.” Rather, I hope to push historians to begin to cultivate a sense for the ways in which western Christianity historically renders the color of saved bodies—white—invisible.

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66 Vial’s opening claim is that “race is not a biological category.” (Vial, 26). But it is precisely that in Kant’s essays.


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