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Genealogies of Sepharad (“Jewish Spain”)

Introduction

by *Daniela Flesler, Michal Rose Friedman and Asher Salah*

*Genealogy is gray, meticulous,
and patiently documentary.
It operates on a field of entangled
and confused parchments,
on documents that have been scratched
over and recopied many times.¹*

On January 14, 2019, King Felipe VI of Spain received the Chief Sephardi Rabbi of Jerusalem Shlomo Moshe Amar, a native of Casablanca (1948-), at the Zarzuela Palace in Madrid. The purpose of Rabbi Amar’s visit was twofold: he petitioned the king to extend the deadline for applications for Spanish citizenship on behalf of descendants of those Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492, under the special 2015 Spanish immigration law meant to “correct” the “historical mistake” of the expulsion, as well as to ease some of its requirements, specifically that of Spanish proficiency. Amar moreover appealed to King Felipe’s “great influence in the world among leaders,” asking him to intervene on behalf of the Jews of France, who he contended, were facing hostility and therefore were unable to enjoy a level of “openness” of Jewish life.²

Such a statement uncannily evokes the historical paradigm of the so-called “royal alliance”—the historical tendency of Jews in the diaspora since ancient times to forge vertical alliances with the highest power of the State, first noted by Salo Baron and

¹ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire,” in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, eds. Suzanne Bachelard et al. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 145-172; “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. D. F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139-164.

² “R. Shlomo Amar se reúne con Felipe VI,” *SFARAD.es El Portal del Judaísmo en España*, January 14, 2019. Accessed December 11, 2020, <https://www.sfarad.es/r-shlomo-amar-se-reune-con-felipe-vi/>.

later elaborated by Yosef H. Yerushalmi.³ It also signals that Spain today is once again perceived as a possible place of settlement for Jews, and suggests the continued power of the idea of Sepharad for Jews in the diaspora and Israel.⁴ The statement moreover conveys how the relation of Jews to Sepharad is mediated in relation to the Spanish nation state, as well as the central role of the modern Spanish nation as an arbiter in the transactions of reclaiming and (re)envisioning and defining Sephardi history and heritage.

While we assembled the essays for this volume in the fall of 2019, the time period allotted for the submission of applications for naturalization through the law of nationality for descendants of Sephardi Jews, reached its end. This law, granting an expedited path to citizenship to the descendants of those Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, had first been presented to the public in the fall of 2012. At the time, Spanish minister of justice Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, and minister of foreign affairs José Manuel García-Margallo, both of the then-ruling conservative Popular Party, described it as a reparation of a historical wrong: García-Margallo explained how it was meant to “recover the memory of a long-silenced Spain,” while Ruiz Gallardón celebrated it as a “re-encounter with all those that had been unjustly deprived of their nationality, who, from now on, can claim Spain as theirs.”⁵ In March, 2014 the law was passed by the lower house of the Spanish Parliament and went into effect in October, 2015. The law eliminated a two-year residency requirement and proof of financial resources, as well as a stipulation that the applicants renounce their current citizenship. By October 2, 2019, one day after the application deadline, the international press announced that the Spanish Ministry of Justice had received 132,226 applications. Of these, some 60,000 were received as of

³ On the “royal alliance” see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “‘Servants of Kings, Not Servants of Servants’: Some Aspects of the Jewish Political History,” *Raisons politiques* 7, no.3 (2002): 19-52.

⁴ Portugal passed a similar law in 2015. For discussion of the reception of the Iberian laws of nationality in Israel see Silvina Schammah Gesser, “Virtually Sephardic? The Marketing and Reception of the New Iberian Laws of Nationality in Israel,” *Lusotopie* 18, no. 2 (2020): 192-217. For an examination of the significance of Sepharad in debates over Sephardi/Arab-Jewish identity in the Land of Israel/Palestine see Yuval Ivry, *Ha’shiva Le’Andalus: Machlokot al tarbut Ve’Zehut Yehudit-Sfaradit bein Araviot La’ivriut* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 2020).

⁵ “Los sefardíes podrán adquirir la nacionalidad española,” *El Mundo* November 22, 2012. Accessed December 11, 2020, <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2012/11/22/espana/1353599031.html>.

August 31 and almost 72,000 in the final month of September alone. As of September 2020, over 150,000 applications had been submitted.⁶

The law's preamble stressed "the common determination to jointly build, in contrast to the intolerance of past times, a new space of peaceful coexistence and unity" (Ley 52559). In this way, the preamble positioned democratic Spain as a nation looking critically at its "intolerant" past, from the perspective of a pluralistic vision of national identity. Nonetheless, if the law of nationality was ostensibly presented as an antidote to this intolerant past, its stated goal of redress appears to be at odds with several of its provisions, including: the high cost of the application process; the requirement of exams in modern Spanish language and culture; and particularly the fact that it was limited in time, ending on October 1, 2019, four years after it had gone into effect. The law is thus as much about what and whom it excludes: perhaps most egregiously, it excludes descendants of Spanish Muslims who were also expelled in 1492 and Muslim converts (the Moriscos) expelled between 1609-1614. Furthermore, the law's touting of so-called "tolerance" elides the issue of Islamophobia and antisemitism in Spain today.⁷ The possibility of a Spanish state that fully includes the descendants of those who had been excluded from the nation in the past, as presented by the law, thus had a clear expiration date and limits.⁸

⁶ "Datos estadísticos básicos de nacionalidad a 30/09/2020," *Ministerio de Justicia de España*. Accessed December 11, 2020, <https://blogextranjeriaprogestion.org/2020/10/19/datos-nacionalidad-residencia-sefardies-y-carta-de-naturaleza-a-30-09-2020/>.

⁷ See the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance "Report on Spain: ECRI Report on Spain (fifth monitoring cycle) Adopted on 5 December 2017 Published on 27 February 2018." Accessed December 11, 2020 <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-spain/16808b56c9>. For an overview of Muslims in Spain and Spanish Islamophobia, see Ana I. Planet Contreras, "Spain," in *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 311-49; Carmen Aguilera-Carnrero, "Islamophobia in Spain. National Report 2018," in *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, eds. Enes Bayrakly and Farid Hafez, accessed December 11, 2020, <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/SPAIN.pdf>. According to the 2019 ADL "Index of Anti-Semitism," 28 % of Spaniards harbor antisemitic attitudes and prejudices (<https://global100.adl.org/country/spain/2019>). The nature of Spain's antisemitism is a complex issue; see Alejandro Baer and Paula López, "The Blind Spots of Secularization. A qualitative approach to the study of anti-Semitism in Spain," *European Societies* 14, no. 2 (2012): 203-221; Hazel Gold, "Pedagogies of Citizenship: Sephardic and Jewishness in Spanish and Catalan Documentary Film and Television," in this volume.

⁸ See <http://www.sephardic.es/portugal-sephardic-citizenship-the-law-in-english/> for the most up to date stipulations of both the Spanish and Portuguese laws. Dalia Kandiyoti and Rina Benmayor are

Indeed, for scholars of modern Spain's relationship with Jews and the legacy of Sepharad, such ambivalent attempts at rapprochement are rather familiar. This law, and the concomitant reflection it awakened about Spain's Jewish history, is one of the latest examples of a long history of Spanish efforts to re-engage with the Jewish world and with its own Jewish history. Spain's Jewish community is quite small, numbering around 45,000 individuals, most of whom immigrated to Spain from Morocco and Argentina in the 1960s and 1970s. The figure of the Jew however has had an important presence in Spanish public discussions and in the Spanish imaginary ever since the expulsion.

A variety of arguments about the place of Jews in Spain's history and nationhood emerged in nineteenth-century political debates over the abolition of the Inquisition, proposed liberal reforms regarding freedom of religious worship, and the gradual decline of Spain as a world power. These discussions gained urgency as Spain's progressive loss of its old overseas empire culminated in the humiliating 1898 defeat by the US in the Spanish American War. At their core, these debates were about modernity itself and Spain's place in a modern world order. Such debates were moreover stimulated by the intervention and contributions of Jewish individuals.⁹ Alongside these discussions, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, historians such as José Amador de los Ríos had begun to re-assess the role of Jewish culture in Spanish history.¹⁰ Their work influenced some of the most important political

currently preparing an edited volume addressing different aspects of both laws through the concept of "reparative citizenship." See also Charles A. McDonald, "Return to Sepharad: Citizenship, Conversion, and the Politics of Jewish Inclusion in Spain," (PhD diss., New School for Social Research, 2019) and Davide Aliberti, "Back to Sefarad? A Comparative Analysis of the 2015 Iberian Citizenship Laws for Sephardic Jews," *Transcultural Spaces and Identities in Iberian Studies*, eds. Mark Gant and Susana Rocha Relvas (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 236-260.

⁹ Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, *El antisemitismo en España: la imagen del judío, 1812-2002* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2002); Hazel Gold, "Illustrated Histories: The National Subject and 'the Jew' in Nineteenth-Century Spanish Art," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 89-109; Mónica Manrique Escudero, *Los judíos ante los cambios políticos en España en 1868* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2016) and Michal Rose Friedman, "Unsettling the 'Jewish Question' from the Margins of Europe: Spanish Liberalism and Sepharad," in *Jews, Liberalism, Antisemitism: A Global History*, eds. Abigail Green and Simon Levis Sullam (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 185-208.

¹⁰ Michal Rose Friedman, "Jewish History as 'Historia Patria': José Amador de los Ríos and the History of the Jews of Spain," *Jewish Social Studies* 18, no. 1 (2011): 88-126; Andrew Bush, "Amador de los Ríos and the beginnings of modern Jewish studies in Spain," in *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the*

figures of the second half of the nineteenth century in Spain, such as Emilio Castelar (1832-1899), famous for his passionate defense of freedom of religious confessionality during the preparation of the 1869 Constitution.¹¹

Spanish efforts at a rapprochement with Sephardi Jews coalesced at the turn of the twentieth century around the figure of a close friend of Castelar, senator Ángel Pulido y Fernández. Pulido became the leading figure of the “philosephardist” movement that sought to expand Spain’s influence in the Mediterranean and advance Spain’s colonial ambitions in Morocco, through the cultivation of relations with Sephardi Jews.¹² The philosephardist campaign brought the history of Sephardi Jews into the public sphere and produced concrete results: one such development was the 1915 appointment of the Jerusalem-born Jewish scholar Abraham Shalom Yahuda to an inaugural Chair for Rabbinic language and literature at the University of Madrid.¹³ Another important result was the granting of Spanish nationality to a number of

Modern Era, eds. Daniela Flesler, Tabea Linhard and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no.1 (2011): 13-33; Nitai Shinan, “Estudio preliminar” in *Los Judíos de España: Estudios históricos, políticos y literarios*, ed. José Amador de los Ríos (Pamplona: Utrera, 2013); Id., *Qorbanot o Ashemim: Toldot Ha-Yehudim Bi-Re'i Ha-Historyografyah Ha-Sefaradit Ba-Shanim 1759-1898* (Yerushalayim: Makhon Ben-Tsevi Le-ḥeker qehilot Yiśra'el Ba-Mizraḥ, 2011).

¹¹ Maite Ojeda Mata, “Thinking about ‘the Jew’ in Modern Spain: Historiography, Nationalism and Antisemitism,” *Jewish Culture and History* 8, no. 2 (2006): 53-72; Nitai Shinan, “Emilio Castelar y los judíos: una reevaluación,” *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebreos* 65 (2016): 101-118.

¹² Paloma Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim: The Jews from Spain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 153-155; Jacobo Israel Garzón, “El Doctor Pulido y los Sefardíes” in *Los israelitas españoles y el idioma castellano*, ed. Ángel Pulido (Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1992), ix-xxiii; Isabelle Rohr, *The Spanish Right and the Jews, 1898-1945: Antisemitism and Opportunism* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 15; Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Alisa Meyuhas Ginio, “The Sephardic Diaspora Revisited: Dr. Ángel Pulido Fernández (1852-1932) and his Campaign,” in *Identities in an Era of Globalization and Multiculturalism*, eds. Judith Bokser Liwerant et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 287-296; and Michal Rose Friedman, “Reconquering ‘Sepharad’: Hispanism and Proto-Fascism in Giménez Caballero’s Sephardist Crusade,” in *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era*, eds. Daniela Flesler, Tabea Linhard and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 35-60.

¹³ For more on the fascinating figure of Yahuda, who held the first Jewish studies chairmanship created in the Western Hemisphere in a secular university in the modern era, see the forum on Yahuda edited by Michal Rose Friedman and Allyson González in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 3 (2019). On his activities in Spain see the forum articles by Friedman, “Abraham Shalom Yahuda: A Jewish Orientalist among Sepharad, Zionisms, and the British Empire,” 435-451 and González, “Abraham S. Yahuda (1877-1951) and the Politics of Modern Jewish Scholarship,” 406-433. See also González in this volume.

Sephardi Jews through a 1924 royal decree, an antecedent of the 2015 Law of nationality.¹⁴

The year 1992 was a pivotal moment in the renewal of wide public interest in Spain's relationship with the Jewish world and in the memory of Sepharad, both in Spain and abroad. As the preparations for the Fifth Centenary of 1492 were underway in the late 1980s, national, regional and local governments and a variety of civil actors began to sponsor and organize a growing number of educational courses, exhibits, and conferences on Sephardic themes. Such efforts also included the publication of books and brochures meant to disseminate accounts of Spain's Jewish past and to mark the "return" of Jews and Judaism to Spain.¹⁵ Further developments during these years included: the opening of Jewish-themed museums; new archaeological excavations of Jewish sites; and the showcasing of "Sephardic routes" throughout Spain, through the Red de Juderías de España/Caminos de Sefarad (Network of Jewish Quarters of Spain/Paths of Sepharad), a publicly funded organization that promotes Jewish tourism in Spain. Today, all things related to "Sepharad" have an important presence in Spain's public sphere.

While "Jewish Spain" as a topic of scholarly inquiry in Jewish and Iberian Studies had predominantly been oriented towards scrutinizing the medieval past, such renewed interest and initiatives have spurred a growing number of scholars working at the intersection of Jewish and Iberian Studies to expand our understanding of Sepharad to incorporate modern and contemporary Spain, and Sephardi Jews.¹⁶ Jacobo Israel

¹⁴ The 1924 decree was intended for Sephardi Jews who had enjoyed the protection of Spain's diplomatic agents in the Ottoman Empire. Few people (between four and five thousand) were able to obtain nationality this way, either for lack of clear information or because the process was arduous and required documents that many did not have. Haim Avni, *Spain, the Jews, and Franco* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982), 31-33. See also Sara Abrevaya Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Books published at this time tracing the history of Jews' "return" to Spain in the twentieth century include Isidro González García, *El retorno de los judíos* (Madrid: Nerea, 1991); José Antonio Lisbona, *Retorno a Sefarad: La política de España hacia sus judíos en el siglo XX* (Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1993).

¹⁶ Ricardo Izquierdo Benito, Uriel Macías and Yolanda Moreno Koch, eds., *Los judíos en la España contemporánea, historia y visiones, 1898-1998* (Cuenca: Universidad Castilla-La Mancha, 2000); Danielle Rozenberg, *L'Espagne contemporaine et la question juive: Les fils renoués de la mémoire et de l'histoire* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2006); Eva Touboul Tardieu, *Séphardisme et*

Garzón has been a pivotal figure in this process of establishing visibility for Spain's Jewish communities. He officially represented them as president of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain between 2003 and 2011, established the publishing house Hebraica Ediciones, and has written extensively on the recent history of Spain's Jewish communities and twentieth-century Spanish-Jewish relations.¹⁷ The journal *Raíces. Revista judía de cultura*, created in 1986 by Garzón, brought together intellectuals of different origins and horizons living in Spain, to explore a wide variety of topics in reference to contemporary Jewish culture and history.

Books by Haim Avni, Antonio Marquina and Gloria Inés Ospina, and Bernd Rother were crucial in dispelling the prevalent myth that credited General Francisco Franco with a direct role in saving Jewish refugees during World War II.¹⁸ Since then, the memory of the Holocaust in Spain has been especially studied by Alejandro Baer,¹⁹ while other scholars have examined topics such as: the position of the II Spanish Republic regarding the rising antisemitism of the 1930s; the participation of Jewish volunteers in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War; and Francoist

Hispanité. L'Espagne à la recherche de son passé (1920-1936) (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2009); Silvina Shammah Gesser and Raanan Rein, eds., *El otro en la España contemporánea/ Prácticas, discursos, representaciones* (Sevilla: Ánfora, 2011); Daniela Flesler, Tabea Linhard and Adrián Pérez-Melgosa, eds., *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era* *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011); Michal Rose Friedman, "Recovering 'Jewish Spain': Historiography, Politics and the Institutionalization of the Jews Past in Spain" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012); Maite Ojeda Mata, *Identidades ambivalentes: Sefardíes en la España contemporánea* (Collado-Villalba: Sefarad Editores, 2018); and Davide Aliberti, *Sefarad. Una comunidad imaginada (1924-2015)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2018).

¹⁷ His works include: *La Comunidad Judía de Madrid. Textos e imágenes para una historia* (Madrid: Hebraica ediciones, 2001); *El estigma imborrable. Reflexiones sobre el nuevo antisemitismo* (Madrid: Hebraica ediciones, 2005); *Escrito en Sefarad. Aportación escrita de los judíos de España a la literatura, la erudición, la ciencia y la tecnología contemporáneas* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2005); *Los judíos de Cataluña (1918-2007)* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2007); *Los judíos en la España contemporánea. Apuntes históricos y jurídicos* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2008); and *El exilio republicano español y los judíos* (Madrid: Hebraica ediciones, 2009).

¹⁸ Haim Avni, *España, Franco y los judíos* (Madrid: Altalena, 1982); Antonio Marquina and Gloria Inés Ospina, *España y los judíos en el siglo XX* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1987); Bernd Rother, *Franco y el Holocausto* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2005).

¹⁹ Alejandro Baer, *Holocausto. Recuerdo y Representación* (Madrid: Losada, 2006); Jacobo Israel Garzón and Alejandro Baer, eds., *España y el Holocausto. Historia y Testimonios* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2007).

antisemitic propaganda.²⁰ The volume *Spain, World War II, and the Holocaust: History and Representation*, edited by Sara J. Brenneis and Gina Herrmann, offers a comprehensive examination of these topics.²¹ Several books have also examined the cultural and political roots of antisemitism in nineteenth and twentieth century Spain.²²

The topic of Spanish Orientalism and neo-colonial designs in North Africa among Jews and Muslims has been the subject of a number of studies.²³ In the area of political and diplomatic history, Spain's relations with the State of Israel, before and after Spain officially recognized Israel in 1986, has been extensively scrutinized.²⁴ The idealized depiction of the status of Jews in medieval Iberia has proven adaptable to a wide variety of social groups and writers within different political and historical contexts around the globe, as illustrated in the case studies of *Charting Memory: Recalling Medieval Spain*, edited by Stacy N. Beckwith, and *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination*, edited by Yael Halevi-Wise. So

²⁰ Arno Lustiger, *¡Shalom libertad! Judíos en la Guerra Civil Española* (Barcelona: Flor al viento, 2001); Isidro González, *Los judíos y la Segunda República (1931-1939)* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2004); Batia Donner and Rachel Bonfil, eds., *From Here to Madrid. Volunteers from Palestine in the International Brigades in Spain 1936-1938* (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 2012); Gerben Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades, and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Javier Domínguez Arribas, *El enemigo judeo-masónico en la propaganda franquista (1936-1945)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2010).

²¹ Sara J. Brenneis and Gina Herrmann, *Spain, World War II, and the Holocaust: History and Representation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).

²² Key works are Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, *El antisemitismo en España, La imagen del judío (1812-2002)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2002); Isabelle Rohr, *The Spanish Right and the Jews (1898-1945): Antisemitism and Opportunism* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2007); and Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida and Ricardo Izquierdo Benito, eds., *El antisemitismo en España* (Cuenca, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2007).

²³ Eloy Martín Corrales and Maite Ojeda Mata, eds., *Judíos entre Europa y el norte de África (siglos XV-XXI)* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2013); Pablo Bornstein, *Reclaiming Al-Andalus: Orientalist Scholarship and Spanish Nationalism* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2020); and Elisabeth Bolorinos Allard, *Spanish National Identity, Colonial Power, and the Portrayal of Muslims and Jews during the Rif War (1909-27)*, (Suffolk: Tamesis Books, forthcoming).

²⁴ Raanan Rein, *Franco, Israel y los judíos* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1996); Raanan Rein, ed., *España e Israel: veinte años después* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2007); Guy Setton, *Spanish-Israeli Relations, 1956-1992: Ghosts of the Past and Contemporary Challenges in the Middle East* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2016).

has the figure of the converso, as Dalia Kandiyoti explores in *The Converso's Return: Conversion and Sephardi History in Contemporary Literature and Culture*.²⁵

The ways Jews, conversos and their relationship with Spain have been represented and instrumentalized in Spanish mass culture, in the tourism industry and in public discourse in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, are the subjects of recent studies: Tabea Linhard's *Jewish Spain: A Mediterranean Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Asher Salah's "La imagen del judío en el cine español," *Secuencias*, 46 (2017): 83-112; Martina L. Weisz, *Jews and Muslims in Contemporary Spain: Redefining National Boundaries* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019); and Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020).

In this special issue for *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, we bring together some of the work of the research group "Genealogies of Sepharad," a group of international scholars working at the crossroads of Iberian and Jewish Studies, and from diverse fields of scholarly inquiry, with the aim of tracing the genealogies of Sepharad, in Spain and among Sephardi Jews, from the late nineteenth century through the present. Our use of the term genealogy borrows from Michele Foucault's definition in his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971).²⁶ We attempt to document and place the entangled histories and discourses about Sepharad over space and time in dialogue with each other, while being attentive to particular historical contexts and conditions, and without being uncritically bound by teleological or overarching structural frameworks. At the same time, by using the term "genealogy," we aim to explore the construction of genealogical narratives of Sephardi identities, while querying the growing recourse to the discourse and science of genetics in

²⁵ Stacy N. Beckwith, ed., *Charting Memory: Recalling Medieval Spain* (New York: Garland, 2000); Yael Halevi-Wise, *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Dalia Kandiyoti, *The Converso's Return: Conversion and Sephardi History in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

²⁶ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire."

examining Sephardi heritage (and Jewish heritage more broadly conceived), whether on the part of individual citizens, states, or scholars.²⁷

This issue of *Quest* thus aims not only to expand our knowledge of modern and contemporary “Sepharad” or Jewish Spain, but also to problematize and reassess the presumptions its study has entailed. It challenges obsolete conceptions of national identification, in turn engaging multilayered and transnational stories whose protagonists include: Ottoman Sephardi women and a Sephardi scholar and manuscript collector; Spanish intellectuals, filmmakers and visual artists with diverse relationships to Judaism; Ladino gastronomy-column writers and authors of Anglo Sephardic cookbooks; a Spanish juggler stationed in Madrid’s Retiro Park and a Spanish man made homeless after being evicted from his home during the crisis of 2008; as well as descendants of Jewish-Iberian converts in Turkey and Latin America reclaiming their roots. All of these protagonists and their histories confront the ghosts that haunt Jewish and Iberian entangled collective imaginaries, memorial figures and cultural representations.

In “Sephardi Women in Ángel Pulido’s Correspondence,” Paloma Díaz-Mas examines letters and photographs sent to Spanish Senator Ángel Pulido by his female Sephardi correspondents and published in his 1905 book, *Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí*. In his philosephardist campaign Pulido maintained an extensive correspondence with Sephardi Jews, mainly from Turkey, the Balkans, Central Europe and North Africa. Díaz-Mas analyzes the representation of several of these women through their photographs and the information they shared with Pulido, as well as how these exchanges differed from the correspondence Pulido maintained with Sephardi men.

In “A History of Histories—of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Exchange: Professor A.S. Yahuda and the International Trade of Antiquities, Rare Books, and

²⁷ For discussion of the diverse meanings and uses of genealogy in contemporary discourses and literature in this context, see Kandiyoti, *The Converso’s Return*. See also Steven Weitzman, *The Origin of the Jews: The Quest for Roots in a Rootless Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017) and Noah Tamarkin, *Genetic Afterlives: Black Jewish Indigeneity in South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

Manuscripts, 1902-1944,” Allyson Gonzalez provides the first attempt to comprehensively study the influential involvement of the Sephardi scholar Abraham S. Yahuda (1877-1951) in the international trade of manuscripts and cultural objects. Buoyed by his position as the chair of Rabbinic Language and Literature at the University of Madrid in 1915, Yahuda legitimized and deepened his role in the trade of material objects; his ongoing trade of such objects, in turn, helped to legitimize his scholarship, which continued well after he left Spain. Through a study of previously unpublished documents, the essay points to the overlapping of knowledge, power, and the acquiring of antiquities and other objects during the first half of the twentieth century.

Inspired by the discovery of a letter written by a Spanish woman (under the pseudonym of Marcelina de Quinto) to Isaac Molho, editor of the *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* (a yearbook published in Jerusalem, from 1959 to 1971), Asher Salah’s article focuses on the persistence of memory of Jewish ancestry within a prominent family of Spanish intellectuals in the twentieth century—the Jardiels—and its reenactment in two different generational contexts. While the literary oeuvre of Enrique Jardiel Poncela, one of the most important comic writers of twentieth-century Spain and a staunch supporter of Francisco Franco, is tainted by a resolute antisemitic bent, his daughter Evangelina, a psychologist and author of fictional books and journalistic essays, converted to Judaism and strongly identified with the struggles of the State of Israel. Through the analysis of the biographical and intellectual trajectories of these two individuals, the article casts light upon the stereotypes, contradictions and ambivalent attitudes of Spanish intellectuals regarding Jews and Judaism.

In her essay “A Tale in the Language of ‘My Mother Spain’: Carmen Pérez-Avello’s *Un muchacho sefardí*,” Tabea A. Linhard analyzes a stunningly illustrated children’s book about a steadfast and courageous boy who embarks on a quest. Published in 1965 by a Spanish nun and schoolteacher, *Un muchacho sefardí* focuses on a Sephardi Jewish child and draws upon numerous early twentieth-century Philo-Sephardic tropes and stereotypes; it also contains reflections on the ways in which translations as well as untranslatables affect identities and communities that extend beyond the limits of the nation state. The book’s multiple layers, including the illustrations of

Máximo San Juan (who would become one of Spain's most important editorial cartoonists of the transition and post-transition eras), make it possible to examine contradictory meanings associated with Jewish and Sephardic themes in Spain in the decade that precedes the end of the Francoist dictatorship.

Drawing on two distinct bodies of Sephardi food writing—Anglophone cookbooks and recipes in *Aki Yerusalayim*'s longstanding Ladino “Gastronomia Sefaradi” column—Harry Eli Kashdan's “Archives of the Sephardi Kitchen” explores the role of cuisine as a primary affiliative structure in contemporary Sephardi culture. He argues that these two divergent literary traditions, in their general ignorance of one another, constitute a framework for an archive of Sephardi cooking. In spite of these texts' common conception of cooking as a practice of memory and identification, they are at odds with one another as to whether Sephardi culture exists only in the past, be it in medieval Iberia or in the Sephardi Levant, or may also be found in the present.

In “Pedagogies of Citizenship: Sepharad and Jewishness in Spanish and Catalan Documentary Film and Television,” Hazel Gold looks at two recent examples from the Spanish television and film industry that illuminate the status of the “Jewish question” in Spain today. Martí Sans's *L'estigma?* (The Stigma, 2012), an independent documentary that interweaves man-in-the-street interviews and conversations with scholarly experts and journalists, focuses on the disidentification of Spaniards from their Jewish past, stemming from long-standing antisemitic biases. *Cuéntame*, a Spanish prime-time television drama series which has been broadcast on La 1 of Televisión Española since 2001, promotes new forms of identification with a Jewish present that sustain an image of Spain as a multicultural, multiconfessional democratic state. From opposite ends of the high culture-mass culture spectrum, both communicate extensive knowledge about the relatively little-known Jewish world, in an uneven effort to engage viewers in a pedagogy of citizenship that oftentimes is rooted in the longing to return to the harmony of an imagined past.

In their essay “Spain's Jewish Genealogies in the ‘Sephardi Portraits’ of Daniel Quintero,” Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa focus on the “Sephardic portraits” of Daniel Quintero (Málaga 1949-), a leading Spanish figurative painter. In

these paintings, composed over the last 25 years, Quintero portrays Sephardi figures from contemporary Spain alongside medieval and early modern Iberian Sephardi Jews. To provide a face to these historical figures (Maimonides, Samuel Halevi, Benjamin of Tudela, Gracia Mendes) Quintero finds inspiration in contemporary Spaniards. Alongside these portraits, a group of still lifes connect the past and present of Jewish Spain. Seen through the methodology of “curatorial dreaming” proposed by Shelley Ruth Butler and Erica Lehrer, Flesler and Pérez Melgosa read these portraits as constructing a genealogy and performing a particular cultural memory. These portraits and still lifes, they argue, establish a relationship between a past that remains in the faces, gazes and gestures of those who forgot it and a present that works to make those traces visible.

In the last essay of the volume, “Ancestry, Genealogy, and Restorative Citizenship: Oral Histories of Sephardi Descendants Reclaiming Spanish and Portuguese Nationality,” Rina Benmayor and Dalia Kandiyoti describe and analyze the results of 46 oral interviews they conducted with descendants of Sephardi Jews who have applied for or received Spanish or Portuguese citizenship. The essay explores genealogical and historical consciousness, identity, and the sense of belonging that these new dual citizenship laws have inspired, looking at how the narrators themselves view official initiatives. The oral histories point not simply to the recuperation of Spanish or Portuguese national identity, but to a strengthening of a Sephardi identity.

Taken in their totality, these essays elaborate a more expansive genealogy of “Sepharad,” just as they illustrate its continued power and hold on political, historical, and literary imaginaries in Spain and throughout the Jewish Diaspora. By doing so, they reconsider “Sepharad” as a site of continued negotiations over Iberian and Jewish histories and identities, and the role of “genealogy” in shaping this process. Working from the margins of Iberian and Jewish studies, it is in the convergence of these fields at their periphery and as entangled histories and memories, that our work opens up new areas of study and broadens our understanding of the genealogical landscape of Sepharad and its possibilities.

Genealogies of Sepharad is a research group of international scholars whose work is deeply engaged with the topic of revisiting the legacy of Sepharad in the modern era through the present, and who are pioneers of this underexplored area of inquiry in Jewish and Iberian Studies. The group was founded five years ago during a meeting of ALCES Siglo XXI in Soria (2015), organized by Stacy Beckwith. Guided by a spirit of collegiality and collaboration, since the group's inception we have invited a growing number of scholars to join our formal and informal discussions, through participation in our academic seminars and symposiums [Cambridge, MA (2016), Zaragoza (2017), Madrid (2018), Salamanca (2019)] book presentations, and guided visits to libraries, archives and museums throughout Spain. We thank all of these colleagues for enriching our group. We are particularly grateful to Stacy Beckwith for convening our first seminar in Soria and to Esther Bendahan Cohen, Ricardo Muñoz Solla and Marina Pignatelli for their generosity in hosting and collaborating in the planning of our annual symposiums in their home institutions in Madrid, Salamanca and Lisbon (postponed to 2021). We are furthermore grateful to author José Manuel Fajardo for his spirited contributions and dedication to our group. We also wish to thank the editorial team of Quest for their guidance and patience in the process of preparing this special issue, which extended through the difficult months of the global Covid-19 pandemic throughout 2020, and to the anonymous referees for their insightful comments and suggestions.

Organizing committee and founding members: Stacy Beckwith (Carleton College, Minnesota, USA), Rina Benmayor (Prof. Emerita UC, California, USA), Daniela Flesler (Stony Brook University, New York, USA), Michal R. Friedman (Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA), Dalia Kandiyoti (CUNY, NY, USA), Tabea A. Linhard (Washington University, St. Louis, USA), Adrián Pérez Melgosa (Stony Brook University, New York, USA), Asher Salah (Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design, Jerusalem, Israel).

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Keywords: Sepharad, Spain, Sephardic, Iberian Jewish History, Genealogy

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Sephardi Women in Ángel Pulido's Correspondence

by Paloma Díaz-Mas

Abstract

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Spanish Senator Ángel Pulido launched a political campaign with the aim of establishing contacts between Spain and the Jews of the Sephardi diaspora. As part of that campaign, Pulido maintained correspondence with around 150 Sephardi Jews, most of them from Turkey, the Balkans and North Africa. Pulido's correspondence seems not to have been preserved. However, in his book Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí (Spaniards without a Homeland and the Sephardi Race) (1905), he included fragments of the letters as well as a large number of photographs sent to him by his Sephardi correspondents. The published material includes photographs and letters of 48 Sephardi women and has barely received any attention by scholars, who have primarily focused on Pulido's relation with his most prominent male correspondents. In this article, I examine the main features of Pulido's correspondence with these women: the image of women suggested by these photographs, the character of the information transmitted to Pulido by his female correspondents and his approach towards Sephardi women of his time.

Portrayal of women

Women's Profiles

Pulido's Sephardi Female Correspondents

Conclusions

In 1904, the Spanish Senator Ángel Pulido Fernández (1852-1932) launched a campaign to create closer bonds between Spain and the Sephardi Jews. The campaign consisted of his interventions in the Spanish Senate, his lectures, several articles published in the press and, above all, his two published books *Los israelitas*

españoles y el idioma castellano (The Spanish Israelites and the Castilian Language) and *Espanoles sin patria y la raza sefardí* (Spaniards without a Homeland and the Sephardi Race).¹

Pulido, a doctor, was a representative of the ideological movement called *Regeneracionismo* (“regenerationism,” a term taken from the vocabulary of medicine, where *regeneration* was used as the opposite of *corruption*), which developed in Spain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Regenerationism advocated for the Spanish nation to regenerate itself by liberating itself from its decline through modernization, education and the promotion of economic activity.

In the Spanish Senate, Pulido represented a Liberal party. His political mentor was the historian and journalist Emilio Castelar (1832-1899), founder of a moderate Republican party called *Partido posibilista* (possibilist party). Castelar was a prominent figure in Spanish politics from the time of the revolution that dethroned Queen Isabella II in 1868; he became President of the First Spanish Republic in 1873-1874.

It is often considered that Pulido’s political and pedagogical campaign was the origin of *philosephardism*, a Spanish ideological movement in favor of the Jews of Hispanic origin. But, in fact, in his campaign Pulido used and reworked some of the ideas about Sephardi Jews that were being expressed from the 1870s in several

¹Ángel Pulido Fernández, *Intereses nacionales. Los israelitas españoles y el idioma castellano* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1904; Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1992); Ángel Pulido Fernández, *Intereses nacionales. Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí* (Madrid: E. Teodoro, 1905; Granada: Universidad, 1993). Biographies of Pulido: Manuel L. Ortega, *El doctor Pulido* (Madrid: Editorial Ibero-Africano-Americana, 1922) and Ángel Pulido Martín, *El Dr. Pulido y su época* (Madrid: n.p., 1945). On Pulido’s campaign and its repercussion, see Michael Alpert, “Dr. Angel Pulido and philo-Sephardism in Spain,” *Jewish Historical Studies* 40 (2005): 105-119; Martine Lemoine, *El Dr. Pulido y su época: La causa sefardí* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2018); Alisa Meyuhas-Ginio, “El encuentro del senador español Dr. Ángel Pulido Fernández con los judíos del Norte de Marruecos,” *El Prezente. Studies in Sephardic Culture* 2 (2008): 111-125; Alisa Meyuhas-Ginio, *Between Sepharad and Jerusalem. History, Identity and Memory of the Sephardim* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), 248-288. I am very grateful to Zeljko Jovanovic for reading a draft of this paper and for his helpful suggestions.

Spanish liberal periodicals connected to Regenerationism, including the newspaper *El Globo*, founded by Emilio Castelar and the journal *Revista de Geografía Comercial*, whose director was Joaquín Costa, one of the most important figures of the Spanish Regenerationist movement.²

However, one new element that Pulido introduced to Spanish philosephardism made his campaign radically different from anything that had preceded it: he developed a wide network of correspondents from different countries of the Sephardi diaspora with whom he exchanged ideas and information through letters. These letters were partially reproduced in his two books mentioned above, and especially in the second one.

As Martine Lemoine suggests, Pulido created something that resembles a social network using the available tools that existed at the turn of the twentieth century.³ The majority of the members (i.e., the correspondents) of this network managed by Pulido, never met each other in person and accessed the network from geographically remote locations. The network had global dimensions as it included participants from Europe, Asia, Africa and America, who simultaneously provided advice, gave their opinions and discussed different topics, occasionally refuting each other, or expressing their agreement or disagreement. This network created by Pulido moreover served as an unofficial forum for the transnational Sephardism of his time.

As in today's social networks, images played a fundamental role in that forum. The correspondents sent photographs to Pulido, including pictures of significant places in their communities and, above all, photographs of themselves and of people from their close circle of social relations.

² Jacobo Israel Garzón, "Joaquín Costa, la *Revista de Geografía Comercial* y los judíos," *Raíces. Revista judía de cultura* 55-56 (2003): 31-34; Paloma Díaz-Mas, "El judeoespañol en la prensa española de la Restauración: informaciones en el diario *El Globo*," in *Lengua, Llengua, Llingua, Lingua, Langue. Encuentros filológicos (ibero)románicos. Estudios en homenaje a la profesora Beatrice Schmid*, eds. Yvette Bürki, Manuela Cimeli and Rosa Sánchez (München: Peniope, 2012), 190-202. For Castelar's attitude towards the Jews, see Nitai Shinan, "Emilio Castelar y los judíos," *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos, Sección Hebreo* 65 (2016): 101-118.

³ Lemoine, *El Dr. Pulido*, 66.

Much has been written about Pulido's correspondents, especially about some of them, such as Haim Bejarano and Abraham Cappon.⁴ Yet, the important number of women that appear in Pulido's books has thus far been overlooked by scholars. The information provided by Pulido about these women is often scarce: it includes a mere photograph with a brief caption. Yet, other women are described in more detail, while at least three of them actively exchanged letters with Pulido. This article is dedicated to them.

Portrayal of women

In Pulido's two books, over two hundred people are mentioned, including supporters and critics of his philosephardic campaign.⁵ Approximately 150 of those mentioned are Sephardi Jews from different parts of the world. Fifty of these people are women, 48 of them are identified by their names and two others appear without names in two photographs that illustrate the traditional clothing of Eastern and Moroccan-Sephardi women, respectively. The rest of the individuals mentioned are non-Sephardi intellectuals and politicians from Spain and other countries, including several Ashkenazi Jews.

The visibility that Pulido grants to women is rather exceptional in the context of his time. It would be difficult to come across any other book published in Spain by a male author at the turn of the twentieth century in which almost a third of the people mentioned are women. How these women are portrayed, and why Pulido chose them over others, calls for particular consideration. Most

⁴ For example, Marie-Christine Bornes-Varol, "Hayim ben Moshe Bejarano, maskil, lecteur et collaborateur de presse," in *La presse judéo espagnole, support et vecteur de la modernité*, eds. Rosa Sánchez and Marie-Christine Bornes Varol (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2013), 281-294; and Beatrice Schmid, "'Por el adelantamiento de la nación.' Las ideas lingüísticas de Abraham A. Cappon," in *Los sefardíes ante los retos del mundo contemporáneo: identidad y mentalidades*, eds. Paloma Díaz-Mas and María Sánchez-Pérez (Madrid: CSIC, 2010), 99-112.

⁵ For more information about some of the central correspondents with Pulido and his campaign, see Paloma Díaz-Mas, "Repercusión de la campaña profsefardí del senador Ángel Pulido en la opinión pública de su época," in *España y la Cultura Hispánica en el Sudeste Europeo* (Atenas: Embajada de España-Instituto Cervantes, 2000), 326-341.

significantly, the photographs reproduced in both books were chosen by the correspondents themselves.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the exchange and collection of personal photographs was a common social practice among both men and women of the middle class. The massive distribution of photography in Europe and America began with the visiting card, a printed item created to serve as an instrument of social relations. As early as 1851, Luis Doderó, a Marseilles photographer, placed his portrait on his own visiting cards. In 1854 André-Adolphe Disdéri, a Parisian photographer, patented the *carte de visite portrait photographique*, a visiting card with a photographic portrait pasted on one of its sides.⁶ These photographic visiting cards enjoyed an extraordinary success and led to the production not only of thousands of visiting cards with portraits of private individuals, but also others with photographs of prominent figures. These visiting cards were sold in huge numbers, exchanged in social circles and collected in albums. About a decade later, *cabinet portraits*, which had a larger format (approximately the size of a postcard), began to be produced and also achieved great success. As Helmut Gernsheim has pointed out, “No longer was photography an art for the privileged: it has become the art for the million.”⁷

Although photographs appear in reduced size in Pulido’s book, most of the originals were most likely either visiting cards or cabinet portraits.

Moreover, we know that Pulido sent his own photograph to several of his correspondents, as they thanked him for sending them his portrait.⁸ These pictures reflect two matching interests: on the one hand, they reveal the kind of

⁶ A digitized version of some of the visiting cards by Disdéri is available in the Digital Library of the Spanish National Library, “Disdéri (1819-1889),” accessed December 10, 2020, <http://bdh.bne.es/bne/search/Search.do?field=todos&text=+Disd%C3%A9ri+%281819-1889%29>. In his lifetime, Disdéri was reputed to be the richest photographer in the world, and he extended his business by opening photographic studios in Toulon, London and Madrid.

⁷ On the *carte de visite* as photograph format see Helmut Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1986; first revised edition London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 55-57.

⁸ For example, Lazaro Ascher, from Bucharest (see Pulido, *Españoles*, 393).

image of Sephardi Jews that Pulido wished to transmit in Spain; and on the other hand, they provide us with a sense of the image that Sephardi correspondents themselves wanted to transmit to the Spanish senator and the Spanish public, as they were well-aware he was planning on disseminating this information in the Spanish media.⁹

Both parties moreover shared similar interests: Pulido connected with the bourgeois Sephardi classes that he considered refined, educated, modern and enterprising as he believed these Sephardi Jews were capable of promoting the economic *regeneration* of Spain, which had just lost the last colonies of its old empire and was in a state of economic and political decline. At the same time, his Sephardi correspondents were interested in presenting themselves to Pulido (and, through him, to the Spanish public) as modern and advanced.¹⁰

A significant feature of the photographs concerns the clothing items that Pulido's Sephardi correspondents chose to wear for the pictures they shared with him. Dress style underwent an important change at the turn of the twentieth century, both in the Ottoman Empire and in North Africa.¹¹ First men, and soon after that women, adopted Western ways of dressing. Indeed, of the 50 women that appear in Pulido's books, 41 posed dressed in Western attire, usually wearing hats and garments of the latest fashion trends of the bourgeoisie of their respective countries.

⁹ A very different case is the photographic representation of the Sephardi Jews of Bosnia in the book by Moritz Levy *Die Sephardim in Bosnien (1911)*, studied by Mirjam Rajner, "Visualizing the Past: The Role of Images in Fostering the Sephardic Identity of Sarajevo Jewry," *Sefarad* 79 (2019): 265-295.

¹⁰ On the social and cultural milieu of Pulido's correspondents, see Paloma Díaz-Mas, "Corresponsales de Ángel Pulido e informantes de Menéndez Pidal: dos mundos sefardíes," in *Los trigos ya van en flores. Studia in Honorem Michelle Débax*, eds. Jean Alsina and Vicent Ozanam (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 2001), 103-116.

¹¹ A description of the traditional style of clothing of the Eastern Mediterranean Jews (specifically of those from Thessaloniki) can be found in Michael Molho's, *Usos y costumbres de los sefardíes de Salónica* (Madrid-Barcelona: CSIC, 1950), 46-47 and 94-95. On the progressive abandonment of traditional clothing in favor of Western dress in Turkey, see Fatma Koç and Emine Koca, "The Clothing Culture of the Turks, and the Entari (Part 1: History)," *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies* 49, no. 1 (2011): 10-29.

The other nine photos depict women wearing traditional attire. One of these images was moreover a fairly well-known postcard,¹² accompanied in the book by the following caption: “Spanish Israelite from Thessaloniki. A popular type” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 25).¹³ Three women from Sarajevo pose wearing a traditional Balkan dress: Sunca Salom, the wife of the president of the Sephardi community of Sarajevo (Pulido, *Españoles*, 556; fig. 1); and Ricca Pinto and Gracia Sumbul, who appear together in a photo taken in the studio of a professional photographer (Pulido, *Españoles*, 326; fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Sunca Salom. Pulido, *Españoles*, 556.

¹² For example, the same postcard is reproduced in Yanis Megas, *Souvenir. Images of the Jewish Community. Salonika 1897-1917* (Athens: Kapon Editions, 1993), 34. Megas' book is a compilation of postcards with images of Thessaloniki printed in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, most of them offering an orientalist and exotic vision targeting Western travelers that visited the town. The caption “Souvenir de Salonique Costume de Dame Israélite” (which does not appear on the image reproduced by Pulido) is printed on top of the postcard reproduced by Megas.

¹³ Hereinafter references to Pulido's *Españoles* are indicated in parentheses.



Fig. 2. Gracia Sumbol and Rica Pinto. Pulido, *Españoles*, 326.

Three other women wear the *berberisca* costume, typical of Sephardi weddings in Morocco¹⁴: one is an anonymous woman who was included to illustrate the traditional clothing of Moroccan Jewish women with the caption “Jewish Spanish woman from Tetuan” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 255); the second is Esther Benayón from Tetuan (Pulido, *Españoles*, 156; fig. 3); and the third is Raquel Pilo from Seville (fig. 4) who not only participated in the welcome reception held by the Jewish community of Seville in honor of King Alfonso XIII, when he visited the city in 1904, but also composed a laudatory poem for that occasion, which Pulido reproduced in his book.¹⁵

¹⁴ For the traditional clothing of Moroccan Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see José Manuel Fraile Gil, “La indumentaria sefardí en el Norte de Marruecos. El tocado y la ropa de cada día,” *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* 59, no. 2 (2004): 43-92. For the *berberisca* Sephardi wedding dress and its meaning as an identity element, José Luís Sánchez Sánchez, “The Sephardi Berberisca Dress, Tradition and Symbology,” *Datatèxtil* 37 (2017): 37-54. <https://www.raco.cat/index.php/Datatextil/article/view/329309/419895>, accessed December 10, 2020.

¹⁵ For more information about the Jewish community of Seville and its reception for Alfonso XIII during his visit in 1904, see Pulido, *Españoles*, 342-346; José Antonio Lisbona, *Retorno a Sefarad. La política de España hacia sus judíos en el siglo XX* (Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1993), 26-27; and Isidro González, *Los judíos y España después de la expulsión. Desde 1492 hasta nuestros días* (Córdoba: Almuzara, 2014), 175-176.



Fig. 3. Esther Benayon. Pulido, *Españoles*, 164.



Fig. 4. Raquel Pilo. Pulido, *Españoles*, 342.

Judith Toledano, from Oran, also poses wearing traditional attire, which appears to be a version of the *berberisca* wedding outfit. The caption that accompanies the picture simply indicates she is “a distinguished lady of Oran (daughter of Mr. Solomon Levy)” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 252; fig. 5), without any mention of whether it was her usual garment or a dress for a special occasion.



Fig. 5. Judith Toledano. Pulido, Españoles, 252.

Another interesting example is that of Victoria Barisac, who chose to appear in an Ottoman dress typical of traditional Muslim Turkish attire (Pulido's caption reads: "distinguished Sephardi Mademoiselle of Constantinople, in Turkish dress", 248; fig. 6). The custom of being photographed in traditional Muslim-Turkish clothing was also practiced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by other Westernized Sephardi Jews of the Ottoman empire, both men and women, who usually wore Western-style clothes in their daily lives.¹⁶

¹⁶ For this use, its identity connotations and similar practices among other religious and cultural minorities of the Ottoman Empire, see Julia Phillips Cohen, "Oriental by Design: Ottoman Jews, Imperial Style and the Performance of Heritage," *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 2 (April 2014): 364-398.



Fig. 6. Victoria Barisac. Pulido, *Españoles*, 248.

Similarly to Barisac, Micca Gross Alcalay, one of Pulido's most active correspondents, mailed him two of her photos: one of herself dressed in Western attire (fig. 7) and another, apparently taken when she was in the prime of her youth, "dressed in a villager costume of Styria [Austria]" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 24; fig. 8). We have no information about why Micca Alcalay chose to send Pulido a photograph of herself dressed as a peasant from Styria, but it is worth recalling that at this time, Bosnia (Micca Alcalay's birthplace), Trieste (where she lived when she became Pulido's correspondent) and Styria were all part of the Austro-Hungarian empire.



Fig. 7. Micca Gross Alcalay in Occidental attire. Pulido, *Españoles*, 321.



Fig. 8. Micca Gross Alcalay disguised as peasant of Styria. Pulido, *Españoles*, 24.

Women's Profiles

The captions that accompany the pictures are quite revealing. Even today, the information published in the media about women tends to focus on their physical appearance (for example, their beauty or elegance). This is the case even when their social relevance is unconnected to any activity directly related to their physical appearance as in the case of female athletes, politicians or wives of heads of state, to name a few. In the early twentieth century, this trend was even more prominent and praising female beauty was almost a *sine qua non*, especially when the information was accompanied by an image. Pulido's captions, however, generally focus on different attributes of these women, rather than on female beauty. There are only two cases in which he included references to their beauty: "Rosa de Toledo, a distinguished and beautiful mademoiselle of Adrianopolis" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 137; fig. 9); and "Matilde Salom, a pretty and graceful mademoiselle, member of the elite of the Spanish Israelite community of Sarajevo" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 324).



Fig. 9. Rosa de Toledo. Pulido, *Españoles*, 137.

In most cases, the adjective Pulido applied to these women (both married and single) is not “beautiful,” but “distinguished,” which does not refer to their physical appearance, but to their refinement and their social status as members of the upper class. For example, he describes several of these women in the following manner: “Miss Luna Benasayag, a distinguished young lady, member of the high society of Tangier” (fig. 10); “Miss Simita Benatar, a distinguished Spanish Israelite from Gibraltar” (fig. 11); “Mrs. Simi Bensimon, a distinguished lady of Mazagán (a Sephardi colony of Tangier [*sic*]),” “Mrs. Gimol Lasry and Miss Esther Lasry. An ornament [*sic*] of the most distinguished society of Tangier,” “Mrs. Chiquinha Salgado, a distinguished lady of the Sephardi community of Tetuan, she lives in Para (Brazil),” etc. (Pulido, *Españoles*, 536, 351, 486, 251 and 486, respectively).



Fig. 10. Luna Benasayag. Pulido, *Españoles*, 536.



Fig. 11. Simita Benatar. Pulido, *Españoles*, 351.

Often, the presentation of these women by Pulido notes their intellectual qualities, their educational background, their artistic activities, or their active role in society (albeit not reduced to their Jewish communities) including their participation in social events, cultural associations or charities: “Blanca Canetti, wife of M. Presente, a distinguished Spanish Israelite from Burgas (Bulgaria). She speaks six languages and the most eminent people of the city frequent her palace”; “Miss Lisita H. Nahon, a treasurer of the ‘Armonía’ Society and piano soloist at charity events (Tangier)”; “Miss Fina Haïm, a Spanish Israelite, a talented artist who won an award in sculpture” (fig. 12); María Haim “a distinguished Sephardi mademoiselle, an outstanding student at the School of Arts and Industries”; “Miss

Rosa Haim, distinguished for her abilities and knowledge”; “Miss Clara Haim, appreciated for her oil paintings”; “Miss Rahma Toledano. A distinguished writer and a secretary of the ‘Armonía’ Society”; “Reyna Alcalay Salom, a distinguished lady. President of the Charitable Association of Hebrew Ladies ‘Humanidad’ (Sarajevo)”; “Ms. Meriam (María) Benasayag. Efficient Secretary of the ‘La Maternelle’ charity association. Admired for her charity work (Tangier)” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 26, 484, 294, 295, 297, 298, 188, 335 and 506, respectively). It is interesting to give some thought to why these women appear in Pulido’s book, as only three of them appear to have been active correspondents (an issue to which I will return) who exchanged letters with him. The other women were included at the suggestion of other correspondents who provided their photos and some information about them.



Fig. 12. Fina Haim. Pulido, *Españoles*, 294.

First of all, it is useful to make a comparison between these women based on their marital status since marriage played an important role in determining the social status of women in the early twentieth century. One would imagine that the majority of women included in the book were married and were the wives of Pulido’s male correspondents. Nonetheless, while there are a total of 21 married women—to whom Pulido either referred as a *dama* (a lady), or placed the title *doña*, equivalent to lady, or Mrs., before their respective names—25 of these women were single. In this case, before their respective names, Pulido placed the titles *Señorita*, *Srta.* or *Sta.* equivalent to Mademoiselle, or Miss. There is also a

photograph of a girl, Sofía Azriel, as well as a widow, “Mrs. Rebeca Elvira Athias, widow of Moisés Salcedo” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 266). Therefore, the number of single women, some of whom were his most active correspondents, exceeds, although not by much, that of married women.

The relationship of these women with Pulido’s other correspondents is stated only in a few instances. For example, four of them were wives of male correspondents: Tamarad Ascher was the wife of Lázaro Ascher (Bucharest); Blanca Canetti was married to M. Presente (Bulgaria); Preciada Pinto was the wife of D.A. Pinto (Tangier), and Sunca Salom was wed to the president of the Sarajevo community (Pulido, *Españoles*, 394, 26, 264, 556, respectively). Furthermore, three women were daughters of male correspondents: Buca Canetti, photographed with a girl named Sofía Azriel, was the daughter of D.H. Canetti (Romania); Judith Toledano was the daughter of Salomón Levy (Orán), and Carolina Carmona’s father was Enrique Carmona (Tetuán) (Pulido, *Españoles*, 401, 252, 434). Perla Levy (Nice, France) is mentioned as being the wife of Jacques Coriat and the daughter of Solomon Levy (Pulido, *Españoles*, 469), while Juana Sak or Siaky (she appears alternatively with both names) is stated to be “the niece of the Illustrious pedagogue Moisés Fresco from Constantinople” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 29; fig. 13).



Fig. 13. Juana Siaky. *Pulido, Españoles*, 29.

Even though the relationships between the different correspondents are not always expressly revealed in Pulido’s books, the coincidence between some

surnames may indicate the existence of local family networks. For example, there are several men and women from Morocco whose last name is Toledano who probably were part of the same family; and the same can be surmised regarding several individuals named Serfaty or Nahon.

Pulido's Sephardi Female Correspondents

As noted at the beginning of this essay, only three women appear as active correspondents who exchanged letters with Ángel Pulido: Rahma Toledano, from Tangier; Fina Haim, from Berlin, and Micca Gross Alcalay, born in Sarajevo, who lived in Trieste.

Rahma Toledano (fig. 14) was most probably the only female correspondent whom Pulido got to meet personally. It is possible that they met each other for the first time during Pulido's trip to Tangier in 1904, and they certainly saw each other on various occasions in Madrid during Rahma Toledano's trips to the Spanish capital where she stayed at the luxurious Palace hotel. Pulido used to visit her there accompanied by his granddaughters. Although Pulido was over fifty and Rahma was in her twenties, it seems that they established a close friendship based on mutual admiration, despite the age difference.¹⁷

¹⁷ Pulido, *El Dr. Pulido*, 240.



Fig. 14. Rahma Toledano. Pulido, *Españoles*, 188.

From her early youth and throughout her life, Rahma Toledano was a prominent figure of the Jewish community of Tangier. She received a Western education in Tangier, first in a Catholic school and then in the school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (and presided over its alumni association for a while). She also published numerous articles in Spanish and French in various newspapers in Morocco, Spain, France and Argentina. Moreover, she was a Zionist activist, serving as a delegate to the Women's International Zionist Organization of London, and she collaborated with several charities in Tangier.¹⁸ In his 1905 book, Pulido refers to Rahma Toledano in the following manner:

She stands out in Tangier for her talent for writing, her grace and her kindness. She is the secretary of many charitable societies and has published reports and memoirs, as well as delicate and highly poetic articles in *El Eco Mauritano*, one of the newspapers published in Tangier. She and her two sisters belong to that highly educated and charming Israelite society of Tangier [...] The letter, as one will note, is written in elegant Spanish and is a model of tenderness and Spanishness.¹⁹

¹⁸ Isaac Laredo, *Memorias de un viejo tangerino* (Madrid: C. Bermejo, 1935), 265-266. Laredo repeatedly refers to her as "Miss," thirty years after Pulido's book, which might suggest that she probably never married, something uncommon for women of her time. See also Abraham Laredo, *Les noms des juifs du Maroc. Essai d'onomastique judéo-marocaine* (Madrid: CSIC, 1978), 618.

¹⁹ "Sobresaliente en Tánger por su talento de escritora, su gracia y su bondad. Es secretaria de muchas Sociedades y ha publicado informes y Memorias, artículos delicados y de alta poesía en *El Eco Mauritano*, uno de los periódicos que se publican en Tánger. Pertenecen, ella y sus dos

The newspaper *El Eco Mauritano* (The Mauritian Echo) was published in Spanish in Tangier between 1886 and 1930. It was founded by two Sephardi men, Isaac Toledano and Isaac Laredo, and a Gibraltar journalist of Spanish origin and British nationality, Agustín Lúgaro.²⁰ According to Abraham Laredo, Rahma Toledano was Isaac Toledano's sister²¹ and it is highly probable that she was responsible for providing Pulido with a series of photographs of women from the same family. One of these women was named Amelia Laredo de Toledano (Pulido, *Españoles*, 532), which suggests that the families of the two Sephardi men who founded *El Eco Mauritano* were probably related by marriage.

Pulido reproduces several fragments of a letter sent to him by Rahma Toledano which complicate Pulido's emphatic statements about her Spanishness and her love for Spain. In these letters, Toledano maintains a more ambivalent attitude towards her Spanish roots and expresses gratitude for her French education:

Deeply moved by the reading of your book *Los israelitas y el idioma castellano*, I have not been able to resist the impulse to express to you, within the possibilities that my modest knowledge of the language allows me to do, all the admiration that your work has sparked in me. We, the Jewish youth, educated in the schools of the Alliance Israelite in which the teaching is mainly in French, have learned the Castilian language in our homes and through reading. However, they have taught us, in French, how to think, but not how to feel. In the schools of the Alliance we have received intellectual drive and have built up principles of character. There we have become aware of our personality; there we have developed a latent feeling of dignity and self-esteem, which had been repressed for so long; lastly, there we have formed our minds; and for these benefits we owe this institution eternal gratitude.²²

hermanas, a esa cultísima y simpática sociedad israelita tangerina [...] La carta, redactada en elegante castellano, como se puede apreciar, es un modelo de ternura y españolismo" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 188).

²⁰ Laredo, *Memorias*, 243-245.

²¹ Laredo, *Les noms des juifs*, 616-618.

²² "Profundamente emocionada por la lectura de su libro *Los Israelitas y el idioma castellano* no he podido resistir al impulso de manifestarle, en los términos en que mis modestos conocimientos del idioma me permiten hacerlo, toda la admiración que su obra me ha sugerido. Educados los

Toledano then proceeds to proclaim her sentimental affection for Spain (implicitly opposed to the intellectual education provided by France):

But our heart is purely Spanish because of our tenderness, sensitivity, sincere and disinterested affection, our indolent predisposition to dream, our spirit of sacrifice draped in that atmosphere of sentimentality. That is why, upon reading your book brimming with nobility and elevated intentions, I have felt the gratitude of those who witness the disappearance of a painful impression.²³

She then recalls the source of that painful impression:

Your highly noble campaign not only rehabilitates Spain, but also succeeds in erasing the infamous vision of a cruel and inquisitorial Spain. When I was a little girl, as a result of one of those coincidences caused by curiosity and desire to learn, the bloody and inhumane history of the Inquisition fell into my hands. Hidden in a tiny corner, I read horrified about such scary events and through my young imagination, I saw vaguely, as in a nightmare, autos-da-fé, innocent creatures condemned to thousands of tortures, young women putting up with unprecedented horrors inflicted upon their bodies. My entire soul then objected, rebelled and sobbed with indignation. Like ghosts from hell, I saw the monstrous figures of Torquemada and Ignacio de Loyola, and from the bottom of my tender little girl's heart I cursed their crimes. Later, time, reflection and study

jóvenes judíos en las escuelas de la Alianza Israelita, donde la enseñanza es principalmente francesa, aprendemos el idioma castellano por el uso familiar y por la lectura. Sin embargo, en francés nos han enseñado a pensar, pero no a sentir. En los bancos de las escuelas de la Alianza, hemos recibido intelectual impulso y recogido principios de carácter. Allí hemos cobrado conciencia de nuestra personalidad; allí se ha desarrollado el sentimiento latente de dignidad y propia estimación, por tanto tiempo comprimido; allí, en fin, se ha formado nuestro cerebro; y por estos beneficios debemos a dicha institución gratitud eterna" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 188-189).

²³ "Pero nuestro corazón es puramente español, por la ternura, la sensibilidad, la afección sincera y desinteresada, por la indolente predisposición a soñar, por el espíritu de sacrificio y por esa atmósfera de sentimentalismo con que se envuelve. Por eso, al leer su libro, rebosante de nobleza y elevadas miras, he sentido la gratitud del que ve desvanecerse una impresión dolorosa" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 188).

partly erased the impression that this reading engraved in my soul. And in the same way I always hated the heartless men of that bloody century, I also came to appreciate contemporary liberal and progressive men, and I came to love Spain, that conciliatory Spain, free of guilt for the past.²⁴

In her letter, rather than expressing her “Spanishness,” in the manner expressed by Pulido, Toledano conveys her deep gratitude for the intellectual training and moral dignity she received in the Alliance Israelite schools, in opposition to an image of Spain that combines two widespread stereotypes: the identification of Spain as a fanatical and intolerant country, the cradle of the Inquisition; and the image of an indolent, dreamy country, a common cliché largely fostered by nineteenth-century Western European (and in particular French) Orientalist literature.

The second female correspondent, Fina Haim, was a teenager who sent Pulido several letters which included information about the Sephardi Jews who had settled in Berlin, including her own family, who were merchants from Constantinople:

Our adorable little friend belongs to a distinguished Spanish family from the East. Her parents have the best carpet and tapestry store in Berlin, and

²⁴ “Su campaña de Vd. elevadísima no solo rehabilita a España, sino que logra borrar la infanda visión de una España cruel e inquisidora. Cuando niña, por una de esas casualidades provocadas por la curiosidad y el afán de conocer, vino a mis manos la historia sangrienta e inhumana de la Inquisición. Escondida en un rinconcito, leía con espanto tan tremendos acontecimientos, y a través de mi imaginación infantil, veía confusamente, como en una pesadilla, arder los autos de fe, condenar a mil torturas a inocentes criaturas, perpetrar horrores inauditos en cuerpos de mujeres jóvenes. Mi alma entera entonces protestaba, se sublevaba y sollozaba de indignación. Entreveía como fantasmas del infierno las figuras monstruosas de Torquemada e Ignacio de Loyola, y desde el fondo de mi tierno corazón de niña maldecía sus horrores. Luego el tiempo, la reflexión, el estudio borraron en parte la impresión que en mi alma dejó grabada esa lectura, y así como odié siempre a los hombres sin entrañas de ese siglo de sangre, supe también estimar a los hombres contemporáneos, liberales y progresistas, y amé a España, a la España conciliadora, irresponsable del pasado” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 188-189). Rahama Toledano here commits a mistake by considering Ignacio de Loyola a member of the Inquisition, when neither he nor the Jesuit Order he founded in 1534 had any participation in the inquisitorial processes, which in fact were led by another religious order, that of the Dominicans.

she has three other sisters, no less charming than Fina, named María, Clara and Rosa, whose photographs embellish this book.²⁵

Despite her young age, Fina Haim's letters indicate remarkable philological finesse. For example, in commenting on the linguistic attitude of the Sephardi Jews of the Ottoman Empire who maintained the use of Spanish and did not learn the language of the countries in which they lived for centuries, she states:

Yesterday, speaking of the Spanish Jews, I heard one saying something I had already heard many times: "It is deeply ungrateful that the Spanish Jews did not embrace the language of the country that had welcomed them with such generosity at the time of the expulsion from their homeland." It seems to me that there is some truth in this claim. But, on the one hand, the beauty of the language, with its folktales and songs, excuses us, and on the other hand, it is also the only legacy of our ancestors. A magnificent legacy that we have conserved in the way only a religion is preserved among a people.²⁶

Likewise, when Fina sent Pulido a text of a traditional ballad "written down as she heard it from her grandmother, whom she had asked to sing Spanish legends" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 295), she had enough sensibility to copy the text exactly as it was sung by her informant, without falling into the temptation of fixing it or introducing her own corrections to it, something that was common among the pioneers of traditional song collecting. Fina's philological finesse, moreover, appeared superior to that of Pulido's, who, with regard to the dialectal features of

²⁵ "Nuestra adorable amiguita pertenece a una distinguida familia española oriunda de Oriente. Sus padres poseen el mejor almacén de alfombras y tapices que hay en Berlín, y tiene otras tres hermanas, no menos encantadoras que Fina, llamadas María, Clara y Rosa, con cuyos retratos embellecemos este libro" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 295).

²⁶ "Ayer, hablando de los judíos españoles, oí, como ya muchas veces, que uno dijo: —Es grande ingratitud la de los judíos españoles que no tomaron la lengua del país que los recogió con tanta generosidad en tiempo de la expulsión de su patria.—Me parece que ya tienen un poco de razón al decir esto. Pero de una parte nos dispensa la hermosura de la lengua con sus consejas y cantitas [*sic*, instead *cánticas*], y de otra parte que ella era la única herencia de nuestros padres. Una herencia magnífica que conservamos como se conserva solamente una religión en un pueblo" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 49).

the text commented with a certain attitude of superiority: “It seems clear that it [the poem] is corrupt.”²⁷

Yet, undoubtedly, Pulido’s most active female correspondent was Micca (or Maria, or Marietta) Gross Alcalay, a Sephardi woman from Sarajevo who married an Ashkenazi Jew and moved to Trieste, which at that time was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.²⁸ When she initiated her contact with Pulido in March of 1904, after reading an article of his in *La Ilustración Española y Americana* (an important Spanish periodical published in Madrid between 1869 and 1921, which she read regularly), Micca Gross Alcalay was in her forties. From that moment on, a very intense relationship of affection and mutual admiration was established between the two. They carried on a continuous and dynamic correspondence over a period of one year, exchanging two to three letters per week.

Micca was Pulido’s only correspondent in Trieste and, therefore, all of the information he received about the Sephardi Jews from this city originated with her. Moreover, thanks to Micca, Pulido got in touch with some of his Bosnian and Serbian correspondents, such as Benko Davicho, who, together with his brother Haim, translated works of Spanish literature into Serbian that were performed at the National Theater in Belgrade (Pulido, *Españoles*, 321).

In his 1905 book, Pulido reproduces extensive parts of some of Micca’s letters to him, highlighting her intelligence and knowledge, her femininity and her “good manly judgment” (buen juicio varonil). He describes her as: a “distinguished and very intelligent lady”; an “intelligent and beautiful friend”; an “intelligent collaborator of our work”; and emphasizes that she was a polyglot, as she spoke four languages: German, Italian, French and “Spanish” (that is, Judeo-Spanish).

Micca Gross Alcalay’s letters, deal with quite diverse topics and display dialectal features of Bosnian Judeo-Spanish, despite the editor’s corrections and her own

²⁷ On the role of Fina Haim and Micca Gross Alcalay as keepers and collectors of Sephardi oral tradition, see Paloma Díaz-Mas, “Folk Literature among the Sephardic Bourgeois Women at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 3, no. 1 (2009): 81-101.

²⁸ Her maiden name was Alcalay and Gross was her married name.

efforts to accommodate her language to modern Spanish: she provides information about the Sephardi Jews of Trieste, as well as those of her native Bosnia; and on the impact of Austro-Hungary in the process of enlightenment and modernization of the Balkan Sephardi Jews. She comments on her readings of Spanish literature, which included works such as *Don Quixote*, the writings of José de Echegaray, Emilio Castelar's speeches, and the theater play *Electra* by Benito Pérez Galdós that had been performed in Spain only three years earlier, in 1901, and caused wide controversy due to its feminist and anticlerical content. She also reflects on the characteristics of Judeo-Spanish, which was her mother tongue, and expresses her feeling of pride to have been able to read so much in Spanish and "perfect" her knowledge of it, to the point that she can pass for a Spaniard. She even recounts how on one occasion two Spanish women thought she was a native of Madrid. She also sent Pulido Sephardi ballads and songs, descriptions of folk customs and of children's games.

While I cannot analyze in detail all of the particular features of Gross Alcalá's letters in this essay, I would like to highlight two particular aspects: her sense of humor, present in all of her letters; and her critical attitude regarding the situation of women and, especially, concerning the arranged marriages that were common among the Sephardi Jews of Bosnia of the time and that she herself had personally experienced.

Hence, in one of her letters, Micca describes a game that was played by girls which included the singing of a ballad about a gentleman who is looking for a wife. The gentleman asks a "Moorish King" to give him one of his daughters as a wife, which leads to a discussion between them concerning the conditions. Micca makes the following comment:

I call it the *preparandum* for marriage, because who among us did not know that one day a similar "gentleman" had to come to ask for the hand of the "Moorish king's daughter"? [...] When I recall with how much eagerness the one who played the role of the father [in the game] begged the gentleman to take one of the daughters, I start laughing, because in real

life it happens in the same way: “please, come back, come back sir,” and then they would add: “and don’t ask for much money [as dowry].”²⁹

In another one of her letters she explains to Pulido the different ways of greeting among Sephardi women, describes marriage customs, and shares songs that were sung at Sephardi weddings:

The professional women singers with their tambourines show up at the girl’s or bride’s house and sing in such a manner that everyone starts crying a lot if the girl goes abroad upon marrying, as was my case:

My daughter, think carefully
before you go:
on the paths you take
you won’t find brothers or relatives.
Make your husband’s family your own
and don’t make them detest you,
you pretty girl

The melody is Arabic and as sad as the lyrics of the song are, it is a very necessary admonition for the girl to “make your husband’s family your own” and “don’t make them detest you.”³⁰

In her comments one can also detect a certain melancholy typical to those “married from far away lands”:

²⁹ “Yo lo llamo el ‘preparandum’ del matrimonio, porque cuál de nosotras no sabía ya que un día tiene que venir el más o menos ‘caballero’ a pedir la mano de la ‘hija del rey moro’ [...] Cuando recuerdo con cuanto anhelo llamaban los padres de ocasión a los caballeros que se les lleve alguna hija me río, porque en realidad no es de otro modo; tornad, tornad caballero y luego se ajunte: no pidéis mucho dinero” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 79).

³⁰ “A casa de la joven, o novia, vienen las cantaderas de profesión con sus panderas y cantan como sigue, que hacen derramar muchas lágrimas si la niña se casa para irse al extranjero, como fue mi caso: ‘Hija, antes que te vayas, /mira bien y para mientes, /por los caminos que irás,/ *no hay hermanos ni parientes*. /A los ajenos aparenta,/no te des a borecer, /hija de buen parecer’. La melodía es árabe y triste como su letra, pero es una monición muy necesaria a la niña de ‘hacer a los ajenos parientes’ y no ‘darse a borecer’ ” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 259).

These stories of passion and great love are good for tales and ballads. They are a fiction. They don't really exist in real life. This is how marriages happen: when a girl reaches the age that her parents consider appropriate for her to marry, one day the father, more serious than usual, enters your little room, a nest of your sweet dreams, and tells you: "My daughter, so-and-so has asked for your hand in marriage, do you accept?" The girl thinks: "anyway, a girl has to marry, one or another, it makes no difference." She replies to her father: "whatever you consider best." I don't know what the girl gains by marrying, or rather, what she loses. The perfect man, the god of her dreams, becomes a material object, *assai materiale* as a Dalmatian woman, a friend of mine, would tell me. The marriage occurs later through the custom of being always united to a man, with whom you are to spend all your days and to whom you become accustomed, as happens with everything that belongs to you.

I know you'll tell me that suicides because of love, and adultery, happen. Most candidates in the first case (suicide) are insane and would take their own lives for any reason. The second option (adultery) shows a personality weakness, a lack of pride. A woman who has dignity, thinks: "Why should I be a toy in men's hands; they look at us without any mercy as flowers, take us, smell us and then throw us in the trash?" Don't take me for your enemy, not at all, I'm only revealing the real life that women have to accept unlike the poetry of their childhood.³¹

³¹ "Esas cosas de pasiones y grandes amores son buenas para cuentos y romances. Son una ficción. En realidad, no existen en la vida. Es así como se hacen los matrimonios: cuando la niña llega en la edad que sus padres deciden casarla, un día os entra el papá más serio que de costumbre, en vuestro cuartito, nido de dulces sueños, y os dice: Hija, fulano te pide por esposa ¿le quieres? La niña se piensa; pues que es precisa casarse, o sea uno, o otro, es indiferente. Responde al padre "como a Vd. mejor parezca". Yo no sé que yo le diga lo que gana la niña en el matrimonio, o mejor lo que pierde; el ideal del hombre, el Dios de sus sueños, llega a ser un objeto material, *assai materiale* me decía una amiga dalmata. El matrimonio se hace más tarde con la costumbre de estar siempre unida al hombre, con el cual tiene de pasar sus días y al cual se afecciona como a todo lo que nos apartiene. Vd. me dirá, que suceden los suicidios por amor o el adulterio. Los candidatos al primo ya son lo más alienados y se toman la vida por cualquier razón; lo segundo es debilidad de carácter, mancansa de orgullo. La que tiene orgullo piensa: "¿por qué que sea yo el juguete del hombre, el cual sin piedad nos contemplan por flores, nos cojen, nos uelen y tiran a la basura?". No me tome Vd. por enemiga de ustedes, no, sólo le expono la vida real que tienen que aceptar las mujeres en cambio de la poesía de su niñez" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 327-328).

The correspondence with Micca Gross Alcalay left a strong and long-lasting impression on Pulido. Almost twenty years had passed since their correspondence when in 1923 Pulido published his book *Micca. Homenaje a la mujer hebrea* to honor his old epistolary friend who was still present in his memory. In this book, Pulido openly declares to have been platonically in love with her. Furthermore, the book, which incidentally starts with a dedication to another of his female correspondents, Rahma Toledano, reveals that Micca Gross Alcalay was no longer alive when Pulido's second book appeared in 1905. Micca passed away that very same year, on May 18, as a consequence of a domestic accident. Apparently, she had received a copy of the book in which she had collaborated so enthusiastically and in which part of her letters were reproduced, but she was not able to read it because she was already on her deathbed.³²

Pulido inevitably reproduces some of the stereotypes about women typical of his time. For example, while praising the culture, intelligence and progressive mentality of his correspondent Micca Gross Alcalay, he also praises her dedication as a housewife and her absolute lack of pretensions and arrogance, an attitude expected of women: "she lives and cultivates her little home with the simplicity of a good bourgeoisie, reads a lot, judges with perfect social sense and has no literary pretenses and even fewer of becoming a writer."³³

When he explains what his intention was by including photographs of women in his book, he declares that he wants to show the similarity between Sephardi and Spanish women. He does not present Sephardi Jews as "exotics" or "Orientals," but as identical to Spaniards, an idea that is coherent with his romanticized theory about the Sephardi Jews as "Spaniards without a homeland." But he nonetheless succumbs to the stereotype of mentioning modesty as the most prominent trait of these Sephardi women:

³² See Pulido, *Mica* [sic]. *Homenaje a la mujer hebrea* (Madrid: Editorial Ibero-Africano-Americana, 1923), 19-21.

³³ "vive y cultiva su hogarcito con la sencillez de una buena burguesa, lee mucho, juzga con perfecto sentido social, y no tiene pretensiones de literatura, cuanto menos de publicista" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 322).

Overcoming women's natural reluctance and modesty, we have brought to our book the portraits of distinguished and honorable ladies and mademoiselles, subjecting them to unusual publicity, though not take note!—to exhibit them as if they were samples in a shop window, or as if they were actresses or professional fashion models, but to prove with their honest physiognomies [...] the affirmation that I have made so many times before: that they are identical to women we can see in our own homes, relationships, and social environment.³⁴

Notwithstanding these stereotypes, and considering the standards of his time, Pulido pays unusual attention to women, who make up almost a third of Sephardi Jews mentioned in the book. In most photographs, women appear elegantly dressed in the style of the bourgeoisie, and the comments he writes to accompany these images do not focus mainly on their beauty, but rather on their education and intellect (their studies, their command of languages, their artistic abilities), their social success and participation in benevolent societies for the well-being of their community:

They speak three or four languages, they adorn themselves with the piano and singing, they participate in social charities and represent a powerful driving force in the education and regeneration of their children.³⁵

Pulido's attitude towards women in general, and towards Sephardi women in particular, was undoubtedly influenced by his personal relationship with some Spanish feminists of his time, and principally with three women who were part of

³⁴ “Venciendo naturales y pudorosas resistencias [de las mujeres], hemos traído a nuestro libro los retratos de distinguidas y honorables señoras y señoritas, sometiéndolos a una publicidad inusitada, no --¡cuidado!-- para exhibir escogidos tipos de escaparate, como si se tratara de mostrar actrices y bellezas profesionales a la moda, sino para documentar con fisonomías honestas [...] esa afirmación tantas veces hecha, de que son las que vemos en nuestros hogares propios, en nuestras relaciones, en nuestro ambiente social” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 520).

³⁵ “Hablan tres y cuatro idiomas, se adornan con el piano y el canto, intervienen en organizaciones sociales benéficas, y representan una fuerza impulsiva poderosa en la educación y regeneración de sus hijos” (Pulido, *Españoles*, 258).

three different generations: Concepción Arenal (1820-1893), Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer (1850-1919) and Carmen de Burgos (1867-1932).

According to Martine Lemoine, Concepción Arenal was a moral reference in Pulido's formation: "Three great figures had an influence on his professional and political raining: Concepción Arenal for his social sensitivity, Dr. Velasco for his scientific training and Emilio Castelar for his political training."³⁶ Concepción Arenal was a lawyer, writer and contributor to several newspapers, as well as a reformer of the Spanish penitentiary system. She promoted the establishment of humanitarian associations in Spain, such as the Red Cross (founded in Switzerland in 1863) and the Catholic charitable organization Society of San Vicente de Paul (founded in Paris in 1833). She also supported the Asociación para la Enseñanza de la Mujer (Association for the Instruction of Women), an educational project founded in 1870.³⁷

Carmen de Burgos, younger than Pulido, was in several ways a successor to his work. A teacher, writer and press collaborator (she used the pseudonym of Colombine), de Burgos addressed the issue of the condition of women in numerous articles, books and lectures.³⁸ Undoubtedly influenced by Pulido's campaign, she promoted the publication of articles relating to Sephardi culture in the magazine *Revista Crítica*, founded by her in 1908,³⁹ and later in the magazine

³⁶ "Tres grandes figuras tuvieron una influencia en su formación profesional y política: Concepción Arenal por su sensibilidad social, el Dr. Velasco por su formación científica y Emilio Castelar por su formación política" (Lemoine, *El Dr. Pulido*, 26). Dr. Velasco mentioned in the quote is Pedro González de Velasco (1815-1882), doctor, anatomist and anthropologist; Pulido published a biography of him in 1894. See Miguel Ángel Puig-Samper, "Pedro González de Velasco," in *DB-e-Diccionario Biográfico Español* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia), <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/11049/pedro-gonzalez-de-velasco>. Accessed December 10, 2020.

³⁷ A summary of her biography, with bibliographic references, in María José Lacalzada de Mateo, "Concepción Arenal Ponte," in *DB-e-Diccionario Biográfico Español* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia), <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/7741/concepcion-arenal-ponte>. Accessed, December 10, 2020.

³⁸ See Blanca Bravo Cela, "Carmen de Burgos Seguí," in *DB-e-Diccionario Biográfico Español* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia), <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/4656/carmen-de-burgos-segui>. Accessed December 10, 2020.

³⁹ Ángela Ena Bordonada, "*Revista Crítica*, una revista literaria fundada por Carmen de Burgos Colombine," in *Escritoras españolas en los medios de prensa. 1868-1936*, eds. Ivana Rota and María del Carmen Servén Díez (Sevilla: Renacimiento, 2013), 95-116.

Prometeo. She also had a significant role in the foundation of the Alianza Hispano-Israelita association.⁴⁰ Pulido mentions Carmen de Burgos and reproduces a photograph of her on page 10 of *Españoles sin patria*, in the acknowledgments section of the book.

Less known than the previous two women is Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer, a woman of the same generation as Pulido, to which he dedicates a few paragraphs in his book. Pulido states that the qualities of the Sephardi women featured in his book might inspire Concepción Gimeno to write a book:

Our admired friend Mrs. Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer, who has written such beautiful books about women in general and about famous women, would find here very appealing reasons to write a superb work worthy of our times.⁴¹

Concepción Gimeno collaborated in numerous magazines and newspapers, founded the magazine *La Ilustración de la Mujer* and in 1877 she dedicated the essay entitled *La mujer española. Estudio acerca de su educación y sus facultades intelectuales* (The Spanish woman. A study about her education and intellectual faculties) to king Alfonso XII. She was also a member of the Masonic lodge for women *Las Hijas del Sol* (The daughters of the sun).⁴²

Some of the qualities Pulido had highlighted about Sephardi women relate to the concerns expressed by these Spanish feminists. In particular, the interest in the education and training of women, especially the young ones (which would explain the high percentage of single women who appear in Pulido's book), or the active participation of women in society through charitable work. He also echoes the reflections on problems affecting women (arranged marriages, lack of freedom to

⁴⁰ María Belén Hernández González, "Carmen de Burgos, defensora de la comunidad sefardita internacional," *Revista Internacional de Culturas y Literaturas* 22 (2019): 122-138.

⁴¹ "Nuestra admirada amiga doña Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer, que tan hermosos libros ha escrito acerca de la mujer, y las mujeres célebres, hallaría aquí muy sugestivos motivos para escribir una soberbia obra digna de nuestros tiempos" (Pulido, *Españoles*, 258)

⁴² On the Masonic lodges for women in Spain, see the monographic issue of the magazine *Cultura masónica* 36 (2019), dedicated to *Masonería y feminismo*.

make their own decisions) communicated by his correspondent, Micca Gross Alcalay. Pulido also applauds women who publicly express their opinions through the press (as in the case of Rahma Toledano), in a manner similar to that of his Spanish feminist friends. And throughout his book he made visible a significant number of Sephardi women about whom we only know what Pulido wrote about them, as there is no information about them in other known sources.

Conclusions

In his book *Espanoles sin patria y la raza sefardí* (1905), Ángel Pulido shares part of his correspondence with Sephardi Jews from all over the world. To date, discussion of Pulido's Sephardi correspondents in the academic literature has in the main referred almost exclusively to men. However, a closer reading of Pulido's book sheds light on the importance Pulido granted to Sephardi women. Almost a third of approximately 150 Sephardi Jews mentioned in these books are women.

It seems that only three of these women were active as correspondents who exchanged letters with Pulido. Their personal profiles regarding their age, education, birthplace and place of living are rather different. Nevertheless, they had one feature in common: they all belonged to the upper-middle class of their respective communities. These women are: Rahma Toledano, a young writer from Tangier, who was a member of a family of intellectuals and journalists; Fina Haim, a teenager who lived in Berlin with her parents, who were traders originally from the Ottoman Empire; and Micca Gross Alcalay, a lady in her forties and a member of the bourgeoisie of Trieste (part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at that moment), who was born in Sarajevo where she lived until she got married. Pulido published parts of their letters which show that these women were: intelligent, well educated, socially and intellectually active and fully aware of their Sephardi identity. He also reproduced their letters explaining the problems that women of their time faced in their social circles, especially in the case of Micca Alcalay.

With regard to the other women who appear in these books, Pulido only published their photographs along with captions in which he signals some of their attributes. In these captions, he pays particular attention not so much to women's beauty or elegance, but to their education and their active role in their social environment, as well as within their respective Jewish communities. Pulido employs their pictures to reinforce his romanticized idea that the Sephardi Jews were "Spaniards without a homeland." He suggested that these Sephardi women were no different from Spanish women either in their physical traits, or in their way of dressing or lifestyle. Moreover, being highly educated, polyglots and actively involved in associations devoted to fine arts and charitable work, they could serve as examples and role models for Spanish women. Although at times Pulido resorts to certain gender stereotypes typical of his era, he nonetheless pays unusual attention to women in these books, to an extent that is unique to any single book written by a male Spanish author at the turn of the twentieth century.

Pulido's attitude towards women cannot be understood without taking into account his friendships and the admiration he felt for some of the leading Spanish feminists of his time, who also insisted on the importance of the education of women and the need for them to play an active role in the society. Particularly important was the influence that three Spanish feminists, belonging to three different generations, had over him. Concepción Arenal, thirty years older than Pulido, was an inspiring person who raised social awareness in Pulido, in the same way Emilio Castelar had raised political awareness in him. Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer was almost of the same age of Pulido. He speaks of her with admiration, praising her books and her articles about the situation of women. Carmen de Burgos (Colombine) was fifteen years younger than Pulido and in some way she became his disciple, continuing Pulido's activities in favor of a mutual approximation between the Sephardi Jews and Spain.

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Keywords: Sephardi Jews, Women Correspondence, Ángel Pulido, Rahma Toledano, Fina Haim, Micca Gross Alcalay

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*A History of Histories—of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Exchange: Professor
A.S. Yahuda and the International Trade of Antiquities, Rare Books, and
Manuscripts, 1902-1944*

by Allyson Gonzalez

Abstract

This article provides the first attempt to study comprehensively the influential involvement of the scholar Abraham S. Yahuda (1877-1951) in the international trade of manuscripts and cultural objects. Buoyed by his position as the chair of Rabbinic Language and Literature at the University of Madrid in 1915, Yahuda legitimized and deepened his role in the trade of material objects; his ongoing trade of such objects, in turn, helped to legitimize his scholarship, which continued well after he left Spain. Through a study of previously unpublished files, the piece points to the overlapping of knowledge, power, and the acquiring of antiquities and other objects during the first half of the twentieth century.

Three years after leaving his position as chair of Rabbinic Language and Literature at the University of Madrid, Abraham S. Yahuda decided to sell his collection of Inquisition material. Consisting of more than a hundred rare Inquisition documents, as well as books, manuscripts, paintings, and other paraphernalia from Spain, Portugal, North Africa, and the former Spanish colonies,¹ Yahuda's

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¹ For two separate copies of this collection, see the files 3779 and 3870 in the Abraham S. Yahuda Archive (henceforth ASYA), National Library of Israel, as well as MS-5e, Box 13, Folder 38, Hebrew Union College Records, 1873-1955 (bulk 1920-1947), American Jewish Archives (AJA), Cincinnati, Ohio. I thank Joe Weber, associate archivist at the AJA, for this material from 2015.

collection from 1926-1927 was in many ways remarkable. Throughout the late nineteenth century, Jewish scholars like Moritz Steinschneider, Heinrich Graetz, and Joseph Jacobs had sought to address the historical lacuna that encircled the study of Iberian Jewish life. Their work, however, had been notably limited, as Yitzhak Baer, one of the doyens of Spanish Jewish history, would eventually describe it.² Jewish and Spanish historians alike, Baer explained, had faced “unusual difficulties” in the study of Jewish life in Spain—from the disparate locations of the source material, to the profound intellectual, linguistic, and methodological sophistication required of such labor.³ Yahuda had helped to propel modern Spanish interest in Judaistic science (*judaistischen Wissenschaft*), as Baer termed it,⁴ but ultimately had “more important” projects in mind.⁵



Fig. 1. Photograph of a portrait of Francisco Sobrino, bishop of Valladolid, oil, 110x85cm, in Yahuda's Inquisition materials. American Jewish Archives, MS-5E, Box 13, Folder 38, A.S. Yahuda. Courtesy of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio at americanjewisharchives.org.

² Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien* I (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1929), iii-v.

³ *Ibid.*, iv.

⁴ Baer cites the work of the Spanish scholar José Millàs Vallicrosa as evidence. See Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, v. Given Yahuda's limited time in Spain as well as his many absences, however, Baer's assertion regarding Yahuda's impact on “Judaistic science” in Spain may be questioned. For a description of some of the students with whom Yahuda worked at the University of Madrid, see Allyson Gonzalez, “Abraham S. Yahuda (1877-1951) and the Politics of Modern Jewish Scholarship,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 3 (2019): 421; 406-433. For articles on Yahuda's connection to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, see the works by Almog Behar, Yuval Evri, Michal Rose Friedman, Mostafa Hussein, Stefan Schorch, as well as Gonzalez in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 3 (2019).

⁵ Regarding these “more important” projects (*wichtigeren Aufgaben*), Baer seems to refer to Yahuda's work on ancient Egyptian-Hebrew points of overlap, a project that came to light as Baer was writing; see Gonzalez, “Politics of Modern Jewish Scholarship,” 429 n121.

That “more important” work—Yahuda’s *Die Sprache des Pentateuch in ihren Beziehungen zum Ägyptischen* (1929), and its emphasis on the significant points of overlap between ancient Egyptian and biblical Hebrew⁶—would be promptly rejected by the leading scholars of the field, after having consumed at least a decade of Yahuda’s labor.⁷ Just outside of Baer’s immediate field of vision,⁸ however, Yahuda had a *different* “more important” project developing in the background, one that would help to propel “Judaistic” studies, as well as Orientalist studies and its modern derivatives, throughout the twentieth century.

From 1902 to 1944, this former professor at the University of Madrid migrated thousands of cultural and religious objects from South Asia to the Middle East and North Africa, as well as from the Iberian Peninsula, the Ladino-speaking Mediterranean, and Latin America into the libraries, museums, and archives located primarily in Europe and the United States⁹—augmenting the intellectual and political status of at least two of the major empires in the modern “Western”¹⁰ world. For at least forty years, Yahuda’s impressive manuscripts, periodicals, and rare books, as well as his involvement in the antiquities trade—as I show in this article—helped to populate the growing collections at the British Museum, Cambridge University, Princeton University, the University of Michigan, as well as the U.S. National Library of Medicine, among others. In some cases, Yahuda’s transactions, as with the Jewish Theological Society, seem to have amounted to a

⁶ “The Language of the Pentateuch and its Relation to Egyptian”; see Abraham S. Yahuda, *Die Sprache des Pentateuch in ihren Beziehungen zum Ägyptischen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1929).

⁷ For an example of an immediate critique, see G. Bergsträsser and W. Spiegelberg, “Ägyptologische und semitische Bemerkungen zu Yahuda’s Buch über die Sprache des Pentateuchs,” *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete* 7 (1929): 113-123. For Yahuda’s response to Spiegelberg, see A. S. Yahuda, “Eine Erwiderung auf Wilhelm Spiegelberg’s ‘Ägyptologische Bemerkungen’ zu meinem Buche ‘Die Sprache des Pentateuch,’ ” *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete* 7, no. 2 (1930).

⁸ For the correspondence between Baer and Yahuda, see ASYA, file 159.

⁹ His selling of items extended beyond these realms, albeit in lesser quantities, from Russia to North Africa, among other locales.

¹⁰ On the employment of “East” and “West” binaries as connected to “ideological codes” relating to emancipation and assimilation which weaken under scrutiny, see the introduction and chapter twenty to David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

few dozen texts.¹¹ In other instances, however, his impact was more profound. As noted by Philip K. Hitti, a foremost scholar of Arabic studies in the United States, Princeton University—following its 1942 acquisition from Yahuda’s collection—could claim to possess the “largest collection of Arabic manuscripts among the academic institutions of the world.”¹²

Working in the aftermath of the 1883 Shapira Affair, which highlighted the need for credibility within the sprawling Near Eastern antiquities and manuscript trade,¹³ Yahuda served as a lettered advisor—as well as a productive source of highly desired cultural objects. Born in a religiously diverse Jerusalem, Yahuda (1877-1951), a profound polyglot of self-declared Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and Sephardi heritage, had trained in Germany before becoming a lecturer of Bible and Semitic philology (ca. 1904-1913) at the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin. By 1915, Yahuda had become the very first Jewish professor to hold a chair of Jewish studies at a modern Western university, at the University of Madrid.¹⁴ Until his resignation from Madrid in 1923, Yahuda’s pedagogical reach at the school extended from the postbiblical period to medieval Iberia.¹⁵ In addition to his chair, which briefly influenced a generation of Spanish scholars, Yahuda sought throughout his life to found programs and institutions of higher learning for Jewish, Arabic, and Islamic studies across Europe, North Africa, the Middle East,

¹¹ Alexander Marx to Herr Dr., April 12, 1915, file 1714, ASYA.

¹² Princeton received this material through a benefactor, Robert Garrett, a Princeton graduate. See Philip K. Hitti, “The Arabic and Islamic Manuscripts,” *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 3, no. 4 (1942): 116-122. Among other things, this collection apparently includes material from the library of the famed Imam Shamil (1797-1871), who organized Muslim resistance to tsarist Russia’s advance in the northeastern Caucasus; see Michael Kemper, Amri Shikhsaidov and Natalya Tagirova, “The Library of Imam Shamil,” *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 64, no. 1 (2002): 121-140.

¹³ This event will be discussed more fully in the coming pages.

¹⁴ Gonzalez, “Politics of Modern Jewish Scholarship”; Michal Rose Friedman, “Orientalism between Empires: Abraham Shalom Yahuda at the Intersection of Sepharad, Zionism, and Imperialism,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 3 (2019): 438; 435-451.

¹⁵ See Allyson Gonzalez, “The First Modern Syllabus: A.S. Yahuda at the University of Madrid,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 3 (2019). Accessible at <https://katz.sas.upenn.edu/blog/jewish-quarterly-review/first-modern-syllabus-s-yahuda-university-madrid>. Accessed 18 December, 2020.

as well as in the United States.¹⁶ Amid his various travels, this “erudite Oriental”¹⁷ became known for a linguistic and intellectual expansiveness that allowed him, with the aid of familial,¹⁸ personal, and professional contacts, to cull little-known manuscripts and other cultural objects from across the globe.

This article provides the first attempt at a comprehensive study of Yahuda’s influential involvement in the trade of manuscripts and cultural objects. It looks chiefly at Yahuda’s selling of these objects to “Western” libraries, museums, and archives, based on previously unexamined and unpublished archival documents. The article covers his transactions from the first half of the twentieth century, beginning with his Inquisition collection in the 1920s, and the events leading up to it, before turning to the broader interwar years, and finally, to his activities during World War Two. Such transactions were frequently validated by his chairship at the University of Madrid, which continued well after his exit. I argue that Yahuda’s work as a scholar legitimized his activity as a collector, and, in turn, that his collecting helped to legitimize his scholarship as well as his academic standing. In the process, this article builds upon existing scholarship which points to the interrelated and interdependent aspects of power, knowledge, and the acquiring of antiquities and other cultural objects during the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁹

One important concern of the paper is Yahuda’s provenance—his documenting of an object’s history, from temporary forms of custody to more entrenched instances of legal ownership.²⁰ Yahuda’s provenance offer, I argue, insight into

¹⁶ Gonzalez, “Politics of Modern Jewish Scholarship.”

¹⁷ For Orientalist constructions of Yahuda, see Friedman, “Orientalism between Empires.” For the Arabist Ignaz Goldziher’s labelling of Yahuda as an “erudite Oriental,” see I. Goldziher, “Referate,” *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 31, August 6, 1904: 1933-1935.

¹⁸ For a brief description of Yahuda and his brother Yitzhak Yehezkel’s involvement with Arab Islamic culture, see Mostafa Hussein, “Arabian Nights, Hebrew Nights: On the Influence of *Alf laylah wa-laylah* on Jewish Culture in Palestine/Israel,” *Journal of Levantine Studies* 8, no. 2 (2018): 125-146.

¹⁹ The literature on this topic is vast, and is particularly influenced by Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1977). See also footnote 27.

²⁰ I take this definition of provenance from the “Introduction,” *Provenance Evidence: A Thesaurus for Use in Rare Book and Special Collections Cataloguing* (Chicago: Association of

the means by which material objects and cultural forms of knowledge were accrued by European and American metropolises during a century of unprecedented warfare and violence—as well as into the discourse surrounding such transactions. As the president of Princeton once declared, the Arabic manuscripts in particular had been desired in part for their “symbolic value,” as well as, among other things, for their ability to assert to a deeply embattled planet the “truths of the merging streams of civilization.”²¹ These assertions could exist even as complex ethical issues remain embedded in the Western accumulation of cultural and religious objects, the importance of which this article does not intend to minimize.²²

Certainly, the “truths” behind the merging of civilizations were far from monotone or homologous.²³ If Yahuda’s collections helped to ground claims for a kind of historical multiculturalism, as suggested by Princeton’s president, his provenance often emphasize its opposite—by underscoring the tenuous and even fraught relations involved in such transactions. Where civil and political rights extended unevenly across nation-states, protectorates, and changing empires, Yahuda articulates participatory as well as conflicting ethno-religious episodes, often within fragmented processes of colonialization.²⁴ His provenance describe a world of unpredictable conflict, where, on the one hand, multi-ethnic and/or religious exchange unfold within legal and consenting frameworks. On the other

College and Research Libraries, 1988), accessible online at <http://rbms.info/vocabularies/introductions/ProvenanceIntro.htm>.

²¹ The university received the manuscripts through a benefactor, as will be further discussed; see Harold W. Dodds, “The Garrett Collection of Manuscripts: Acceptance of the Collection by President Dodds,” *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 3, no. 4 (1942): 113–115.

²² See Neil Brodie and Simon MacKenzie, “Trafficking Cultural Objects: An Introduction,” *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 20 (2014): 421–426 and John Henry Merryman, “Two Ways of Thinking about Cultural Property,” *American Journal of International Law* 80, no. 4 (1986): 831–853. For a summary of the primary conflicts, see “Buying, Selling, and Owning the Past,” *Stanford University: Multidisciplinary Research & Teaching*, accessed on February 3, 2015 at <http://news.stanford.edu/news/multi/features/heritage/>.

²³ On de-colonization discourse among colonized persons within the interwar period, see Stuart Ward, “The European Provenance of Decolonization,” *Past & Present* 230, no. 1 (2016): 227–260; and, more broadly, Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁴ For a comprehensive study of colonialization and its ends, see Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and Its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of Colonial Empires* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

hand, his writings also warn against “deceitful” figures from afar who threaten to destroy cultural objects—and with them, entire civilizations, including their own. By Yahuda’s account, this most capricious trade unveils a world in which modern *conversos* discreetly bring their family histories to market, a place where contemporary “Inquisitors” act with unchecked ferocity, and where “fanatical Mohammadeans” frustratingly undermine the stability of Western material appropriations.

In the process, this article observes how such documentary narratives—which claimed to offer a descriptive insider view into the details of a transaction—could, in fact, obscure important provenance-related concerns, like the clear recording of ownership and the legal transfer of an object. It also observes how extenuating circumstances, as described by such narratives, may serve to heighten the potential desirability of an item. As such, this article also traces some rhetorical practices within interwar and wartime provenance, and from a figure whose professorship in Spain helped to extend his cultural, linguistic, and geographic reach. At the same time, this piece also highlights the broad role of scholars and collectors—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—as well as the scholar-collector, in the at-times contentious whirligig-like trade.

Throughout the nineteenth century, European archives and libraries had created new methods for processing existing repositories of historical texts and cultural objects.²⁵ At the same time, these institutions increasingly accumulated an extensive array of materials from distant locales—in part, a reflection of their connections with the growth of modern empire.²⁶ Yahuda’s own family, it should

²⁵ Critiquing monolithic definitions of a “European” or European-esque archive, Michel Duchein stresses the unique contexts in which each country’s and region’s archival system developed, as an epistemological structure distinct from that of libraries—and which in many ways remains distinct, even as libraries began during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to hold their own archival collections. See Michel Duchein, “The History of European Archives and the Development of the Archival Profession in Europe,” *The American Archivist* 55, no. 1 (1992): 14-25.

²⁶ The literature on this topic is vast. In addition to Said, recent critical and geopolitical approaches to the subject include Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing of Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire - Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For Spain, see Manuela Marín, “Orientalismo en España: estudios árabes y acción colonial en Marruecos (1894-

be noted, played a role in this cultural transfer, having worked at various points on behalf of European powers. Yahuda's Calcutta-born grandfather, Salomon Yahuda, for example, aided the British with supplies during the suppression of a mid-nineteenth century uprising in India, becoming a British subject in the process; Yahuda's father, Benjamin, was a rabbi and merchant who shuttled material goods into Palestine and Syria; and, crucially, his older brother, Isaac Benjamin ("I.B."), was a publisher and well-known bookseller who widely distributed texts from Cairo as well as Jerusalem.²⁷ Such actions could dovetail with the work of other African and Middle Eastern traders, who regularly moved cultural objects within and across borders.²⁸ Wartime appropriations also played a key factor in the Western aggrandizement of material objects, as had been the case, for example, with the *desamortizaciones* (seizures/confiscations) connected in part to the social debates that informed the civil wars in nineteenth-century Spain—which expropriated art objects, materials, and land long-owned by the Catholic Church.²⁹ While the Great War also witnessed the pillaging of cultural objects, international policy on the exporting of cultural and religious property would only begin to shift following the vast appropriations during World War

1943),” *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia* 69, no. 231 (2009): 117-146; Aurora Rivière Gómez, *Orientalismo y Nacionalismo Español: estudios árabes y hebreos en la Universidad de Madrid (1843-1868)* (Madrid: Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, 2000); and Barnabé López García, “Orígenes del arabismo español. La figura de Francisco Fernández y González y su correspondencia con Pascual de Gayangos,” *Cuadernos de la Biblioteca Española de Tetuán* 19-20 (1979): 277-291.

²⁷ Given the significance of winning British nationality, as well as the date, Yahuda's grandfather may have provided these supplies during the Indian Rebellion of 1857-1858; see Yahuda to Foreign Office, October 21, 1909, file 3058, ASYA.

²⁸ Ghislaine Lydon Krätli, *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011).

²⁹ For a description of these transfers, see José Ramón López Rodríguez, “El desarrollo de los museos arqueológicos en Andalucía durante el siglo XIX,” in *Arqueología fin de siglo: la arqueología española de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX* (I Reunión Andaluza de Historiografía Arqueológica), eds. María Belén Deamos and José Beltrán Fortes (Seville: 2002), 157-168. For art objects in particular, see Pierre Géal, “La creación de los museos en España,” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* 14 (2002): 289-298.

Two³⁰—yet the application of such policies still remain far from uniform, including when applied to other geo-political and historical circumstances.³¹

Finally, although this article examines several of Yahuda's most significant transactions, grounded in part on his authority as a former chair and professor at the University of Madrid, it is not intended as a comprehensive analysis of Yahuda's entire range of provenance. Nor is it concerned, for example, with some object's precise purchase price. The transactions examined here are based on a study of more than three hundred files relating to the first half of the twentieth century from across Europe and the United States, as well as from the National Library of Israel, which houses the bulk of Yahuda's papers.³²

In 1927, while reading through the contents of a recently received package, Adolph Oko, the respected librarian for Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, learned of a stark historical encounter. Examining the documents in hand, Oko read that the materials had been the result of a rescue mission—albeit a historically distant one.³³ As described by A.S. Yahuda, a former chair of rabbinic language and literature at

³⁰ Notably the 1954 Hague Convention as well as the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

³¹ Consider Nigeria, which unsuccessfully attempted in 2004 and 2006 to reclaim its Nok statuettes from France, which as late as 1997 had ratified UNESCO's 1970 Convention, signed in Paris. See Marie Cornu and Marc-André Renold, "New Developments in the Restitution of Cultural Property: Alternative Means of Dispute Resolution," *International Journal of Cultural Property* 17, no. 1 (2010): 1-31; 2. For the ongoing work of navigating restitution claims following the Shoah, see, for example, the World Jewish Restitution Organization at <https://wjro.org.il/our-work/restitution-by-country/>. Accessed December 18, 2020.

³² This piece also does not address the bequeathing of Yahuda's collection to Israel's national library after Yahuda's death in 1951. This collection and the legal battle relating to its transfer during the early years of the State of Israel warrant their own separate study; see Jesse Dukeminier and Robert H. Sitkoff, "Hebrew University Association vs. Nye," *Wills, Trusts, and Estates* (Wolters Kluwer Law & Business, 2013), 408-414.

³³ Although Oko received Yahuda's description in 1926, Oko apparently did not study its contents until 1927. For the initial April 6, 1926 letter to Oko, see file 1952, ASYA. Oko's copy—which includes the full Inquisition list, some 56 pages—is preserved at the American Jewish Archives (AJA); see MS-5E, Box 13, Folder 38, A.S. Yahuda, 1922-1928, AJA. I thank Joe Weber of the AJA for relaying the Oko-Yahuda material.

the University of Madrid, the material under review had been collected from Spain approximately fifty years before by “amateur” collectors. The numerous preserved items allegedly represented the only remains of Inquisitorial archival material which, Yahuda stated, once existed in volume throughout Spain.³⁴ Much of that material, he argued, no longer survived—having partially been carried away by antique dealers seeking to fill museums across Europe. More alarming, Yahuda suggested, had been the on-site destruction by the hands of persons who wanted to erase the history of the Inquisition in Spain—from those who were “keenly interested in sparing the future generations the knowledge of the unglorious [*sic*] activities of the Inquisition with all its cruelties and barbarous practices.” Yahuda added, “It is extremely rare to find nowadays in Spain any collection of such completeness, and still less of such a nature as this one.”³⁵

Oko had been a logical choice as a potential buyer. As one of the main “guardians” responsible for the building of Jewish libraries in the United States,³⁶ Oko had been uniquely positioned to realize a new home for such material. A scholar of the seventeenth-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza, Oko had largely built the Hebrew and Jewish book collection in Cincinnati,³⁷ and knew well the medieval and early modern circumstances that variously shaped the development of the Inquisition in the Iberian Peninsula until its abolition in 1834. Along these same lines, Oko would have been familiar with the theft and destruction of religious and cultural objects that occurred throughout the nineteenth century in Spain, including of the tribunal archives during and after the liberal revolution of 1820.³⁸

³⁴ File 1952, ASYA; and MS-5E, Box 13, Folder 38, A.S. Yahuda, 1922-1928, AJA.

³⁵ *Ibid.* For an abbreviated list of contemporary sites with primary Inquisition material in Spain, see Lorenzo H. Feldman, “La Inquisición y otros archivos hispánicos,” *Localización: Biblios: Revista electrónica de bibliotecología, archivología y museología* 13 (2002): 1-7.

³⁶ Ismar Elbogen, “American Jewish Scholarship: A Survey in Honor of the Centenary of Kaufmann Kohler,” *American Jewish Year Book* 45 (1943-1944): 47-65; 60.

³⁷ The Editors, “Adolph S. Oko,” *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 4 (1944): 290.

³⁸ I thank Francisco Bethencourt for his description of the raid of the Inquisition tribunals and public archives during and following Spain’s 1820 liberal revolution. Bethencourt estimates that Spain’s national archives likely contain less than 20 percent of the original Inquisition documents, while in Portugal perhaps more than 80 percent exist in the National Archive. Email correspondence with author, January 12, 2020. As for private collectors in Spain who sold their material to antiquarian/collection houses such as Maggs, see the June 18-19, 2020 discussion on the topic of Spain’s cultural patrimony on the ESPORA listserv

Such narratives had been widely documented, from figures like the Spanish Orientalist Pascual de Gayangos, who as early as 1839 witnessed the “wantonly destroyed” books, pictures, and ornaments resulting from the seizure of church property,³⁹ to that of the Catholic Church in Spain, which had frequently attempted to preserve what it deemed its legitimate cultural patrimony.⁴⁰

Working amid these various forms of destruction, Yahuda argued, were the actions of modern-day *conversos*—the descendants of Jews who had converted to Christianity, by force or volition, who, he suggested, still retained their Jewish self-identification after nearly half a millennium. Yahuda described how these “*marranos*”—converts to Christianity who secretly practiced Judaism—had fervently searched the country for the precious documents that Yahuda now presented to Oko. “Still conscious of their Jewish origins,” Yahuda wrote, these persons “did not spare time or money to search all over Spain” for the materials, as these items risked being set ablaze by so-called “fatal accidents.”⁴¹ Yahuda was offering a wide if essentialized picture of Jewishness, writing in consonance with other supposed *converso* sightings in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iberian Peninsula, from the travel writer George Borrow’s *converso* village dwellers⁴² to the “classic Sephardi type(s)” living secretly in Portugal, as reported by one of Yahuda’s own relatives, Ariel Bension.⁴³ Such fascination with

(<https://sympa.ucdavis.edu/sympa/arc/espora>). In turn, antiquarian houses would sell these acquired materials to buyers like Yahuda, who regularly purchased from Maggs between 1938 and 1949, if not before; see, for example, file 1653 in ASYA.

³⁹ William Hickling Prescott, *The Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott, 1833-1847* (Boston-New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925), 104. I thank Thomas Glick for this reference.

⁴⁰ See “Leyes, reales decretos, reales órdenes, circulares y instrucciones dictadas para la conservación de los objetos y monumentos históricos y artísticos,” *Boletín oficial*, May 2, 1882, Archivo Conde de Romanones, signatura 70-1, archives of the Real Academia de la Historia (RAH) in Madrid, Spain; and “Circular de la Nunciatura Apostólica de Madrid sobre enajenación de objetos artísticos,” *Eclesiástico*, July 29, 1922: 380-391, in the Archivo Conde de Romanones, signatura 70-1, RAH.

⁴¹ File 1952, ASYA; and MS-5E, Box 13, Folder 38, A.S. Yahuda, 1922-1928, AJA.

⁴² Chapter eleven in George Borrow, *The Bible in Spain, or The Journeys, Adventures, and Imprisonments of an Englishman, in an Attempt to Circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula* (London, Paris, New York: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1843; 1908).

⁴³ For a critique of a fantasized Spain and its “orientalización” at the romantic crossroads of the “North-South” and the “Oriente-Occidente,” see Xavier Andreu Miralles, *El descubrimiento de*

ostensible “modern *conversos*” would also resonate with the future claims of the so-called Jerusalem School, and the idea of plural yet durative forms of “immanent” Jewishness.⁴⁴

It seems that the collectors were "Marranos" still conscious of their Jewish origin, who did not spare time or money to search all over Spain

Fig. 2. Yahuda's description of the collectors in Spain. American Jewish Archives, MS-5E, Box 13, Folder 38, A.S. Yahuda. Courtesy of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio at americanjewisharchives.org.

Writing to Oko, Yahuda explained that the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York had wanted to purchase the collection, but was unable to raise the needed funds, which was partly true.⁴⁵ Alexander Marx, the Seminary's librarian, had certainly found much interest in the ongoing study of Jewish life in Spain and Portugal, and apparently purchased a variety of texts on the subject from Yahuda as recently as 1915—such as Fidel Fita's *Estudios históricos* as well as Joaquim Mendes dos Remedios's 1895 *Os judeus em Portugal*.⁴⁶ Yet Marx had been

España: mito romántico e identidad nacional (Barcelona: Taurus, 2016). For Yahuda's relative, see Ariel Bension, “An Echo of the Inquisition,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, October 21, 1921, 15. At other times, Yahuda was more critical of such supposed *conversos*, noting how they would occasionally attempt to sell the last of their family's remnants; see A.S. Yahuda, *Hed ha-Mizrah*, June 9, 1950: 8 [Hebrew].

⁴⁴ On the concept of “immanence,” see Marina Rustow, “Yerushalmi and the Conversos,” *Jewish History* 28 (2014): 11-49; for a discussion of *conversos* and the Jerusalem School, see David Nirenberg, “Unrenounceable Core,” review of *The Other Within: The Marranos, Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, by Yirmiyahu Yovel, *London Review of Books* 31, no. 14 (2009): 16-18.

⁴⁵ Yahuda to Oko, April 6, 1926, file 1952, ASYA.

⁴⁶ According to their 1915 correspondence, Marx tried to purchase more than a dozen texts about Jewish life in Spain and Portugal, and Yahuda—based on his private notations—seems to have located several of these items; the two items cited above remain in the library's collection. As Marx notes, Spanish books of “real interest (*wirklichem Interesse*) for the history of the Jews, I always buy for the library, when they are moderately priced.” Some of the texts Marx requested include: Fidel Fita, *Estudios históricos*, listed by Marx as containing eight volumes (1882-1887) as well as Fita, *La España hebrea* (listed as *Historia hebrea*, 1888); Francisco Fernández y González, *Instituciones jurídicas del pueblo de Israel* (1881) as well as Fernández y González, *Los mudéjares de Castilla* (1866); José Fiter y Inglés, *Expulsión de los judíos de Barcelona* (Barcelona, 1876); Enrique Claudio Girbal, *Los judíos de Gerona* (Gerona, 1870); José María de Mas y Casas, *Memoria*

limited both in terms of his school's budget as well as by the interests of its trustees.⁴⁷ Turning to Oko, Yahuda confided that if he (Yahuda) had brought these items to the “Maggs or Southbys (Sotheby's)” auction houses—instead of, presumably, to such financially midweight academic institutions—the collection would have fetched a far higher price.⁴⁸

In a brief note to Yahuda, Oko responded: “Not interested.”⁴⁹

This rejection was not entirely unique. In the three years prior to contacting Oko, Yahuda seems to have prepared this same material for German- and English-speaking buyers—each sharing the narrative that the items had been salvaged from Spain by modern *conversos*—before having turned unsuccessfully to Oko.⁵⁰ As for Oko, his reasoning behind the rejection was neither explicitly ideological nor political. Rather, the Inquisition materials were, “after a careful perusal of the memoranda,” simply not of interest.⁵¹

Yahuda's documenting of extenuating circumstances had frequently driven the logic of a sale, and required some combination of pragmatic and rhetorical agility—even for less dire exchanges, where Inquisitors remained far from the scene. Just three years earlier, in 1924, Yahuda had managed to salvage the sale of the early print run of an important Ladino newspaper to the British Museum, even when the item fell short of its original description. Working with Lionel David (L.D.) Barnett, the longtime keeper for the British Museum's Department

histórica de los hebreos y de los árabes en Manresa (Manresa, 1837); Joaquim Mendes dos Remedios, *Os judeus em Portugal* (Coimbra, 1895) as well as his *Una biblia hebraica da biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*. See Alexander Marx to Herr Dr., April 12, 1915, file 1714, ASYA.

⁴⁷ As Marx noted, the cost of the materials exceeded that of previous acquisitions, and the trustees (*Kuratoren*) had no interest and little propensity toward larger issues (*größeren Ausgaben*), presumably of the Inquisition; see Marx to Yahuda, December 24, 1924, file 1714, ASYA.

⁴⁸ Yahuda to Oko, April 6, 1926, file 1952, ASYA.

⁴⁹ Oko responded while traveling; he received Yahuda's offer in the previous year; see Oko to Yahuda, Oct. 7, 1927, MS-5E, Box 13, Folder 38, A.S. Yahuda, 1922-1928, AJA.

⁵⁰ See Yahuda's various iterations in files 3779 and 3880, ASYA.

⁵¹ Oko to Yahuda, Oct. 7, 1927, MS-5E, Box 13, Folder 38, A.S. Yahuda, 1922-1928, AJA.

of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts,⁵² Yahuda had initially arranged to sell to the museum the first fourteen volumes of the pro-Zionist newspaper *El Avenir*, based in Salonica.⁵³ It was an understandably desirable purchase on several counts: Comprising a majority of the city's population, Salonican Jews were increasingly writing their own histories of the city, the "Mother of Israel,"⁵⁴ even as the idea for a Jewish homeland in Palestine was being variously constructed among local Zionists and non-Zionists alike.⁵⁵ The great fire of 1917 had also recently destroyed many Jewish communal properties and records.⁵⁶ As the date of sale approached, however, what had been intended as a perfunctory transaction changed when approximately half of the latter four volumes of *El Avenir* were said to be missing. Writing to Barnett, Yahuda proposed an immediate corrective—a replacement for the absent items. While recognizing the importance of the Salonican text, Yahuda explained that several volumes of the illustrated Ladino periodical, *El Amigo de la Familia*, would serve as a more than suitable substitute. This Istanbul-based periodical, Yahuda opined, "has become extremely rare and is of a higher literary character than any other Judeo-Spanish [Ladino] paper."⁵⁷ Yahuda could presume to speak with some authority on the topic, as he had recently written on Ladino and its development while serving as a chair at the University of Madrid.⁵⁸ In response, Barnett declined the proposed substitute, opting for a more limited run of the Salonican text, which ultimately reduced the

⁵² A. L. Basham, "Obituary: Lionel David Barnett," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 23, no. 3 (1960): 642-644.

⁵³ For a description of the paper, which ran from 1897-1917, see Uriel Macías, ed., *De buena tinta. 150 años de prensa en ladino* (La Rioja: Fundación San Millán de Cogolla, 2008), 21; and Moshe David Gaon, *Newspapers in Ladino* (Jerusalem, 1965), 13 [Hebrew].

⁵⁴ The first precise Jewish Salonican population figures followed the fire of 1917; Devin E. Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 56-57. For quote, see Devin E. Naar, "Fashioning the 'Mother of Israel': The Ottoman Jewish Historical Narrative and the Image of Jewish Salonica," *Jewish History* 28 (2014): 337-372.

⁵⁵ Paris Papamichos Chronakis, "A National Home in the Diaspora? Salonican Zionism and the Making of a Greco-Jewish City," *Journal of Levantine Studies* 8, no. 2 (2018): 59-84; and Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 23 and chapters 4 and 5.

⁵⁶ K. Papastathis and E. A. Hekimoglou, *The Great Fire of Thessaloniki (1917)* (Thessaloniki: Printing House, S.A., 2010), 15.

⁵⁷ Yahuda to British Museum, October 19, 1924, file 1578, ASYA.

⁵⁸ A. S. Yahuda, "Contribución al estudio del judeo-español," *Revista de filología española* 2 (1915): 343-347.

final price of sale.⁵⁹ An elder in the Spanish and Portuguese Sephardi congregation in London⁶⁰ and an Orientalist in his own right, Barnett gave a slightly more generous reply than Oko. In Barnett's response to Yahuda, he asked few questions—neither countering nor modifying the professor's literary assessment—even though the two individuals had corresponded over the years on topics ranging from the period's rising antisemitism to the possible whereabouts of a Napoleonic text that Yahuda wanted to locate.⁶¹ A similarly kind but brief rejection followed one year later, in 1925, when the museum declined to purchase two lead figures from Benin, under French control for more than thirty years. Such pieces—particularly of fighting figures, as with Benin's legendary female warriors—had recently grown in popularity in France, following the British's own extensive looting of cultural objects during the Benin massacre of 1897.⁶² Slipping the glossy photos of the statues into a return envelope, H.J. Braunholtz from the museum's Department of Ceramics and Ethnography undoubtedly thought of the surfeit of such objects, when he explained to Yahuda: "I beg to thank you... and to inform you that we are unable to consider the question of purchasing the



Fig. 3. Photograph of two Benin figures. A.S. Yahuda Archive, file 1578, National Library of Israel.

⁵⁹ Yahuda to Barnett, October 19, 1924, file 1578, ASYA. See Sarah Abrevaya Stein's description of the journal in *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington, IN: University Indiana Press, 2004).

⁶⁰ A scholar of Indian culture, language, and history, this long-time keeper for the British Museum—also a lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies shortly after its founding in London—edited and published books on the Bevis Marks synagogue and its records in London. See Basham, "Obituary: Lionel David Barnett," as well as Penuel P. Kahane, "Barnett, Lionel David" in <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/barnett-lionel-david>.

⁶¹ File 1578, ASYA.

⁶² For the British Museum's acquiring of pieces from the Kingdom of Benin, and for an analysis of the multiple meanings of Benin's widely circulated objects following the struggle over southwest Nigeria's delta region, see Felicity Bodenstein, "Notes for a Long-Term Approach to the Price. History of Brass and Ivory Objects Taken from the Kingdom of Benin 1897," in *Acquiring Cultures. Histories of World Art on Western Markets*, eds. Bénédicte Savoy et. al. (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 267-288. For the appeal of the Kingdom of Dahomey's cultural objects in modern colonial France, see Julia Kelly, "Dahomey! Dahomey! The Reception of Dahomean Art in France in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century," *Journal of Art Historiography* 12 (2015): 1-19.

figures, as they are not of sufficient importance to us.”⁶³ Yahuda’s authority—even as the first Jewish chair of a modern Jewish studies-related position—had its limits.

Yet Yahuda’s professorship in Spain certainly helped to legitimate numerous transactions over the years, even as the scope of his cultural transfer extended far beyond any declared *converso*-Inquisitorial lingerings in Spain—as well as beyond the modern Sephardi heartlands. As early as 1920, Yahuda had exercised his professorship in Madrid to form an impromptu cultural “mission” of Mesopotamian artifacts on behalf of the British. Having taken leave from Madrid—officially in order to give a lecture in Lisbon—Yahuda contacted the British Foreign Office as part of an elaborate proposal to acquire highly valuable Assyrian antiquities. These items had been docked in Portugal during World War One after having been illegally excavated by German archeologists in Basra, prompting Yahuda, a British subject, to press the Foreign Office to consider their possible acquisition.⁶⁴ The antiquities trade in particular had been of considerable value to England, especially given British awareness of increasing Western appropriations from the Near East, alongside its alarm at the collections being amassed by Germany, Italy, as well as the United States.⁶⁵

In 1921, one year after the Mesopotamian “mission” for the “mother country,” Yahuda would deepen his involvement in the British purchase of rare material objects through the trade of pre-modern manuscripts, even as Yahuda remained conspicuously absent from his university chair.⁶⁶ Working with the British Museum, the professor secured the sale of 114 rare manuscripts, including two in Arabic from the fourteenth century on the subject of medicine and astronomy.

⁶³ H.J. Braunholtz to Yahuda, September 18, 1925, file 1578, ASYA.

⁶⁴ May 7, 1920, FO 371/5186, British National Archives; cited in Gonzalez, “Politics of Modern Jewish Scholarship,” 423.

⁶⁵ See the Foreign Office file FO 371/4175, “Project for the Creation of an Imperial Institute of Archaeology in Cairo,” page stamp 209, British National Archives.

⁶⁶ Yahuda very possibly sold items to the museum prior to 1921, the earliest transaction with the museum preserved in the ASYA. The British Museum’s records (housed in the British Library since 1973) do not readily indicate the earliest transaction and need further study. Hannah Graves, British Library-Archives, email correspondence with the author, November 19 and December 30, 2019. For debates in Spain surrounding Yahuda’s university absences, see file 1970, ASYA.

These manuscripts were purchased on behalf of A.S. Yahuda, while listed under the name of “Isaac Benjamin [I.B.],”⁶⁷ as Yahuda frequently worked in conjunction with his elder brother, a Cairo-based bookseller, particularly prior to the mid-1920s. On the heels of this transaction, in 1922, while still affiliated with Madrid, Yahuda expanded his reach in the English market through the sale of thirty manuscripts to Cambridge University, including an eleventh-century copy of Avicenna’s *Book of Healing*.⁶⁸ These Cambridge manuscripts had been originally slated for Magdalen College, Oxford. However, as Yahuda explained to the British Museum on February 23, 1923—notably, one day after he formally resigned from the University of Madrid⁶⁹—Yahuda decided to terminate his negotiations with Magdalen College, as the elaborate talks had grown messy. According to Yahuda, the failed sale rested with Arthur Cowley, a Magdalen fellow, head of the Bodleian Library and a leading scholar of Semitic languages, who had “bargained too much and too long—thinking that he (Cowley) ought to deal with Arabic Mss (manuscripts) in a true Arabic way.”⁷⁰

By the spring of 1925, Yahuda continued his momentum with the British Museum by selling as the lone merchant of record thirty-five manuscripts—including *Two treatises on gnomonics*, written by the fourteenth-century Andalusian scholar

⁶⁷ The two fourteenth-century manuscripts included a medical compendium, known as *Zubda*, on October 8, 1921, as well as astronomical handbook by the Yemen astronomer Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Kawāshī. For details regarding the merchant of record, British Library-Archives, Victoria Ogunsanya, email correspondence with author, October 25, 2019.

⁶⁸ Of the ninety-one manuscripts offered for sale by A.S. Yahuda, Cambridge purchased thirty on September 19, 1922; see classmarks MS Or. 995-1024 on the Fihrist online catalogue: https://www.fihrist.org.uk/?f%5Binstitution_sm%5D%5B%5D=Cambridge+University&f%5Btype%5D%5B%5D=manuscript&page=96. Frank Bowles, Department of Archives and Modern Manuscripts, Cambridge University Library, email correspondence with author, December 23, 2019.

⁶⁹ Yahuda to Minister of Public Instruction, February 22, 1923, file 3752, ASYA.

⁷⁰ Yahuda to Barnett, February 23, 1923, file 1578. Actually, Cowley agreed to consider Yahuda’s collection, but warned from the outset that his library was “very short of money”; see Cowley to Yahuda, January 24, 1922, file 1975, ASYA. Despite such harsh words, Yahuda had consulted Cowley for advice during his dispute with Moses Gaster (discussed below) and with questions during Yahuda’s time in Spain; Yahuda also sold books to Cowley from at least 1910-1912. See file 587, ASYA.

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Raqqām.⁷¹ Yahuda's contacts with the British Museum also opened a path for him to sell, one year later, more than two hundred Islamic manuscripts to the University of Michigan.⁷² By the late 1920s, Yahuda also began discussions with the mining magnate Alfred Chester Beatty—with whom Yahuda owned several thousand shares of Beatty's Selection Trust,⁷³ and for whom Yahuda provided material for the famed Beatty collection in Dublin.⁷⁴

Over the years, Yahuda's standing in the trade of books, manuscripts, and cultural objects would be augmented by his short-lived chair in Madrid, even as he built upon his prior renown as a scholar-collector—as someone expert in transporting valuable items across often-unstable political borders, a partial outgrowth of his academic training and research. This training included a doctorate with the famed Theodor Nöldeke at the Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität in Straßburg,⁷⁵ as well as a lecturer post in Bible and Semitic philology (ca. 1904-1913) at the Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin.⁷⁶ As Yahuda's intellectual circles expanded, so would his ability to participate in a wider world of cultural trade.

As early as 1907, Yahuda had already become known on both sides of the Atlantic for his carefully circulated booklists—a kind of informal guide to rare and

⁷¹ On April 4, 1925, Yahuda sold the *Two treatises on gnomonics* along with twenty-two other manuscripts. On October 10, 1925, he sold an additional twelve manuscripts; British Library-Archives, email correspondence with the author, October 25, 2019. These items were listed separately from a collection of sixty-eight manuscripts that were sold specifically by Yahuda's brother, I.B., to the British Museum in 1922; British Library-Archives, email correspondence with author, October 25, 2019.

⁷² Edward Edwards, a noted scholar for the British Museum, apparently contacted the University of Michigan's Francis W. Kelsey (1858-1927) regarding the Yahuda materials. Edwards relayed to Kelsey that the British Museum could not make the purchase, which opened the door for Michigan to expand its manuscript collection. Yahuda seems to work in conjunction with his brother for this sale. See Eryn Kropf, "The Yemeni Manuscripts of the Yahuda Collection at the University of Michigan: Provenance and Acquisition," *Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* 13 (2012): 1-19.

⁷³ In 1936-1937, Yahuda owned two thousand shares of Selection Trust Limited; see file 3781.

⁷⁴ Yahuda clearly bought, sold, and exchanged pieces with Beatty; see file 217, ASYA.

⁷⁵ The school is now known as the Université de Strasbourg (University of Strasbourg), following the return in 1918 of Alsace-Lorraine to France from Germany, which had annexed much of the region after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871).

⁷⁶ Irene Kaufmann, *Die Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (1872-1942)* (Berlin: Hentrich&Hentrich, 2006), 41.

desirable texts, available to a select group of potential buyers. As explained by Richard Gottheil, the head of the Oriental Department for the New York Public Library as well as a professor at Columbia University, Yahuda's booklists had been in considerable demand even while Yahuda worked as a lecturer in Berlin. Gottheil, born in Manchester and educated in Germany, knew of such lists because of his own purchases from Yahuda.⁷⁷ Participating within a dilated intellectual network, Gottheil, in turn, relayed the requests of other scholars to be included within Yahuda's distribution: "Will you please send your periodic list of books to Hartwig," wrote Gottheil, referring to Hartwig Derenbourg, the first chair of Islam at the École des Hautes Études in Paris, who in 1880 had catalogued Arabic manuscripts in Spain.⁷⁸ Gottheil wrote, as if surprised, "He has not seen it (your book list) at all."⁷⁹

Crucially, some of Yahuda's earliest potential buyers had included even the very faculty with whom he once studied as well as worked. By 1913, Nöldeke along with the Orientalist Julius Euting, both at Straßburg, had apparently sought to find a patron for at least some of the choice Arabic manuscripts that Princeton University would acquire from Yahuda by the 1940s through the American benefactor Robert S. Garrett, a Princeton alumnus.⁸⁰ As Yahuda explained to Garrett prior to the Princeton purchase, both Nöldeke and Euting had been "sorry that there could be found no patron who would spend the sum necessary to buy

⁷⁷ File 979, ASYA. For a biography, see Joshua Bloch and Ida A. Pratt, "Richard James Horatio Gottheil, 1862-1936," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56, no. 4 (1936): 472-489.

⁷⁸ Richard Gottheil to Yahuda, June 16, 1907, file 979, ASYA. Yahuda's archive in Jerusalem contains correspondence with Hartwig Derenbourg (Derenbourg) from 1899 to 1900, but does not mention booklists; see file 624, ASYA. For a background on the Derenbourg family—that "dynasty of Orientalists"—as well as a mention of Hartwig's cataloging of Arabic materials in Spain (in the El Escorial), see Vincent Scheil, "Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M. Hartwig Derenbourg," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1909): 725-755.

⁷⁹ Gottheil to Yahuda, June 16, 1907, file 979, ASYA. Regarding Gottheil's surprise, consider the important role of Hartwig Derenbourg and his father Joseph, for example, in relaying the work of German Arabists to scholars in France and Algeria; see Alain Messaoudi, "Usages de la science allemande de Paris à Alger (v. 1840 - v. 1920)," *Revue germanique internationale* 7 (2008): 185-199.

⁸⁰ See Yahuda to Garrett, likely 1931; see Garrett's response to Yahuda on October 27, 1931, file 887, ASYA.

them for Straßburg.”⁸¹ Such benefactors had been essential to Germany’s acquiring of Arabic manuscripts—the long result of scientific curiosity, commercial and colonial interest, looting and war, as well as local sovereign desires to create powerful status symbols.⁸² Significantly, with the Princeton purchase, Yahuda seems to have first learned of Garrett, the school’s benefactor, nearly *forty* years before the actual transaction—due to Yahuda’s longstanding connection with the German Orientalist Enno Littmann (1875-1958), also of Straßburg, as Littmann had been hired by Garrett to conduct research in Syria as well as Ethiopia during the first decade of the twentieth century.⁸³ From faculty to students, as well as later alumni, the reticulation of scholarship with the trade of cultural material could extend both horizontally and vertically across a wide landscape.

Behind many of these exchanges loomed the infamous “Shapira Affair” of 1883, which highlighted the critical role of scholars in identifying veritable historical objects, while protecting against the more unsavory aspects of the Near Eastern manuscript and cultural object trade. The incident emerged when Moses Shapira, a Polish-born antiquities dealer in Jerusalem, claimed to possess “the earliest scroll of Deuteronomy ever found.” The event attracted much fanfare until the text and the many Moabite objects in Shapira’s shop were dismissed by scholars as counterfeits forged by the antiquarian dealer and his associate, Salim al-Khourī, a local dragoman (interpreter) and craftsman.⁸⁴ This incident, as well as Shapira’s

⁸¹ See Yahuda to Garrett, undated letter, file 887, ASYA. If Yahuda accurately described the attempted sale to Straßburg, the events would have predated 1913, when Euting died.

⁸² Regarding Arabic manuscripts now preserved in the public libraries of Berlin, Bavaria, and Gotha, see Tilman Seidensticker, “How Arabic Manuscripts Moved to German Libraries,” *Manuscript Cultures* 10 (2017): 73-82.

⁸³ Yahuda was formally introduced to Garrett through Chester Beatty in 1931; see file 217, ASYA. However, for Yahuda’s earlier conversations with Littmann (who briefly succeeded Nöldeke at Straßburg), and their numerous references to Garrett as early as 1903, see file 1557, ASYA. As Henning Trüper notes, Menelik II of Ethiopia had been eager to establish points of contact with Western powers—opening a door for German scholars like Littmann and American benefactors like Garrett—in order to contain Italy’s foothold in the region; see Trüper, “Wild Archives: Unsteady Records of the Past in the Travels of Enno Littmann,” *History of the Human Sciences* 26, no. 4 (2013): 128-148. For broader ethnographic fascinations of Ethiopian Jewry, see Micha J. Perry, *Eldad’s Travels: A Journey from the Lost Tribes to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 76-93.

⁸⁴ Fred N. Reiner, “C. D. Ginsburg and the Shapira Affair: A Nineteenth-Century Dead Sea Scroll Controversy,” *The British Library Journal* 21, no. 1 (1995): 109-127, and for the quote, Martin Heide,

later suicide, shook the Near Eastern cultural trade, even as it fascinated a far wider readership, including in Spain, where the news ran across the front page.⁸⁵ One year later, in 1884, the Ottoman Empire strengthened its antiquities law through Osman Hamdi Bey, the head of the Ottoman Imperial Museum who was himself a respected artist.⁸⁶ This law provided additional protection against the vast exporting of cultural objects from the region, even as European and American powers justified their ongoing foreign presence, not the least of which included the need for local research and education.⁸⁷

Yahuda could offer to his buyers what Shapira variously lacked. In addition to a profound supply of materials and a Jerusalemite heritage, Yahuda had commanded a distinguished education and academic standing, as well as an active pen, for better or worse. In 1908 Yahuda had, in fact, engaged in his own much-watched battle over a newly “discovered” text—in what became a contest between him and a major European collector over the textual foundations of ancient Israelite history. By the end of the debate, Yahuda successfully refuted the collector, Moses Gaster, the Romanian-born *hakham* (rabbi) of the Sephardi congregation of London, who incorrectly claimed to have discovered a Samaritan Hebrew Book of Joshua.⁸⁸ Taken from the perspective of provenance, however, Yahuda’s acuity in the debate was hardly surprising: between 1904 and 1912, the scholar-collector had sold thirty-two Samaritan manuscripts to the Oriental Institute in St. Petersburg, Russia, as well as forty-four pieces to Dropsie College in Philadelphia—all while completing his dissertation on the medieval Iberian

“The Moabitics and Their Aftermath: How to Handle a Forgery Affair with an International Impact,” *New Inscriptions and Seals Relating to the Biblical World*, eds. Meir Lubetski and Edith Lubetski (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 193-242. I thank Marc Brettler for discussing this event with me.

⁸⁵ See, for example, this story from Madrid: “El suicidio de un anticuario,” *El Día*, March 17, 1884.

⁸⁶ Michael Greenhalgh, *Plundered Empire: Acquiring Antiquities from Ottoman Lands* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 539.

⁸⁷ Idir Ouahes, *Syria and Lebanon Under the French Mandate: Cultural Imperialism and the Workings of Empire* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 38-44.

⁸⁸ A striking discovery, if it were correct, since the Samaritan corpus included only the Pentateuch. For Yahuda’s refutation of Gaster, see Stefan Schorch, “Abraham Shalom Yahuda’s Contribution to Samaritan Studies as *Wissenschaft des Judentums*,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 3 (2019): 452-457.

writer Bahya ibn Paquda's *Duties of the Heart*.⁸⁹ Quite simply, Yahuda knew the material well in part because of his own direct access to it, when needed.⁹⁰

Yet the power that arose from such a collection—as well as much of its risk—was due to its potential value. Two years into his university appointment at Madrid, Yahuda had to grapple with the fact that much of his collection, still housed in Berlin, might be seized by German authorities.⁹¹ Amid the Great War, such concerns were not unfounded. After all, Max Nordau, the Zionist writer and close companion of Yahuda's in Spain, had recently watched as France, Nordau's longtime home, fully appropriated his family's limited assets.⁹² But Nordau and Yahuda faced different outcomes: Valued at approximately two hundred thousand francs—a considerable sum at the time⁹³—Yahuda's collection in Berlin had the wherewithal to mobilize the interest of the diplomatic branches of both Spain and England. Even if the actual value of Yahuda's materials fell short of the figure quoted to Spanish and British authorities,⁹⁴ Yahuda had made use of his

⁸⁹ Schorch, "Abraham Shalom," 455.

⁹⁰ As evident with the missing volumes from *El Avenir*, Yahuda was not in constant possession of the objects presented for sale, but frequently had them sent from other locales, as discussed more fully in this article.

⁹¹ Yahuda to Arthur Hardinge, June 28, 1917, file 1076, ASYA. According to a later comment made by Yahuda, the items were stored during the war in the attic of the Hochschule in Berlin; see Yahuda to Chester Beatty, August 3, 1927, file 217, ASYA.

⁹² As Christoph Schulte notes, French authorities confiscated Nordau's funds during the war; see Schulte, *Psychopathologie des Fin de siècle: Der Kulturkritiker, Arzt und Zionist Max Nordau* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 350. Yahuda attributed Nordau's plight to Leon Daudet, the antisemitic founder of *L'Action française*, who apparently claimed that Nordau was a German agent propagandizing against France; see A.S. Yahuda, *Ha-Haganah 'al ha-yishuv be-milhemet ha-'olam ha-rishonah: zikhronot mi-yeme shahuti bi-Sefarad* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at ha-meḥaber, 1951), 22.

⁹³ In contemporary terms, about 44.9 million euros, according to the Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (INSEE) data at <http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/calcul-pouvoir-achat.asp>. For the reference, see Yahuda to Hardinge, June 28, 1917, file 1076, ASYA.

⁹⁴ Certainly a larger figure would have attracted more assistance from the Spanish and British authorities. Unfortunately, Yahuda's available tax records do not clarify the extent of his collection/trade, since his preserved taxes, which exist primarily from the mid-to-late 1930s, list income primarily from local property as well as from shares in companies overwhelmingly in South Africa and London—without reference to his manuscript and cultural object trade; see file 3781, ASYA. As Friedman notes, Yahuda also had land holdings in Palestine during the 1930s; see Friedman, "Orientalism between Empires," 447-449.

university chair in part to press for Spanish intervention by way of the Spanish ambassador to Germany, as well as from England.⁹⁵ Yahuda hoped that such diplomatic channels could expedite the transfer of his material away from Berlin, and specifically without German inspection.⁹⁶ (Yahuda would not have to repeat such concerns again, having with precaution brought much of his collection with him from London to the United States during the Second World War.⁹⁷) Of course, Yahuda likely wanted access to his collection, since the University of Madrid had failed to meet the professor's desired level of income, which Yahuda recognized prior to assuming his post.⁹⁸ Equally important, the Berlin materials also included many of Yahuda's writings, representing some twenty years of research, and appears to have included resources for his future work.⁹⁹

In the meantime, Yahuda's reputation as the "first" modern Jewish chair in Spain had spread among an uneven and diverse readership—including persons who were neither seasoned collectors nor established scholars. In Havana, members of the *Unión Israelita* wrote directly to Yahuda to celebrate his position in Madrid.¹⁰⁰ In Paris, Nissim Behar, a founder of modern Hebrew language education, described Yahuda's hiring by Spain as a "historic event" (*événement historique*).¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Yahuda also noted that he needed the material for his own research; see Yahuda to Hardinge, June 28, 1917, file 1076, ASYA. Yahuda had early on notified the Spanish embassy in Germany about his concerns regarding his collection; see Yahuda's December 18, 1915 letter in file 2490, ASYA.

⁹⁶ It is unclear whether the items were removed in the end: on August 3, 1927, Yahuda claimed that about 16 cases of his collection remained in the Hochschule attic in Berlin; see file 217, ASYA. For Yahuda's petition to the Spanish and English, see Yahuda to Hardinge, June 28, 1917, file 1076, ASYA.

⁹⁷ Yahuda to Bank of England, September 17, 1940, file 178, ASYA; and Yahuda to Wolff, October 22, 1940, file 3033, ASYA.

⁹⁸ Even if Yahuda stressed that monetary concerns were secondary when accepting the chair in Spain, some 8,859 pesos went unpaid since 1917, roughly when his university absences began; see Yahuda to Primo de Rivera, February 9, 1928, ASYA, file 2085A. For the initial discussion regarding Yahuda's salary, see page 378 and following in Manuela Marín et al., *Los epistolarios de Julián Ribera Tarragó y Miguel Asín Palacios: Introducción, catálogo e índices* (Madrid: CSIC, 2009).

⁹⁹ Yahuda to Arthur Hardinge, June 28, 1917, file 1076, ASYA. Yahuda apparently began his project on the "Hebrew-Egyptian relationship" in 1913, which he put aside while in Spain.

¹⁰⁰ File 1040a, ASYA.

¹⁰¹ Behar was writing prior to Yahuda's official appointment as chair. See Nissim Behar letter to Yahuda, November 26, 1913, file 224, ASYA. For Behar's role in the teaching of modern Hebrew,

Oscar S. Straus, a former U.S. diplomat to the Ottoman Empire and the first Jew to serve in a U.S. presidential cabinet, offered a larger geo-political narrative: Yahuda's hiring in Madrid had sent out a message to the "entire world" that the "old spirit of the Evil in Spain is dead or soon-to-die, while the spirit of the Good has managed to survive all these centuries."¹⁰²

In short, Yahuda's position in Spain had resonance, or could be rendered as such. Years after resigning from his position—more than a decade afterward—Yahuda's title as "professor" from the University of Madrid could help to deepen his prior reputation as a preeminent book and manuscript dealer. In fact, Yahuda's short-lived chair at Madrid, which officially ended in 1923, provided the titular model that would be frequently duplicated in professional and private spheres, from the trade of manuscripts, to the delivering of new lectures, as well as within business and official state documents, and often at Yahuda's own urging. When in 1926 Yahuda began manuscript discussions with the University of Michigan, it was as the "Professor [A.] S. Yahuda."¹⁰³ Five years later, in 1931, Spain would secure a visit from "Professor Yahuda"—eight years after he held the title—in order to catalog the country's various manuscripts.¹⁰⁴ In New York, at the Jewish Theological Society, the Berlin-trained Marx had actively followed Yahuda's trajectory from the scholar's first days at Madrid, and afterward frequently referred to "Herr Professor" in his correspondence with Yahuda.¹⁰⁵ Even in London, the King's College highlighted speaker in 1935 for the eight-hundredth anniversary of Maimonides's birth in Cordoba was none other than "Professor A.S. Yahuda, Ph.D. (*lately* Professor of Hebrew and Medieval Hebrew Literature in the

see Shlomo Haramati, *Three Who Preceded Ben-Yehuda: Sephardi-Oriental Forerunners in the National Revival* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Publications, 1978), vii-xii and 83-125 [Hebrew].

¹⁰² Oscar S. Straus to Ángel Pulido, September 29, 1916, file 2097, ASYA. Apparently Yahuda was copied on the note.

¹⁰³ Kropf, "The Yemeni Manuscripts," 9. Yahuda seems to have been associated with his brother for this transaction.

¹⁰⁴ "Spain Invites Jewish Scholars: Jerusalem Editor Among Seven," *The Palestine Bulletin*, October 20, 1931. The participants included "Professor Yahuda," followed by Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum of Cairo and Abraham Elmaleh of Jerusalem, member of the Executive of the Jewish National Council. The remaining four (unnamed) persons were from Spanish Morocco and Tangiers.

¹⁰⁵ Marx to Yahuda, January 31, 1931, file 1714, ASYA.

University of Madrid)”—approximately twelve years after his resignation.¹⁰⁶ This convention followed a general European tradition for preserving the title of professor, even if held for a brief duration.¹⁰⁷ Privately, Yahuda also seems to have upheld its continued use, as suggested by his local taxes and shareholding documents, where he was frequently recognized as “Professor Abraham S.E. Yahuda.”¹⁰⁸

At the same time as Yahuda’s “professorship” retained its titular residue, Yahuda’s standing in the rare book, manuscript, and cultural object trade seems to have overshadowed his scholarly writings. Specifically, Yahuda’s longtime research project, which examined ancient Egyptian-Hebrew philological points of overlap—from *Die Sprache des Pentateuch* (1929), as well as its English-language counterparts, *The Language of the Pentateuch* (1933) and *The Accuracy of the Bible* (1934)—failed to advance his academic standing.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, Yahuda’s reputation as a reliable source for texts and cultural objects remained, and could help to justify the creation of university positions. As Godfrey Driver, Regius Professor of Hebrew and vice president of Magdalen College at Oxford, wrote to Yahuda sometime between 1931 and 1932, “We hope to [found] a lectureship in Rabbinic Hebrew, open to everyone, and connect it with the custody of Hebrew + Oriental books in the Bodleian Library. Can I tempt you to help us?”¹¹⁰ Perhaps, implied Driver, the former professor might find interest in such an arrangement.

¹⁰⁶ See postcard, “Moses Maimonides, His Time, Personality, and Influence,” May 20, 1935, King’s College, Department of Spanish, file 1658a, ASYA. *Italics* mine. Yahuda also helped to plant the idea for the talk.

¹⁰⁷ Jonathan D. Sarna, “Leonard Bernstein and the Boston Jewish Community of His Youth: The Influence of Solomon Braslavsky, Herman Rubenovitz, and Congregation Mishkan Tefila,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 3, no. 1 (2009): 35-46; 39.

¹⁰⁸ The initials S.E. for Shalom Ezekiel; see file 3781, ASYA.

¹⁰⁹ Yahuda’s project went through three iterations in five years: *Die Sprache des Pentateuch in ihren Beziehungen zum Ägyptischen* (Berlin, 1929); *The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian* (Oxford, 1933); and *The Accuracy of the Bible* (London, 1934). In the end, this project—which consumed more than a decade of his life—was largely dismissed by scholars. For a critique of this work, see footnote no.7.

¹¹⁰ Undated later (1931-1932); see Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Magdalen College, ASYA file 1975. Driver’s letterhead, “From the Vice-President,” places the text between 1931 and 1932. My thanks to Ben Taylor, archivist, Magdalen College; email with the author, May 16, 2016.

Part of Yahuda's expertise as a dealer of rare texts and objects emerged from his ability to work independently, far outside of the public eye. When the antisemitic Gerald Wallop (the "Viscount Lymington") had been found cheating on his wife in 1935, the divorce came to the fore, alongside inheritance duties of about three hundred thousand pounds. In the context of this personal and financial drama, Wallop opted to sell his family's long-held Isaac Newton papers to avoid losing his estate.¹¹¹ Yahuda watched as the sale of these papers moved forward. With Newton's texts almost in hand, an elated Yahuda wrote to his wife Ethel: "(We) have over 1500 pages written by Newton in his own hand on the most important questions is very thrilling indeed. But not only on Religion, Prophecies, Bibles, Faith, and Chronology, but also on alchemy, Mathematics and other purely scientific matters of the greatest importance for his studies and discoveries!!"¹¹²

As Yahuda's standing as a scholar-collector retained its hold, he also began to distance himself from his brother I.B., apparently by the mid-1920s. As the historian S.D. Goitein noted, Yahuda's elder brother was himself a "dealer in Arabic books...(with) connections all over the Arab world."¹¹³ Yet, I.B. had increasingly drawn the ire of buyers in the U.S. and England over the years—in part because of an apparent lack of stability and clarity of communication. As Gottheil in New York repeatedly complained, I.B. often failed to include prices for texts and for the exorbitant shipping costs as part of an estimated final cost of sale. At times, Yahuda's brother also lacked basic tactfulness, as when I.B. incorrectly thought that Gottheil had died in 1916, wherein I.B.'s foremost concern was, it seemed, to find a replacement buyer, and quickly.¹¹⁴ By 1923, a frustrated (and still-living) Gottheil vented to Yahuda, "We should...very much like to get in connection *again* with somebody who can furnish us with books published in the Near East, especially Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia."¹¹⁵ When I.B. disappeared—

¹¹¹ Sarah Dry, *The Newton Papers: The Strange and True Odyssey of Isaac Newton's Manuscripts* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹¹² Dry, *The Newton Papers*, 161.

¹¹³ Shelomo D. Goitein, "The Origin and Historical Significance of the Present-Day Arabic Proverb," *Islamic Culture* 25-26 (1952): 170; 169-179.

¹¹⁴ Richard Gottheil to Yahuda, June 10, 1916, file 979, ASYA.

¹¹⁵ Richard Gottheil to Yahuda, April 6, 1923, file 979, ASYA. *Italics* mine. Clearly Yahuda seems to have worked with other booksellers, as well. I.B. experienced several setbacks, some personal,

as he did on occasion with both American and British buyers—Yahuda was asked to fill the gap. As Barnett of the British Museum remarked in 1922, when I.B. appeared to have “given up the business” of bookselling in Cairo, Yahuda was needed to provide the names of other “moderately honest bookseller(s)” in the region.¹¹⁶



Fig. 4. Postcard from David Aydan to Yahuda. A.S. Yahuda Archive, file 152, National Library of Israel.

By the mid-1920s Yahuda’s new suppliers included the rabbi David Aydan, who founded the first Hebrew printing press in Djerba, Tunisia. Until the 1960s, Aydan’s various presses in Djerba produced hundreds of works for a wide readership, even as he regularly sold texts to Yahuda.¹¹⁷ By the late 1920s, Yahuda also worked with the al-Khanji library in Cairo, which relayed materials to Yahuda from Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and the surrounding North Africa—and explicitly made its efforts known to Yahuda, repeatedly reminding the professor that *it* was the first bookseller to access many of these texts.¹¹⁸ As one of the oldest libraries in Cairo, al-Khanji also seems to have purchased material from Yahuda.¹¹⁹ Such transactions at times were illicitly

curated: As explained by Yahuda, the securing of rare books and manuscripts required him to find “the right men, men of personal authority and knowledge” who through their travels could scour the sources in Turkey, Morocco, as well as Iraq.¹²⁰ In some cases, that meant bribing local customs officials—as in Sanaa,

some because of the First World War, when he moved from Cairo to Jerusalem, first in 1918 and then again in 1922; see file 1578, ASYA.

¹¹⁶ Barnett to Yahuda, May 1, 1922, file 1578, ASYA.

¹¹⁷ Files 152 and 189, ASYA. For background, see www.editionsdulys.com/uploads/3/8/9/9/3899427/communaut_spharade_9.pdf.

¹¹⁸ Files 189, 76 and 1379, ASYA. I thank Mostafa Hussein for generously reading the Arabic material from these files and discussing them with me; email correspondence with author, November 20, 2019.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Yahuda to Chester Beatty, May 15, 1929, file 217, ASYA.

Yemen, during the interwar period, when the local imam became outraged over the removal of manuscripts from his region by Italian collectors.¹²¹ Even as Yahuda deepened his relations with such figures, he nonetheless maintained occasional professional dealings with his older brother. Not only had Yahuda sought to protect his brother's book collection in Berlin during the Great War—valued at approximately two to three thousand pounds (about 138,000 euros in today's

terms)¹²²—I.B. was also listed, for example, as the main source of the manuscripts sold by “Professor [A.] S. Yahuda” to the University of Michigan in 1926.¹²³

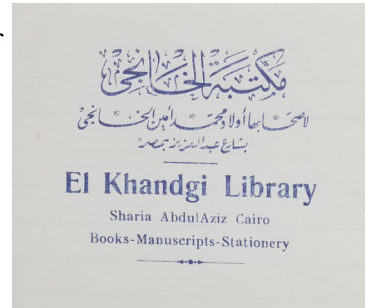


Fig. 5. Letterhead, al-Khanji Library to Yahuda. A.S. Yahuda Archive, file 1379, National Library of Israel.

More than two decades after resigning from the University of Madrid, Yahuda vacated London for New York—which served as a new home for his rare book, manuscript, and cultural object trade. There, in the Big Apple, Yahuda would create his second professorship, as the director of the New School's short-lived Center for the Study of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations and Languages (1945-1952), founded largely without pay.¹²⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Yahuda also undertook a second project—one that he clearly wanted known, as he tried to situate himself within the broader history of the thriving cultural object trade within the U.S. Yahuda had already sold more than sixty manuscripts to the Army Medical Library by 1941, promptly followed by the remarkable sale of more than five thousand Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu manuscripts to Princeton University in 1942.¹²⁵ In a full-length article written in 1944 for the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Yahuda sought to cement his impressive standing as a scholar-

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² For the estimated value of I.B.'s collection, see the undated/unsigned letter, file 1076, ASYA. For the historical conversion, see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result>.

¹²³ Kropf, “The Yemeni Manuscripts,” 9-10.

¹²⁴ See Gonzalez, “Politics of Modern Jewish Scholarship,” 430-431.

¹²⁵ Rudolph Mach, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts (Yahuda section) in the Garrett Collection*, Princeton University Library (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977). It should be noted that Yahuda temporarily ended negotiations during the attempted sale; see file 3736. ASYA.

collector within a wider cultural and historiographical heritage—however, not by turning to the recent Princeton and Army Library transactions, but rather to the late nineteenth century. In so doing, Yahuda would return from the dregs of history Moses Shapira and his assistant, Salim al-Khouri—the infamous Near Eastern forgery-makers from more than half a century before.¹²⁶

In what seemed like a blurring of history and fiction, Yahuda's article explained how in 1902 he (Yahuda) had saved the United States from the wiles of "Salim" (al-Khouri)—still active nearly twenty years after the infamous Shapira Affair. Not unlike Yahuda's closeted *conversos* and the lingering Inquisitors of modern Spain, the Jerusalem-based Salim appeared nearly inexhaustible. In the article, Yahuda described how he, his brother (presumably I.B.), and a professor from the University of Pennsylvania had tried to bypass Ottoman laws in order to secret a rare sarcophagus out of Jerusalem.¹²⁷ However, as the date of purchase neared, Yahuda supposedly recognized that Salim, being helped by an effendi (a well-respected local man), had attempted yet another fraud. Yahuda promptly stopped the sale, causing the scholar-collector to receive "a thousand curses in the name of Allah and all the devils."¹²⁸ Fearing being reported to the Turkish authorities, Salim then supposedly brought to Yahuda the veritable historical objects that the would-be professor immediately purchased: "old coins, old Greek coins, Phoenician glasses and other objects."¹²⁹ Salim also relayed to Yahuda his elaborate techniques for manufacturing fraudulent objects—invaluable tips for a discerning dealer within the often-forged knockabout world of religious and cultural objects.

¹²⁶ Yahuda, "The Story of a Forgery and the Mēša Inscription," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 35, no. 2 (1944): 139-164.

¹²⁷ Yahuda seems to err on this point, as with several others in the piece. Yahuda references George Barton as professor at the University of Pennsylvania, but Barton does not seem to have held that position until 1922.

¹²⁸ Yahuda, "The Story of a Forgery," 143.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

From the perspective of provenance, Yahuda's encounter with Salim described events that would be variously repeated over the years and across numerous transactions. Yahuda had become an expert at creating unique and detailed narratives as part of his trade—articulating, when possible, what the scholar Neil Brodie has called a “coherent find,” where, for example, objects brought to sale had been notably found together.¹³⁰ (The more comprehensive a find, the logic goes, the higher its intellectual and economic value.) But pragmatic details like coherence seemed to lack the “good story” often practiced by Yahuda: Where were the fortuitous alignments, as with unexpectedly helpful Salim and the *conversos*? And, what of the refracted tensions, evident, for example, in the complaints against Yahuda's own brother, or with many of the booksellers from the “Orient,” who, as Yahuda wrote in private, behaved supposedly like “fanatical Mohammadeans” when dealing with the sale of religious texts?¹³¹ The scholar-collector, Yahuda seemed to suggest, had to rise above and descend into a most uncertain world, in an attempt to document such strange events. The narratives were themselves antiquities of a sort, a history of histories¹³²—of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim exchange—an unstable and precarious world that could, it seems, only be described by the respectable professor from the University of Madrid.

Amid contracts, arguments, disagreements, cancelled negotiations, and longtime correspondence, such rhetoric seemed to exist simply as part of the talking, part of the written hype embedded in the sale of a material object. The colorful narratives within the pages of Yahuda's provenance were at times impressively dynamic. Moving from language to activity, such rhetoric could rival the energetic transport of the material objects they described—moving across and into new lands, one way or another—whether from the hands of Yahuda, al-Khanji, Aydan or others, occurring both licitly and illicitly. And while the president of Princeton in 1942 could reasonably (and even responsibly) uphold the “symbolic value” of the manuscripts recently purchased from Yahuda—in the midst of daily genocide across seemingly innumerable blood-filled lands—the details of such exchanges

¹³⁰ Neil Brodie, Jenny Doole, and Peter Watson, *Stealing History: The Illicit Trade in Cultural Material* (Cambridge: The McDonald Institute for Archival Research, 2000), 8.

¹³¹ See Yahuda's undated (1931-1941) handwritten letter to Robert Garrett in file 887, ASYA.

¹³² Compare Yahuda, *Qadmoniot ha-Aravim* (Jerusalem, 1894-1895?).

were, nonetheless, far more complicated than the “truths of the merging streams of civilization.”¹³³ Such transactions would have been impossible without the sustained and often conscious intertwining of consumption, knowledge, and power.

Yet the details of such trade also seemed far simpler. As Yahuda noted while trying to attract Harry Wolfson of Harvard University to a possible sale, the acquiring of an object could merely help with one’s own limited research, larger nationalist projects notwithstanding.¹³⁴ Ownership also meant bragging rights. As if to entice Wolfson, Yahuda explained, “I am the *only* one who made a thorough study of Koran calligraphy through all ages and in all countries.” Yahuda boasted: He even had the visual slides.¹³⁵

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Keywords: Orientalism, Provenance, Sephardim, *Conversos*, Looting

¹³³ The university received the manuscripts through a benefactor; see Harold W. Dodds, “The Garrett Collection of Manuscripts: Acceptance of the Collection by President Dodds,” *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 3, no. 4 (1942): 113-115.

¹³⁴ For Gershom Scholem’s collection and its connection to the National Library of Israel, see Zvi Leshem, “The Alacritous Work of Librarians and the Insane Labor of Collectors: Gershom Scholem as Book Collector and Librarian—A Collection of Sources,” *Scholar and Kabbalist: The Life and Work of Gershom Scholem*, eds. Mirjam Zadoff and Noam Zadoff (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2018), 292-322.

¹³⁵ Yahuda to Wolfson, April 27, 1941, file 3037, ASYA. Italics mine.

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*Jews and Judaism in the Writings of Enrique Jardiel Poncela
and his Daughter Evangelina Jardiel*

by Asher Salah

Abstract

*Inspired by the discovery of a letter written by a Spanish woman under the pseudonym of Marcelina de Quinto to Isaac Molho, editor of the *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* (Treasure of the Sephardic Jews), this article focuses on the persistence of memory of Jewish ancestry within a prominent family of Spanish intellectuals in the 20th century—the Jardiels—and its reenactment in two different generational contexts. While the literary oeuvre of Enrique Jardiel Poncela, one of the most important comic writers of twentieth-century Spain and a staunch supporter of Franco, is tainted by a resolute antisemitic bent, his daughter Evangelina, a psychologist and author of fictional books and journalistic essays, converted to Judaism and strongly identified with the struggles of the State of Israel. Through the analysis of the biographical and intellectual trajectories of these two individuals, the article casts light upon the stereotypes, contradictions and ambivalent attitudes of Spanish intellectuals regarding Jews and Judaism.*

Introduction

Enrique Jardiel's antisemitism

Evangelina Jardiel and her Peculiar Philosemitism

Conclusions

Introduction

This research began several years ago when I came across a curious and fairly long letter, published in 1962 under the title of “The Traces of Israel in Spain,” in the *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes*, a yearbook published in Jerusalem between 1958 and 1970, in Spanish, Judeo-Spanish, French and Hebrew.¹ It was signed by a certain Marcelina de Quinto. This letter stood out among the other texts in the journal—mainly scholarly essays—for two reasons. First, it was an effusive declaration of love for the State of Israel and its people by a Christian Spanish woman of self-proclaimed Jewish ancestry, at a time when Spain had not yet recognized the Jewish State.² Second, her identity was concealed through a pseudonym, even though the *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* counted the most prominent names of Spanish Academia among its collaborators, including Francisco Cantera Burgos (1901-1978), Josep M.^a Millàs Vallicrosa (1897-1970) and Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1869-1968), who had no qualms about their names appearing in the journal alongside those of Israeli figures such as Isaac Ben-Zvi (1884-1963), the second president of the State of Israel, or Israeli Nobel prize author, Samuel Yoseph Agnon (1887-1970).

The addressee of the letter was Isaac Molho (1894-1976), the founder and director of the journal *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes*. Molho, the son of Rafael and Yafa de Botton, daughter of the well-known rabbi and scholar Jacob De Botton (1843-1911), was born in Salonika.³ In addition to receiving a traditional Jewish

¹ Marcelina de Quinto (alias Evangelina Jardiel), “Las huellas de Israel en España,” *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes: Estudios sobre la historia de los judíos sefardíes y su cultura—Otzar Yehudei Sefarad* (Treasure of the Sephardic Jews: Studies on the History of the Sephardic Jews and their Culture) 5 (1962): xxxvii-xliii.

² Formal diplomatic relations were established only in January 1986. On the history of the relations between Spain and the State of Israel, see José Antonio Lisbona, “Las relaciones diplomáticas España-Israel: 1948-1986,” in *Los judíos en la España contemporánea: historia y visiones (1898-1998)*, ed. Carlos Carrete (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, 2000), 201-236; Raanan Rein, ed., *España e Israel: veinte años después* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2007); Guy Setton, *Spanish-Israeli Relations, 1956-1992: Ghosts of the Past and Contemporary Challenges in the Middle East* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2016).

³ Molho left a vivid recollection of his youth in Greece in his “Haia Ze rak Temol Shilshom. Hatzi Yovel Shanim Be-Saloniki Yerushalaim Shel Artzot Ha-Balkan (1894-1919) [Esto acontecia Ayer y Antiyer],” *Tesoro* 5 (1961): 129-152. For a biographical sketch of Molho, the preface by David

education, Molho studied in the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU),⁴ becoming a leading figure of the Zionist movement in the Balkans and a prolific publicist, writing for the most important Sephardi journals in Greece, such as *Pro-Israel* and *El Pueblo*.⁵ In 1919, he emigrated to Jerusalem where he became a successful businessman, working as an agent for several American and European film companies. Author of numerous studies on the Jews of Salonika, he wrote extensively on Sephardic culture and heritage.⁶ His articles in Hebrew were published in the leading Hebrew journals of the time, *Ha-Tzefirah*, *Kiriat Sefer*, *Yedaa Am*, and *Hed HaMizrah*, while his writing in Spanish appeared in prestigious scholarly publications, such as *Sefarad* (1941-) and *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* (1952-) of the university of Granada. He was acquainted with King Alexander I of Greece (1893-1920), King Hussein of Jordan (1933-1999), and on several occasions met Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion (1886-1973).⁷

During his four trips to Spain to deliver lectures on the history of the Jews in the Sephardi diaspora, Molho established a close relationship with the eminent

Benvenisti to Robert Attal, *Pirumei Isaac Rafael Molho (Reshimah Bibliografit)* (The Publications of I. R. Molho [A Bibliographical List]) (Jerusalem, 1989). Also Yitzchak Kerem, "Molho, Isaac Rafael," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 14, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2007), 425-426.

⁴ Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993); André Kaspi and Valérie Assan, eds., *Histoire de l'Alliance israélite universelle de 1860 à nos jours* (Paris: Colin, 2010).

⁵ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003); Rosa Sanchez and Marie-Christine Bornes Varol, eds., *La presse judéo-espagnole, support et vecteur de la modernité* (Istanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, 2013); Devin Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

⁶ His books include *Tur Ha-Zahav Be-Toldot Saloniki Ba-Dorot Ha-Ahronim* (The Golden age in the History of Salonika in the last Generations) (Jerusalem: 1948) as well as many monographic studies on Sabbateanism and on outstanding figures of Sephardi culture, such as Abraham Cardozo, Rabbi Yehuda Almosnino, rabbi Yehuda Bibas, Joseph Baruch Marcou and articles in Hebrew, Ladino, French and Spanish. For a complete bibliography of his writings see Robert Attal, *Pirumei Isaac Rafael Molho*.

⁷ In the twelfth issue of the *Tesoro*, Molho published some of the letters he received from these personalities. His correspondence with Abraham Yahuda and with Samuel Stern is preserved in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. Otherwise, most of his personal archives are today deposited at the *Ben Zvi Institute* of Jerusalem.

Spanish philologist Ramón Menéndez Pidal, whom he invited to Israel in 1964.⁸ Due to his position as semi-official speaker and representative of the World Union of Sephardi Communities and as an associate of the *Instituto Benito Arias Montano* in Madrid, he was the only Israeli in the Franco era to be appointed in 1969 as a member of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE). These honors were bestowed on him not only thanks to his literary endeavors, but first and foremost because of his activities at the highest levels in political and cultural milieus in Spain and Israel in favor of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Molho was a liberal Zionist, a humanist, as well as a champion of dialogue between Arabs and Jews, as attested by his participation in Kedmah Mizraha and the groups Brit Shalom and Yihud.⁹

As for the name Marcelina de Quinto, Isaac Molho pointed out in a brief note accompanying the article that it had been chosen by the author in order to protect her privacy. Writing in his characteristic Castilian, mixed with Judeo-Spanish idioms, Molho explained:

It being a delicate matter and taking into account the scruples of modern society, we decided not to reveal the name of the author of these pages... Without hiding anything, she proclaims her abiding ties that bind her from head to toe to the Jewish race, to Judaism, to the State of Israel, and although she was baptized and received a non-Jewish upbringing, without knowing much about Judaism, she feels spiritually different from her immediate environment.¹⁰

⁸ Isaac Rafael Molho, "Evocación del Patriarca Ramón Menéndez Pidal," *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* 11-12 (1969-1970): viii-xviii.

⁹ Joseph Heller, *Mi-Brit Shalom Le-Yihud: Yehuda Leib Magnes Ve-Ha-Maavaq le-Medina Du-Leumit* (From "Brit Shalom" to "Ichud": Judah Leib Magnes and the Struggle for a Binational State in Palestine) (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003).

¹⁰ "Por delicadeza, teniendo cuento de los escrúpulos de la sociedad moderna, no divulgamos el nombre de la autora de estas páginas... Sin nada esconder, ella proclama los ataderos indefectibles que la atan de pies y de manos a la raza judía, al judaísmo, al Estado de Israel, y encima de su bautismo y su educación no-judía y sin conocerlos de cerca se siente, espiritualmente otra que su ambiente inmediato," *Tesoro* 5 (1961): xxvii.

Indeed, the author presents herself in the first lines of the letter as “a great admirer of that State of Israel and a great enthusiast of the Jewish people, perhaps because I carry Jewish blood in my veins, as I have always heard my elders say, and because my genetic heritage is evident in my person.” Who was hiding behind the alias of Marcelina de Quinto? Why did she conceal her real name? The only information she revealed about her family was the following:

My father was a famous writer in Spain. We come from a town in Aragon called Quinto de Ebro where in the old city there is still a part called the Jewish quarter. A great uncle of mine was a professor of ancient languages in Madrid who translated the Bible and wrote a Hebrew grammar. In my family, it was common knowledge that we had Jewish origins from Greece. I was six years old when my father returned from a trip to the United States. I remember as if it were today how he told us about Sephardi Jews who spoke old Castilian and still had the keys of the houses where they lived in Sepharad... My husband is also a writer. Like me, he is strongly sympathetic to the Jewish people and we are planning a trip to Israel. His sympathy for Israel is based on his own Jewish ancestry, as he is related to a very old family of certain Jewish origin from Granada.¹¹

Armed with these scant but quite revealing clues, it became possible to search for the real identity of the author of the intriguing letter. The only person who could possibly correspond to the description provided in the letter turned out to be Evangelina Jardiel (1928-2018), daughter of the renowned Spanish writer Enrique

¹¹ “Mi padre fue un escritor famoso en España. Venimos de un pueblo aragonés que se llama Quinto de Ebro y que tiene una parte antigua que todavía llaman la judería. Un tío abuelo mío era catedrático de lenguas muertas en Madrid que hizo una traducción de la Biblia y una gramática hebrea. En mi familia se daba por hecho siempre que veníamos de judíos de origen griego. Tenía yo seis años cuando mi padre volvió de un viaje a Estados Unidos. Recuerdo como si fuese ahora cómo habló de judíos sefardíes que hablaban castellano antiguo y tenían todavía las llaves de las casas que habían habitado en Sefarad... Mi marido también es escritor. Como yo, tiene una gran simpatía por el pueblo judío y proyectamos un viaje a Israel. Su simpatía por Israel en él es justificadísima pues descende de una familia granadina antiquísima y judía con seguridad.” *Tesoro* 5 (1961): xxxix.

Jardiel (1901-1952).¹² Not only was the Jardiel family originally from Quinto de Ebro, a town near Zaragoza, but the name of Evangelina's grandmother was also identical to the pseudonym chosen for the letter: Marcelina. Marcelina Poncela Ontoria (Valladolid, 1867-Quinto, Zaragoza, 1917) was a famous painter in her time, and was married to the journalist and founding member of the PSOE, the Spanish Socialist party, Enrique Jardiel Agustín (1864-1944).¹³ Jardiel Agustín, Evangelina's grandfather, was moreover a relative of Mariano Viscasillas y Urriza (1835-1912), a disciple of the eminent Spanish scholar Amador de los Ríos (author of one of the first serious Spanish academic studies of the Jews of Spain) and a professor of Semitics at the central university of Madrid. Viscasillas y Urriza had translated the Bible from Hebrew into Spanish and authored a very innovative grammar of Hebrew in 1872.¹⁴

Another biographical detail, in this case concerning her father, the writer Enrique Jardiel Poncela, was also consistent with Evangelina's report. Jardiel Poncela traveled to the United States on two occasions, the first time between September 1932 and May 1933 and the second time between July 1934 and April 1935, working

¹² The bibliography devoted to Enrique Jardiel is abundant. Among the most important biographies of Jardiel: Juan Bonet, *El discutido indiscutible* (Madrid: Biblioteca nueva, 1946); Rafael Florez, *Mio Jardiel* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1966) (second and enlarged edition 1993); Evangelina Jardiel, *Enrique Jardiel Poncela, mi padre* (Madrid: Biblioteca nueva, 1999); Enrique Gallud Jardiel, *Enrique Jardiel Poncela: La Ajetreada vida de un maestro del Humor* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2001); Victor Olmos, *¡Haz reir, haz reir! Vida y obra de Enrique Jardiel Poncela* (Sevilla: Renacimiento, 2015); Juan Carlos Pueo, *Como un motor de avión: biografía literaria de Enrique Jardiel Poncela* (Madrid: Verbum, 2016).

¹³ M^a Dolores Cid Pérez, *Retrato de Marcelina Poncela* (Valladolid: Edita Ayuntamiento de Valladolid, 2019).

¹⁴ Mariano Viscasillas, *Gramática hebrea* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1872). Among his main contributions to Hebrew scholarship are *Programa de la asignatura de lengua hebrea* (Madrid: Tip. Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1892); *Nueva gramática hebrea comparada con otras semíticas: precedida de una larga reseña histórica: y seguida de un manual práctico, un resumen de dicha gramática y una breve gramática caldea*, 2 vols., (Madrid: Est. Tip. Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1895); *Elementos de gramática hebrea: para uso de los Seminarios Conciliares y demás establecimientos docentes* (Madrid: Tip. Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1895); *Nueva crestomatía hebrea: seguida de un breve vocabulario de todas las palabras en ella contenidas: para uso de las universidades y seminarios* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1895).

as a scriptwriter for Twentieth Century Fox in Hollywood.¹⁵ Evangelina, who was born in 1928, was at the time five or six years old and could remember her father's descriptions of his American trips. Finally, in 1952, Evangelina married the playwright Alfonso Paso Gil (1921-1978), born in Madrid, but whose family came from Granada. Alfonso's father, Antonio Paso Cano (1870-1958), was born in Granada and together with Enrique García Álvarez authored a popular zarzuela, *El niño judío*, first performed in 1918.¹⁶ The couple, however, did not manage to undertake their planned trip to Israel together, as they separated a short while after the publication of the letter.¹⁷



Fig. 1. Photo of Evangelina Jardiel to the right with her half sister Mariluz, Private Collection (Courtesy of Enrique Gallud Jardiel), <http://jardielponcela.blogspot.com/2009/01/fotos.html>.

¹⁵ Aside from Enrique Jardiel, *Exceso de equipaje: mis viajes e Estados Unidos; monólogos, películas, cuentos y cinco kilos de cosas* (Madrid: Biblioteca nueva, 1943) see also Jardiel's grandson, Enrique Gallud Jardiel, *El cine de Jardiel Poncela* (Málaga: Ediciones Azimut, 2015).

¹⁶ Antonio Paso y Enrique García Álvarez, *El niño judío. Zarzuela en dos actos, dividida en cuatro cuadros* (Madrid: Oficina y talleres de Prensa Popular, 1918).

¹⁷ They had two children, Rocío and Paloma Jardiel. According to Evangelina, they separated in 1961 and divorced in 1968 when they obtained an ecclesiastic annulment of their marriage. E. Jardiel, *¿Por qué no es usted del Opus Dei?* (Madrid: Graficas Varela, 1974). In 1973 Eva Jardiel published a vitriolic portrait of her former husband in a sensationalistic journal, "Alfonso Paso: Eva Jardiel Poncela disecciona al que fue su marido," *Los Españoles* 20 (1973).

Enrique Jardiel's antisemitism

Having established the true identity of the author of the letter to the editorial board of the *Treasure of the Sephardic Jews*, it is now necessary to understand how Evangelina's claim to a Jewish ancestry could coexist with the opinions concerning the Jews that characterized her upbringing: her father, Enrique Jardiel, aside from being one of the most prominent comic writers in contemporary Spain, was also a notorious Jew baiter.¹⁸ Jardiel belonged to what Pedro Laín Entralgo called "la otra generación del 27,"¹⁹ a group of writers born between 1895 and 1905 who invented a new form of popular humor, opposed to the official "generation of 27" which included poets such as Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Jorge Guillén, and Vicente Aleixandre, who experimented with a highly refined hermetic aestheticism. The divide between these two groups was not only a matter of different literary vocations, but also a political contraposition. Jardiel and his companions, among them, Antonio de Lara "Tono", Edgar Neville, López Rubio and Miguel Mihura, all shared the same sympathies for far-right ideologies and became staunch supporters of Franco during and after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

The role of the Sephardi Jewish legacy in Spanish culture was a subject intensely debated within these avant-garde circles, and a wide spectrum of opinions concerning the Jews coexisted among these intellectuals.²⁰ Although secondary

¹⁸ Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, *El antisemitismo en España: La imagen del judío (1812-2002)*, prólogo de Juan Goytisolo (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2002), 296-297, writes about him: "importante escritor antisemita, ya en los años veinte fue el genial humorista Enrique Jardiel Poncela... y desde luego compartía todos los tópicos populares sobre los judíos."

¹⁹ According to the testimony of José López Rubio, *La otra generación del 27. Discursos y cartas* (Madrid: Centro de documentación teatral, 2003), 47.

²⁰ José Schraibman, "El tema judío en la 'generación del 98'," in *Los judíos en la España contemporánea: historia y visiones (1898-1998)*, ed. Carlos Carrete (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, 2000), 61-74; Silvina Schammah Gesser, "La imagen de Sefarad y los judíos españoles en los orígenes vanguardistas del fascismo español," in *España e Israel*, 67-88; Michal Rose Friedman, "Reconquering 'Sepharad': Hispanism and Proto-Fascism in Gimenez Caballero's Sephardist Crusade," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 35-60. A general overview of the Jews in modern and contemporary Spain can be found in Danielle Rozenberg, *L'Espagne contemporaine et la question juive: Les fils renoués de la mémoire et de l'histoire* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2006); Eva Touboul Tardieu, *Séphardisme*

among the themes in Jardiel's literary oeuvre, which was more centered on the role of women and sexuality in contemporary society, his works contain manifold references to Jewish characters, providing an interesting insight into the perception of Jews by an important representative of the right-wing literary avant-garde in Spain in the thirties and forties.



Fig. 2. Photo of Enrique Jardiel Poncela, Private Collection (Courtesy of Enrique Gallud Jardiel), <http://jardielponcela.blogspot.com/2009/01/fotos.html>.

In his book *Exceso de equipaje: Mis viajes a Estados Unidos* (My trips to the United States) (1943), Jardiel recounts his contacts with Jews and Jewish culture, among them a visit to the Yiddish theatre in Los Angeles in 1933. His discovery of the American Jewish world inspired his depiction of the Jews as “a minority race, but the most influential and the one that controls the spiritual and economic life of the United States.”²¹ In his play *El amor solo dura 2000 metros* (Love only lasts 2000 meters),²² all the characters embodying the inhumane exploitation of people in Hollywood have Jewish sounding names: Slater, Schneider, Zolberg. This illustrates how much the purported Jewish love of wealth and lust for power,

et Hispanité. L'Espagne à la recherche de son passé (1920-1936) (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2009).

²¹ Enrique Jardiel, *Exceso de equipaje* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1955), 80. “una raza minoritaria pero que es la más influyente y la que más decide y encauza la vida espiritual y económica de Estados Unidos.”

²² Enrique Jardiel, *El amor solo dura 2000 metros, comedia de la vida de Hollywood en cinco actos* (Sevilla: Espuela de Plata, 2015), originally presented in the theater in Madrid in 1941.

a trope in the antisemitic discourse of the time, constituted one of Jardiel's greatest concerns, since it personified what Jardiel most despised in modernity: materialism, cosmopolitanism, and mass-culture.²³ The opposition between his perception of the Jewish drive for social climbing and the "values" of Latin peoples is staged in his novel *¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía!* (Wait for me in Siberia, my darling!) in which the character of Goldsmandreshfarsensbachnn, clearly a German Jew, titleholder of mountaineering, is beaten by the Italian Curcio Pavanelli, "campeón del mundo de bajadas vertiginosas" (world champion of vertiginous descents), applauded by the Spanish protagonist Mario Esfarcies.²⁴

However, it is in his fictional works that Jardiel most explicitly displayed his hostility towards Jews.²⁵ In *La tournée de Dios* (God's tour), written in 1929 and published in 1932, a delegation of forty-seven Jews traveling to Madrid to assess the state of worldly affairs, complain before God that they are the victims and slaves of the other peoples of the world, and ask God to help them, at least in some financial operations, if he is not ready to reverse this situation in their favor.²⁶ At this point, the narrator interrupts the story and turns to the reader to explain what a Jew is:

Yes, reader, it's true: it's enough to look at the face of a Jew to know what he is. However, among these forty-seven individuals who, under the denomination of "representatives of the Jewish people," snuck into the Cathedral, only two looked like Jews... Only these two were real Jews, and their claims appeared to have a slight Zionist inflection "we want you, o Lord, to grant us independence."²⁷

²³ Daniel Fernández de Miguel, *El enemigo yanqui: las raíces conservadoras del antiamericanismo español* (Zaragoza: Genuève, 2012), 191.

²⁴ Enrique Jardiel, *¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía!* (Madrid: Catedra, 1997), originally published in 1929.

²⁵ In the excellent study devoted to the four novels by Jardiel nothing is said about the problematic depiction of the Jews. Barbara Greco, *L'umorismo parodico di Enrique Jardiel Poncela. I romanzi* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2013).

²⁶ Cap. 45 En donde Dios concede audiencia a damas católicas, a los judíos y a los ladrones madrileños. [que son las únicas tres que Dios concede].

²⁷ Enrique Jardiel Poncela, *La tournée de Dios* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janes, 1981), 242: "Sí, lector; es cierto; basta con mirarle a la cara a un judío para saber que lo es. Pero, de aquellos cuarenta y siete

God, however, rejects their grievances and reminds them that the Jews are the sole tyrants of humanity:

If on earth exists a people today who are the tyrant of the others, this people are you [the Jews]. You have all the possible money and influence in worldly affairs. You own the biggest companies on earth, you hold the scepter of finances and you control the life of the world. You are the spring of power, the barometer of wealth, and the scale of the activity... Human beings give you their wallets and you lay claim also to their heart.²⁸

Felix, the protagonist of the theatre play *Las cinco advertencias de Satanás* (Satan's five warnings) (1935), one of Jardiel's greatest successes with at least three cinematographic adaptations between 1938 and 1970,²⁹ is a middle-aged man who, after a dissolute life, takes the decision to marry the young Coral and leave behind his nightly adventures. However, the Devil crosses his path, makes five prophecies and calls into question all his plans. A secondary, yet important character in the piece is the administrator of Felix's considerable fortune. His name is Isaac Blum, and his character fits the stereotypical image of the greedy and stingy Jew. Jardiel introduces him in the first act as follows:

Isaac Blum was undoubtedly born to administer money; he is a citizen in his fifties. From behind he looks just like a descendant of Moses, from the front his appearance makes you think he is an Israelite, and his profile makes him seem like a Hebrew. These anomalies become clear when you realize that Isaac, who was born in Poland, is absolutely Jewish. He wears

individuos que, bajo la denominación de 'representantes del Pueblo Judío', se colaron en la Catedral, sólo dos tenían cara de judíos... Solo esos dos son judíos de verdad y su reclamo parece tener acentos sionistas "deseamos, Señor, que nos independices."

²⁸ Jardiel Poncela, *La tournée de Dios*, 242: "Si en la tierra existe hoy un pueblo que sea tirano de los demás, ese pueblo sois vosotros. Tenéis todo el dinero y la influencia posibles. Dueños de las grandes empresas agitáis el cetro de las finanzas y regís la vida del mundo. Sois el resorte del poder, el barómetro de la riqueza y la balanza de la actividad... Los humanos os entregan el bolsillo y queréis que os entreguen el corazón."

²⁹ Asher Salah, "La imagen del judío en el cine español," *Secuencias* 46 (2017): 83-112.

a coat and a hat that he purchased, making a violent effort on himself, in 1909, and he keeps all his clothes in a tolerable state thanks to constant and exquisite care that any scrupulous housewife would find moving. He wears glasses, which he bought in 1896 from a friendly optician who gave him a big discount, and has a beard, because this is the only thing that doesn't wear down... Perhaps having said all this, it is pointless to say that Isaac is very rich, even richer than Felix, whose fortune he administers.³⁰

In the plot, the character of Isaac is used for the comic effect of other hyperbolic manifestations of stinginess and for a certain repressed lasciviousness. But he is overall inoffensive and instrumental in saving the young Coral.

Much more appalling is *El naufragio del Mistinguett* (The shipwreck of the Mistinguett), a short novel written in the last years of the Spanish Civil War, probably during Jardiel's exile in Argentina in 1938. Here, Jardiel unleashes his radical anti-Semitic view of contemporary history. The political situation of the world is metaphorically represented by a raft, floating in the middle of the ocean after a shipwreck, on which individuals of different nationalities have sought refuge. After a series of events, the Jew Barucher, a shameless liar and astute manipulator, ends up taking control of the food, with the help of the American, British and French passengers on board. At this point, he ceases to look harmless and reveals his "fierce, cruel and ruthless character." He completely subjugates the Russian to his will and deceitfully organizes all of the castaways on the raft in a rebellion against the German. The German, the Italian, the Japanese, the

³⁰ *Las cinco advertencias de Satanás*, in Enrique Jardiel Poncela, *Eloísa está debajo de un almendro* (Madrid: Espasa, 2011), 187-188. "En cuanto a ISAAC BLUM, administrador de FÉLIX y nacido indudablemente para administrador, es un ciudadano de unos cincuenta años, que de espaldas tiene todo el tipo de un descendiente de Moisés, de frente hace pensar en un israelita y de perfil parece un hebreo. Estas anomalías quedan explicadas cuando uno se entera de que ISAAC, que ha nacido en Polonia, es absolutamente judío. Viste un traje, un abrigo y un sombrero que adquirió, haciendo un violento esfuerzo sobre sí mismo, en 1909, y conserva todas esas prendas en uso tolerable todavía gracias a continuos y exquisitos cuidados, que enternecerían a cualquier ama de casa escrupulosa. Lleva gafas, compradas en 1896 a un óptico amigo, que le hizo un gran descuento, y usa barba, porque es la única cosa que no se le desgasta al usarla... Quizá, después de decir esto, sea un poco ocioso añadir que ISAAC es muy rico, seguramente más rico que el propio FÉLIX, cuya fortuna administra."

Portuguese and one of the two Spaniards on board, Echaide Garcia, the narrating voice of the novel and clearly Jardiel's alter-ego, try to stop the Jew's plans, but the Jew instigates a fratricide between this Spaniard and the other one, who benefits from the support of the French, the Russian and the Czechoslovak on the raft.³¹ This novel is a rather explicit reference to contemporary political events, including the Spanish Civil War, meant humorously, but from a clearly fascist perspective.

After the victory of Franco, two of Jardiel's early works bearing evidence of his prejudices against the Jews, *La Tournée de Dios* and *Las cinco advertencias de Satanás*, were censored and withdrawn from the market. This was due not to their anti-Semitic bent, however, but rather for their tawdry depictions of sexuality and their agnostic position on religious matters.³² A report of Franco's censorship from 1941 praises Jardiel's *El naufragio del Mistinguett* "por su acertado estudio de los caracteres raciales" (for its accurate study of racial types).³³

Jardiel's repugnant view of the Jews indeed reached its peak during the Spanish Civil War, enhanced and encouraged by the alliance of the Francoist regime with Nazi Germany. Juan Carlos Pueo points out, for instance, that Jardiel changed the title of one of his early short novels, *La cita de Gunda: comedia indudablemente alemana* (Gunda's date: a clearly German comedy),³⁴ to *La cita de Rebeca* (Rebecca's date), with a new subtitle: *comedia indudablemente judía* (a clearly Jewish comedy), which ridicules Jewish greed and is better adapted to the new political circumstances in 1939 after the victory of Franco over the Spanish Republic.³⁵ Political opportunism cannot be ruled out in explaining the exacerbation of Jardiel's depiction of Jews and the shift in his oeuvre from a traditional negative stereotyped portrayal of Jews, typical of much of Spanish

³¹ Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, *El antisemitismo en España. La imagen del judío (1812-2002)*, prólogo de Juan Goytisolo (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2002), 296-297.

³² The censors' reports concerning the novel *La tournée de Dios* have been analyzed by José Suárez-Inclán, "Estrategias léxico-gramaticales de los censores en la manipulación de dos comedias de Jardiel Poncela," *Teatro: Revista de Estudios Culturales. A Journal of Cultural Studies* 22 (2008): 156.

³³ Quoted by Juan Carlos Pueo, *Como un motor de avión: biografía literaria de Enrique Jardiel Poncela* (Madrid: Verbum, 2016), 554.

³⁴ Originally published in the satirical weekly *Buen Humor* 255 (1926): 4-5.

³⁵ Pueo, *Como un motor de avión*, 486.

culture of his time, to a political antisemitism more in line with the Francoist obsession with a “Judeo-masonic plot” against Spain.³⁶

Jardiel’s humor resorts to the techniques of the “esperpento” cultivated by Ramón del Valle-Inclán, with its grotesque, and the reduction of human beings to objects,³⁷ and draws from the theories of Ortega y Gasset, according to which new art should avoid any objective depiction of the world and “dehumanize” reality through humor, deformation, and phantasy.³⁸ Nevertheless, the abovementioned examples that encompass all of Jardiel’s literary endeavors, before and after the Spanish Civil War, attest to a systematic and a strongly racialized perception of Jewish difference, responding more to a personal repulsion towards what Jews stood for in his own ideological imaginary. Such a portrayal may have been instrumental to the political goals of Spanish fascism, but undoubtedly prefigured it and was much more consistent over time compared to Jardiel’s portrayals of other national, ethnic and religious groups, such as gypsies, Muslims, and black Americans, for whom he expressed different degrees of empathy.³⁹

However, and in spite of the unflattering representations of Jews found in these and other works, Enrique Jardiel, like his daughter Evangelina, boasted of his possible and equally obscure ascendancy from Greek or Italian Jews.⁴⁰ In the

³⁶ Javier Domínguez Arribas, *El enemigo judeo-masónico en la propaganda franquista (1936-1945)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2010).

³⁷ Ramón Del Valle Inclán, *Luces de Bohemia* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2002), originally published in 1924.

³⁸ Jose Ortega y Gasset, *La deshumanización del arte y otros ensayos de estética* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2008). This essay was originally published in 1925.

³⁹ For instance, *El amor solo dura 2000 metros* presents an explicit critique of American white supremacism and condemns racial discrimination against Afro-Americans through his sympathetic portrait of Doggy the black chauffeur who is the subject of almost everyone’s racial bias and egotistical outbursts, with the exception of the two Spanish protagonists of the play.

⁴⁰ In the biography of her father, Evangelina Jardiel Poncela writes “los Jardiel descendían de judíos griegos que vinieron a la Península, asentándose en Aragón, concretamente en Quinto de Ebro” (the Jardiel family was the descendant of Greek Jews who came to the peninsula settling in Aragón, and in particular in Quinto de Ebro), Jardiel, *Enrique Jardiel Poncela, mi padre*, 23. However, in a letter to the writer Miguel Delibes (1920-2010) Evangelina alludes to a Jewish Italian origin of her name, “Poncella es asimismo apellido judío italiano y al españolizarse perdió una ele” (Poncella is an Italian Jewish surname and when it was adopted in Spain it lost an L), Enrique Jardiel Poncela, *Obras completas*, Vol. 5, (Barcelona: AHR, 1975), 356.

prologue to his 1928 work, *Amor se escribe sin hache* (Love is written without an h), he even suggests an imaginary etymology of his patronym, Jardiel, which in Hebrew would mean God's energy, or Divine strength.⁴¹ Certainly, Jardiel's knowledge of Judaism and of Hebrew was minimal. He mixed up Hebrew and Aramaic and believed that in Passover, which for him fell on the month of *Teveth* and not on *Nissan*, Jews are forbidden to drink milk. Curiously, he writes *Shabbat* as *Shabbes* according to the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew, probably a consequence of his contacts with Ashkenazi Jewish culture in the United States.⁴²

This "family romance" could have been just another one of Jardiel's eccentricities, and it has been interpreted this way by most of Jardiel's biographers. Nonetheless, Jardiel's case is not unique in his cultural environment. It presents remarkable similarities with other writers and intellectuals who in the 1920s and 30s showed a strong interest in Judaism, sometimes claiming to be direct descendants of Sephardi Jews. This took place in the wake of the campaigns of Spanish senator Angel Pulido Fernández (1852-1932) to recover the cultural heritage of the Sephardi communities in the Jewish diaspora and their place in contemporary Spain.⁴³ The most famous example is Rafael Cansinos Assens (1882-1964), and his self-fashioned identity as a Jew,⁴⁴ as well as the rediscovery of Jewish roots by the Falangist writer Samuel Ros (1904-1945),⁴⁵ Nobel prize author Jacinto Benavente (1866-1954), and

⁴¹ Enrique Jardiel, *Amor se escribe sin hache* (Madrid: Catedra, 2000), 85 "Jardiel en lengua hebrea significa energía de Dios." This etymology has been repeated and accepted at face value by most of Jardiel's biographers, such as Rafael Flores, *Mío Jardiel: Jardiel Poncela esta debajo de un almendro en flor*, (Madrid: Alfoquequeras, 1993), 20 and Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro: El credo que ha dado sentido a mi vida* (Madrid: Desclée De Brouwer, 1976), 77 who attributes this explanation to the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. The only biographer contesting the credibility of such an allegation is Enrique Gallud Jardiel, *Enrique Jardiel Poncela: La Ajetreada Vida de un Maestro Del Humor* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2001), 120. Federico Garcia Lorca had a similar claim concerning the Jewish origin of his second surname proving his own "blood" connection to Judaism: Ian Gibson, *Vida, pasión y muerte de F. García Lorca* (Madrid: Debolsillo, 1998), 533 and 655-656.

⁴² Jardiel Poncela, *La tournée de Dios*, 241.

⁴³ Alisa Meyuhás Ginio, "The Sephardic Diaspora Revisited: Dr. Ángel Pulido Fernández (1852-1932) and His Campaign," in *Identities in an Era of Globalization and Multiculturalism*, eds. Judit Bokser Liwerant et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

⁴⁴ Jacobo Israel Garzón, *Escrito en Sefarad* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2005). Professor Allyson Gonzalez is now working on the Jewish aspects of Cansinos' literary persona.

⁴⁵ Asher Salah, "Samuel Ros, el modernismo reaccionario y los judíos," forthcoming paper.

dramatist Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1933), who proudly declared himself a descendant of the “noble raza hebrea” (the noble Jewish race) and of the queen of Saba.⁴⁶

The alleged Jewish lineage and philosephardism promoted in conservative and proto-fascist circles to which many of the aforementioned intellectuals belonged could coexist with expressions of hatred against Jews. Benavente expressed this contradiction in his memoirs in 1937:

without a doubt, there is something Jewish in me, perhaps much more than just something, for my physiognomy is more Asiatic than European, and then there is my surname as I am from Murcia where everyone is pretty much Jewish, but more than anything because of my antipathy towards the Jewish race, an unequivocal proof of belonging to it.⁴⁷

To solve these contradictory feelings towards Jews, Jardiel, like many other Spanish intellectuals of his time, establishes a hierarchy of Jews, from the most noble, those with Iberian roots, to the most despicable, Polish Jews.⁴⁸ In an explanatory note in *La tournée de Dios*, Jardiel introduces the reader to the different groupings of the Jewish people:

⁴⁶ This phenomenon has been noted by Julio Caro Baroja, *Los Judíos en la España Moderna y Contemporánea* (Madrid: Ediciones ISTMO, 1978), 227.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, *El antisemitismo en España. La imagen del judío (1812-2002)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2002), 88. “yo, sin duda, tengo algo de judío, mucho quizá, por mi tipo más asiático que europeo, por mi apellido, por ser de Murcia, donde nadie escapa de judío, y más que nada por mi antipatía a la raza judía, señal inequívocable de pertenecer a ella.”

⁴⁸ On the influence of Jewish notions of Sephardi mystique and Sephardi superiority on Spanish intellectuals, see Michal Rose Friedman, “Orientalism between Empires: Abraham Shalom Yahuda at the Intersection of Sepharad, Zionism, and Imperialism,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 3 (2019): 435-451. On prejudices concerning Eastern European Jews (Ostjuden) in Germany see Steve Ascheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness (1800-1923)* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

Now, those forty-seven individuals, to what class, and to which caste of Jews did they belong? Were they Sephardi? Or simply Ashkenazi? Or very vulgar Polaks?⁴⁹ Contemporary Jews—as is generally unknown—are divided into three classes or castes: the Sephardis, the Ashkenazis and the Polaks. The Sephardis are convinced they are the custodians of the authentic Hebrew tradition. They descend from the Jews of Spain and Portugal, Italy, North Africa, Arabia, Persia, Turkey and Greece and often speak the *paquetilla* [deformation of Haketia, the language spoken by some Jewish communities of North Africa], a kind of Castilian of the fifteenth century, with some Hebrew and Arabic words. Ashkenazis inhabit those countries where Yiddish, or Jewish-German is spoken. To this caste despised by the Sephardis, belong, for example, the Jews who, with almost no exceptions, settled in Whitechapel in London. Finally, the Polaks are the Jews of Eastern Europe, those who inhabit Galicia, Poland and Russia, and who are despised by Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews alike. That is to say, they are the most downtrodden of the race.⁵⁰

In this way Jardiel could easily claim a Sephardi origin, while simultaneously expressing his hatred for the Jewish masses of Europe and America. This was by no means an uncommon feature in modern Spain. Yael Halevi-Wise for example has shown that the recognition of Jewish traces in the multicultural past of contemporary Spanish identity often also implied a positive assessment of the process of conversion and expulsion. This process allowed for the formation of a

⁴⁹ This is the term used by Jardiel in the original, borrowing the derogatory meaning common in French, German, and American English.

⁵⁰ Jardiel Poncela, *La tournée de Dios*, 240: “Ahora bien: esos cuarenta y siete individuos, ¿a qué clase, a qué casta de judíos pertenecían? ¿Eran sefardíes? ¿O simplemente aschkenazis? ¿O vulgarísimos Polaks? (1). Los judíos actuales —como generalmente no se sabe— se dividen en tres clases o castas: sefardíes, aschkenazis y polaks. Los sefardíes se creen poseedores de la verdadera tradición hebraica. Descienden de los judíos de España y Portugal, Italia, norte de África Arabia, Persia, Turquía y Grecia y suelen hablar de paquetilla, especie de castellano del siglo XV, viciado con algunas voces orientales. —Los aschkenazis habitan aquellos países en que se habla el yidish o judío-alemán. A esta casta, despreciada por los sefardíes, pertenecen, por ejemplo, los judíos que, en Londres pueblan en casi su totalidad Whitechapel. —Por último, los polaks son los judíos de la Europa oriental, los que habitan la Galitzia, Polonia y Rusia, y a los que desprecian por igual los sefardíes y los aschkenazis. Es decir, son los cenicientos de la raza.”

new Latin “race,” superior to those that had preceded it, because of its apparent success in merging and obliterating its inner and previously conflictual elements.⁵¹ However, the contradictory political systems informing what Halevi-Wise calls the “Sephardic paradigm” can potentially result in an identitarian instability deferring “the final achievement of harmony to an indefinite point in the future.” It is therefore interesting to examine how this narrative of an alleged Sephardi origin, transmitted in the memory of the Jardiel family, shaped the life of Enrique’s daughter, Evangelina Jardiel.⁵²

Evangelina Jardiel and her Peculiar Philosemitism

In fact, a diametrically opposed attitude toward the Jews characterized the position of Enrique Jardiel’s daughter, Evangelina. In her 1961 letter to Molho, commenting on Judaism, Evangelina wrote “what a perfect religion!” and saw her life guided by “the hand of the God of Israel.”⁵³ She was the illegitimate daughter of Enrique and the cabaret artist and designer Josefina Peñalver who at the time of Evangelina’s birth was a married woman and the mother of a four year-old son, Jose Maria. Josefina left Enrique three months after Evangelina’s birth and Evangelina was raised by Enrique’s sister, Angelina.⁵⁴ Although Enrique was quite indifferent regarding religious matters, he insisted on sending his daughter to a convent school after she had attended the German kindergarten in Madrid for several years. She spent the years of the Civil War in Seville with her aunts and in 1939 continued her studies in different Madrid schools, such as San Luis de los franceses, the Lycée Français, and later returned to an all-female religious school, which she left in 1943. Despite her profound devotion to Catholicism, she suffered

⁵¹ On racial mixing in Spain see also Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Susan Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁵² Yael Halevi-Wise, ed., *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁵³ Marcelina de Quinto (alias Evangelina Jardiel), “Las huellas de Israel en España,” xlii.

⁵⁴ From Evangelina’s memories of her early days in Evangelina Jardiel, *Enrique Jardiel: mi padre*, 61-76.

discrimination for being the illegitimate daughter of the scandalous writer Enrique Jardiel.⁵⁵

When her desire to become a nun as a teenager was opposed by her confessor, Evangelina felt that her relationship with Catholicism was at a dead end.⁵⁶ Four months after her father's death in 1952, she married Alfonso Paso. This was from the beginning a very unhappy union and in 1958 in order to fill the void in her life and to connect to the Jewish heritage of her family, she began studying Hebrew with a priest. She had to suspend her studies shortly thereafter, when she became involved in the long process of getting a religious annulment of her marriage.

After her separation from Paso, she decided to study psychology at the Universidad Central in Madrid. At that time, the director of the department was still Antonio Vallejo Nájera (1889-1960), a Spanish psychiatrist who promoted a particular notion of eugenics in Spain, intended to reconcile German doctrines of racial hygiene with the requisites of Catholic moral doctrine.⁵⁷ She later worked as a psychologist specializing in couples therapy.⁵⁸ Evangelina also soon discovered a vocation for journalism and for writing, collaborating occasionally with various newspapers and magazines, such as the popular weeklies *Crítica*, in 1952, and *Sábado Gráfico*.⁵⁹

In 1966 she published *El diario de Chatoski: la vida humana vista a través de los ojos bizcos de un gato siamés* (Chatoski's Diary: Life through the eyes of a

⁵⁵ Evangelina Jardiel, *Dios Dentro*, ch. 1 "el pecado" and ch. 2 "Injusticias y... un encuentro maravilloso."

⁵⁶ Ibid., "Me he equivocado. No me interesa esta religión," 34.

⁵⁷ María Luis Muñoz, "Contribución a la historia del movimiento psicoanalítico en España: Formación de la Asociación Sicoanalítica de Madrid," *Revista de Psicoanálisis de Madrid* (1989): 121-152; Antonio Vallejo Nájera, *Eugenésia de la hispanidad y regeneración de la raza* (Burgos: Editorial Española, 1937). It is difficult to ascertain whether this school of thought exerted any kind of influence upon Evangelina's later racialized perception of the Jews.

⁵⁸ She treated Edoardo Mallorquí, son of José Mallorquí Figuerola (1913-1972), and his wife María Pilar, <http://fraternidadbabel.blogspot.com/2011/03/eduardo-mallorqui-iii.html>, accessed November 8, 2020.

⁵⁹ I only found the 34 instalments published from May 22, 1971 to February 5, 1972 of her essay on her father. Eva Jardiel, "Así era mi padre," *Sábado Gráfico* 41 (May 22, 1971); 42, (May 29, 1971); 8 (July 17, 1971); 9 (July 24, 1971); 22 (October 23, 1971); 27 (November 27, 1971).

squinting Siamese cat),⁶⁰ followed in 1974 by *¿Por qué no es usted del Opus Dei?* (Why aren't you a member of Opus Dei?),⁶¹ a book of interviews she conducted in 1970 about the Opus Dei, featuring various representatives of Spanish civil society, including Camilo José Cela (1916-2002), Ernesto Giménez Caballero, Miguel Delibes,⁶² and her childhood friend, Franco's minister of Tourism in the sixties and future leader of the popular party, Manuel Fraga Iribarne (1922-2012). The book provided a critical perspective on the growing influence of this religious movement in Franco's Spain. In 1976, she wrote a spiritual autobiography, *Dios dentro* (God within), in which she depicted her quest for religious meaning.⁶³ In 1999, she published a biography of her father and she devoted her last years to curating his literary estate.⁶⁴

According to her own testimony, Evangelina's interest in Judaism dates back to her early years. In the letter to the *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* she explained that the first novel she wrote, which was never published, was centered on a love-story between a Jewish girl and a Christian aristocrat. The young Evangelina must have been intrigued by a possible connection to Judaism that was certainly alluded to in her family. In her father's biography, Evangelina mentions an episode involving her aunt who had studied Arabic and met the Sultan of Morocco. The Sultan could not believe she was a Christian maiden since she uncannily resembled a local Jewish girl "like two peas in a pod":

⁶⁰ Eva Jardiel Poncela, *El diario de Chatoski* (Madrid: Imp. El Economista, 1966). Positively reviewed in *ABC*, (January 31, 1967): 62 and by Fernando Lience Basil in *Mundo Deportivo*, (July 2, 1967): 4.

⁶¹ Eva Jardiel Poncela, *¿Por qué no es usted del Opus Dei?* (Madrid: Varela, 1974). Although she finished the book four years earlier, it was only published in 1974 "once the Opus Dei technocrats were no longer occupying influential political positions to get the green light for publication," Jorge Perez, *Confessional Cinema: Religion, Film, and Modernity in Spain's Development Years (1960-1975)* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2017), 179.

⁶² The original letter, dated November 13, 1970 to Delibes with the questionnaire, is now preserved in the Miguel Delibes Foundation in Valladolid, which also kept two others thank you letters dated November 23, 1970 and concerning the history of the Jardiel family, November 1970.

⁶³ Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*.

⁶⁴ Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Enrique Jardiel Poncela, mi padre*. Evangelina also wrote the prologues of many of the reeditions of her father's Works such as Enrique Jardiel Poncela, *Tres comedias escogidas* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1953); Id., *A 40 kms del Pacífico y 30 de Charles Chaplin* (Madrid: Rey Lear, 2011).

You are not Spanish, you are the daughter of rabbi X. Maria looked for this Jewish girl for whom everybody mistook her. She was curious and how great was her surprise when she found out that they were almost identical; the other girl was no less surprised.⁶⁵

This memory is followed by another chapter about the beginning of her father's literary vocation, which was also associated with a "Jewish connection":

In the French Lycée he [Enrique Jardiel] wrote his first love verse. He was ten and his fiancée nine years old. Her name was Eva Salcedo and she was the daughter of a Jewish banker [perhaps Aaron Salcedo, originally from Bayonne but established in Madrid where he was in contact with Ángel Pulido] and according to what he [Enrique Jardiel] writes in the prologue of his *Amor se escribe sin hache* "I swear that I was not going there for money!"⁶⁶

In her letter to Molho Evangelina recalls that her first readings about the Sephardi Jews were subsequent to her marriage in 1952. But it was Leon Uris' *Exodus*, published in 1958 and translated into Spanish in 1960 by Bruguera, which was to have a definitive impact on her life.⁶⁷ Paloma, Evangelina's daughter, explained in an interview with *El País* in 2015 that when she was six years old, her mother was crazy about the screen adaptation of *Exodus* (1960) by Otto Preminger with Paul

⁶⁵ "tú no eres española, eres la hija del rabí Tal... María fue a buscar a aquella hebrea que decían que era ella. Tenía curiosidad y cuál sería su sorpresa al comprobar que eran casi iguales, la otra, según contaban, tampoco sabía de su asombro," Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Enrique Jardiel Poncela, mi padre*, 27

⁶⁶ Ibid., "en el liceo francés escribió su primer verso de amor. Tenía diez años y la novia nueve, se llamaba Eva Salcedo y era hija de un banquero judío y según dice en una acotación a *Amor de escribe sin hache*: 'juro que no iba por dinero!'"

⁶⁷ Marcelina de Quinto (alias Evangelina Jardiel), *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* 5 (1962): xxix. There is no date to the letter, which was certainly edited by Isaac Molho who inadvertently introduced some mistakes and expressions in Judeo-Spanish that were not in the original version. It is likely that the letter was sent around the days of Yom Kippur 1961, which would explain the various references to this special event in the Jewish calendar.

Newman in the role of Ari Ben Canaan, the fearless Israeli fighter.⁶⁸ However, a new world opened to her when she became acquainted with Isaac Molho and his wife, at a conference in Ramón Menéndez Pidal's house in the Madrid neighborhood of Chamartín:

Without even noticing it, I was getting involved in Jewish mysticism... when I heard my new friends [the Molhos] offhandedly speaking of a Jewish custom, I thought that Jesus lived and died in that religion... The acquaintance with this Sephardi couple was instrumental to making new Jewish friends. Each one brought other ones. Through these friendships I was discovering something new for me: the Jewish soul, its great mysticism, so similar to the Spanish one.⁶⁹

This event can be dated with precision. It was in Madrid on June 3, 1961, when after a long series of conferences throughout Spain, Isaac Molho gave a lecture in front of a select audience of journalists and scholars, including Francisco Cantera Burgos, Alejandro Díez-Macho, José María Millàs Vallicrosa, Julio Caro Baroja, David Gonzalo Maeso, who would also become future contributors to the *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes*.⁷⁰

Meeting Isaac Molho had a significant impact on Evangelina's life. From this moment on, she began dreaming of being a Sabra and embracing Judaism. According to Isaac's daughter, Sarika Molho (1935-)—who became acquainted

⁶⁸ Miqui Otero, "El clan de los Jardiel," *El País*, April 3, 2015, https://elpais.com/cultura/2015/04/02/actualidad/1427985249_184741.html, accessed November 8, 2020, "la adaptación cinematográfica con Paul Newman la volvía majareta."

⁶⁹ Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*, 47, 48 and 57 "sin darme cuenta me iba metiendo en el misticismo judío... cuando a los que escuchaba era a mis nuevos amigos, hablando, por ejemplo, de pasada, de cualquier costumbre de la religión judía, pensaba en Jesús, pensaba que vivió y murió en esa religión... el conocimiento del matrimonio sefardí hizo que tuviera nuevos amigos judíos. Tras unos surgían otros. A través de aquellas amistades iba yo conociendo algo nuevo para mí: el alma judía, su gran misticismo, tan parecido al español."

⁷⁰ The description of Molho's travel to Spain in *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* 5 (1962): v-xxxii. Actually, Vallicrosa had already been acquainted with Molho during his own trip to Israel in 1953. Isaac Molho, "Madai Ha-Yahadut Bi-Sfarad. Le-Viquro Ha-Shelishi shel Professor Vallicrosa b-Yrushalaim" (Jewish scholarship in Spain. For the third visit of Professor Vallicrosa in Jerusalem), *Mahberet* 17-20 (1953): 104.

with Evangelina when she was writing for the Israeli women's magazine *La-Ishah* in Madrid and also hosted her in the family house on Ibn Gabirol street in Jerusalem—one of the reasons for the conjugal crises between Alfonso Paso and Evangelina was apparently Evangelina's intention to convert their daughters to Judaism.⁷¹ Whereas the report by Gutierre Tibón which claimed that Evangelina made Aliya and settled in Israel in the nineties is certainly untrue,⁷² her fervid Zionism is beyond any doubt. As Evangelina explained:

Educated with simplicity, like any other Spanish woman, I felt inside myself, ever since I was very young, the Jewish element. Suddenly, I feel the race, I feel it deep inside me as something very serious, and, oddly enough, I feel more and more displaced, it is as if I jumped back in time, in my eyes I am Jewish and all the Jews are my brothers, and Israel is in me as something very intimate, and my sole desire is to visit it.⁷³

This opportunity came in January 1964, when, thanks to the contacts Evangelina had already established with Jews living in Spain and in Israel, a women's newspaper invited her to travel to Israel to write about the visit of Pope Paul VI. It was on this occasion that for the first time she presented herself publicly as being Jewish. Although there is no evidence to support her 1999 claims that she wrote for the Judeo-Spanish journal *El Tiempo: semanal político y literario* published in Tel Aviv from 1950 to 1967,⁷⁴ nor that she was an editor for the monthly Mexican journal *La Tribuna Israelita*,⁷⁵ she acted as a sort of intermediary between Spain and Israel, as attested by her translation and adaptation of Itzhak B. Ben Rubi's,

⁷¹ Personal communication during an interview in January 2019.

⁷² Gutierre Tibón, *Nuevo diálogo de la lengua: como ablarás i escribirás en el siglo XXI* (Ciudad de México: Espasa-Calpe de México, 1994), 204.

⁷³ "Educada sencillamente como cualquier mujer española, he sentido dentro, desde muy pequeña, lo judío. De pronto yo siento la raza, la siento dentro de mí como algo muy serio, y lo que es más raro, cada vez me siento más desplazada, es como si hubiera dado un salto atrás, y para mí soy judía y como hermanos siento a los hebreos, e Israel está dentro de mí como algo muy íntimo y mi único deseo es visitarlo." Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*.

⁷⁴ According to the short biographical note of Evangelina in her father's biography Jardiel Poncela, *Enrique Jardiel Poncela, mi padre*, 13.

⁷⁵ A thorough examination of all the issues of *El Tiempo* did not give any finding concerning the presence of Evangelina among the journal's collaborators.

El sekreto del mudo from Judeo-Spanish to Castilian and of Isaac R. Molho, *Valeurs et silhouettes israéliennes* from French.⁷⁶

She was deeply moved when the great rabbi of Jerusalem, Isaac Nissim (1896-1981), after an interview told her that “You might be a Christian of religion, but you have never stopped being Jewish.”⁷⁷ This was the prelude to Evangelina’s formal conversion to Judaism in Jerusalem in August of the same year, also thanks to the support she received from her close friend, the then Israeli Minister of Police Behor Shalom Shitrit (1895-1967). From then on, she adopted the name of Eva, dropping her quite unusual name Evangelina with its strong Catholic connotation.⁷⁸ She confessed that she was also converting as an act of rebellion against her father: a liberation from the guardianship of the patriarchal figure that had dominated her life to this point.

However, contrary to her expectations, the conversion did not create any opportunities for her to live a normal Jewish existence. Back in Spain, she was perceived with suspicion, if not hostility, by some members of Madrid’s small Jewish community. Evangelina attributes this rejection to the influence of the local Jewish leadership, which she describes as being composed exclusively by “international Jews,” a derogatory term that might have referred to Max Mazin (1923-2012), a Polish-born Jew and a key figure in Spanish Jewry in the second half of the twentieth century. The characterization of Ashkenazi Eastern European

⁷⁶ Isaac R. Molho, *Valeurs et silhouettes israéliennes* (Jerusalem: Ahva Press, 1955); Eva Jardiel, *Traducción y adaptación del Judeo-español* (Madrid, 1966), mentioned in Nancy Korbin, “Holocaust Literature in Judeo-Spanish, Portuguese, and Spanish,” *Tradition* 18, no. 3 (1980): 294. Molho’s Spanish translation was made in 1961 with the title *Los que forjaron el Estado de Israel* but was never published. The manuscript is available at the Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem. I would like to thank Ricardo Muñoz Solla for this information.

⁷⁷ Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*, 78.

⁷⁸ However, in her biography of Enrique Jardiel, Evangelina says that the priest who should have baptized the little girl resisted to give the child the name Evangelina, claiming it was not a Catholic name, and only after the menaces of Enrique did he accept to christen her with this name. Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Enrique Jardiel Poncela, mi padre*, 263. The same story in the prologue of *Amor se escribe sin hache* recounted by Enrique is slightly different: according to him the problem for the priest was that he did not know any saint by this name.

Jews in her book *Dios dentro* is reminiscent of the anti-Semitism of her father's prose:

Very few among them are what we would call "international Jews"... in Hitler's camps the moneyed Jews survived unharmed. If any of them died, it was by mistake... What is known as an "international Jew" is neither Jewish nor anything else, as nothing are his companions. They are a race created by themselves, no matter where they come from. They are "birds of prey" who only have one God: money; one goal: to dominate the world, and one commandment: "Whatever is necessary to reach that goal, it is lawful." Concretely, those who belong to the Jewish race would even sell weapons that would later serve to kill their brothers. It does not matter. Everything is lawful... They will destroy each other with their own hands. The damage will be tremendous. The price will be paid by all of humanity.⁷⁹

At the end of the sixties, Eva once again drew close to Christianity and she recognized that "the only real truth is that Jesus is God."⁸⁰ She retrospectively admitted her "mistake" concerning her fascination with the Jewish faith:

I was not looking for Jesus, I was looking to feel part of a community, a need that stemmed from the religious formation I received, but which was deformed by the singular times through which I had to live [probably a reference to the Franco regime].⁸¹

⁷⁹ Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*, 125-126. "Muy pocos son lo que se conoce como 'judío internacional'... en los campos de Hitler los del dinero salieron todos ilesos. Si alguno murió fue por equivocación... Lo que se conoce como «judío internacional» ni es judío ni es nada, como nada son sus compañeros. Son una raza creada por ellos mismos, da igual de dónde procedan. Son «aves de presa» que sólo tienen un Dios: el dinero; un fin: dominar el mundo y un mandamiento: «Lo que sea necesario para llegar a ese fin, es lícito»; en el caso concreto de los que procedían de la raza judía, hasta vender armas, incluso, que servirían después para que muriesen sus hermanos. Da igual... Ellos mismos se destruirán entre sí. El daño será tremendo. Lo pagará toda la humanidad."

⁸⁰ Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*, 143.

⁸¹ Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*, 156. "No buscaba a Jesús, buscaba humanamente sentirme dentro de una comunidad por una necesidad equivocada, nacida de la formación religiosa que recibí, deformada ella misma por la época especial que me tocó vivir."

Judaism would not play any role in the subsequent years of Evangelina's life, whose next obsession would become unidentified flying objects, after having allegedly experienced an extraterrestrial encounter while driving from Madrid to Cordoba with her daughter.⁸²

Conclusions

Enrique and Evangelina's biographies display contradictions and ambivalent attitudes regarding Judaism, a hallmark of the family. In Spanish, the adjective *Jardielesco* has even become a designation for a natural penchant for paradoxes and anticonformist behaviors. This is characteristic of Enrique Jardiel's dealing with almost any subject in his oeuvre. In politics, Enrique Jardiel has been labeled as "too conservative for the left and too libertine for the right," alluding to his problems with Franco's censorship on the one hand, and the boycott of his works in South America by Republican exiles on the other. In response to the accusations of misogyny, Jardiel used to say: "only one thing is worse than women: men." And his daughter Evangelina too adopted a lifestyle that stood in contrast to the dominant values of the Spanish society of her time, becoming one of the first women in Spain to divorce, to get a driver's license and to make financial transactions in the Madrid stock exchange.⁸³

Moreover, Enrique and Evangelina's controversial and contradictory attitudes with regard to the Jews could be attributed to the widespread ignorance in Spanish culture about Judaism, in a country where Jews had been more the specter of a haunting past of persecutions and intellectual achievements than real figures inhabiting the present. Nevertheless, and without claiming to analyze the psychological complexities that determined their relationship of love and hatred of Jews, the case of the Jardiels, father and daughter, is exemplary of a phenomenon deeply enrooted in Spanish history and culture in the twentieth century.

⁸² In the seventies many people in Spain claimed to have seen unidentified flying objects, a social phenomenon examined in the journalistic work by Juan José Benítez, *Terror en la luna* (Barcelona: Planeta-Agostini, 2000).

⁸³ "La Bolsa no es solo cosa de hombres," *Diario financiero*, May 9, 2014.

Both Enrique and Evangelina share an essentialist and primordialist vision of the notion of the national character of the Spaniards, one in which only Sephardi Jews have their share.⁸⁴ However, there is a considerable difference between the substantially hostile posture of Enrique Jardiel against the Jews and the ambiguous philosemitism of Evangelina, which led her even to a conversion to Judaism. This difference is undoubtedly linked to the discovery of the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust. According to Evangelina's own admission:

I remembered something my father said. The great luck of Spain in not having participated in the Second World War... How many Spaniards, even those with anti-Semitic prejudices, would have been in a similar situation to mine [she is referring to the episode when upon returning to Spain after the end of the visit of Pope Paul VI she was arrested for a few hours at the border between Jordan and Israel by a Jordanian soldier on the account of her Jewish look, together with a Jewish American journalist], but much more dramatic. What a surprise would it have been for them to find themselves in Nazi concentration camps accused of having Jewish blood, notwithstanding their feeling of being Spanish in the depths of their hearts.⁸⁵

The family memories of an alleged Jewish ancestry would have probably remained inert, were it not for the impact of the Eichmann trial upon Spanish public opinion. When Evangelina wrote her letter to Isaac Molho, the context had changed and Spain, like most Western countries, had entered in a new memorial constellation, what Annette Wieviorka has called the "witness era," when the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust became the focus of international attention.⁸⁶ In 1961, a period when Evangelina was "in a very difficult situation. I

⁸⁴ Rosana Alimova, "El concepto de Hispanidad en la encrucijada de los siglos," in *Actas del XXXVII Congreso de AEPE* (Murcia, 2003): 55-68.

⁸⁵ Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*, 81.

⁸⁶ Annette Wieviorka, *L'Ère du témoin* (Paris: Plon, 1998). Evangelina's remarks on the impact the Eichmann trial had on her feelings for Jewish suffering appear to be an early example of a memorial shift that has only transpired within general Spanish public discourse in the last two decades, as noted by Alejandro Baer, "The Voids of Sepharad: the Memory of the Holocaust in

was going through a bad time in my life [because of her painful separation from her husband],”⁸⁷ also coincided with the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, whose echoes are very present in Evangelina’s decision to draw closer to Judaism:

In these days, I have been reading Moshe Perlman’s book, *The Capture of Eichmann*, which has interested me very much and made clear to me how Benjamin Stern’s work *Eichmann: His Life and his Victims* which I read before, was so poorly documented. Now I am beginning the *Hands of the Miracle* by Joseph Kessel, which has been recently published in Spain. Therefore, all my life focuses on Israel, all my readings and my thoughts.⁸⁸

The discovery of the Jewish genocide perpetrated by the Nazis led some intellectuals of Evangelina’s generation to transform their prejudices about Jews into a fervent philosemitism and sympathy for Israel.⁸⁹ In Spain the perception and the knowledge of the Jewish world was also rapidly changing in the sixties. In 1959 Madrid hosted the international exhibition of Sephardi bibliographic treasures, in 1964 the Sephardi museum of Toledo opened and hosted the first international conference of Sephardi studies.⁹⁰ Moreover, these were the years of the II Vatican council, which inaugurated a new era in the attitude of the Church towards the Jews. Already in 1961, in Madrid the Association of Friendship between Catholics and Jews was founded, with its own bulletin and conferences. Finally, the end of the Spanish protectorate over Morocco in 1956 resulted in a considerable demographic growth of the Madrid Jewish community, which was

Spain,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 95-120. I would like to thank Daniela Flesler and Adrian Pérez-Melgosa for this reference.

⁸⁷ Evangelina Jardiel Poncela, *Dios Dentro*, 82.

⁸⁸ Marcelina de Quinto (alias Evangelina Jardiel), “Las huellas de Israel en España,” xlii. “Estos días he estado leyendo, *La captura de Eichmann*, de Moshe Perlman, que me ha interesado mucho y me ha hecho ver lo mal documentado que estaba Benjamin Stern en su libro *Eichmann, su vida y sus víctimas*, que havia [*sic*] leído antes. Ahora empiezo *Las manos del milagro* de Joseph Kessel, que acaba de editarse en España. Así es que toda mi vida gira en torno a Israel, mis lecturas, mis escritos y mis pensamientos.”

⁸⁹ David Cesarani, ed., *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961* (London-New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁹⁰ Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020).

officially recognized by the Spanish state in 1965.⁹¹ All these factors contributed to a greater exposure to Jews and Judaism among wider audiences in Spain. It is worth noting that Evangelina's estrangement from her initial enthusiastic discovery of her Jewish roots in the early sixties coincides with the two decades of the almost complete disappearance of philosephardic rhetoric in the public discourse of Spanish authorities in the seventies and in the eighties. Such discourse would resurface once again in Spain in the context of the commemorations of the fifth centennial anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews in 1992.

Eviatar Zerubavel reminds us that the definition of ancestry is crucial to grasp psychological structures and social interactions.⁹² However, it is also important to stress that similar questions of genealogy can be framed and triggered with unexpected consequences in different historical contexts. The malleable and inherently ambivalent nature of any genealogical claim not only appears in the long term but is perceptible within the span of a single life. Therefore, beyond an assessment about the reality of their personal identity constructions and a judgment of their emotions towards the Jews, the Jardiel family offers us an exemplary case study of two generations, spread over the whole of the twentieth century, to assess the changes of what Maurice Halbwachs called *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. The same memory of a supposed Jewish family legacy is activated in a diametrically opposed way in different time frames: one led Enrique Jardiel Poncela to radical forms of Judeophobia in the first half of the century and another brought his daughter to a form a strong identification with Israel and the Jews in the second half of the twentieth century. This demonstrates the degree to which the inheritance of Sepharad had and continues to have a very high conflictive potential, typical of "underground memories", which according to Michel Pollak, "continue their work of subversion in silence and almost imperceptibly emerge in moments of crisis through sudden and exacerbated shocks." The story of the Jardiels illustrates how "memory enters into dispute,"

⁹¹ Davide Aliberti, *Sefarad: Una comunidad imaginada (1924-2015)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2018), passim.

⁹² Michael Pollak, *Memoria, olvido, silencio* (La Plata: Al Margen Editora, 2006).

but also demonstrates the persistence of old stereotypes throughout the twentieth century.⁹³

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Keywords: Antisemitism in Spain, Memory, Sephardi Studies, Spanish Literary Vanguard, Francoism

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⁹³ I would like to express my debt of gratitude to the anonymous reviewers, to Daniela Flesler and in particular to Michal R. Friedman for her enlightening comments and insightful reading of this essay in its various stages.

*A Tale in the Language of “My Mother Spain”:
Carmen Pérez-Avello’s Un muchacho sefardí*

by Tabea Alexa Linhard

Abstract

This article focuses on Carmen Pérez-Avello’s Un muchacho sefardí (A Sephardi Boy), a novel for young readers that that writer, who also happened to belong to Catholic religious order, published in Spain in 1965. The text’s multiple layers make it possible to examine contradictory meanings associated with Jewish and Sephardi themes in the decade that preceded the end of the Francoist dictatorship. On the one hand, Un muchacho sefardí stands out in a historical period in which Paloma Díaz-Más identifies an “absolute silence” with regard to Jewish characters and Jewish themes in Spanish literature. On the other hand, Pérez-Avello tapped into what could be called a “Philo-Sephardi catalogue” in order to craft the book. Un muchacho sefardí represents a unique opportunity to further understand a moment of gradual change and transition with regard to gender roles, the role of the church, and, of course, Spain’s relationship with Sephardi Jews.

Unruly Sisters

Children’s Literature under Franco

Un muchacho sefardí

The Language of “My Mother Spain”

Unruly Sisters

In 1965 *The Sound of Music*, known as *Sonrisas y lágrimas* (Smiles and Tears) in Spain and as *La novicia rebelde* (The Rebellious Novice) elsewhere in the Spanish-speaking world, won the academy award for best picture, making steadfast, courageous, yet still pious nuns (or, at least, novices) visible in popular culture and mass media. The “Singing Nun” (Jeanne-Paule Marie “Jeannine” Deckers) may have started this trend a few years earlier with her hit song “Dominique.” In Spain, where Francisco Franco ruled with the loyal support of the Catholic Church, the trend continued with the upbeat protagonists of two comedies, *Sor Citroen* (Pedro Lazaga, 1967), and *Sor Ye-Yé* (Ramón Fernández, 1968).

These last two characters may look remarkable in a country where women belonging to religious orders had long been in charge in prisons and reformatories. In the decade that followed the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) nuns were often complicit in a violent purge of all forms of political dissent. Yet the light-hearted figures that appeared in the films depicted a change that was only skin-deep.¹ In the mid-1960s nuns were no longer watching over public morality with the same agency and intensity as the interdependence between the Francoist state and the Catholic Church enabled in the earlier decades of the dictatorship. However, the heroines of the “desarrollismo comedies,” *Sor Citroen* (Gracita Morales) and *Sor Ye-Yé* (Hilda Aguirre) are safe and unthreatening characters.² They may hint at women’s evolving roles, even within the confines of a religious order and the hierarchy of the Catholic church, yet structural change is not exactly on their agenda. Characters like *Sor Citroen* and *Sor Ye-Yé* may be unconventional, yet

¹ Aurora G. Morcillo “Walls of Flesh. Spanish Postwar Reconstruction and Public Morality,” *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 84, no. 6 (2007): 737-758; 742; Frances Lannon, “Ideological Tensions. The Social Praxis and Cultural Politics of Spanish Catholicism,” in *Spanish Cultural Studies. An Introduction*, eds. Jo Labanyi and Helene Graham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 277.

² “Desarrollismo” refers to “the series of socio-economic and cultural transformations that took place in Spain from around 1960 to the mid-seventies.” Jorge Pérez, “‘Hay que motorizarse!’: Mobility, Modernity, and National Identity in Pedro Lazaga’s ‘Sor Citroen’,” *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 11 (2007): 7-24; 8-9.

they ultimately reveal “that spiritual values have to stay attuned to market demands and progress.”³

In this context of a gradual transformation in a dictatorship that lasted for another decade, an intriguing story about a real-life Spanish nun, Carmen Pérez-Avello (1908-1999) intersected with the genealogies of Sepharad. In 1965 Pérez-Avello published the children’s book *Un muchacho sefardí* (A Sephardi Boy).⁴ Note that this time rather than the nun herself, the book’s main character, José Albazanel, happens to be steadfast and courageous.

The book’s plot is rather predictable: a young protagonist embarks on a quest and along his journey he encounters a range of colorful characters. Some are shady, others menacing, yet the majority support his endeavor. After some troubles and tribulations, the child succeeds and so the book ends with an uplifting message. Nothing in this story stands out until the protagonist’s identity and the reason for his quest are considered. In 1913, José Albazanel decides to follow his dream, and travel from Salonika to “Sepharad, distant and beautiful like a star,” in order to “learn the Spanish they speak over there and then teach it to all the Sephardim. And bring back books and ballads.”⁵

On the one hand, *Un muchacho sefardí* stands out in a historical period in which Paloma Díaz-Más identifies an “absolute silence” with regards to Jewish characters and Jewish themes in Spanish literature.⁶ On the other hand, this brief description already reveals that Pérez-Avello tapped into what could be called a “Philo-Sephardi catalogue” in order to craft *Un muchacho sefardí*. While modern Jewish Studies in Spain dates back to the nineteenth century, a Philo-Sephardist movement emerged in the early twentieth century, under the leadership of

³ Pérez, “Hay que motorizarse,” 16.

⁴ Carmen Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí* (Madrid: Doncel, 1965).

⁵ “Sefarad lejana y bella como una estrella”; “estudiar bien el español como lo hablan allí para enseñarlo después a todos los sefardíes. Y traer libros y romances a España.” Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí*, 58 and 31

⁶ Paloma Díaz-Más, “Judíos y conversos en la literatura Española,” in *From Iberia to Diaspora. Studies in Sephardic History and Culture*, eds Yedida Stillman and Norman Stillman (New York: Brill, 1999), 346-361.

physician and senator Ángel Pulido.⁷ Pulido's work, as well as one of the earliest artefacts of that repertoire—Ernesto Giménez Caballero's film *Jews of the Spanish Homeland* (1929)—, are travel chronicles, from Spain to the Sephardi and Ladino-speaking worlds in the Balkans and Southeastern Europe. Pérez-Avello's protagonist reverses the direction of that journey, as her José Albazanel travels from Salonika back to Spain, to Sepharad.

The text's multiple layers, that also include the illustrations of Máximo San Juan (who would become one of Spain's most important editorial cartoonists of the transition and post-transition eras), make it possible to examine contradictory meanings associated with Jewish and Sephardi themes in the decade that preceded the end of the Francoist dictatorship. Stated differently, this work of children's literature echoes philo-Sephardi motifs that were common in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the same time it anticipates mainstream perceptions of Sephardi culture and of Sephardi Jews that would later inform the recovery of a Jewish past in the Iberian world, or, as Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa have called it, the "memory work of Jewish Spain."⁸ While *Un muchacho sefardí* is a largely forgotten text that today can be mainly found in Antiquarian bookshops or stores dedicated to Judaica, it still represents a unique opportunity to further understand a moment of gradual change and transition with regards to gender roles, the role of the church, and, of course, Spain's relationship with Sephardi Jews.⁹

⁷ Andrew Bush, "Amador de los Ríos and the Beginning of Modern Jewish Studies in Spain," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 13-33; Michal Rose Friedman, "Jewish History as 'Historia Patria': José Amador de los Ríos and the History of the Jews of Spain," *Jewish Social Studies* 18, no. 1 (2011): 88-126.

⁸ Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020).

⁹ Another publishing house, Everest, came up with a second edition in 1992, therefore coinciding with the events that the year of the 500 anniversary of the Expulsion made Sephardi lives—at least slightly—more visible in Spain.

Children's Literature under Franco

The illustrated book appeared in the collection *La Ballena Alegre* and received a state-sponsored award for children's literature, the Premio Doncel, in 1965.¹⁰ The books that belonged to this collection were aimed at children and young adults, and while their contents were not strictly ideological, the texts often could be considered didactic, if not moralizing.¹¹ As María Elena Soliño has shown, even though prizes for children's literature that were created in Spain the 1950s aimed to promote literary innovation and to "offer the reader a more realistic portrait of life," not only the stylistic quality of the awarded works often was lacking, the portrayals of gender roles also were ultraconservative.¹² Following this trend, the protagonists of the *Ballena Alegre* books usually were well-behaved boys who never transgressed the moral codes of the period.¹³ The most recognizable one of these characters may be young Marcelino in José María Sánchez Silva's *Marcelino pan y vino* (*Miracle of Marcelino*) (1953).¹⁴ Ladislao Vajda adapted the book for the big screen, making it one of the most successful Spanish films of all times. The book's (and the film's) religious message is evident: the eventual death of the young protagonist, writes Justin Crumbaugh, "is widely considered to be an affirmation of the official ideology of mid-1950s' Francoism."¹⁵ Sánchez Silva's book was not the sole "Ballena Alegre" book with such a subject matter, and so many of the texts in the collection equated children's reading habits with Catholic religiosity and its moral codes.¹⁶

¹⁰ *La Ballena Alegre* was a publishing house that the Delegación Nacional de Juventudes established in 1959 and the Doncel award was given for the first time in 1961. See Rosario Vega García, "Literatura infantil y juvenil en la España de los años sesenta: La Ballena Alegre," *Espéculo. Revista de Estudios Literarios* 42 (2009).

¹¹ A few works by Swedish author Astrid Lindgren also appeared in translation in this same collection, representing an exception to this rule.

¹² María Elena Soliño, *Women and Children First: Spanish Women Writers and The Fairy Tale Tradition* (Washington DC: Scripta Humanistica, 2002), 66.

¹³ Rosario Vega García, "Literatura infantil y juvenil en la España de los años sesenta."

¹⁴ José María Sánchez Silva, *Marcelino pan y vino* (Madrid: La Ballena Alegre, 1953).

¹⁵ Justin Crumbaugh, "Spectacle as spectralization, untimely timelessness: 'Marcelino pan y vino' and mid-1950s' Francoism," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3 (2014): 338.

¹⁶ Other religious texts include *Manuel y los hombres*, by Miguel Buñuel and the *Ángel en España* series by poet Jaime Ferrán, that also include *Ángel en USA norte* and *Ángel en USA sur*. These books were travel narratives, making them somewhat comparable to *Un muchacho sefardí*, except

Nothing of this is surprising, given that in the 1950s and 1960s books written for children and young adults still were the subject of strict regulations and censorship. A decree from 1955 ruled that publications for young audiences had to rigorously respect religion—which in this sense clearly meant Catholicism. Consequently, “narratives and comic books that contained examples of laicism and that featured biased descriptions of rituals and customs from other religions or confessions, that can lead to misunderstanding or scandal,” were to be avoided.¹⁷

Given these rules, one may wonder why Pérez-Avello’s *Un muchacho sefardí* was not only deemed appropriate for young readers in Francoist Spain, but also the recipient of a state-sponsored award. To make matters more complex, the same 1955 decree also ruled that, “foreign sounding expressions and phrases as well as constructions that reveal a deficient or incorrect use of the Spanish language” were unfitting for books written for children and young adults.¹⁸ Yet even with these restrictions Pérez-Avello managed to write a book, that, according to Rosario García Vega, “not only contributed to a better understanding of Sephardi culture, inspired by a period that is of great interest, but that also contained a message of tolerance towards other races and political as well as religious ideologies.”¹⁹ While *Un muchacho sefardí* is about a Sephardi child who dreams of a “Sepharad, beautiful and distant like a star” the text underscores what Maite Ojeda Mata has called an “ambivalent conceptualization of Sephardic identity in Spain.”²⁰ In this

that here Ángel is an angel, sent by God to help men. This allows him to first take a trip to Spain and eventually the United States.

¹⁷ “narraciones o historietas que contengan ejemplos destacados de laicismo, descripciones tendenciosas de ceremonias o costumbres correspondientes a cultos de otras religiones o confesiones, que puedan inducir a error o escándalo,” Paloma Uría Ríos, *En tiempos de Antoñita la Fantástica* (Madrid: Foca, 2004), 17.

¹⁸ “las expresiones y giros extranjerizantes, así como las construcciones que revelen deficiencia o incorrección en el uso de la lengua española,” Uría Ríos, *En tiempos de Antoñita la Fantástica*, 17.

¹⁹ “no solo contribuyó a un mayor conocimiento de la cultura sefardí, inspirándose en un período de gran interés, sino que contenía un mensaje de tolerancia hacia otras razas e ideologías, tanto políticas como religiosas,” Rosario García Vega, “Literatura infantil y juvenil en la España de los años sesenta.”

²⁰ Maite Ojeda Mata explains that, “while a Philo-Sephardic project of political inclusion did develop, the Sephardim were never accepted as full citizens in modern Spain.” Maite Ojeda Mata, *Legitimizing Identities: Modern Spain and the Sephardim* (London: Lexington, 2018), xviii.

sense, Jewishness remains invisible and in silence (to evoke Díaz-Más) in the book. Stated differently, the “Philo-Sephardi catalogue” conceals more than it reveals about “Jewish Spain.”²¹

Pérez-Avello’s text displays the tensions of Spain’s complicated and ambivalent relationship with the Sephardim and, in a broader sense, with a Jewish presence in Spain in the 1960s. *Un muchacho sefardí* is a well-researched work (considering the limited resources that may have been available for Pérez-Avello) and, to an extent, the book does succeed in providing information about a community that indeed was largely unknown for mainstream audiences. The book’s form (an illustrated children’s book) and the largely conventional, if not conservative story it tells make *Un muchacho sefardí* a depiction of Sepharad that is simultaneously unthreatening and bold.

Pérez-Avello therefore still fits in with her peer group of cheerful and slightly unruly nuns. Yet her accomplishment may pale in relation to those of the other (mainly fictional) nuns mentioned in the introduction: neither does she become a quasi-celebrity like the “Singing Nun,” nor does she flee from the Nazis across the Alps with a musical family, as the heroine of *The Sound of Music* does. Nevertheless, Angela Lamelas, a former student of the author, recalls that for her Pérez-Avello completing *Un muchacho sefardí* felt like climbing “her Aconcagua,” the highest peak in the Spanish-speaking world and outside of Himalaya.²²

In 1964, just a year before Pérez-Avello’s book appeared, Francoist Spain had just celebrated itself, proclaiming the so-called “25 Years of Peace.” This “great state performance” was an effort to rebrand a dictatorial regime that had now become institutionalized.²³ Stated differently, the “25 Years of Peace” really were 25 more years of war for large segments of the Spanish population: individuals who

²¹ I am using “Jewish Spain” here as a complicated misnomer. See Tabea Alexa Linhard, *Jewish Spain: A Mediterranean Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

²² Clementina Giménez, “Carmen Pérez Avello y la literatura infantil y juvenil,” *Biblioteca Virtual Universal* (2010), <https://biblioteca.org.ar>, accessed November 10, 2020.

²³ Julián Díaz and Asunción Castro, *XXV años de paz franquista: sociedad y cultura en España hacia 1964* (Madrid: Silex, 2017), 11.

remained in exile, in prisons, and who were enduring, mostly in hiding, the trauma of civil war and of post-war repression. Yet it also is true that the 1960s were a period of economic and social transformation in Spain, changes that ranged from the appearance of (foreign, scantily-clad) bodies on the country's beaches, of capital in the country's coffers, and of dissent in public and private spaces.²⁴

And it is in these private spaces where Pérez-Avello's own form of (albeit rather limited) dissent materialized into a book for Spanish children with a Jewish protagonist. Not much is known about Pérez-Avello's biography. She spent most of her life in Spain's northern regions of Cantabria and Asturias, where she studied education and worked as a schoolteacher for 42 years. It is unclear at which point she joined the order of the Esclavas del Sagrado Corazón.²⁵

Lamelas, Pérez-Avello's above-mentioned former student, remembers her teacher's fondness for books and language, explaining that she always looked for "constructive books, and was in love with the Spanish language; in class we did exercises that were about the richness of the Spanish language."²⁶ Yet Pérez-Avello's devotion to literature and language was not unconditional. The times when she lived, the education she received, and the institutional rules she obeyed, restricted this love. Amelas also recalls that while Pérez-Avello admired novelist Ana María Matute's writing, she was not fond of the "types of sad children" and "repetitive environments" that were common in Matute's works.²⁷

²⁴ For Spain and tourism see Eugenia Afinoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella, *Spain is (still) Different: Tourism and Discourse in Spanish Identity* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008); Justin Crumbaugh, *Destination Dictatorship: The Spectacle of Spain's Tourist Boom and the Reinvention of Difference* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010); Flesler and Pérez Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain*.

²⁵ Her first book *El gato que llegó a la luna* (1964) was later republished as *Sueños de un gato negro* (1983). In 1965 she published *Un muchacho sefardí* which was then followed by *Unos zuecos para mí* two years later.

²⁶ "Buscaba libros constructivos y, enamorada de la lengua española, en clase hacíamos ejercicios sobre la riqueza de nuestro lenguaje." Giménez, "Carmen Pérez Avello y la literatura infantil y juvenil," 10.

²⁷ "tipos tristes de niños;" "ambientes muy repetidos." Ibid., 11.

This last comment speaks volumes about Pérez-Avello's own protagonist in *Un muchacho sefardí*: José Albazanel could not be more different than one of Matute's saddest child protagonists, Matia in *Primera memoria* (Awakening).²⁸ Not only Matia's sorrow makes *Primera memoria* relevant in this context: another undeniably sad protagonist of the 1959 novel is Manuel Taronjé, a "chueta," a descendant of Majorcan Jews who converted to Christianity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The echoes of the violence committed against the Majorcans of Jewish descent in the seventeenth century, and how these relate to the violence of the Spanish Civil War are among the main themes in *Primera memoria*.²⁹

While both *Un muchacho sefardí* and *Primera memoria* have a relationship with the intersections between Spanish history and Jewish history, the texts differ greatly. Trauma and loss shape the cruel and maddening world in which Matia resides, a world torn apart by the legacies of anti-Jewish sentiment and the violence of the Civil War. Yet Matia's understandable grief may have made Pérez-Avello disapprove of this novel.³⁰ By contrast, Pérez-Avello's Sephardi boy, even in his darkest moments, does not seem to allow himself to feel any other emotions than boundless love for the lost homeland and the language he has committed to keep alive.

One may attribute these differences to genre and audience: *Primera memoria* is a book with a young protagonist, yet it is not a children's book. *Un muchacho sefardí* is an illustrated book with children and for children. *Un muchacho sefardí*

²⁸ Just like *Un muchacho sefardí*, *Primera Memoria* also received an award, yet a much more prestigious, and still existing prize, the Premio Nadal in 1959. The novel has been translated twice, *The School of the Sun* (Elaine Kerrigan, New York: Pantheon, 1963) and *Awakening* (James Holman Mason, London: Hutchinson, 1963).

²⁹ While Matute's novel takes place during the first year of the Spanish Civil War, it also evokes the violence that the *chueta* communities endured in Majorca in the late seventeenth century and that culminated when the Majorcan Inquisition held trials (*autos-de-fé*) for more than 70 individuals accused of heresy. All were tortured, and roughly half burnt at the stake. Francesc Garau, a Jesuit theologian, documented these events in *La fe triunfante*, a book that also became a widely used tool of anti-Jewish propaganda. In *Primera memoria*, one of the characters is a proud owner the book.

³⁰ See Scott Macdonald Frame, "A Private Portrait of Trauma in Two Novels by Ana María Matute," *Journal of Romance Studies* 21, no. 1 (2003): 127-138.

has an uplifting ending, as does another one of Matute's works, *El polizón del Ulises* (The Stowaway of the Ulises) published the same year as Pérez-Avello's book, and also aimed at younger audiences.³¹ Given the above-mentioned restrictions for children's literature that the Francoist government had imposed, it hardly is surprising that this tale ends in a sanguine, if not inspirational tone. The young protagonist not only survives after almost drowning, his lived experiences (that include sheltering a fugitive political prisoner, the stowaway from the book's title) also allow him to mature intellectually and emotionally—as José Albazanel also does.

Children's and young adult literature published in the earlier decades of the Francoist dictatorship also represented radical departures from the more complex, richer and avant-garde influenced works published during the Second Republic and for the duration of the Spanish Civil War (between 1931 and 1939). The Francoist victory not only meant that most of these books' authors (Antoniadorobles, María Teresa León, Salvador Bartolozzi, Magda Donato, Elena Fortún) were in exile, it also led to severe restrictions when it came to the kind of books that could be published: works with religious themes or texts that narrated exemplary children's lives strictly adhering to the moral codes that the dictatorship had imposed.³² Moreover, and as mentioned earlier, these books also still were the subject of strict regulations and censorship.

The fact that Pérez-Avello writes about a Jewish child could suggest that the author was using this highly regulated genre in a subversive manner. While there may be some truth to this, the Sephardi traits of her characters reveal that the subterfuge here is limited. Pérez-Avello's Sephardi protagonist and the members

³¹ Ana María Matute, *El polizón del Ulises* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1965).

³² Elena Fortún's life (née Encarnación Aragoneses) and her books focalized on the character Celia are outliers in these sense that the author published books about the young *madrileña* before, during, and after the Spanish Civil War. Indeed, the book series is rather complex, as the works oscillate between resistance and accommodation to patriarchal, racial and moral codes of the respective periods when Fortún wrote them. For more information on the author and her character, see Uría Ríos *En tiempos de Antoñita la fantástica* and Carmen Toro, "Infancias imaginadas: Creciendo en España en el Siglo XX con Elena Fortún y Miguel Delibes" (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2018), <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0149-2214>, accessed November 10, 2020.

of his community actually are rather similar to Sephardi characters that have appeared in other Spanish novels: his already mentioned devotion to and nostalgia for Sepharad and the Spanish language is a common trait among Sephardic characters, and so is his righteousness.³³ Another attribute that Sephardim depicted in Spanish novels share is a sense of “Sephardi Supremacy,” that is, a racialized understanding of Sephardi and Ashkenazi mythologies in which “Sephardi Jews were considered superior to Ashkenazi Jewish because of having “mixed” with Christian Spaniards.”³⁴ Pérez-Avello’s tells this same old story in a simpler way: she downplays her characters’ Jewishness and so such a hierarchy becomes irrelevant, given that non-Sephardi Jews do not seem to exist in the world that Pérez-Avello creates.

Un muchacho sefardí

There is another fundamental difference between the protagonist of Matute’s *Primera memoria* and Pérez-Avello’s *Un muchacho sefardí*: the main characters of all of Pérez-Avello’s books are boys, not girls. Even though she was surrounded by young women and was probably far more attuned to their worldviews, desires, and needs in Francoist Spain, she wrote about a Sephardi boy and not about a

³³ While Jewish characters are abundant in Spanish literature in the nineteenth and twentieth century, these figures oftentimes are a compendium of positive and negative stereotypes with little or no relationship to reality. Novels with Sephardi protagonists include Vicente Blasco Ibañez’s *Luna Benamor* (1909), Concha Espina’s *El caliz rojo* (1923), and Azorín’s *María Fontán* (1944). These three texts are discussed in a brief essay by Rafael Pérez de la Dehesa, published in *Tesoro Sefardí* in 1963. Pérez de la Dehesa makes it evident that these novels convey the notion that, given their Hispanic origin, Sephardim are not only fundamentally different, but also superior to Ashkenazim. Rafael Pérez de la Dehesa, “El judío sefardí en la novela española moderna: Blasco Ibañez, Concha Espina, Azorín,” *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes. Estudio sobre la historia de los judíos sefardíes y su cultura* 6 (1963): 47-51.

³⁴ Michal Rose Friedman, “Orientalism between Empires: Abraham Shalom Yahuda at the Intersection of Sepharad, Zionism and Imperialism,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 3 (2019): 435-451; 439. As Friedman herself points out, a longer discussion of this process of this racialization can be found in Friedman, “Recovering Jewish Spain: Historiography, Politics and Institutionalizations of the Jewish Past in Spain” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2012); Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1970-1930* (Baton Rouge: U of Louisiana Press, 2009); see also Ojeda Mata, *Legitimizing Identities*.

Sephardi girl. She knew well that in Francoist Spain only boys would be free enough to have an adventure or go on a quest.”³⁵

The young women in Pérez-Avello’s classrooms in the decades that followed the Spanish Civil War endured the consequences of strictly gendered rules and expectations. In 1938, when the Spanish Civil War was in its second year, most of the reforms that were carried out during Spain’s Second Republic were reversed—with a vengeance. The reinstatement of the Civil Law Code turned women into de facto non-citizens who could neither inherit nor own property. In Francoist Spain, women became, “the guarantors of the renewal of national purity through the mandates of chastity and married motherhood.”³⁶ When Pérez-Avello, neither wife nor mother, joined a religious order she made “the only free decision a woman could take.”³⁷ Having said this, it is important to not see Pérez-Avello as a spirited rebel, as tempting as that may be. Instead, from her position as a woman belonging to a religious order, as a schoolteacher tasked with educating young women for the only imaginable future in Franco’s Spain, and as a successful author of children’s literature, Pérez-Avello negotiates transformation and preservation.³⁸

The Nationalists’ victory in 1939 signified that no religions other than Catholicism could be practiced in Spain, at least not in the near future. While specific Jewish congregations, among them Barcelona’s Jewish community resumed their activities as early as 1945, official status was not possible until 1968.³⁹ For the

³⁵ Giménez, “Carmen Pérez Avello y la literatura infantil y juvenil,” 20.

³⁶ Morcillo, “Walls of Flesh,” 738.

³⁷ Morcillo, *The Seduction of Modern Spain*, 80.

³⁸ “Nuns had a very important role in the social services of the state. They became prison’s wardens, teachers, and nurses along with their lay counterparts, the members of the Women’s Section of Falange. Their work fitted in the symbiotic union between Church and state during Francoism. They were instrumental in shaping the identity of the official True Catholic Womanhood with the implementation of the 1950s New National Catholic high school curriculum.” Morcillo, *The Seduction of Modern Spain*, 82.

³⁹ See Danielle Rozenberg, “Minorías religiosas y construcción democrática en España. (Del monopolio de la Iglesia a la gestión del pluralismo),” *Reis* 76 (1996): 245-265; Rozenberg, Danielle. *La España contemporánea y la cuestión judía: Retejiendo los hilos de la memoria y de la historia* (Madrid: Casa Sefarad-Israel, 2010); Martine Berthelot, *Memorias judías: Barcelona 1924-1954: Historia oral de la Comunidad Israelita de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Riopiedras, 2001).

duration of the dictatorship, in the country at large, and possibly even more in Cantabria and Asturias, Jews and Sephardim were largely invisible. Older, religious anti-Jewish sentiments therefore co-existed with a general ignorance about Jewish culture and history.⁴⁰

Un muchacho sefardí appeared two years prior to the passing of the 1967 “Law of Religious Freedom.” This change, that took place in relation to the reforms of Vatican II (1962-1965), had been in the making before the right to practice religions other than Catholicism in public became a reality. Needless to say, none of these transformations occurred quickly. The book therefore appeared in the earlier years of a “gradual disengagement” between church and state and so the book simultaneously displays continuities and ruptures.⁴¹

Even though the protagonist of Pérez-Avelllo is a Jewish child, she could have never called her book “A Jewish Boy” not only because the censorship apparatus may have not allowed such a book to appear in print, but also, perhaps more importantly, because in the 1960s (and, in fact, until recently) *judío*, was used as a pejorative term, an insult.⁴² Pérez-Avello almost exclusively uses *sefardí* to refer to José Albazanel and his community, making it clear that her characters are emotionally attached to Sepharad, to the Spanish language, yet not at all to Jewishness.⁴³

All of this begs the question of what Pérez-Avello’s sources for her book were and why a Spanish nun chose to write about a Sephardi boy in the first place, considering also the pedagogical materials that were available when she wrote the book. Many of the textbooks conceived and published in the 1930s and 1940s were still in usage in the 1960s, and these books were filled with anti-Jewish stereotypes. The stories told in the textbooks were of Jews as powerful masterminds, responsible for blood libel and a long list of other crimes. Stated differently, the

⁴⁰ Paloma Díaz-Más, *The Sephardim: The Jews from Spain*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁴¹ Lannon, “Ideological Tensions,” 276.

⁴² Rozenberg, *La España contemporánea y la cuestión judía*; Davide Alberti, *Sefarad, una comunidad imaginada* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2018).

⁴³ “Hebreo” and “hebreos” appear 4 times (9, 10, 18 and 47); “hijos de Israel” twice (10 and 14).

authors of the textbooks added no new ideas to very old and deeply ingrained anti-Jewish sentiments.⁴⁴ The treatment of the 1942 Expulsion in the textbooks is also not surprising: the expulsion is not only justifiable, it indeed appears described as a “brilliant foresight,” as shown in Feliciano Cerceda’s 1940 *Historia del Imperio Español y la Hispanidad* (History of the Spanish Empire and Hispanidad): “The world has now shown us that we were right, and after four centuries, the majority of the politicians have adopted the advice of our Catholic Kings, expelling from their territories this very dangerous race.”⁴⁵ The fact that such statements still circulated into the 1960s (and possibly beyond) is distressing, and while Pérez-Avello softens this perspective, she does not go as far as challenging earlier representations of the 1492 Expulsion.⁴⁶ *Un muchacho sefardí* indeed begins with the words “It was a day in July of 1492,” which is then followed by a brief narration of the departure of the Albazanel family from Toledo.⁴⁷ Yet the expulsion is neither questioned, nor critiqued. In Pérez-Avello’s book the expulsion causes sadness and pain, but never rancor, only an infinite nostalgia for a lost paradise.

⁴⁴ As Michal Rose Friedman has shown, philo-Sephardist and fascist ideologue Ernesto Giménez Caballero is the author of a pedagogical guide for high-school instructors *Lengua y Literatura de España y su imperio* (Language and Literature of Spain and its Empire), published between 1940 and 1953. “While the guide by and large presents a traditional Catholic interpretation of the Spanish past, it also includes sections on Jewish authors and texts from medieval Spain, descriptions of Jewish influences in the great works of Spanish literature, and references to Judeo-Spanish as a Hispanic language. In discussing the origins of Castilian literature, Giménez Caballero indicates that Hebraic authors, such as Maimonides and Yehuda Ha-Levi, played an essential role in the formation of the *verdadero genio español* (genuine Spanish spirit). Apparently, even within Fascist Spain, the Jews—or at least the memory of them—might occupy a distinguished place in the Patria.” Michal Rose Friedman, “Reconquering ‘Sepharad’: Hispanism and Proto-fascism in Giménez Caballero’s Sephardist Crusade,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 95-120; 56.

⁴⁵ “El mundo nos da ahora por fin la razón, y, después de cuatro siglos, los mayores políticos adoptan el consejo de nuestros Católicos Soberanos, expulsando de sus territorios a esta raza peligrosísima.” Feliciano Cerceda S.I., *Historia del Imperio Español y la Hispanidad* (Madrid, Razón y Fe, 1940), 23 cited in Andrés Sopeña, *El florido pensil* (Barcelona: Booket, 2016), 157.

⁴⁶ Arguably, the information about the Nazi Genocide was rather limited in Francoist Spain, yet not even that would justify the circulation of this type of “pedagogical” materials. See Alejandro Baer, “The Voids of Sepharad: The Memory of the Holocaust in Spain,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 95-120.

⁴⁷ “Era un día del mes de julio de 1492,” Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí*, 9.

In this way the author manages to invent a Sephardi character for whom her young readers could root. She also eludes all possible controversy by not engaging with negative stereotypes about Jews and Sephardim, and instead builds the plot around the protagonist's devotion for the "language of my mother Spain," as Pérez-Avello herself puts it in the introduction to her text.⁴⁸ This is, as Díaz-Más has noted, a common vision about Sephardim that in many ways still endures:

(T)he Sephardim are Spaniards without a country; they long for Spain and hold a deep love for the country, proven by their conscious and deliberate retention of Judeo-Spanish as a remembrance of their lost homeland and by their preservation, for five centuries, of the keys to the houses and their ancestors abandoned in Toledo when they were expelled from Spain.⁴⁹

Many of these commonplaces, including the key to the abandoned home in Toledo, also appear in Pérez-Avello's book.

The story that Pérez-Avello tells begins in 1492, when José Albazanel's ancestors are expelled from Toledo, taking with them, as is to be expected, not much more than the key for their home. The key, one of the most recognizable tropes of the "Philo-Sephardic catalogue," is mentioned in the moment of expulsion and also roughly five centuries later, when José Albazanel, the Sephardic boy, decides to travel from Salonika to Spain. In the book the (highly overused) symbol of the key also conceals far more than what it could ever reveal about the history of the Sephardim. *Un muchacho sefardí* is an illustrated book, and yet the key is the sole image that visually connects the book with the Sephardim, or at least with myths about the Sephardim. With the exception of two illustrations, Máximo's work could depict any young child's quest, anywhere in the Mediterranean world. The two exceptions are a watercolor rendering of José Albazanel's ancestors who, after having been forced out of Toledo, are standing on a hill outside beyond the city's

⁴⁸ "lengua de mi madre España," Ibid.

⁴⁹ Díaz-Más, *The Sephardim*, 168.

limit (fig. 1).⁵⁰ The fact that the man (Elías Albazanel) and not the woman (Sara Albazanel) in the depiction holds an unusually large key (even for the period), is hardly a coincidence: “returning” to Sepharad in the book clearly is a masculine endeavor.



Fig. 1. Illustration from Carmen Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí* (Madrid: Doncel, 1965), n.n. .

⁵⁰ Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders of material reproduced in this article (fig. 1 and fig. 2). We would be pleased to rectify any errors or omissions should they be drawn to our attention.

The other image is a much more minimalist black and white sketch of young José Albazanel (fig. 2).⁵¹ His head is shown next to table with an open book and a closed one with the title “Sefarad” featured on the cover.

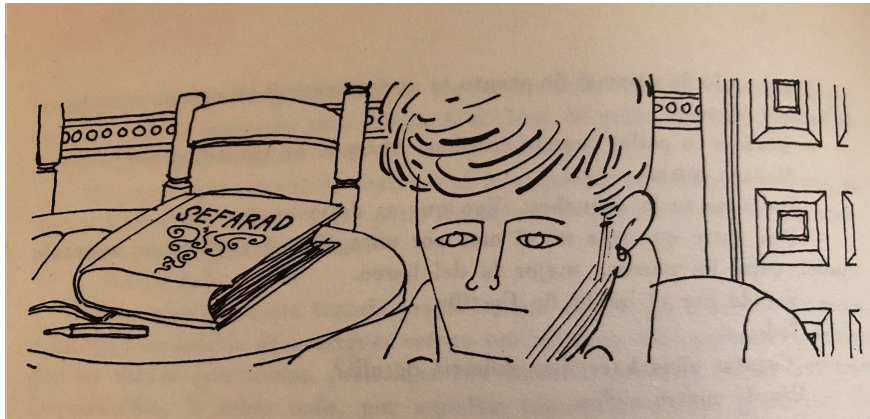


Fig.2. Illustration from Carmen Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí* (Madrid: Doncel, 1965), 65.

Having said this, it is important to point out that Pérez-Avello did corresponded with Isaac R. Molho, the editor of *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes. Estudio sobre la historia de los judíos sefardíes y su cultura*, published in Israel between 1959-1965. Molho briefly mentions Pérez-Avello and her book in a 1965 article, expressing admiration for her work. He adds that in a private letter to him she confessed that with the book she intended to bring Spanish youth closer to the Sephardim, who feel a strong connection to Spain. She also mentions that in her imagination she always travels to Jerusalem, where “such pleasant and historic memories fill my deep experience.”⁵²

Additionally, Pérez-Avello must have been familiar with at least some of the academic initiatives that in the 1960s centered on Sephardi Studies. Even though anti-Semitic discourse was prevalent in Spain during World War II, this was not an obstacle for the creation of the “Instituto Arias Montano de Estudios

⁵¹ Despite attempts, it has not been possible to trace the image right holders.

⁵² (Melumadot Sefaradit Ve-Hokhmat Israel) *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* 8 (1965): 129-131. A review of *A Sephardi Boy* was appeared in the same publication. I wish to thank Asher Salah for providing me with the reference and Stacy Beckwith for help with the translation.

Hebraicos y Oriente Próximo” in 1941. This institution, writes Anna Menny, illustrates the regime’s ambivalent position towards Jews and Jewishness.⁵³ The Institute and its activities operate in relation to what Menny calls an official, conservative Philo-Sephardism. Yet while academic studies focusing on the Sephardim and Sephardi culture took place for the duration of the dictatorship, a relation with the actual lives of Sephardi Jews (some of who were, as late as 1945 still deported from Rhodes and other places to Auschwitz) was basically non-existent. In the 1960s academic discourse on Sephardic topics operated in relation to rapprochements between the Francoist government and the State of Israel. The Exposición Bibliográfica Sefardí Mundial (1959), the Simposio Sefardí (1964) and the creation of the Museo Sefardí de Toledo were among the most visible initiatives.⁵⁴ Pérez-Avello’s version of Sepharad does not differ greatly from what came across these institutional venues and channels. Stated differently, *Un muchacho sefardí* is as sophisticated and as limited as other, contemporary and also earlier stagings of Sepharad.

The Language of “My Mother Spain”

Pérez-Avello’s descriptions of the Sephardi characters’ love for homeland and language echo Ángel Pulido’s *Espanoles sin patria y la raza sefardí* (Spaniards without a Homeland and the Sephardi Race) particularly when it comes to the notions of what a correct Spanish is and why it matters. In his first reference to Ladino, Pulido describes it as an “incorrect Castilian” that nevertheless deeply moves him, since it conveyed “love for the Spanish land, expressing with mournful

⁵³ Anna Menny, “Sepharad—object of investigation? The Academic Discourse about Sepharad and Sephardim in Spain” *Jewish Culture and History* 16, no. 1 (2015): 6-23; 10. Isabelle Rohr, *The Spanish Right and the Jews*; Ojeda Mata, *Legitimizing Identities*.

⁵⁴ While the museum was created by decree in 1964, it did not open its doors until 1971. It is impossible to know whether Pérez-Avello was one of the roughly 12,000 visitors who had a chance to see the exhibit during the month it was open. See Flesler and Pérez Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain*; Guillermo Olagüe de Ros, “La Exposición Bibliográfica Sefardí Mundial (1959) y el primer Simposio Sefardí (1964),” *Raíces* 93 (2012-2013), 80.

emotion delicate and tender adages, bearing witness to a religious tradition.”⁵⁵ In his different encounters with Sephardim, Pulido repeatedly emphasizes this love, tenderness, and devotion to language and homeland, “our beloved fatherland,” yet he also points out the flaws of the language, that appears with all degrees of imaginable deficiencies.”⁵⁶ Pérez-Avello’s book consistently reflects these same sentiments, and the references to the characters love for the *lengua española* are numerous.⁵⁷ José is determined to become a teacher, which makes his quest not so much about reaching Sepharad, but about returning with the qualifications that would make it possible for him to remedy such degeneration. He explains to anyone willing to listen that he yearns to “arrive and return, with that rich and beautiful language well learned.”⁵⁸ To be clear: he does not wish to return to Sepharad to claim a home that once was his (an actual return to Spain may have been far too problematic), but simply to become better at a language that was supposed to be his own in the first place.

Even though Pérez-Avello writes with such devotion about language, a linguistic hierarchy is evident throughout the text, given that she also describes Ladino, again echoing Pulido, as an “impoverished version” of the language. Stated differently, the Sephardim that Pérez-Avello imagined in the 1960s love Sepharad and its language, even though the love they profess still situates them below the subjects who reside in places like Toledo.

For José and also for his grandfather the language they use and also love so much is deficient, as Pulido would have it. This explains the boy’s desire to return to Toledo, become a teacher and to educate the members of his community in the “living” Spanish. Even though Pérez-Avello makes it clear that the language spoken in Salonika is not proper Castilian and has its shortcomings, the text also

⁵⁵ “amor á la tierra hispana, que hubo de expresar con emoción lacrimosa y frases de extremada delicadeza y ternura, como atestiguando un culto religioso” Ángel Pulido, *Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1993), 2-3.

⁵⁶ “nuestra querida madre patria,” “la cual aparece con todos los grados de degeneración imaginables.” Ibid., 4 and 61.

⁵⁷ Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí*, 20, 31, 34, 46, 49 and 58.

⁵⁸ “llegar y tornar con aquella lengua rica y hermosa bien aprendida.” Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí*, 83.

highlights the emotional attachment of the characters to Ladino. It may not be the language of Toledo, but the characters still prefer it to French, the language that due to the presence of the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools would rapidly spread across the Sephardic Levantine world, or to Greek.⁵⁹ And here Pérez-Avello again echoes Pulido, who wrote in support of sponsoring the establishment of Spanish Schools in the Levant. These schools, however, never became a reality: “It is unlikely that Spanish-speaking schools, had they been established, would have attracted more pupils than those of the Alliance.”⁶⁰

This is not the story, however, that Pérez-Avello chooses to tell. When a “foreign” teacher—whose nationality is never specified—appears in Salonika with the intention of opening a new school, the entire community resists this endeavor.

Mateo, the merchant of the Valencia plaza assured everybody he had heard that in less than a year he would rip out that old tongue from the children, the language they still spoke, Judeo-Spanish, and from then on they would communicate in that other modern language that he would implant, by force.⁶¹

This leads the Salonika youth to defy the foreign teacher and eventually find a way to make him unceremoniously leave the community. As the teacher departs, Mateo (the above-mentioned character) cries out that their language is “from Castille,” and that “neither him, nor anyone will rip it out.”⁶² Ladino not only is likened to a tongue that nobody should dare to tear out (Pérez-Avello here plays with different meanings of *lengua*, as it can mean “tongue” and “language”), a slippage also occurs here. Pérez-Avello has substituted “Judeo-Spanish” with “the

⁵⁹ Aron Rodrigue, “The Ottoman Diaspora: The Rise and Fall of Ladino Literary Culture,” in *Cultures of the Jews, A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken, 2002), 863-885.

⁶⁰ Michael Alpert, “Dr Ángel Pulido and philo-Sephardism in Spain,” *Jewish Historical Studies* 40 (2005): 105-119; 114.

⁶¹ “Mateo, el Mercader de la placita Valencia aseguraba haber oído decir que en menos de un año arrancaría a los niños aquella lengua antigua que hablaban, el judeo-español, y que les haría entenderse con otra lengua moderna que él, por fuerza, había de implantar.” Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí*, 76.

⁶² “¡Pero el nuestro, el de Castilla, ni él ni nadie nos lo arranca!” Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí*, 76.

language from Castille.” Even though the hierarchy between Spanish and Castilian is maintained throughout the text, it becomes less important when both languages—both tongues—are threatened by other “foreign” and “modern” languages that could be either French or Greek.

The fact that neither the nationality, nor the language of the foreigner are mentioned make French and Greek interchangeable in this context, even though historically this was not the case. It may be more likely that the foreigner was trying to teach Greek to the Salonika youngsters, given that the city had only become part of Greece a year before the narrative begins. The first Alliance school was established in Salonika in the late nineteenth century.⁶³ Yet for the kind of world Pérez-Avello imagines for her Sephardic boy, any language that was not Ladino or, of course, the language of her “Mother Spain,” would be foreign to the community she envisions. And this depiction of the community differs from a historical reality in which, as Devin Naar has shown, as early as 1912, the Salonika elites developed new national narratives, based on shared citizenship and genealogy. This made it possible for Salonikans to be Greek and Jewish at the same time, instead of stubbornly insisting, as Pérez-Avello’s characters do, on an identity based on nostalgia.

Stated differently, even though *Un muchacho sefardí* may take its young readers to Greece and to other places, the book never really leaves its Spanish context and the dreamed-up version of Sepharad.⁶⁴ It is in this sense that some of the book’s blind-spots and contradictions—that also make it more interesting and worthy of further scrutiny—become prevalent. As mentioned earlier, even though Pérez-Avello lived and worked in a largely female world, her hero and most of those who

⁶³ “While a major influence in Jewish communal politics from the late nineteenth century through World War I, the power of the Alliance in Salonika waned during the interwar years.” Devin Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

⁶⁴ Another student remembers that Pérez-Avello would always prioritize her pedagogical responsibilities: “Pérez-Avello trabajaba en la novela entre clase y clase [...] Y el muchacho sefardí quedaría agazapado tras el montón de cuadernos con los ejercicios corregidos, aguardando estoicamente el turno de mañana,” Giménez, “Carmen Pérez Avello y la literatura infantil y juvenil,” 20.

support him are male. José's mother appears briefly, and only in her role as his nurturing caregiver, and not in relation to the meanings attached to language and homeland. In her introduction to her own text, however, the author immediately brings up what Monique Balbuena has called the "feminine trappings" of Ladino.⁶⁵

I wish, with my modest work, to collaborate in the broader knowledge of and love for the Sephardic people, who took even to the most remote regions the language of my mother Spain.⁶⁶

While Sepharad, "distant and beautiful like a star," mainly has female attributes in the text, the ties with Sepharad and with the Spanish language appear to be an exclusively male endeavor in the text—as even the earlier described illustration indicates. Pérez-Avello loved language, yet language itself also ends up betraying the coherence of her narrative. José's quest to return to Sepharad really begins when he becomes an apprentice of San Remo, an old Irish fisherman. While Pérez-Avello provides no reason for why the Irishman has an Italian surname, San Remo does explain that he found employment on a merchant ship when he was a boy himself. After sailing across the world, he settled in the Aegean shores, yet he also affirms that he ultimately intends to spend his old age in his homeland, Ireland. Even though he has made friends across the world, he feels compelled to return to Ireland, as *Dios lo manda* (God requests this).⁶⁷ By contrast, José departs his community for the first time when he begins working for San Remo. The man and the boy leave Salonika in order to find work together in a coastal town. Pérez-Avello never specifies what language the Sephardi boy and the Irish man with an Italian name use to communicate with each other, or what the lingua franca is in the coastal town. There they meet the local mayor, and after San Remo asks him about a place to stay, the mayor immediately responds (presumably in

⁶⁵ Monique Balbuena, *Homeless Tongues: Poetry and Languages of the Sephardic Diaspora* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2.

⁶⁶ "Quiero, con mi modesto trabajo, colaborar en la obra de un mayor conocimiento y amor hacia el pueblo sefardí que llevó hasta muy apartadas regiones la lengua de mi madre España," Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí*, 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

Greek): “I did not know you were a sailor.”⁶⁸ He then proceeds to explain that he recognized San Remo’s profession because he used the female article “*la*” and not “*el*” for the sea, so “*la mar*.”⁶⁹ This choice of article would then reveal San Remo as a man of the sea. San Remo indeed consistently uses “*la mar*,” not “*el mar*” in the book.⁷⁰

The use of article requires further contextualization. In Spanish, using “*la*” instead of “*el*” *mar* connotes a close relationship with the sea. Thus, San Remo’s usage of the female article (and the mayor’s recognition of this) would be consistent.⁷¹ In Ladino, as in Spanish, both “*la mar*” and “*el mar*” could be used. Indeed, the titles of many Sephardi romances suggest that “*la mar*” may be quite common.⁷² Yet San Remo is not Sephardi and given that the old man and the boy have now left Salonika, the entire conversation with the mayor would, in all likelihood, not take place in Spanish or Judeo-Spanish. In Greek “*Thalassa*” (sea) is always female, as in French or Romanian, but not in Italian.⁷³ Irish, presumably San Remo’s own mother tongue, is tricky here: while “*fárraige*” (sea) is considered to be feminine, the definite article “*an*” (the) has different uses depending on gender and whether the noun begins with a consonant, or a vowel.⁷⁴ What matters here more than the intricacies of grammatical gender in Irish is that the use of gender does not correspond to the ways in which “*la mar*” and “*el mar*” operate in Spanish and Ladino.

⁶⁸ “No sabía que usted era marino.”

⁶⁹ “La ha llamado usted al mar ‘la mar.’ Eso fue todo.”

⁷⁰ Pérez-Avello, *Un muchacho sefardí*, 36.

⁷¹ See Olav K. Lundeborg, “On the Gender of Mar: Precept and Practice,” *Hispanic Review* 1, no. 4 (1933): 309-318. It is clear that the gender varies, the tendency that more popular forms and folklore, as well as poetic, figurative language *la mar* is preferred. Given that the author comes to this conclusion by examining classics of Spanish literature, these uses probably were familiar to Pérez-Avello.

⁷² The romances here would include: “Si la mar era de leche;” “Ya salió de la mar;” or “La Sirena”

⁷³ English has not grammatical gender, yet words still have gendered attributes. Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* comes to mind: “But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favors, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought.” Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952), 30.

⁷⁴ Micheál Ó Siadhail, “A Note on Gender and Pronoun Substitution in Modern Irish Dialects,” *Ériu* 35 (1984): 173-177.

At no moment it becomes clear what language the characters are speaking in this exchange. This can have two different meanings: first, that even though the author situates this part of the plot in Greece, she never leaves a Spanish context where the difference between “*la mar*” and “*el mar*” make sense.⁷⁵ And second, perhaps more provocatively, Pérez-Avello uses the Sephardi catalogue to tell a story that really does not have all that much to do with the Sephardim. Instead, the story she really wants to tell is about an old Irish sailor with an Italian name who wants to, as San Remo confesses in the book, write his life memories of his Mediterranean journeys. Máximo’s illustrations—with the exceptions of the two earlier discussed images—also help to move the story further away from its Sephardi or Jewish context.

In this sense, Pérez-Avello’s book ends up being not about a Sephardi boy, but about a Mediterranean Sea that unites and separates the fates of the characters, conjuring up the *longue durée* of cultural crossings, exchanges, and conflicts in the region and perhaps also the swift cultural changes that were taking place on the country’s beaches, now enjoyed by large numbers of tourists. In the mid-1960s’s José Albazanel unthreatening return to Sepharad was the only one that could be imagined: not only because the protagonist is a child, but also because said child’s return is to language, to correct grammar. And that may be the only story that the “Philo-Sephardi catalogue” can deliver in the 1960s. Fifty-five years after the book’s publication, Spain’s Instituto Cervantes announced the opening of an extension in Salonika, where, as per the Institute’s announcement, Spanish language lessons will be offered to the Sephardi community in addition to other cultural and academic activities that will make it possible to enhance and disseminate the Sephardi legacy in Greece’s second largest city.⁷⁶ Stating that this initiative represents the fulfillment of José Albazanel’s dreams of Sepharad probably is a facile reading. Yet time will tell whether the new institute will prove

⁷⁵ The toponyms, supposedly Greek, would also require further examination, given that all names are given in Spanish: Cala de Oro, Ensenada Verde, Punta de Cuerno.

⁷⁶ “El Cervantes abrirá una extensión en Salónica para promover el legado sefardí,” in “Sala de prensa”, *cervantes.es*, accessed November 10, 2020 https://www.cervantes.es/sobre_instituto_cervantes/prensa/2020/noticias/extensi%C3%B3n_salonica.htm.

whether Carmen Pérez-Avello was an obedient or an unruly sister. Or perhaps a combination of both.

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Keywords: Philo-Sephardism, Ladino, Francoism, Children's Literature, Carmen Pérez-Avello

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Archives of the Sephardi Kitchen

by *Harry Eli Kashdan*

Abstract

Drawing on two distinct bodies of Sephardi food writing—Anglophone cookbooks and the long-running recipe column in the Judeo-Spanish periodical Aki Yerushalayim—this paper explores the role of cuisine as a primary affiliative structure in contemporary Sephardi culture. I argue that these two divergent literary traditions, in their general ignorance of one another, constitute a framework for an archive of Sephardi cooking. In spite of these texts’ common conception of cooking as a female practice of memory and identification as well as their shared interest in the intersection of the culinary and the linguistic, they are at odds with one another as to whether Sephardi culture exists only in the past, or may also be found in the present. Side-by-side consideration of both corpuses requires an understanding of Sephardi culture attentive to persistent continuities in spite of major historical ruptures.

Introduction

Anglophone Cookbooks

Judeo-Spanish Recipes from *Aki Yerushalayim*

Conclusions

Introduction

The taste of Sepharad, the Jewish name for the Iberian Peninsula, can be found, according to most contemporary Sephardi cookbooks, in the flavors of almond and orange blossom. Over half a millennium of migration, these two ingredients

have continued to evoke Iberia, alongside custardy, egg-based desserts and dozens of dishes that are known by Judeo-Spanish names even if they were only added to the Sephardi repertory in the years following expulsion. Like Judeo-Spanish, the everyday language of Sephardi migrants, food is a pillar of Sephardi identity. Recipes and language are two of the cultural artifacts that most easily accompany diasporic subjects over centuries of migration, yet both food and language are subject to accretive processes in which words and dishes from other cultures are added to ever-expanding linguistic and culinary vocabularies with each stop along Sephardi migration routes. Sephardi food, like Judeo-Spanish itself, represents a continually elaborated tradition built around a persistent medieval Iberian core.

Despite its major role in ballasting the integrity of Sephardi culture, Sephardi foods occupy an uncertain niche in constructions of contemporary Jewish cuisine. They plainly differ from the totemic Ashkenazi foods of the popular imaginary of Jewish cuisine; nor can they easily be grouped alongside the Arab and fusion dishes which have come to dominate the cuisine of contemporary Israel. As heritage foods, Jewish foods reflect the migratory itineraries of their makers. Sephardi itineraries are among the longest and most varied in Judaism, leading to an equally varied cuisine; some Sephardi dishes reach back to ancient Baghdad, while others evoke medieval Al-Andalus, and more still were picked up in the Maghreb, Italy, Egypt, the Balkans, and the Levant (the Eastern Mediterranean broadly, sometimes including the Balkans) over half a millennium of post-expulsion peregrinations outward from Iberia. Perhaps because of this unwieldy variety, Sephardi foods have often been regarded as generally, or generically, Mediterranean, rather than constitutive of a distinctively Jewish culinary tradition. In this paper, I examine two bodies of contemporary literature which attempt to codify Sephardi food culture. The first consists of seven Anglophone Sephardi cookbooks (published between 1984 and 2000), while the latter revolves around the long-running recipe column of the Jerusalem-based Judeo-Spanish periodical *Aki Yerushalayim* (1979-2016).¹

¹ Olga Borovaya, *Modern Ladino Culture: Press, Belles Lettres, and Theatre in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012). The author alludes to the difficulty of properly naming and describing the language of the Sephardim, which is variously known as Ladino, Romance, Djudyó, Judeo-Spanish, and more. “In this book,” Borovaya writes, “I will call

Judeo-Spanish derives from the Castilian Spanish spoken by many of the Sephardim expelled from Iberia near the close of the fifteenth century. Over generations of migration, this language acquired vocabulary mainly from Hebrew and Italian, Greek, and Turkish, the languages spoken in important stations on Sephardi itineraries. The Judeo-Spanish and English sources I examine here overlap in time and subject matter but bring to bear different perspectives on Sephardi food and culture. *Aki Yerushalayim* implicitly understands Sephardi cookery as a vital, ongoing practice, while Anglophone Sephardi cookbooks often describe Sephardi recipes as elements of an obsolescing tradition in need of salvage and preservation. In spite of these divergent perspectives on the ontological status of Sephardi culture, the English cookbooks share with Judeo-Spanish recipes a single epistemology as texts engaged in the construction of an archive of Sephardi food. These divergent literary traditions describe the borders of a Sephardi culinary culture that is a major site of memory and identification for the Sephardi diaspora, yet their general lack of engagement with one another suggests a paradox at the heart of the discourse of contemporary Sephardi cuisine. Understanding the stories inherent in these various recipe collections requires thinking simultaneously of breakage and continuity, cultural rupture and the persistence of culinary memory. Anglophone and Judeo-Spanish sources, in this sense, uncannily double one another, each the other's ghostly partner in the archival process.

By the term “archive,” I intend to describe Sephardi recipes as subject to a quasi-technological process of storage and retrieval, while leaving open the question of the precise nature of the access such as an archive provides. Are Sephardi recipes locked away in such a repository, or is it an open library available for continual

[the language] ‘Ladino’—the name preferred by most of its speakers after World War II—and its other names will appear only in direct quotations” (pp. 14-15). In the case of the present study, I have elected to use the term Judeo-Spanish to describe this language in deference to the subtitle of *Aki Yerushalayim*, originally *Revista [semestrala] de la Emission en djudeo-espanyol de Kol Israel-la Boz de Israel* (1-45) and, later, “*Revista kulturala djudeoespanyola*” (46-100). As in Borovaya, other names for the language will appear only in direct quotations. For a full discussion of the debates over the name of Ladino/Judeo-Spanish see Borovaya, *Modern Ladino Culture*, 13-16. On Ladino print culture, see also Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

access? Theorists Russell J. A. Kilbourn and Eleanor Ty describe the problem of archival access, writing,

[we live] in a world in which it is now possible to walk around with a USB key or “flash drive” in one’s pocket or briefcase, containing as much information as the Library of Congress... For most of us today this is what memory is, in a first-order sense, or rather in a sense that transcends any “natural”-technical binary: an external, prosthetic storage tool.²

A printed recipe is such a storage tool, and a collection of recipes forms the archive around which this paper is built. Anglophone cookbooks and Judeo-Spanish recipes imagine access to their contents under divergent conditions. Bringing these corpuses together permits the construction of a more expansive archive which reflects a broader vision of contemporary Sephardi food culture.

My interest lies not with the identification of the precise elements which these texts position at the core of Sephardi cuisine, but with an exploration of the narrative techniques by which these texts elaborate a picture of the Sephardi culinary universe. This is not to suggest that this study will entirely ignore culinary features such as the primacy of the eggplant in the Sephardi kitchen, but rather to indicate that the prominence of particular ingredients or dishes will be understood in the context of how such prominence plays into the stories these texts tell about Sephardi culture (rather than as evidence for claims about culinary history). While food and the discourse of food are the equal objects of this inquiry, I confine myself here to the ways in which this culinary discourse is elaborated in written sources. As Carol Bardenstein observes, “traditional” modes of recipe transmission presume the ongoing maintenance of links between mothers and daughters, nieces, and daughters-in-law, the former of whom transfer oral and embodied knowledge to their progeny via practical experience in the kitchen. Both *Aki Yerushalayim*’s recipe column and the Anglophone cookbooks I deal with here

² Russell J. A. Kilbourn and Eleanor Ty, “Developments in Memory Studies and Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Literature and Film,” in *The Memory Effect: The Remediation of Memory in Literature and Film*, eds. Russell J. A. Kilbourn and Eleanor Ty (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013).

presuppose a lapse in this mode of transmission, and offer literary documentation of recipes as a substitute (or supplement) to the real or imagined loss of kitchen wisdom. The discourse of Sephardi food they offer is therefore shaped by a literary sensibility; oral histories have been important tools for historians of Sephardi Judaism, but are outside the scope of this study. The methodology, then, involves a close reading of recipes and the range of elements that surround them in these sources, including personal narratives, quasi-anthropological investigations of food and culture, and the photography and graphic design which shape contemporary cookbooks. Instead of exploring the history of Sephardi food or attempting to define what Sephardi food “is,” my readings are attentive to how Sephardi history and food culture are narrated in literary contexts.

The axes of my analysis are my sources’ relationships with history and memory, with language, and with gender, all within the context of the larger question of what the act of collecting Sephardi recipes signifies about how food writing constructs the state of Sephardi culture. History and memory are, in this analysis, largely indistinguishable from one another; my concern lies not with historical fact, but with the memorial narration thereof as it occurs on the Sephardi table. By “language” I mean Judeo-Spanish, specifically. Sephardi food and the Judeo-Spanish language reciprocally reinforce one another as core features of Sephardi distinctiveness. Experiences of consuming Sephardi heritage foods are often linked with memories of familial conversations in Judeo-Spanish, the dishes seeming inseparable from the vocabulary used to describe them. This simultaneous coding is evident in the merging of auditory and gustatory sense memories and in concrete linguistic features such as the characteristic use of diminutive suffixes in the names of Sephardi foods (not *börek*, but *borekita*, for example). The final axis, of gender, concerns the role of women as guardians and exponents of Sephardi food culture, as well as the ways in which women’s cultural capital is shifted when recipes move from private kitchens to cookbooks and magazines. Such transpositions of culinary authority necessitate the creation of new ways of “maintaining communal structure, social ties, and cultural tradition,” which move “women’s efforts toward

empowering themselves and the [domestic] spaces they inhabited” from the private sphere of the domestic into public view.³

Aki Yerushalayim's recipe column presents a unique resource for scholars of Sephardi food. For over thirty years, from 1979 to 2016, this Jerusalem-based journal distributed articles on Sephardi culture and history, reviews of Sephardi music and literature, short poems and stories, and news to an international readership. The magazine was founded and edited throughout its run by Moshe Shaul, an Izmir-born Israeli journalist. Beginning with the second issue, every issue of *Aki Yerushalayim* includes Sephardi recipes. No other similar archive of contemporary Sephardi foodways exists in Judeo-Spanish, making *Aki Yerushalayim* a natural locus of this study. The selection of Anglophone texts was, as a result of the recent efflorescence of English-language Sephardi food writing, more difficult. My choices were guided by a happy coincidence: my encounter with the cookbook collection of the Sephardi restaurant Gostijo, in Athens, Greece. When I visited Gostijo in 2013, the owners were kind enough to allow me to borrow their cookbooks, which include major texts that are exemplary of Anglophone Sephardi food writing as well as several lesser-known volumes which indicate the variety of approaches food writers have taken to this cuisine.⁴ Focusing on these texts allows me, further, to grapple with a group of cookbooks that are already constitutive of a working archive of Sephardi food and are demonstrably in use in a contemporary Sephardi kitchen.

³ Andrea K. Newlyn, “Challenging Contemporary Narrative Theory: The Alternative Textual Strategies of Nineteenth-century Manuscript Cookbooks,” *Journal of American Culture* 22, no. 3 (1999): 35.

⁴ The seven English-language cookbooks in Gostijo's kitchen library were published between 1984 and 2000. In deference to the integrity of Gostijo's archive, all seven of these texts are discussed at length in this paper. Although Gostijo's library offers an artificial constraint on the plethora of Sephardi cookbooks published over the last 40 years, it has the virtue of containing both the major texts in the field as well as more esoteric volumes, enabling a fair, representative survey of the range of material available.

Anglophone Cookbooks

Gostijo, a Sephardi restaurant established in Athens, Greece, in 2011, is attached to the local Chabad center and run as a project of cultural ambassadorship by the rabbi and his wife, neither of whom is of Sephardi descent. The kitchen, the owners informed me, is managed by a Greek Christian woman who ensures that the dishes, derived from a number of English-language Sephardi cookbooks, are prepared in an authentic Greek style. Gostijo's website explains,

We felt [Gostijo] had to do more than offer delicious and unique cuisine. It had to share an entire culture. The result is Gostijo, a culinary exploration of the Sephardic cuisine of the Mediterranean Jews... We chose the name Gostijo as it means “sharing food” in Ladino, the traditional language of Sephardic Jews. And this is the aim of the restaurant—to share the traditional Sephardic recipes and the rich and ancient culture of Sephardic Jews.⁵

The menu offers a mixture of Sephardi classics like *huevos haminados* (baked eggs) and *bourekitas* (little pies), Greek dishes (*moussaka*, *souvlaki*, *gyro*), and contemporary Israeli favorites (Palestinian *falafel* and *mujaddara*, Ashkenazi *chicken schnitzel*). At the same time, one notes that the menu labels Sephardi leek fritters in Spanish as *keftes de puerro* (using the Spanish word for leeks) rather than by their usual Judeo-Spanish moniker, *keftes de prasa*. While it is certainly not the case that only Sephardi Jews are authorized to cook Sephardi cuisine, such slippages highlight the complex relationships of Gostijo's operators and head chef with a Sephardi culture which they approach from outsiders' perspectives.

Located in the Psiri neighborhood of downtown Athens, Gostijo caters both to locals and to Jewish tourists (the website is, tellingly, available in English, Greek, and Hebrew). There are increasing numbers of Sephardi restaurants around the world, including such exemplars as Jerusalem's Barood, La Escudilla in Madrid, and La Vara in Brooklyn. The dishes offered by these establishments are often

⁵ “About,” Gostijo Kosher Restaurant, accessed August 19, 2019, <https://www.gostijo.gr/about/>.

framed as the heritage foods of the restaurants' owners.⁶ The variety of dishes on Gostijo's menu, on the other hand, suggests both an interruption of traditional familial lines of culinary transmission and the existence of alternative avenues for the propagation of recipes, through the doubled mediation of the cookbooks used in the restaurant's kitchen and the restaurant's own interpretations of Sephardi recipes offered to customers. I argue that the Greek and Israeli dishes on Gostijo's menu should not be understood as evidence of inconsistency in the restaurant's focus, nor as a consequence of the non-Sephardi origins of its managers, but instead as a characteristic feature of contemporary efforts to codify Sephardi food along Mediterranean lines.⁷ The intermingling of categories like "Greek," "Israeli," and "Sephardi" on Gostijo's tables reflects an uncertainty about the precise location, in time and space, of the Sephardi world. Did it exist in Iberia, or the Levant? Is it all around us in modern Greece? Or has it, perhaps, migrated to Israel? This restaurant, a ten-minute walk from the Acropolis, operated by Ashkenazim with food cooked by a Christian, offers space for the (re)presentation of Sephardi food cultures. Gostijo's very existence suggests a response to the uncertain ontological status of a Sephardi cuisine—and a Sephardi culture—which, in the lachrymose view of popular narratives of Sephardi history, has been perceived to be in decline since the Iberian expulsions in 1492 and 1496. In such a conception of Sephardi history, the vibrant Sephardi world of the early twentieth-century Levant can only be a belated anomaly, always already doomed to deliquescence. The unexpected continuity evidenced at Gostijo recalls both the rupture of Levantine Sephardi culture with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the ravages of World War II, and the inevitable accompaniment of such ruptures by persistent, new manifestations of Sephardi culture.⁸ In light of

⁶ Authenticity in cuisine is, in any case, a bogeyman. El fogón Sefardi, in Segovia, for example, serves suckling pig in addition to *keftes de puerro*. Market considerations likely mandate the inclusion of this non-kosher Segovian specialty.

⁷ On the construction of Mediterranean cuisine and its overlap with Sephardi cuisine, see Harry Eli Kashdan, "Anglophone Cookbooks and the Making of the Mediterranean," *Food and Foodways* 25, no. 1 (2017): 1-19; 4-6 on Claudia Roden.

⁸ On the lachrymose view of Sephardi history and evolving counter-narratives, see Sarah Abreyava Stein, "Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries since 1492," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 327-329. As Stein details, most reappraisals of Sephardi history begin by deconstructing the "Sephardi Mystique" of the Golden Age of al-Andalus. My attention, instead, is on the slow rupture of Sephardi history in

Gostijo's menu of Sephardi, Israeli, and Greek dishes, any food eaten—or perceived to be eaten—by Sephardim might be, or become, Sephardi food. Dishes stand equally as exemplars of particular cultural traditions and avatars of a broadly constructed Mediterranean culinary and cultural zone.⁹

The seven cookbooks I borrowed from Gostijo's library reflect this ambiguity. Some, like Gilda Angel's *Sephardi Holiday Cooking: Recipes and Traditions* and Viviane Alchech Miner's *From My Grandmother's Kitchen: A Sephardic Cookbook*, describe their recipes exclusively as "Sephardi."¹⁰ Others, like Joyce Goldstein's *Sephardic Flavors: Jewish Cooking of the Mediterranean*, Robert Sternberg's *The Sephardic Kitchen: The Healthful Food and Rich Culture of the Mediterranean Jews*, and Pamela Grau Twena's *The Sephardic Table: The Vibrant Cooking of the Mediterranean Jews*, treat Sephardi and Mediterranean as synonymous descriptors of a particular historical milieu; Sternberg allows a slippage between the cuisines of Sephardim and "other Jewish communities in the Mediterranean region," without specifying the (presumably Mizrahi) communities to which he refers.¹¹ Yet other texts focus on personal dishes local to particular countries or communities, as in Nicholas Stavroulakis' *Cookbook of the Jews of Greece*.¹² Claudia Roden's *The Book of Jewish Food* embraces a much broader geography; the Sephardi half of this enormous cookbook includes dishes

early-twentieth century Levant, from the decline of the Ottoman Empire to World War II to the establishment of the State of Israel and the rise of Arab nationalist movements.

⁹ As Claudia Roden put it, "there is really no such thing as Jewish food... Local regional food becomes Jewish when it travels with Jews to new homelands. And even then it has only been regarded as such in certain circumstances." Claudia Roden, "Cooking in Israel: A Changing Mosaic," in *National & Regional Styles of Cookery: Oxford Symposium 1981. Proceedings*, ed. Alan Davidson (London: Prospect Books, 1981): 112-117.

¹⁰ Gilda Angel, *Sephardic Holiday Cooking: Recipes and Traditions* (Mount Vernon, NY: Decalogue Books, 1986); Viviane Alchech Miner and Linda Krinn, *From My Grandmother's Kitchen: A Sephardic Cookbook* (Gainesville, FL: Triad Pub. Co., 1984).

¹¹ Robert Sternberg, *The Sephardic Kitchen: The Healthful Food and Rich Culture of the Mediterranean Jews* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), vii. See also Joyce Goldstein, *Sephardic Flavors: Jewish Cooking of the Mediterranean* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000); Pamela Grau Twena, *The Sephardic Table: The Vibrant Cooking of the Mediterranean Jews: A Personal Collection of Recipes from the Middle East, North Africa and India* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

¹² Nicholas Stavroulakis, *Cookbook of the Jews of Greece* (Port Jefferson, NY: Cadmus Press, 1986).

from Indian, Chinese, and Mizrahi Jewish communities alongside recipes from the Mediterranean.¹³ Roden's *Book of Jewish Food* is by far the best-known of these texts and still, more than three decades after its first publication, enjoying a top-ten ranking in Amazon.com's kosher cookbooks subsection.¹⁴ Stavroulakis' *Cookbooks of the Jews of Greece* is the only one of these volumes to have been translated, as *Cuisine des juifs de Grèce*, in the French.¹⁵ Many of these texts narrate a culinary history that traces Sephardi cuisine to medieval Iberia, but others have a more immediate focus on a grandmother's or mother-in-law's kitchen. Weaving through these varied perspectives are a fascination with the Judeo-Spanish language, an uncertainty about whether to celebrate the role of women as stewards of Sephardi culinary culture or bemoan their relegation to the kitchen as a relic of patriarchal mores, and an unexamined Orientalism vis-à-vis the Sephardi world. What emerges from these elements is a sensation of "pastness"—what Rey Chow, writing about her experiences wandering through American Chinatowns, has described as "an epistemic status [as] ethnographic museums, where relics, including people as well as objects from the 'past' are put on display."¹⁶ In Anglophone Sephardi cookbooks, food itself becomes an object from the past; these cookbooks invariably describe the Sephardi world as something already lost and in danger of being entirely forgotten.

The sources used at Gostijo can be divided into two groups. The first consists of what I, borrowing a term from David Sutton call "nostalgia cookbooks," by women and men who trace their ancestry to Iberia and mourn the decline of the cosmopolitan Levant around the mid-twentieth century, drawing comparisons between the demise of that world and the end of an imagined period of interreligious harmony in Iberia upon the expulsions at the close of the fifteenth

¹³ Claudia Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand and Vilna to the Present Day* (London: Viking, 1987).

¹⁴ "The Book of Jewish Food," Amazon, accessed October 22, 2019, <https://smile.amazon.com/Book-Jewish-Food-Odyssey-Samarkand/dp/0394532589/>.

¹⁵ Nicholas Stavroulakis, *Cuisine des Juifs de Grèce*, translated by Mireille Mazoyer-Saül (Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1995).

¹⁶ Rey Chow, "The Provocation of *Dim Sum*; or, Making Diaspora Visible on Film," *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese* 9, no. 2 (2009): 210.

century.¹⁷ As Svetlana Boym eloquently put it, “Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy.”¹⁸ The fantasy, in this case, lies in both the imaginary of *convivencia* in Al-Andalus and the suggestion of unproblematic continuity between the Sephardi culture(s) of medieval Iberia and those of the early twentieth century.¹⁹ The second group of texts includes cookbooks by non-Sephardim who treat the Sephardi world as an historical and anthropological object waiting to be discovered from the outside, and subsequently salvaged and preserved for ongoing consumption through the practices of cooking and eating. Both groups of texts describe a secret cultural space that can be entered through rites of discovery and initiation, offered as a gift first to cookbook writers—by childhood experience, marriage into Sephardi families, or anthropological investigation—and, subsequently, to readers like Gostijo’s Ashkenazi owners.

In *The Book of Jewish Food*, Claudia Roden approaches Sephardi food from the perspective of her nostalgia for her childhood in Cairo. She explains, “My own world disappeared forty years ago, but it has remained powerful in my imagination. When you are cut off from your past, that past takes a stronger hold on your emotions.”²⁰ Roden’s personal experience is, in her cookbook, a microcosm of the Sephardi experience writ large. “This centuries-old chapter of Jewish life has come to an end,” she writes, “but we will always have traces of it on the table, for cooking is the part of culture that lasts.”²¹ Roden’s sense that the Sephardi world ended around the middle of the twentieth century is repeated in

¹⁷ David Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford: Berg, 2006).

¹⁸ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), xiii. These cookbooks partake, in particular, in Boym’s “reflective nostalgia,” which “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and time” (p. 47).

¹⁹ For reappraisals of the idea of *convivencia*, see Kenneth Baxter Wolf, “*Convivencia* in Medieval Spain: A Brief History of an Idea,” *Religion Compass* 3, no. 1 (2009): 72-85; and, Jonathan Ray, “Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing Our Approach to Medieval *Convivencia*,” *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 2 (2005): 1-18.

²⁰ Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 3. For a discussion of the complexity of Roden’s claims to an Egyptian identity. See Carol Bardenstein, “Transmissions Interrupted: Reconfiguring Food, Memory, and Gender in the Cookbook-Memoirs of Middle Eastern Exiles,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 1 (2002): 353-387.

²¹ Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 231.

all of the Anglophone texts I examine here, where authors figure themselves as redeemers of a culture on the verge of being lost, presenting culinary artifacts of Sepharad for an audience in search of foods that are both exotic and “authentically” Jewish. In Roden’s case, the termination of the post-expulsion Sephardi world is precisely coincident with her own family’s departure from Egypt in 1956.²² This is typical of the nostalgic writings examined by Svetlana Boym, who asserts, “in the emotional topography of memory, personal and historical events tend to be conflated.”²³ For Roden, there is little difference between the end of her childhood world and the end of the Sephardi world at large. Preoccupied with her own memories of Egypt, Roden turns to food because it is “a link with the past,” with “the old life,” but the precise temporal location of this “past” is hazy. *The Book of Jewish Food* embraces a transhistorical perspective in which “the past” to which Roden refers might be located anywhere, from her childhood home in Cairo to her Sephardi ancestors’ homes in Spain.²⁴

This diachronicity makes the Sephardi world a space of the mind which can be eternally recreated on the table. When Roden writes, “Many of the grand dishes and refinements [of Sephardi cuisine] were acquired during the great periods in the Sephardi experience,” she refers not only to the early modern Ottoman Empire and medieval Iberia, but to “the eighth to the twelfth century in Baghdad” and the world of the Sephardim’s own ancestors, Jews who chose to stay in Babylonia after

²² In 1956 and after, the currents of Egyptian nationalism made life in Egypt untenable for many Jews, including both foreign and Egyptian citizens, as a result of economic pressures and outright expulsions. The complex of expulsions and nationalizations in late 1956 deserves some elaboration. Joel Beinin’s excellent *The Dispersal of Egyptian Jewry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) explains the process by which many Jews were forced to leave Egypt in detail: “In response to the British-French-Israeli attack on Egypt on October 29, 1956, Egypt took harsh measures against its Jewish community. About 1,000 Jews were detained, more than half of them Egyptian citizens. Thirteen thousand French and British citizens were expelled from Egypt in retaliation for the tripartite attack, among them many Jews. In addition, 500 Jews not holding French or British citizenship were expelled. Some 460 Jewish-owned businesses were sequestered. Many Jews lost their jobs. The government nationalized the assets of all British and French citizens, and Jews holding those nationalities were affected in that capacity... When the hostilities were over, Jews were subjected to unofficial pressures to leave Egypt and renounce their citizenship” (p. 87).

²³ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 52.

²⁴ Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 11 and 211.

the Persian conquest.²⁵ Robert Sternberg joins Roden in narrating Sephardi history from both medieval Iberia and the medieval Middle East, while for Nicholas Stavroulakis, who considers Greek Romaniote and Sephardi dishes side by side, references to recipes that may date back “to antiquity” lend Sephardi food an ancient gravitas.²⁶ In many of these cookbooks, continuity is just as important as antiquity. The dishes do not simply have ancient roots, but are often presented as unchanged from their historical versions. Sephardi cuisine therefore provides a direct link with the past. Offering proof of this point, Roden notes that many of her inherited recipes “are very like dishes cooked in the Iberian peninsula today.”²⁷ She describes the “thrilling” sensation of wandering through Seville and coming across “narrow winding streets which bore the names of relatives and friends of mine,” suggesting intimate links between food culture and language.²⁸ Joyce Goldstein, in the rationale for her *Sephardic Flavors*, suggests something similar. She avers that she “needed to see what remains from the Spanish and Portuguese repertoire, or was derived from it, and how the recipes have changed and evolved as the Sephardim changed locale.” Goldstein does not explain why she felt this need, assuming her readers, like her, intrinsically value the idea of maintaining an intact tradition. Her conclusion: “Not much has changed.”²⁹ Unspoken, here, is the idea that older is better, truer, or more authentic. For these writers, a key part of the importance of Sephardi cuisine is its antiquity. Recipes of more recent origin are correspondingly less valuable.

According to these cookbooks, Sephardi culture is not just located in the past, but in a past that was itself unchanging. Per these texts, even when Sephardi culture thrived, it was somehow outside of time. In the modern Mediterranean it was still linked to Sepharad, in medieval Sepharad it remained tied to Baghdad, and in medieval Baghdad it was still linked to Jewish antiquity. It is for this reason that both Sternberg and Goldstein emphasize what Goldstein calls a “strange symmetry”: When the Sephardim were expelled from Spain, “the last day for

²⁵ Ibid., 212-213.

²⁶ Sternberg, *The Sephardic Kitchen*, xiv; Stavroulakis, *Cookbook of the Jews of Greece*, 6.

²⁷ Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 223.

²⁸ Ibid., 218.

²⁹ Goldstein, *Sephardic Flavors*, 25.

departure was the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av... the anniversary of the destruction of the First and Second Temples of Jerusalem.”³⁰ The perceived importance of this historical coincidence lies in its echoing of what Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi calls the “cyclical quality of liturgical time.”³¹ The dates of several of these volumes’ publications—Goldstein, 2000; Sternberg, 1996; Roden, 1987, reissued 1996; and Twena, 1998—suggest an affinity with acts of memory surrounding the 500-year anniversary of the expulsions of Sephardi Jews from Iberia in 1492 and 1496. While none of these cookbooks were translated into Spanish, they certainly capitalize on a wave of memorial activity for Sepharad at the end of the twentieth century. In Goldstein’s telling, Sephardi history is, like Jewish ritual observance, subject to repetition. The Sephardim, then, always await the next disaster in a history marked by cataclysm. As Viviane Alchech Miner puts it, “Somehow I knew, even when I was very young, that our situation wasn’t permanent.”³² This representation of Sephardi culture is an odd fusion of the static and the temporary: the only constant is the inevitability of disaster, against which is arrayed a set of recipes characterized by, as Boym might suggest, a nostalgic, romantic fantasy of an unchanged culinary culture.

Robert Sternberg enters an Orientalist mode when describing the diachronic nature of the Sephardi world. “In the Mediterranean,” he explains, “ancient history lives side by side with modernity. Mysticism, the supernatural, romance, and poetry appear in all facets of everyday life, including cooking.”³³ Sternberg’s Orientalist language insists on a vision of the Sephardi world as other to “normative” and “modern” (that is, Ashkenazi) Judaism. This perspective is shared by both Sephardi and non-Sephardi authors; Sternberg’s figuration of a Mediterranean imbued with decadence and magic is only the most extreme example of a kind of facile exoticism in which many of these cookbook authors indulge. Roden describes Sephardi food as “sensual,” and “refined and sophisticated,” while the Sephardim themselves are “colorful,” with “a sunny,

³⁰ Ibid., 12.

³¹ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 42.

³² Miner and Krinn, *From My Grandmother’s Kitchen*, 152.

³³ Sternberg, *The Sephardic Kitchen*, vii-viii.

hedonistic nature... sensitive to beauty and pleasure.”³⁴ Miner tells us simply that Sephardi food is “an exotic blend,” and Twena agrees, adding that Sephardi life offered a “simple, yet colorful existence.”³⁵ Echoing evocations of a particular “Sephardi mystique” common in Ashkenazi writing, these cookbooks repeatedly describe the color and warmth of Sephardi culture in implicit contrast to the Ashkenazi world with which, these authors presume, readers will be more familiar.³⁶ Roden makes the comparison explicit: “The Ashkenazi world is a cold world... The Sephardi world is a warm one.”³⁷ The dichotomy of Roden’s construction offers a commercial rationale for the publication of the text: readers who believe themselves already familiar with Jewish food must still purchase Roden’s book to acquaint themselves with the full range of Jewish cooking.

Orientalist tropes aside, Roden and Miner’s bias in favor of Sephardi food and culture can be described as a function of both the marketing of their cookbooks and their personal nostalgia for their childhoods in the Sephardi world. The other authors represented in Gostijo’s cookbook library have different connections to Sephardi culture. Stavroulakis strikes an objective, scholarly attitude towards the Jewish cultures of his own Greece, but Goldstein, Sternberg, Angel, and Twena construct their interest in Sephardi food in romantic terms. For Angel and Twena, this is a literal romance; both married into Sephardi families. Twena describes an effort of many months’ careful cajoling before Claire, her husband’s “exotic Iraqi mother, [...] finally allowed [Twena] into the kitchen.”³⁸ She continues, “I felt like a guru’s disciple, gaining enlightenment in morsels.”³⁹ Goldstein and Sternberg, on the other hand, approach Sephardi cuisine as an offshoot of their

³⁴ Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 212 and 132.

³⁵ Miner and Krinn, *From My Grandmother’s Kitchen*, 6; Twena, *The Sephardic Table*, 14.

³⁶ On the “Sephardi mystique,” see John M. Efron, *German Jewry and the Allure of the Sephardic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Carsten Schapkow, *Role Model and Countermodel: The Golden Age of Iberian Jewry and German Jewish Culture during the Era of Emancipation* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016); Ismar Schorsch, “The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989), 47-66.

³⁷ Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 16.

³⁸ Twena, *The Sephardic Table*, 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

interest in the Mediterranean zone.⁴⁰ They write of their love for and fascination with the contemporary Mediterranean, broadly. Goldstein explains, “Since 1957, the year of my first voyage to the Mediterranean, I have been in love with the food and flavors of the region.”⁴¹ Her love for the Mediterranean provides the basis for her culinary authority. “After many years of cooking Mediterranean food, I believe I have acquired a natural affinity for the seasonings of the region.”⁴² The oxymoron of an “acquired natural affinity” underlines Goldstein’s perspective as an outside researcher of Sephardi culture. Sternberg shares Goldstein’s love for an exotic Mediterranean. He writes, “I encountered Sephardic and other forms of Mediterranean Jewish cooking for the first time in Israel, where I lived as a student from 1972 to 1974. I was fascinated with the types of foods produced in the kitchens of some of my non-Ashkenazic Israeli friends and in the ethnic restaurants and kiosks of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.”⁴³ Implicit in his memories is the claim that Sephardi food is itself “ethnic.” Ashkenazi food, by unspoken contrast, is normative Jewish food.

Love for Sephardi food, whether from the perspective of personal memory and affiliation or “acquired affinity,” forms the foundation for an argument, repeated in all of these cookbooks, about the superiority of the Sephardi way of life. This argument, facilitated by the corollary assumption that Sephardi culture exists only in the past, not the present, is expressed most clearly in the way these texts narrate Sephardi history following the expulsions from Iberia. In each text, we learn how the Sephardi diaspora dominated local Jewish communities in the Mediterranean. According to Roden, “Iberians quickly overwhelmed the Balkan communities,” while in Morocco, “the newcomers quickly came to play a central role in the development of the country... with their superior culture.”⁴⁴ In the Levant, Stavroulakis echoes Roden’s sentiments, noting that upon “the arrival of the Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire, Romaniote Jews were suddenly faced with a

⁴⁰ For more on the elision of Sephardi and Mediterranean, see Joëlle Bahoul, “The Sephardic Jew as Mediterranean: A View from Kinship and Gender,” *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 4, no. 2 (1994): 197-207.

⁴¹ Goldstein, *Sephardic Flavors*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴³ Sternberg, *The Sephardic Kitchen*, 9.

⁴⁴ Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 225 and 494.

more sophisticated culture.”⁴⁵ Goldstein adds, “Romanote communities were eventually obliged to accept Sephardic cultural dominance and language.”⁴⁶ Finally, Sternberg summarizes, “Sephardic culture became the dominant culture and Sephardic cuisine became the dominant cuisine.”⁴⁷ While I do not contest the historical narrative of Sephardi cultural dominance over other Jewish communities in the Mediterranean, the language of these cookbooks reflects not just dominance, but a normative standard of cultural superiority. Absent are any explanations of what perceived inadequacies might have made the local Jewish communities of Morocco, the Balkans, or the Levant inferior to the newly arrived Sephardim.

The other normative statements repeated through all of Gostijo’s cookbooks concern women’s roles in the Sephardi kitchen. Describing her mother-in-law’s culinary expertise, Twena writes, “Cooking was the only medium of expression available to women of her culture.”⁴⁸ Marc Angel, in an introduction to his wife, Gilda Angel’s, cookbook, writes that women’s kitchen labor “reflected a love and devotion for family and guests.”⁴⁹ Goldstein waxes nostalgic:

Most women worked at home, feeding the immediate family or entertaining guests and extended family in a hospitable and generous manner... Most didn’t work outside the home, so they did not have to rush to get a meal together for the family, as so many of us do today. It would be wonderful to return to the traditions of the Sephardic dinner table, to the joy of the family meal and the pleasure of extended conversation. I hope that these recipes will tempt you into the kitchen.⁵⁰

Leaving aside these observations’ apparent ignorance of the types of economically productive labor many Sephardi women did undertake in the home—dressmaking and tailoring, tatting lace, etc.—Goldstein’s nostalgia here appears to

⁴⁵ Stavroulakis, *Cookbook of the Jews of Greece*, 4.

⁴⁶ Goldstein, *Sephardic Flavors*, 17.

⁴⁷ Sternberg, *The Sephardic Kitchen*, viii.

⁴⁸ Twena, *The Sephardic Table*, 11.

⁴⁹ Angel, *Sephardic Holiday Cooking*, 14.

⁵⁰ Goldstein, *Sephardic Flavors*, 27.

be directed at a type of convivial family life enabled by the confinement of women to the domestic sphere.⁵¹ Roden seems, at first, to parrot these sentiments, though a slightly ironic tone lends her observations greater nuance.

The men went to work, the women prepared the meals... It was labor-intensive, with a lot of pounding, hollowing, stuffing, wrapping and rolling into tiny balls and fingers. The women prided themselves on their skills and—so my father said—were happy to spend hours in the kitchen.⁵²

In introductions and acknowledgments, a few of these authors express their gratitude to the “women” or “ladies” who taught them these recipes.⁵³ Yet for all these cookbooks’ ethnographic bent, the actual voices of the women who provided these authors with culinary instruction are largely absent. The one exception comes from Twena, who relates a conversation with a woman she met while doing her research.

[She] told me that her children had always asked for her recipes and that somehow there was never enough time. This was a common sentiment among the women I cooked with or interviewed—they did not know how to pass on their way of life; the pace had changed.⁵⁴

The authors of these cookbooks, then, whether male or female, inscribe themselves within a salvage paradigm, rescuing from obscurity a culture that its own practitioners—Roden and Miner excepted—are seen as incapable of maintaining. This attitude is evidence of a kind of doublethink: even while ascribing superiority to the Sephardi culture that spread from Iberia throughout the Mediterranean, these texts assume that contemporary Sephardi culture is a degraded relic, divorced from its rhapsodic past.

⁵¹ On Sephardi women’s work, see Ruth Lamdan, “Jewish Women as Providers in the Generations Following the Expulsion from Spain,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issues* 13 (2007): 49-67.

⁵² Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 6.

⁵³ Twena, *The Sephardic Table*, 6; Goldstein, *Sephardic Flavors*, 27; Stavroulakis, *Cookbook of the Jews of Greece*, xi.

⁵⁴ Twena, *The Sephardic Table*, 14-15.

The Sephardi language, Judeo-Spanish, is, like Sephardi food, generally asserted to be a major tradition in steep decline. Most of these authors content themselves with mention of the language's medieval Castilian roots and descriptions of the accretion of Levantine linguistic elements in the evolving Judeo-Spanish that was spoken in the eastern Mediterranean. Sternberg sprinkles *The Sephardic Kitchen* with Judeo-Spanish proverbs and folktales that similarly situate food within the broader practice of culture, and Roden further elaborates the linkages between language, food, and culture, recalling that, as a child, Judeo-Spanish “represented a mysterious lost paradise, a world of romance and courage and glorious chivalry which enmeshed us all in invisible threads of deep longing with its songs about lovers in Seville and proverbs about meat stews and almond cakes.”⁵⁵ Roden's lambent nostalgia suggests that even in her childhood Judeo-Spanish was already experienced as an artifact of a lost past. Goldstein goes further, describing Judeo-Spanish as “spoken by an ever dwindling number of elderly Sephardim,” seeming to anticipate the language's imminent demise alongside that of its last speakers.

The elements metering the collapse of Sephardi culture are remarkably consistent across these texts: wistful, romantic longing for the milieu of the early twentieth-century Mediterranean, attempts to account for the changing roles of women at home and in the workforce, and the death of the Judeo-Spanish language. Only Sternberg acknowledges “living Sephardic Jewish communities” around the world, “in Israel, France, Latin America, South Africa, and the United States,” but these communities—with the possible exception of the Israeli one—are explicitly not the subject of his survey; the book's subtitle evokes *The Healthful Food and Rich Culture of the Mediterranean Jews*, not the global Sephardi diaspora. In this light, Sternberg, like the other authors discussed here, contributes to a recipe archive oriented towards the preservation of a dead culture, not the propagation of its still-extant forms. These texts evince an inconsistent understanding of history and time: in their view, while the expulsions from Iberia emphatically do not constitute a cultural break, the decline of the cosmopolitan Mediterranean as a result of the spread of Nazism to Greece and the fall of various imperial and

⁵⁵ Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*, 7.

colonial powers across North Africa and the Levant emphatically does.⁵⁶ This core assumption makes of Sephardi cuisine a relic, an artifact, something to be recuperated from an inviolable narrative of loss.

Judeo-Spanish Recipes from *Aki Yerushalayim*

The very existence of *Aki Yerushalayim*'s recipe column tends to negate some of the major assumptions of Anglophone sources, though it is important to recognize that *Aki Yerushalayim* is itself something of an oddity, even before turning to the recipe column which sits, like an afterthought, at the end of all but the very first of the journal's one hundred issues (1979-2016). The major centers of the modern Judeo-Spanish press were in pre-World War II Salonika, Constantinople, Smyrna, and Sofia.⁵⁷ This press flowered along with Levantine Sephardi culture near the end of the nineteenth century, and scholars—like cookbook authors—generally agree that its heyday had passed by the middle of the twentieth. Though the descendants of many of the Mediterranean's Sephardi communities indeed moved to Israel, by the time of the journal's inauguration, Judeo-Spanish had for some decades been understood to be a language in steep decline. In historical terms, *Aki Yerushalayim* was already belated when the first issue went to press; the establishment of a new Judeo-Spanish periodical in late twentieth-century Jerusalem was a quixotic endeavor. Greek Thessaloniki, Turkish Istanbul and Izmir, and Bulgarian Sofia had taken the places of the Ottoman cities which had long been comparatively hospitable to Sephardi Jews, and Jerusalem was

⁵⁶ On the links between constructions of Mediterranean culture and memories of medieval Spain, see Tabea Alexa Linhard, *Jewish Spain: A Mediterranean Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 6-10.

⁵⁷ Olga Borovaya suggests only the first three sites in *Modern Ladino Culture*. Sarah Abrevaya Stein includes Sofia alongside the other cities in *Making Jews Modern*. Jerusalem was a minor player in the world of the Judeo-Spanish press until its rapid development after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. See Brad Sabin Hill, "Printing," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Jeffrey Khan (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

positioning itself as the center of a new, Hebrew literary culture ostensibly open to, and speaking for, all Israeli Jews.⁵⁸

In founding *Aki Yerushalayim*, Moshe Shaul, editor-in-chief of the journal for the entirety of its run, aimed to both fill the Judeo-Spanish gap in Israeli journalism and to standardize the spelling of Judeo-Spanish written in Latin characters. This mission quickly expanded to include historical essays, literary materials, and reviews of recent publications in Judeo-Spanish or about Sephardi Jews. Recipes were first featured in the second issue of *Aki Yerushalayim*, where they were appended to two brief articles on food in Sephardi culture which, like Anglophone sources, assert an unchanging Sephardi culinary tradition preserved since the expulsions from Iberia.⁵⁹ They continued to appear, generally without connection to the journal's other content, in all subsequent issues, and were regularized in issue number five, April 1980, under the title "Gastronomia Sefaradi." The column was written by Kamelia Shahar until the fiftieth issue of *Aki Yerushalayim* (n.2, 1994), when authorship passed to Zelda Ovadia, who retained her position until the magazine, facing declining subscription numbers and decreased government funding from Israel's National Authority for Ladino, ceased publication with its one hundredth issue in 2016.⁶⁰ Alongside the regular recipe column, the journal only sporadically included articles on culinary topics—sixteen in total, including the two found before the recipes that debuted in the journal's second issue. These articles range from personal narratives about cooking with one's family to culinary histories examining the roles of Sephardim in the sugar and cacao trades. Twice, the journal printed poems about food. A handful of issues include a cookbook among the journal's regular book reviews. On four occasions general cooking advice is offered alongside the recipes in "Gastronomia Sefaradi." Much more common—twenty instances in total—is the inclusion of Judeo-Spanish *refranes* (short sayings or proverbs) on culinary themes

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the question of whether Jerusalem is, or was ever, a Sephardi city, see Matthias B. Lehmann, "Rethinking Sephardi Identity: Jews and Other Jews in Ottoman Palestine," *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 81-109.

⁵⁹ "Gastronomia Sefaradi," *Aki Yerushalayim* 2 (1979): 25; Matilda Cohen, *La Savor De La Tradision*, *Aki Yerushalayim* 2 (1979): 26-28.

⁶⁰ Thirteen issues of *Aki Yerushalayim* were released as double issues, meaning that only 87 separate editions of the journal were actually published.

interspersed among an issue's recipes. In its 37 years, *Aki Yerushalayim* provided recipes for about 350 dishes. About half of these were reproduced, unchanged, in 1995 in the volume *El gizado Sefaradi*, itself replete with *refranes* and interpolated literary selections.⁶¹

Granted the unusual nature of this source, it is worth pausing to examine closely the forms taken by the "Gastronomia Sefaradi" column over the decades of its publication. The recipes themselves, extracted from their curious context, are generally unremarkable. Eggs, eggplants, and cheese are heavily featured, as are rolled, filled, and stuffed foods, which are variously baked or fried. One finds directions for composing salads, rice dishes, and soups, as well as instructions for baking all kinds of Sephardi sweets. To the culinary historian, a comparison between *Aki Yerushalayim* and popular Anglophone Sephardi cookbooks offers little that will alter our understanding of Levantine Sephardi cuisine. Instead of focusing on the dishes themselves, then, I direct my attention mainly to the form and framing of the "Gastronomia Sefaradi" column.

An article accompanying the first recipes featured in the journal, in the second issue of *Aki Yerushalayim*, offers a rationale for a discussion of Sephardi food by way of bemoaning the decline of matrilineal transmission and the vagueness of recipes passed down from mother to daughter or daughter-in-law over generations. The author, Matilda Cohen, goes so far as to lay blame for the decline of Sephardi cuisine on "the mothers," whose imprecise measurements and eagerness to cook for, rather than with, their children kept the current generation from learning to cook for themselves.⁶² The recipes are offered as demonstration of the importance of preserving typical dishes. With Cohen's complaint about Sephardi mothers in mind, recipes in *Aki Yerushalayim* are invariably precise and easy to follow. After the second issue, the decline of Sephardi cuisine is never again

⁶¹ Moshe Shaul, Aldina Quintana Rodriguez and Zeldia Ovadia, eds., *El gizado Sefaradi* (Zaragoza: IberCaja, 1995).

⁶² Cohen, *La Savor De La Tradision*, 26. Matilda Cohen, whose name appears as both Matilda Cohen and Matilda Kohen in the second issue of *Aki Yerushalayim*, may be Matilda Koén-Sarano, a prolific writer and teacher of Judeo-Spanish, whose recent works include the bilingual Hebrew/Judeo-Spanish cookbook, *Gizar kon gozo: Rekolio de rechetas de kuzina de las Komunitas sefardíes* (Jerusalem: Sh. Zak., 2010).

mentioned, perhaps because, as we learn in a short piece introducing the newly-regularized “Gastronomia Sefaradi” column in the fifth issue, so many “female readers... sent us recipes” for inclusion in the journal.⁶³ The eager response of *Aki Yerushalayim*’s women readers belies the journal’s early contention that Sephardi cuisine had declined. These women’s submissions offer a clear demonstration that Sephardi food was, on the contrary, alive and well in Israel. The Sephardim gathered in Israel asserted the liveliness of their culture in direct contradiction to *Aki Yerushalayim*’s own adoption of diasporic and Zionist perspectives suggesting the gradual decline and disappearance of specifically Sephardi foodways, and of Jews in Muslim lands more broadly.

In most issues of *Aki Yerushalayim*, the recipes are printed without introduction or explanation. On one occasion, recipes for traditional Passover dishes appear in an April issue, though, as usual, no narrative element accompanies the six dishes that are featured.⁶⁴ Two other issues also feature Jewish holiday recipes, this time alongside short blurbs about the festivities, though without calendrical links between the dates of publication and observance.⁶⁵ On eight occasions, the recipes that appear in “Gastronomia Sefaradi” are credited to published Sephardi cookbooks, including one instance that represents the only point of contact between the two corpuses examined in this paper: in issue 67 (September, 2001), three recipes are reproduced from Claudia Roden’s *Book of Jewish Food*.⁶⁶ Issue 78 (October, 2005) is devoted to dishes of the Bulgarian Sephardi community. Issue 81 (April, 2007) again features recipes from Bulgaria, as well as Turkish Sephardi dishes. Issues 93 (April, 2013), 94 (December, 2013), 96 (December, 2014), and 97-98 (December, 2015) are devoted to specific ingredients: onion, *kashkaval* or white cheese, rice, and spinach, respectively, each with brief narrative introductions attesting to the importance of these ingredients in Sephardi cookery. This late pattern echoes a much earlier examples from issue 6 (July, 1980), which includes three recipes based on eggplant by Djina Kamhi, who writes about

⁶³ Kamelia Shahr, “Gastronomia,” *Aki Yerushalayim* 5, no. 15 (1980): 54.

⁶⁴ Kamelia Shahr, “Gastronomia Sefaradi,” *Aki Yerushalayim* 6, no. 21 (1984): 46-48.

⁶⁵ Recipes for Rosh Hashanah, Shavuot, and Yom Kippur, Zelda Ovadia, “Gastronomia Sefaradi,” *Aki Yerushalayim* 16, no. 51 (1995): 85-87; recipes for Purim, Zelda Ovadia, “Gastronomia Sefaradi,” *Aki Yerushalayim* 22, no. 65 (2001): 84-86.

⁶⁶ Zelda Ovadia, “Gastronomia Sefaradi,” *Aki Yerushalayim* 22, no. 67 (2001): 77-79.

her mother's cooking in a full-length article in the same issue. Issue 19-20 (October, 1983-January, 1984) also focuses on the eggplant, perhaps the most characteristic ingredient of Levantine Sephardi cooking. The short explanatory piece accompanying the recipes offers the rationale, familiar to scholars of the Mediterranean diet, that the eggplant is a low-calorie, nutrient dense food worthy of greater use in the kitchen.

It is clear from this overview that Moshe Shaul, editor of *Aki Yerushalayim*, and Kamelia Shahar and Zelda Ovadia, the gastronomy column's authors, struggled to determine the role of "Gastronomia Sefaradi" within the journal. "Gastronomia Sefaradi," in spite of its inclusion for almost the entirety of *Aki Yerushalayim*'s history, often seems to have a tentative relationship to the rest of the text. At a moment in the history of food writing when narrative introductions had already begun to regularly accompany cooking instructions, *Aki Yerushalayim*'s recipes only rarely engage the reader through storytelling. Shahar and Ovadia remain largely mysterious figures throughout their tenures. Shahar pens a brief introduction to the first official "Gastronomia" column, while Ovadia authors one full-length article in 2006.⁶⁷ Otherwise, these women's histories, and the stories of their personal relationships with food, remain opaque. Even Ovadia's article, a discussion of historical changes in Sephardi food which might have been occasion for reflection on the changing role of food in Sephardi culture, instead focuses mainly on listing technical innovations in the kitchen such as food processors and refrigerators, without pause for reflection on the consequences of the adaptation of these technologies. In her introduction to the first official "Gastronomia" column, Shahar strikes a reactive posture, remarking that many female readers sent in their own recipes after the journal published some in earlier issues, and offering a space for the continued presentation of some small number of these submissions. In subsequent issues, however, guest contributors are only rarely credited, and the unclear sourcing of most of *Aki Yerushalayim*'s recipes only heightens the reader's sense, already aroused by the frequent changes in its

⁶⁷ Kamelia Shahar, "Gastronomia Sefaradi," *Aki Yerushalayim* 5 (1980): 54; Zelda Ovadia "La Kuzina Sefaradi-Ayer I Oy," *Aki Yerushalayim* 26-27, no. 79 (2006): 56-58.

format and focus, that the column is a somewhat *ad hoc* production subject to editorial whims.

The place of the culinary in a “Judeo-Spanish Cultural Journal” appears to be the subject of ongoing negotiation. The place of the culinary in Judeo-Spanish culture itself, however, is never questioned. The creative team’s struggles with the “Gastronomia” column reflect a shallow engagement with the assumed importance of food to culture; the translation of food, understood to be an important and organic element of Sephardi culture, into a journalistic frame therefore causes them ongoing editorial difficulty. It seems easy enough for Shaul and his team to produce pieces about Sephardi literature, history, and music, but finding a way of producing compelling journalism on the subject of food presents them an insoluble problem. In this light, the frequent intermixing of recipes and *refranes* indicates an attempt to somehow make food literary, not by the straightforward narrative means found in so many contemporary cookbooks (including the Anglophone Sephardi examples discussed above), but through the very *mise-en-page* of the journal. In the absence of a clear narrative perspective on Sephardi food, the juxtaposition of recipe and *refran*—many of which use culinary metaphors to make their gnomic points—not only indicates how food is naturalized within colloquialisms in the Judeo-Spanish language, but also allows the reader to understand Sephardi food as itself a vital idiom, coequal with Judeo-Spanish in expressing Sephardi culture. The positioning of food and language as the twin pillars of Sephardi distinctiveness reaches its height in an issue of *Aki Yerushalayim* that features recipes contributed by students studying to become Judeo-Spanish teachers.⁶⁸

Two full-length articles in *Aki Yerushalayim* make explicit this connection between food and language. “Frutas I Plantas Komo Metaforas En Djudeo-Espanyol” offers a thorough list of vegetal metaphors commonly used in Judeo-Spanish, including a number of idiomatic gems: a “*ravano*,” (radish), “*es una persona torpe, sin edukasion i sin intelijensia*,” (a slow, uneducated, unintelligent person); “*echando bamyas*” (making okra), is lying; to say that something “*no es*

⁶⁸ Zelda Ovadia, “Gastronomia Sefaradi,” *Aki Yerushalayim* 22, no. 66 (2001): 90-91.

kastanyas” (is not chestnuts), means acknowledging the importance of what at first appears trivial.⁶⁹ These idioms place the culinary at the center of Judeo-Spanish expression. The other article on food and language appears at the midpoint of *Aki Yerushalayim*’s history. “Los terminos ajenos en la gastronomia djudeo-espanyola,” by Aldina Quintana Rodriguez, uses the 50-issue corpus of “Gastronomia Sefaradi” columns published thus far as the basis for a linguistic investigation of the presence of foreign loanwords in Judeo-Spanish food writing. Quintana Rodriguez makes expected references to the incorporation of the non-variable foreign nouns that describe contemporary kitchen appliances, and ably describes how vocabulary from Turkish, Greek, and French—old sources of Judeo-Spanish loanwords—and even English—a more recent influence on the Judeo-Spanish lexicon—have become naturalized. Surprisingly, in spite of *Aki Yerushalayim*’s Israeli home, Quintana Rodriguez finds little evidence of a Hebrew influence in her corpus. “There are not many borrowings from Hebrew in this column,” she writes. The only major exceptions are the use of Hebrew terms for milks with different fat contents, and the replacement of the Judeo-Spanish *masá* and *masás* by the transliterated Hebrew *matsa* and *matsot*.⁷⁰

This linguistic analysis, especially, suggests the presence within Israel’s borders of a Sephardi linguistic tradition that predates the Israeli nation, and is influenced by the languages of the Sephardi Mediterranean far more than by modern Hebrew. The same, of course, can be said of the recipes themselves, which form an increasingly self-conscious archive over the 37 years of *Aki Yerushalayim*’s publication. At regular intervals, the journal features an index of all the material published in it thus far, organized by categories and including both the recipes from “Gastronomia Sefaradi” and the other food writing in the journal. A researcher could not ask for a better guide to the material. The evolution of the “Gastronomia” column, towards the end of *Aki Yerushalayim*’s run, to focus on a single ingredient or the cuisines of particular territories in each issue seems,

⁶⁹ Rachel Amado Bortnick, “Frutas I Plantas Komo Metaforas En Djudeo-Espanyol,” *Aki Yerushalayim* 22, no. 66 (2001): 58-60. Bortnick is a well-known evangelist for Judeo-Spanish, and founder of the Ladinokomunita online community for Judeo-Spanish speakers.

⁷⁰ Aldina Quintana Rodriguez, “Los Terminos Ajenos En La Gastronomia Djudeo-Espanyola,” *Aki Yerushalayim* 16, no. 51 (1995): 46-49.

similarly, to anticipate a scholarly gaze, with the material neatly organized for later reference. In an interview on the occasion of the publication of the journal's final issue, Moshe Shaul acknowledged that *Aki Yerushalayim* was, in fact, particularly treasured by academics, who found it a valuable source on Sephardi culture.⁷¹

Aki Yerushalayim's self-conscious presentation of the persistence of Sephardi culture in a new context, decades after that culture supposedly found its demise, offers a vision of continuity in spite of disruption. The recipes which appear reliably within its pages attest to the power of new media of transmission to propagate—rather than merely preserve—old traditions, and powerfully evoke the entanglement of food and language. This archive troubles the narrative of the Sephardi world's total rupture, suggesting that foodways can offer important evidence of the persistence of cultures outside the environments that are, *post facto*, constructed as their natural homes. It is the journal's own readers who push back against the narrative of decline that accompanies the first recipes featured in the journal, demanding the creation of a female space within its pages for the kind of recipe exchange that, in earlier eras, took place either in neighbors' and relatives' kitchens, or in literary forms such as diaries and domestic manuals that were largely overlooked until feminist historians began to "redress the neglect of women's household contributions and roles" using precisely these kinds of sources.⁷² The frequent dismissal of such writing as "ephemera" is inevitably "bound up with gender ideologies and the debasement of popular cultural material."⁷³ Yet, women's traditional control of food represents a "powerful channel for communication and a means to establish connection, create obligations, and exert influence."⁷⁴ The collection of recipes found in *Aki Yerushalayim* is the outcome of "collective... collaborative writing" through which women readers construct a

⁷¹ Daniel Santacruz, "Oldest all-Ladino magazine in the world closes after 37 years," *Kolsefardim*, January 2017, accessed August 19, 2019, <http://www.kolsefardim.net/oldest-all-ladino-magazine-in-the-world-says-adio-after-37-years>.

⁷² Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York: Palgrave, 2002): 2.

⁷³ Newlyn, "Challenging Contemporary Narrative Theory," 36.

⁷⁴ Carole M. Counihan, "Female Identity, Food, and Power in Contemporary Florence," *Anthropological Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1988): 53.

public space for the continued sharing of culinary knowledge.⁷⁵ As a consequence of readers' demand for this space, the editors of *Aki Yerushalayim* gradually refine a vision of the "Gastronomia Sefaradi" column that offers both a public culinary forum and an archive of unambiguously living recipes for both popular and scholarly audiences.

Conclusions

Cookbooks operating within the salvage paradigm necessarily figure the Judeo-Spanish language and Levantine Sephardi culture as a dead artifact; nostalgia cookbooks, for similar reasons, position Sephardi culture within their authors' own pasts. From the perspective of *Aki Yerushalayim*, on the other hand, Anglophone cookbooks writing from the perspective of either salvage or nostalgia—with the notable exception of the reproduction of three of Claudia Roden's recipes—are largely irrelevant to the journal's ongoing project of documenting contemporary Judeo-Spanish culture. Yet the rich interlinking of food and language immediately evident in both *Aki Yerushalayim* and Anglophone Sephardi cookbooks suggests a correspondence between these sources that invites a deeper examination of their opposite perspectives on Sephardi food cultures.

Judeo-Spanish itself, far from continuing to decline, is the subject of increasing numbers of study programs in the United States, Israel, and Spain. Sephardi cookbooks continue to be published for both commercial and Jewish communal audiences, and Sephardi cuisine seems equally to be enjoying a renaissance. Some of this resurgence is driven by tourist industries in Morocco and Spain that, beginning around the 500-year anniversary of the Iberian expulsions, have attempted to capitalize on nostalgia for Sepharad through cookbooks, restaurants, set menus, and the revival of specific dishes; another source of growing interest in Sephardi food comes from the flavors popularized by Yotam Ottolenghi at the Ottolenghi delis in London and in his cookbooks, especially *Jerusalem*, co-written

⁷⁵ Theophano, *Eat My Words*, 8.

with Ottolenghi head-chef Sami Tamimi.⁷⁶ This is not to suggest that the historicizing perspective offered by Anglophone cookbooks is simply “wrong,” but to point to the necessity of an expanded vision of the possibilities for Sephardi food culture in the contemporary period. The breakages which nostalgia and salvage cookbooks dwell on are real; so is the persistence of Sephardi cuisine.⁷⁷

The juxtaposition of Anglophone cookbooks with *Aki Yerushalayim* sketches the outline of an archive of Sephardi recipes that does not differentiate recipes based on the varying motives behind their compilation. This archive offers both a preservation mechanism for a culture that defines itself through the repetition of its own rupture, as well as a living resource for the continued practice of Sephardi culinary tradition. It offers, simultaneously, a secure repository and a public library, suggesting that Sephardi cuisine can be conceived as a living tradition, with equal emphasis on both the “living”—changing and thriving—and “traditional”—ancient and precarious—of such a formulation. The lack of engagement between the two corpuses that make up the archive I have constructed here is an expression of the coexistence of temporal distance and affective intimacy between contemporary Sephardim and the memory of Sepharad. The inclusion of additional sources including, to name just a few of the many possibilities for expansion, contemporary Spanish and Portuguese Sephardi recipes from the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America, Hebrew Sephardi recipes from Israel, Judeo-Spanish recipes exchanged online in groups like Ladinokomunita, and embodied

⁷⁶ Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi, *Jerusalem: A Cookbook* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2012). For Ottolenghi and Tamimi, the marketing of Sephardi food is a byproduct of the construction of a vision of possible culinary harmony between Israeli and Palestinians in contemporary Jerusalem. On uses of the Sephardi past in contemporary Spain, see Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, “Hervás, *Convivencia* and the heritagization of Spain’s Jewish Past,” *Journal of Romance Studies* 10, no. 2 (2010): 53-76 and “Marketing convivencia: contemporary tourist appropriations of Spain’s Jewish past,” in *Spain is (still) different: tourism and discourse in Spanish identity*, eds. Eugenia Afinoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

⁷⁷ An especially prominent project documenting and reinvigorating medieval Iberian Jewish recipes is Ana Gómez-Bravo’s *Converso Cookbook*, an online project featuring recipes and mini-essays on *Adafina* (Sabbath stew), Jewish ham (cured goose), and *almodrote* (a baked eggplant dish). “The Converso Cookbook,” Stroum Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Washington, accessed October 22, 2019, <https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/converso-cookbook-home/>.

kitchen wisdom transmitted through practical lessons and oral testimony, can only deepen and enrich the archive of the Sephardi kitchen, which grows and changes in response to inputs and according to its own internal organizational logics and politics. It is never—or never only—a static repository into which recipes can be impersonally dumped, but rather offers a living resource for scholars of Sephardi foodways and, of course, for Sephardi cooks.

The particular juxtaposition I offer here, between Anglophone cookbooks and Judeo-Spanish recipes, represents what I believe to be the outer borders of such an archive, which must exist along a continuum between conceptions of Sephardi cuisine as a dead artifact and as a living practice. The same tension between the static and the dynamic, the ancient and the contemporary, imbues Sephardi food itself. In the kitchen, a Sephardi cake made with royal navel oranges and commercial almond extract cooked in a modern oven must taste somewhat different from one made with Valencian orange blossom water and locally ground almond meal, but we may imagine, at least, a continuity of flavor and tradition in spite of evolving culinary practice. The production of such a medieval yet modern cake, like the writing down of its recipe, expresses both a break from the past and its persistence.

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Keywords: Food, Diaspora, Levant, Mediterranean, Cookbooks

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*Pedagogies of Citizenship: Sepharad and Jewishness in Spanish and Catalan
Documentary Film and Television*

by Hazel Gold

Abstract

Catalan filmmaker Martí Sans's documentary L'estigma? (The Stigma?) (2012) and the Spanish television fiction series Cuéntame cómo pasó (Tell me how it happened) (2001-) confer visibility to the small national Jewish community that remains largely imaginary to their fellow Spaniards. They exemplify how cultural productions may reframe and circulate a different (his)story about the relationship of democratic Spain and Catalonia to the legacy of Sepharad and Jewishness, though they approach storytelling from different perspectives: the former is a social issues documentary defined by its didacticism; the latter delivers "infotainment" by appealing to viewers' emotions. L'estigma?, structured around interviews with academics, theologians, and journalists, denounces longstanding antisemitic stereotypes that permeate Spanish society. Cuéntame, by introducing Jewish characters into a Spanish family drama, taps network TV as a vehicle to familiarize the viewing public with Jewish customs and Sephardi heritage in Spain. They present their audiences with an aspirational civic pedagogy, though not without a certain ambivalence toward the pluralistic landscape this pedagogy promotes.

Mapping Disidentification through Documentary: Martí Sans's *L'estigma?*

Promoting Identification through Mass Televisual Culture: *Cuéntame cómo pasó*

Conclusion

The small size of the Jewish population in Spain today—"few in number, indistinguishable, and therefore 'invisible'"—stands in asymmetrical relationship to the growing number of educational venues and cultural products that seek to

introduce participants to Judaism and its traditions.¹ In the sphere of literature, Jewish and specifically Sephardi and *converso* characters and storylines not infrequently appear as the subject of contemporary Spanish narrative, most commonly in historical novels set in medieval and early modern Spain or in works of fiction about the Holocaust. By contrast, audiovisual culture—film and, to a lesser extent, television—lags behind in contemporary Spanish cultural production that explores Sepharad and other Jewish topics. Unlike the proliferation of Jewish-themed cinema in Latin America in recent decades, the Spanish film industry has less frequently produced features focused on fictional Jewish protagonists or that explore aspects of Jewish life through a historical or sociological lens. While Jewish film festivals are held throughout Spain, their programming is invariably comprised of foreign films, principally from the U.S., Israel, and Latin America.² Jewish-oriented programming on Spanish public and private television, while perhaps somewhat more familiar to viewers owing to news broadcasts and biopics, is similarly limited.

¹ Alejandro Baer, “Between Old and New Antisemitism: The Image of Jews in Present-Day Spain,” in *Resurgent Antisemitism*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 109. Figures regarding the size of the Jewish population residing in Spain today vary considerably. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem demographer Sergio Della Pergola calculates the total number of Jews in Spain as 20,000: Sergio Della Pergola, “World Jewish Population, 2018,” in *The American Jewish Year Book 2018*, eds. Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin (Dordrecht: Springer, 2018), 361-452. The Federación de Comunidades Judías Españolas puts the figure closer to 40,000 out of a total population of approximately 47 million, or less than 0.1 %. See Federación de Comunidades Judías, “La FCJE,” accessed December 16, 2020, <https://www.fcje.org/la-fcje/>. Jewish communities in twenty-first-century Spain are largely comprised of immigrants who came from the Maghreb in the 1960s and from Latin America in the 1980s-1990s during the dirty wars of the Southern Cone and in the early 2000s owing to the economic crisis.

² Most twenty-first century Spanish and Catalan documentaries and fictional films with Sephardi or Jewish themes coincide in extolling the role of Spaniards—diplomats and those linked to the Republican resistance during the Civil War—as rescuers of Jews during World War II, a tendency noted by Alejandro Baer, “The Voids of Sepharad: The Memory of the Holocaust in Spain,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 97-98, and Asher Salah, “La imagen del judío en el cine español,” *Secuencias* 46 (2019): 105. Although Salah registers an increased Jewish presence in Spanish film of the most recent decade, he notes that it continues to be distinguished by the “the paradox of belonging and exoticism of Jews within the Hispanic national body” (*paradoja de pertenencia y exotismo de los judíos en el cuerpo nacional hispánico*). *Ibid.*, 105.

The film *L'estigma?* (The Stigma?), released in 2012 by veteran Catalan documentarian Martí Sans, and episodes from 2017-2019 of the wildly popular TV series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Tell me how it happened) are exceptions in this regard. At a moment when film and television have come to rival and even eclipse print culture as the prime source of historical knowledge for contemporary audiences, these audiovisual texts open a window onto attitudes toward Jewishness and the Sephardi legacy in present-day Spain. In the burgeoning field of Spanish and Catalan documentary film *L'estigma?* is unique: it is the only film whose subject is the direct confrontation of deep-seated prejudices in Spain toward Jews, both historically and in the current moment. *Cuéntame*, Spain's longest running TV series (2001-), began incorporating Sephardi characters into its narrative arc in 2017. This is especially relevant since the show (following a model inspired by the U.S. series *The Wonder Years*) airs on La 1, the flagship television channel of the state-owned public-service television broadcaster Radio y Televisión Española (RTVE), and reaches a vast viewership nationally and, via satellite or cable, across Europe, Asia, and the Americas.³ The show and the network it airs on are based in Madrid, whereas Sans's documentary is Catalan and has been shown on TV3/Televisió de Catalunya, a Catalan national television channel. *L'estigma?* focuses on the disidentification of Spaniards from their nation's Jewish past stemming from longstanding antisemitic biases; *Cuéntame* promotes new forms of identification with a Jewish present that flatter the image of Spain as a multicultural, multiconfessional democratic state. From opposite ends of the high culture-mass culture spectrum, both communicate knowledge to their audiences about the relatively little-known history and traditions of the Sephardi and Jewish world in an uneven effort to engage viewers in a pedagogy of citizenship that, while discrediting longstanding stereotypes, oftentimes is rooted in the longing to return to the putative harmony of an imagined past.

³ José Carlos Rueda Laffond and Amparo Guerra Gómez, "Televisión y nostalgia: *The Wonder Years* y *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 64 (2009): 396-409.

Mapping Disidentification through Documentary: Martí Sans's *L'estigma?*

L'estigma? belongs to a so-called Golden Age of documentary filmmaking that in the U.S. dates to the 1980s and in Spain to the 1990s.⁴ This vogue has continued undiminished to the present moment as the popularity of art-house and television documentaries increases among Spanish audiences and the technical means required for production and post-production become cheaper, especially in comparison to the usually much larger budgets of fiction films. *L'estigma?*, which Sans co-scripted, directed, edited, and produced on a modest budget, is a case in point.⁵ Financing was provided by the Generalitat (Autonomous Government of Catalunya), TV3/Televisió de Catalunya, and the Institut Català de les Empreses Culturals (ICEC), along with contributions from the Comunidad Israelita de Barcelona, the Federación de Comunidades Judías en España (FCJE), and the Institut Ramon Llull de Llengua i Cultura Catalanes. Owing to constrained resources Sans was unable to shoot a planned second part to his film in Jerusalem, where he had hoped to explore the foundational spaces of Christian culture and show the latter's indebtedness as well as ingratitude toward Jewish culture. In being forced to scale back his project Sans sharpened his focus on the theme that he found most disturbing: "Judeophobia and its persistence" (*la judeofòbia i la seva pervivència*).⁶

In examining Spanish expressions of hostility toward Jews *L'estigma?* functions not solely as a historical excursus but also as a mirror of current events. The rise in Spain of anti-Jewish rhetoric and acts, including property damage and defacement

⁴ On the growing importance of documentaries in the U.S. film industry, see Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1. In Spain, see Josetxo Cerdán and Casimiro Torreiro, "Situación actual del documental en España," in *Imagen, memoria y fascinación: Notas sobre el documental en España*, eds. Josep Maria Català, Josetxo Cerdán and Casimiro Torreiro (Madrid: Ocho y Medio, 2001), 140.

⁵ *¿L'estigma?*, directed by Martí Sans (Barcelona: Altervideo, 2012), DVD.

⁶ Gabriel Yacubovich Japkin, "Cinema III: *L'estigma?* de Martí Sans," *Un català a Israel* (blog), January 14, 2013, <http://blogspersonals.ara.cat/uncatalaaIsrael/2013/01/14/cinema-iii-lestigma-de-marti-sans/>. Accessed September 20, 2018. Translations from Catalan-language secondary sources in this essay are my own. Translation of Catalan quotations from *L'estigma?* are based on the film's English-language subtitle track, which I have occasionally modified. All translation into English of Castilian-language quotations is my own.

of cemeteries and worship sites, has been documented in opinion polls conducted by the Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project, the Ministerio de Educación-España, and the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas-Barómetros; through investigations by national and international Jewish organizations including the Observatorio de Antisemitismo (established by the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España in 2009) and the Anti-Defamation League; and by scores of academic studies and press reports.⁷ They all express deep concern over what the Council of Europe, when it appealed to Spain in June of 2015 to introduce laws to combat antisemitism, described as “prejudice and intolerance against Roma, as well as Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance against migrants [that] continue to be expressed, notably in print and audiovisual media and on the Internet, as well as in political life,” chiding the Spanish government for its often tepid response.⁸ Notwithstanding King Felipe VI’s exclamation—“How

⁷ Surveys of Spaniards’ attitudes toward Jews continue to register negative sentiment and social hostilities. Pew Research Center, “Unfavorable Views of Jews and Muslims on the Rise in Europe,” *Global Attitudes & Trends Project*, accessed September 20, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2008/09/17/chapter-1-views-of-religious-groups/>; María José Díaz-Aguado, Rosario Martínez Arias, and Javier Martín Babarro, *Estudio estatal sobre la convivencia escolar en la educación secundaria obligatoria* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Observatorio Convivencia Escolar, 2010), accessed December 16, 2020, <https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publiventa/estudio-estatal-sobre-la-convivencia-escolar-en-la-educacion-secundaria-obligatoria/educacion-secundaria-socializacion/13567>; Observatorio de Antisemitismo, *Informe sobre el Antisemitismo en España durante los años 2015 y 2016* (Madrid: Observatorio de Antisemitismo, 2017), accessed September 20, 2018, https://observatorioantisemitismo.fcje.org/wp-content/uploads/wpcf7_uploads//2017/09/Informe-2015-2016.pdf; Anti-Defamation League, *ADL Global 100: An Index of Anti-Semitism-Spain*, accessed September 20, 2018, <https://global100.adl.org/country/spain/2019>. Uniquely, Spanish antisemitism occurs in the near-total absence of Jews, owing not to the destruction of the local population during the Holocaust but rather to the 1492 Edict of Expulsion. However, it is important to note that there is a gap between public discourse and social realities. The expression of hostility by Spanish politicians and the media toward Jews and Israel has overall not impeded the gradual development of Jewish life in Spain in the twenty-first century, although the emergence of Vox, the ultranationalist and openly anti-immigrant political party founded in 2013, has encouraged a troubling increase in racism. See Raanan Rein and Martina Weisz, “Fantasmas del pasado, desafíos del presente: nuevos y viejos ‘otros’ en la España contemporánea,” in *El otro en la España contemporánea: prácticas, discursos, representaciones*, eds. Silvina Schammah Gesser and Raanan Rein (Sevilla: Fundación Tres Culturas del Mediterráneo, 2011), 163.

⁸ European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, *ECRI Report on Spain (Fifth monitoring cycle)*, February 27, 2018 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe/ECRI Secretariat, 2018), accessed September 20, 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-spain/16808b56c9>.

greatly we have missed you!”—uttered in response to the passage of the 2015 law granting an expedited path to Spanish citizenship for Sephardi Jews, daily life for Spain’s Jews is colored by the ignorance of the general populace and the uncritical repetition of inherited prejudices.⁹

Quoting ex-foreign minister Ana Palacio to the effect that “Spaniards believe there is no anti-Semitism in Spain,” the ADL report *Polluting the Public Square* laments this “mainstreaming of anti-Semitism in Spain, with more public expressions and greater public acceptance.”¹⁰ Such lack of self-awareness—the internalization and normalization of explicitly anti-Jewish sentiment—is, as Baer observes, one of the defining characteristics of antisemitism in Spain today.¹¹

When he became cognizant of his own unconscious prejudices, Sans explained that this new-found awareness became his motivating factor in making *L’estigma*.¹² As the director declares in voice-over in the early minutes of his film: “I had so absorbed the idea that Jews are untrustworthy that I wasn’t even conscious of it. I had inherited the prejudice from my family education and from society in general. Mistrust and contempt are more ingrained than we would like to admit. Thus, I began the process of deconstructing my own antisemitism.”¹³ The core of Sans’s documentary reflects his efforts to expose the continuing circulation of myths and stereotypes about Jews, and to explain why this enmity

⁹ “¡Cuánto os hemos echado de menos!” Quoted in Carmen Remírez de Ganuza, “El Rey recibe en Palacio a los sefardíes 5 siglos después de su expulsión,” *El Mundo*, November 30, 2015. Accessed September 21, 2018, <https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2015/11/30/565c439c22601d46248b465d.html>.

¹⁰ Anti-Defamation League: Blogs; “Polluting the Public Sphere: Anti-Semitic Discourse in Spain-Introduction,” a blog by the ADL, accessed September 21, 2015.

¹¹ Baer, “Between Old and New Antisemitism,” 96. Gustavo Perednik labels this “naive Spanish Judeophobia”: “most Spaniards remain completely unaware of the Judeophobic nature of their country and are shocked at the suggestion that Spain is particularly hateful towards the Jews.” Gustavo D. Perednik, “Naïve Spanish Judeophobia,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 15, nos. 3-4 (2003). Accessed March 13, 2016. <https://jcpa.org/article/naive-spanish-judeophobia/>.

¹² Japkin, “Cinema III: *L’estigma*?” de Martí Sans.”

¹³ “Estava tan amarat a la idea que els jueus no són de confiança que ni tan sols n’era conscient. Havia heretat el prejudici de la meva educació familiar i de la societat en general. La desconfiança i el menyspreu estan més arrelats del que voldríem admetre. Així vaig començar el procés de desconstrucció del meu antisemitisme.”

directed toward a religious minority continues to haunt the nations of Europe, his own included, even as contemporary societies become increasingly secularized.

Sans's focus on stigmatization aligns closely with Erving Goffman's classic 1963 treatise, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*.¹⁴ In his study Goffman defines stigma as "the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance."¹⁵ While he uses the term to refer to "an attribute that is deeply discrediting,"¹⁶ an "undesired differentness from what we had anticipated,"¹⁷ he stresses throughout that stigma, as a social phenomenon, can only properly be discussed using a language of relationships rather than of attributes. The cases he analyzes are examples of so-called "mixed contacts," that is, instances of social encounter between the stigmatized and "normals" that can lead to two possible outcomes.¹⁸ Either the discrepancy between an individual's actual and virtual identity is discovered and social rejection ensues, or the individual's differentness remains undisclosed and she engages in passing. Both these forms of encounter are experienced and discussed by the subjects in Sans's film. In elaborating upon potential sources of support for the stigmatized, Goffman further distinguishes between those who share the discredited individual's stigma and "normals" who stand outside the tainted circle of discredit "but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it," and who are granted acceptance and a kind of honorary membership in the clan.¹⁹ These latter supporters, who Goffman labels "the wise," carry a "courtesy stigma."²⁰ Such individuals, Goffman notes, tend to have undergone some dramatic encounter that changes their viewpoint: "The normal person who is becoming wise may first

¹⁴ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Preface, n.p.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

have to pass through a heart-changing experience, of which there are many literary records.”²¹

This categorization aptly describes the circumstances in which Sans came to make his documentary. Onscreen the director is circumspect, stating that a few years previously he had come into contact with the small Barcelona Jewish community, which had in turn led him to “reconsider many things” (replantejar moltes coses). Tellingly, though, the film is dedicated to “Alícia Fingerhut, who taught me to love her people” (que em va ensenyar a estimar el seu poble). In press interviews given at the time of *L’estigma?*’s release Sans revealed that his relationship with a Jewish woman from the community prompted him to put himself in her place by traveling to Israel and enrolling in a seminar on Judaism. The importance of having made the film as a non-Jew, in his opinion, is that the majority of spectators will more easily identify with his perspective.²²

In *Stigma* Goffman is cautious with his praise of the wise: “The person with a courtesy stigma can in fact make both the stigmatized and the normal uncomfortable; by always being ready to carry a burden that is not ‘really’ theirs, they can confront everyone else with too much morality.”²³ This observation is linked in *L’estigma?*, as in any documentary that voices the concerns of a

²¹ Ibid., 28. In the intervening decades since the publication of *Stigma*, sociologists and social psychologists have critiqued Goffman’s universalizing approach, his inability to recognize agency on the part of the stigmatized, his treatment of the stigmatized as homogeneous groups not subject to internal divisions, and—of particular relevance to this essay—his failure to interrogate the concept of normalcy. I use his term “normals” advisedly, placing it in quotation marks to indicate my recognition of the constructedness of Goffman’s own position and its limitations for describing not only the dynamics of social encounter between Spaniards and Jews but also the political interactions of Spaniards and Catalans; there is assuredly no consensus over who counts as a “normative” national subject. Nonetheless, *Stigma* is still in many respects a foundational text: the social interactionism theory that Goffman pioneered laid the ground for the understanding of the social construction of stigmatized categories (race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, etc.) and is clearly relevant to Sans’s film.

²² Ada Castells, “Per la cara. Martí Sans,” *Time Out Barcelona* 262, February 28, 2013: 8. Accessed September 19, 2015, <https://altervideo.tv/en/p/l-estigma-the-stigma>. Responding to Castells’s observation that *L’estigma?* was made by a non-Jew, Sans affirmed: “I believe it’s important. The immense majority of us are gentiles and can identify with my point of view.” (Crec que és important. La immensa majoria som gentils i ens podem identificar amb el meu punt de vista).

²³ Goffman, *Stigma*, 31.

marginalized or subaltern sector of society, to an ethical quandary: Do the subjects who wear the mantle of expertise speak *in* the film or *for* the film? Or as film scholar Bill Nichols asks: “When documentaries tell a story whose story is it? The filmmaker’s or the subject’s?”²⁴ Other than a small number of speakers—the Argentinean-born Israeli author Gustavo Perednik; Malka González, a self-proclaimed Spanish descendant of conversos; an unidentified Jewish gay man who appears in a brief cameo—the interviewees who dominate the screen in *L’estigma*? are non-Jewish scholars and public personalities who are invoked as authorities on the subject of antisemitism and Spanish Jewry. Questions inevitably arise over how this underrepresentation of Jewish interviewees might mediate the film’s impact on viewers. Will Spanish or Catalan viewers who strongly disidentify with Jews and Jewish culture be more inclined to adopt a position of closer identification after viewing Sans’s documentary and hearing his spokespersons? Does the near-total omission of voices of Iberian Jews result in a circumvention of Jewish agency?

To a certain extent, this omission is circumstantial; by the director’s own admission, he encountered difficulty persuading Jewish subjects to appear on camera. Some—including the Jewish woman who was his initial contact and sparked his interest in the project—turned him down outright while others made concealment of their identity a condition of participation. Such is the case of the young man who is the first of Sans’s subjects to speak on camera. Immediately following the opening credits Sans and this man appear on screen, cloaked in deep shadow that obscures both of their faces. When asked about his experience as a homosexual, the man says “I’ve never experienced it as a stigma. I feel completely normal” (no lo he vivido como un estigma. Me siento completamente normal), and he affirms that he neither feels discriminated against nor hides his sexuality.²⁵ Yet when asked why he doesn’t want to be identified by his Jewish background—“Are you afraid?” (¿Tens por?)—Sans’s interlocutor demurs: it’s not fear, “the

²⁴ Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 10.

²⁵ In sharp contrast to the surveillance and purges of homosexuals under the Franco dictatorship, democratic Spain has been one of the EU’s earliest defenders of gay rights. Gay marriage and adoption of children by gay couples were legalized in 2006, and Pride Week (la Semana del Orgullo) is a major celebration in Madrid, Barcelona, and numerous other cities, receiving financial support from the respective municipal governments.

thing is that it's a hassle, and it's a pain to go into explanations. It's something very personal and I feel I shouldn't have to give that type of explanation" (lo que pasa es que es un rollo, dar explicaciones es muy pesado y es algo muy personal y considero que no tengo que dar ese tipo de explicaciones).²⁶

L'estigma tells not one but rather two stories. One is the history of the emergence of Judeophobia in early Christianity and its perpetuation over the centuries across Europe and in Spain, with attention to the continuing manifestations of Spanish antisemitism in the twenty-first century. The other is the story of the director's own awakening to the silences, misperceptions, and overt attacks in his country on Jews and the misrepresentations of the legacy of Sepharad. This is signaled by Sans's physical presence onscreen; he is filmed while conducting interviews or is shown walking through the streets of Madrid and Barcelona, and he is heard speaking throughout. By underscoring his own passage from ignorance to knowledge, empathetic understanding, and, ultimately, advocacy, what Sans relates is effectively a conversion narrative. With the braiding together of these two stories the director puts into play the larger transnational discourse of antisemitism as critiqued by leading Catalan and Spanish public intellectuals who appear in the film—Xavier Torrens, Viçenc Villatoro, Gabriel Albiac, and several others—alongside his personal odyssey of conscience.

²⁶ Barber quotes an unidentified Spanish-Jewish journalist who echoes this reluctance to speak out: "the members of this [Jewish] community continue to be very reserved and resist acknowledging publicly their identity in the workplace or in academic milieus" (los miembros de esta comunidad siguen mostrándose muy reservados y se resisten a confesar públicamente su identidad en los lugares de trabajo o en los ambientes académicos). Ferran Barber, "Este es el nuevo rostro del antisemitismo español, según expertos y judíos," *Público*, July 2, 2018. Accessed September 20, 2018, <https://www.publico.es/sociedad/antisemitismo-espana-nuevo-rostro-antisemitismo-espanol-expertos-judios.html>.

The European Commission on Racism and Intolerance, *ECRI Report on Spain (Fifth monitoring cycle)* has advised the Spanish government of the need to strengthen reporting, data gathering, and criminal law response to hate crimes and to develop better mechanisms for handling online hate speech. Vulnerable groups, "including Jewish communities and LGBT people, have informed ECRI that their members tend to hide their identity as they fear being exposed to security risks, including that of becoming victims of hate crime." *Ibid.*, 25.

As a result, *L'estigma*'s structure offers a hybrid mix of the expository, participatory, and performative modes of documentary filmmaking.²⁷ Although the film is heavily weighted toward the presentation of historical information, Sans rejects the pseudo-objectivity of voice-of-God narration to communicate it. Instead, in the expository mode Sans directly addresses viewers in voice-over and relies on evidentiary editing—that is, the use of images to illustrate what is being said—to reinforce the continuity of his argument and disclose his personal perspectives. These in turn are validated by the interventions of the many experts who discursively expand on Spain's (and Europe's) enduring Judeophobia.

In the participatory mode Sans interacts with his subjects through conversations or interviews. In one key scene Sans visits the Centro de Estudios Ibn Gabirol, Madrid's only Jewish high school, to interview visiting author-teacher Gustavo Perednik and some of the students. In doing so he experiences firsthand the extreme security measures that the school has put in place, unlike any of the neighboring *colegios* on the same street. A police car is parked out front, cameras are trained on the building, and visitors are confronted with locked entry doors, an intercom system, and ID card checks. As the camera observes Sans going through this screening process, which treats sympathetic outsiders (Goffman's "wise") and potential threats with equal suspicion, viewers see what this experience is like for the director. The juxtaposition of the uncomfortable scrutiny Sans is obliged to undergo and comments by students who express the need to keep a low profile—one boy states he has been advised to take off his *kippah* when he leaves the school—underscores how Jews in Spain, as a vulnerable minority under surveillance by a sometimes hostile society, may opt to cultivate their invisibility, echoing *L'estigma*'s initial scene. At the same time, this juxtaposition reinforces the ironic play of seeing and being seen that is central to documentary filmmakers and their human subjects.

²⁷ Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 149-153, identifies several modes in documentary filmmaking, each making differing use of realism and narrative. The expository mode speaks directly to viewers, using voice-over. In the participatory mode the filmmaker and his social actors interact, and the latter have a hand in shaping what occurs before the camera; this mode especially makes use of interviews. The performative mode underscores the expressive quality of the filmmaker's engagement with the film's subject; as a result, the audience is addressed in an especially vivid way.

In the performative mode Sans embraces what Moreno-Caballud describes as “the embodied and subjective positions that classic authoritarian documentaries wanted to erase,” a move that is often accompanied by the use of metacinematic techniques that lay bare the process of the film’s genesis.²⁸ It has been argued that this use of subjective intentionality—where the director exercises the dual function of narrator and protagonist—has become increasingly common in Spanish documentaries since 2001, the year that marked the success of José Luis Guerín’s *En construcción* at the San Sebastián Film Festival.²⁹ In the performative mode emphasis is placed upon the affective aspects that are necessarily implied by the director’s insertion of autobiographical experience as the film, quoting Nichols, “seeks to move its audience into subjective alignment or affinity with its specific perspective on the world.” For this reason, “[t]he emotional intensities and social subjectivity stressed in performative documentary is often that of the underrepresented or misrepresented,” including ethnic and religious minorities.³⁰

L’estigma relies on a structure that crosscuts between extended interludes in which numerous authorities expound at length on Spanish Judeophobia and briefer man-in-the-street interviews that solicit opinions on Jews as well as the State of Israel. Sans’s cast of talking heads includes academics representing a variety of scholarly disciplines and academic institutions; these institutions are located primarily in Barcelona, although there is also representation of universities in Madrid. The featured scholars share a philosemitic lens that shapes their publications, teaching, and, oftentimes, their interventions in public life. Working within their respective fields, their research is characterized by in-depth exploration of the historical contributions of Spanish and Catalan Jews to their respective societies, by analysis of the historical and contemporary prejudices that have led to their marginalization or stigmatization, and, in some cases, by a

²⁸ Luis Moreno-Caballud, “Looking amid the rubble: new Spanish documentary film and the residues of urban transformation (Joaquim Jordà and José Luis Guerín),” *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas* 11, no. 1 (2014): 63.

²⁹ Ibid., 62-63. Another factor contributing to the expanded presence of the autobiographical voice in documentary is linked to advances in videotechnology, including webcams, cellphones, camcorders, and desktop editing. Tony Dowmunt, “Autobiographical documentary—the ‘seer and the seen,’” *Studies in Documentary Film* 7, no. 3 (2013): 264.

³⁰ Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 204-205.

vigorous defense of Israel and Zionism. Sans draws his experts from the faculties of: the University of Barcelona (Maria Josep Estanyol and Josep Ramon Magdalena, Semitic philology-Hebrew and Aramaic studies; Xavier Torrens, political science; ex-priest Josep Montserrat, philosophy); the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Joan Culla, contemporary history); Rovira i Virgili University (Jaume Renyer, law); Pompeu Fabra University (Eugenio Trías, philosophy); the Theology Faculty of Catalonia (Capuchin Enric Cortès, ancient and medieval Judaism); and the Complutense University of Madrid (Gabriel Albiac, philosophy).³¹

The lone non-Spaniard academic featured in the film is Gustavo Perednik, whose study *La judeofobia* (2001) is seminal to the director's inquiry into the mechanisms of stigmatization.³² Based on a course he created for the Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad in Jerusalem, which he has also taught in Spain and Latin America, his book traces Judeophobia from its founding moment until the present. Perednik defends his use of the term Judeophobia, as opposed to the more common term antisemitism, for historical and semantic reasons: the prefix signals who is the true object of religious and social oppression (Jews, not Semites) and the suffix (phobia) alludes to the irrational nature of this hatred. He describes Judeophobia as a singular historical phenomenon: permanent, deeply rooted, obsessive.³³ *La judeofobia* argues that the hatred of Jews can be traced to pagan

³¹ A representative sample of their academic publications includes: Maria Josep Estanyol i Fuentes, *Judaisme a Catalunya, avui* (Barcelona: Pòrtic, 2002); Jaume Renyer i Alimbau, *Anticatalanisme i antisionisme, avui* (Barcelona: Duxelm, 2010); Joan B. Culla, *Israel, el somni i la tragèdia. Del sionisme al conflicte de Palestina* (Barcelona: La Campana, 2004); José Ramón Magdalena Nom de Déu, *Judíos y cristianos ante la "Cort del Justicia" de Castellón* (Almassora: Diputació de Castelló, 1988); Josep Montserrat i Torrents, *La sinagoga cristiana: el gran conflicto religioso del siglo* (Barcelona: Muchnik, 1989); Gabriel Albiac, *La sinagoga vacía: un estudio de las fuentes marranas del espinosismo* (Madrid: Hiperión, 1987) and *Ahora Rachel ha muerto* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1994), a novel set in the seventeenth-century Sephardi world; Xavier Torrens, *Com expliquem l'Holocaust: guia per a l'educació sobre la Shoah* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona. Regidoria de Dona i Drets Civils, 2006) and "Racismo y antisemitismo," in *Ideologías y movimientos políticos contemporáneos*, ed. Joan Antón Mellón (Madrid: Tecnos, 2006), 347-380. Torrens also teaches a university course on Judeophobia.

³² Gustavo Daniel Perednik, *La judeofobia: cómo y cuándo nace, dónde y por qué pervive* (Barcelona: Flor del Viento Ediciones, 2001).

³³ *Ibid.*, 27-32. Perednik repeats the notion of the "uniqueness of Spanish Judeophobia" in his article "Naive Spanish Judeophobia." For recent discussion on defining antisemitism and use of

cultural myths of antiquity and to later Christian theological myths invented in the Middle Ages—the blood libel, the profanation of the Eucharistic host, and the Black Plague, along with the accusation of deicide that emerged in early Christianity—through which Judeophobia was transmitted. In the modern era, Perednik contends, Judeophobia continues unabated; its various avatars appear in the Enlightenment, under Communism, during the Holocaust, and in anti-Zionism. Perednik concludes his book with cursory reference to sociological, psychological, and anthropological explanations for the longevity of the stigma attached to Jews. In the final pages he sums up: Judeophobia is “an intrinsically irrational attitude of a generally rational society” (*una actitud intrínsecamente irracional de una sociedad generalmente racional*), a form of “social sadism” (*sadismo social*) whose extirpation depends upon the long-delayed reconciliation of Christianity with the Jewish people.³⁴

The remaining voices of authority and conviction in Sans’s film include: Josep Monseny, a psychiatrist who teaches at the Catalan Association for the Clinic and Teaching of Psychoanalysis; the Jungian analyst Malka González, who identifies as a descendant of *conversos* and has re-embraced Judaism; Andreu Lascorz, president of the Association for Catalonia-Israel Cultural Relations; the journalist and writer Vicenç Villatoro, who until recently directed the Barcelona Center for Contemporary Culture and is a former member of the Catalan Parliament; and Pilar Rahola, a journalist and former deputy representing the left-wing party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya in the Spanish Parliament (1993-2000) who also served as deputy mayor of Barcelona (1994-2000).³⁵ Rahola maintains an especially high media profile, writing weekly articles for the prominent Catalan newspaper *La Vanguardia* and making regular TV and radio appearances. In her

terminology including “Judeophobia” see Jonathan Judaken, “AHR Roundtable: Rethinking Anti-Semitism. Introduction,” *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1122-1138.

³⁴ Ibid., 216.

³⁵ Villatoro and Rahola, along with the aforementioned Culla and Estanyol, are mentioned by Álvarez Chillida as adherents of the Catalanist movement who emphasize the philosemitic character of the Catalan people and are staunch defenders of the Israeli state. Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, “El antisemitismo en la Cataluña contemporánea,” in *Judíos entre Europa y el norte de África (siglos XV-XXI)*, eds. Eloy Martín Corrales and Maite Ojeda Mata (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2013), 164.

cameos in *L'estigma*? she forcefully condemns her country's antisemitic biases and the treatment of Israel by the European, Spanish, and Catalan left.³⁶

As director, Sans's principal creative task is to weave these voices together. The conversations of these many interviewees with Sans are organized topically, dividing the film into five discrete segments.

(1) *What is a Jew?* Sans opens his film with a montage of unscripted answers solicited from passersby during street interviews, clearly selected to highlight the average Spaniard's unfamiliarity with Jewish history and traditions. They variously reply: Jews "always have money" (*siempre tienen dinero*); are from "another culture, based on a religion with a Christian, Catholic foundation" (*una cultura més, basada en una religió amb una base cristiana, catòlica*); "read the Koran" (*llegeixen el Corán*); "must be fanatical Christians" (*han de ser catòlics fanàtics*); "don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (*no creuen en la resurrecció de Jesucrist*); "study the Kabbalah" (*estudian la Càbala*); are "the opposite of a Christian" (*el inverso del cristiano*); are people "who don't go to mass or anything, don't get married, don't take communion, don't get baptized" (*no va a misa ni nada, ni se casa, ni hace la comunión, ni se bautiza*); are people "who hurt Jesus" (*van fer mal a Jesus*); "those who Hitler killed" (*aquests que Hitler va matar*); those whom "they used to kill during Holy Week with a rattle" (*es matava per Setmana Santa amb una carraca*).³⁷ These replies are interwoven with

³⁶ Rahola's denunciations gain added force in light of her own (prior) affiliation with the leftist Esquerra Republicana party. For a fuller version of her critiques, see her interview in the Israeli daily *Haaretz*. Roi Bet Levi, "Look Left in Anger," *Haaretz.com*, October 19, 2008. Accessed June 20, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5047864>.

³⁷ The reference is to the use of wooden or metal rattles (*carracas* and *matracas*) during the Tenebrae service that commemorates the Crucifixion, a Holy Week ritual of medieval origin practiced in many parts of Spain; the sound they make accompanies the symbolic killing of Jews as punishment for their act of deicide. For further explanation, see Reinerio Álvarez Saavedra, "Castigos figurados a Judas y judíos en la Semana Santa española. El caso particular asturiano," *Antropología Experimental* 18 (2018): 1-17. Álvarez Chillida remarks that using rattles or noisemakers in the practice known as "to go kill Jews" (*anar a matar jueus*)—a line taken from a popular poem learned by children schooled in Catalan culture at the close of the 19th century—was still occurring in Catalonia until only a few decades ago. Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, "El antisemitismo en la Cataluña contemporánea," 149. The ex-priest Josep Montserrat states in *L'estigma*? that as a child he witnessed this ceremony of "killing Jews."

contrasting explanations by Sans's more informed yet not unproblematic spokespersons: Jews are defined by adherence to a system of religious beliefs and rituals (Monseny); by a collective feeling of permanent belonging (Villatoro); by having converted or considering oneself a part of Jewish culture (Estanyol); by virtue of descent from a Jewish mother (Magdalena); by stigmatization and permanent status as victims (Rahola).

(2) *What does "the Jew" signify for Spaniards?* Here the film's authorities coincide in the belief that for a majority of the populace, Jews are either invisible or have come to be identified with mythical archetypes. This underscores the persistent confusion between historical and imaginary Jews and draws attention to the average Spaniard's scant knowledge of the cultural and economic role played by Jews in medieval Spain.

(3) *What is Judeophobia?* This represents the lengthiest section of the film, in which the experts offer differing explanations—psychoanalytical, theological, historical—based on their professional expertise. They summarize the historical experiences of Castilian and Catalan Jews, tracing the roots of anti-Judaism in early Christianity. From these beginnings they move chronologically through European history, discussing social, religious, and economic tensions in medieval society; the expulsion of 1492 and the Inquisition, signaling the rejection of minorities and the narrowing of intellectual avenues; and the "*converso* problem" and persecution of the *anusim* or crypto-Jews. They proceed to present their views of what they perceive as Spain's weak embrace of Enlightenment thought and stunted modernity, concluding with discussion of the pseudoscientific racial theories subtending nineteenth-century antisemitism.

(4) *What distinguishes the fate of Jews in the twentieth century?* This segment centers on the Holocaust, Jewish victimhood, and the creation of the state of Israel in the wake of the Shoah. The consensus of the speakers who intervene in this sequence is that those who accuse Jews of cultivating their status as victims or who delegitimize Israel's right to exist continue to traffic in the antisemitic biases that have historically determined Spaniards' attitudes toward the Jewish people.

(5) *How is Spanish Judeophobia displayed in the twenty-first century?* In the film's final segment Sans lines up his spokespersons to make the case that antisemitism is as strong as ever, though it now emerges cloaked as anti-Zionist sentiment and attacks on Israel's conduct towards the Palestinians. As the film attests, these attacks, which at times have also targeted the experts in the film, are delivered from both ends of the Spanish and Catalan political spectrum: by both pro-Arab conservatives and anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist leftists.³⁸ Sans inserts a wordless montage of visual evidence—photos, newspaper headlines, editorial cartoons, and tweets—to illustrate this bias.

These five expository segments are threaded together by a sequence of scenes filmed at a *bar mitzvah* ceremony in Barcelona's Great Maimónides Synagogue. The insertion of these scenes works structurally to signal the shifts in topics being discussed; they are also a visual image that reinforces the notion of Jewish religious and cultural continuity that endures, even in the face of discrimination. The scenes offer a vision of the future embodied in the younger generation that remains faithful to their origins and heritage, symbolized here by the boy who, surrounded by friends and family, is shown donning *tefillin* and reading from the Torah.

As can be seen from this summary, the thrust of *L'estigma?* is highly didactic, responding to the observation of the unidentified gay Jew at the film's outset who laments that "in this country there is so much ignorance" (En este país hay mucha, mucha ignorancia) and to Sans's own rhetorical question: "Why was I unaware of practically all aspects of a tradition that is part of our cultural and genetic legacy?" (¿Per que jo ignorava gairebé tot sobre una tradició que forma part del nostre llegat cultural i genètic?). Sans's use of the word "genetic" is a reminder of the genealogies that are invoked and interrogated when discussing the legacy of Sepharad in Spain today. It is precisely Sans's search to answer the question he has posed to himself, "to learn about a history that's been hidden from us, the splendor of our Jewish culture" (per conèixer una història que ens han ocultat, l'esplendor de la nostra cultura jueva), as he declares in voice-over, that leads him to the prominent

³⁸ Baer, "Between Old and New Antisemitism," 102.

personalities whose commentary maps out the historical trajectory of Spanish and Catalan Judeophobia.

Notwithstanding the seriousness or enthusiasm with which Sans approaches his quest for answers, *L'estigma?* warrants viewers' close attention to its embedded contradictions and blind spots. First, the film occupies a shifting, sometimes uneasy middle ground as a documentary intended for a specifically Catalan audience, but also as a film whose wider implications signal expectations of a more diverse spectatorship. The multilingual subtitles (Castilian, French, English) and dual soundtracks for Sans's voice-overs on the released DVD of the film, recorded by him in both Catalan and Castilian, strongly suggest the intention of the director (and Altervideo, his production company and distributor) to address audiences across Spain and to market his film internationally. Street interviews as well as commentary by the film's authorities also alternate between Castilian and Catalan, inclining heavily toward Catalan. Yet if *L'estigma?*'s pedagogical thrust is aimed principally at Catalan viewers, the panorama it presents of Jewish-Catalan historical interactions and cultural influences is marked by some significant lacunae.

Iberian and Jewish Studies scholars are increasingly attentive to the interrelationship between antisemitism and philosemitism, which frequently function in tandem in Spanish and Catalan thought and politics.³⁹ In fact, this tendency is exemplified in *L'estigma?*: while the persistence of popular antisemitism is the *raison d'être* of the film, philosemitism and philosephardism foreground the responses of the experts who address it. This makes the film's omissions all the more unexpected.

There is, for example, no mention in *L'estigma?* of the historical association between antisemitism and anti-Catalanism. Josep Benet has explored how the rhetoric of Spanish fascism during the 1930s and 40s identified Catalans with Jews;

³⁹ See, for instance, Michal Rose Friedman, "Reconquering 'Sepharad': Hispanism and Proto-Fascism in Giménez Caballero's Sephardist Crusade," in *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era*, eds. Daniela Flesler, Tabea Linhard and Adrián Pérez Melgosa (London-New York: Routledge, 2013), 50-75, along with other essays in this collection.

he catalogues numerous examples of the disparaging term “Judeo-Catalans” in the writings of Falangist politicians like Onésimo Redondo and shows how in the Franco-held zone during the Civil War the Catalan nationalist movement was described as “the work of Judaism [la obra del judaïsme].”⁴⁰ The association of Catalans with Jews in this political context can be traced to the common perception, held by Francoist ideologues, of Jewish cosmopolitanism and unassimilability to the state, viewed as a threat to national unity. In some instances, this linkage was said to be based on supposed blood ties: Benet quotes 1930s writings by Juan Pujol, director of the principal organ of Nazi propaganda in Spain (*Informaciones*, 1931-1936), alleging that the conservative Catalan bourgeoisie who founded the separatist Lliga Regionalista was comprised of descendants of Jews and *conversos*.

Nor is there recognition in Sans’s film of the prominent currents of philosemitism that circulated in Catalonia: most prominently during the Civil War (1936-1939); in the 1950s-1960s, as illustrated by the poetry of Salvador Espriu and Josep Pla’s reports on Israel; and during the two decades of Catalan government under Jordi Pujol (1980-2003).⁴¹ This omission is puzzling in that “Catalan philosemitism is an ideology fully inscribed within Catalan nationalism.”⁴² Scholars have observed how the Jewish past “could be ‘useful’ in the construction of a regional identity for Catalunya” that is different from the rest of Spain.⁴³ In a very recent and controversial example of this connection, Clara Ponsatí, a former Eurodeputy for Junts per Catalunya—and one of several former regional government ministers who fled Spain for Belgium because of their participation in the 2017 referendum on Catalan independence—, stated before the European Parliament in February,

⁴⁰ Josep Benet, *Catalunya sota el règim franquista. Informe sobre la persecució de la llengua i la cultura de Catalunya pel règim del general Franco (1ª part)*, 1st re-edition, (Barcelona: Blume, 1978), 128, 133. Among other works, Redondo published a commented edition of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

⁴¹ Jordi Pujol, president of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalonia’s Autonomous Government) from 1980-2003, was both a strong proponent of Catalan nationalism and a fervent supporter of Israel.

⁴² Edgar Illas, “On Universalist Particularism: The Catalans and the Jews,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 90.

⁴³ Anna Menny, “Sepharad-object of investigation? The academic discourse about Sepharad and Sephardim in Spain,” *Jewish Culture and History* 16, no. 1 (2015): 14.

2020: “One of the most serious crimes against the Jewish people took place in 1492 when the so-called Catholic Kings ordered the expulsion of the Jews from Sepharad. This first episode of antisemitism by the State, admired by Adolph Hitler and which he tried to surpass, is the cornerstone of Spain’s tragic history of intolerance. Today this intolerance takes the form of contempt for the rights of the Catalan minority.”⁴⁴

In fact, Sans himself has said that “The Jew is to Europe what the Catalan is to Spain.”⁴⁵ The analogy he draws on is threefold, based on a series of convergent myths, summarized by Illas: Catalans, like Jews, see themselves as a persecuted community fighting to preserve their identity, a vision that hardened during the Civil War and the subsequent Francoist suppression of manifestations of Catalanism; like Jews, they have a history as highly successful merchants, industrialists, and today, global capitalists; like Jews, they stress the importance of their own language.⁴⁶ Yet the Catalan university professors who participate in the film more often speak in terms of the Spanish nation rather than of Catalonia. So too does the author Vincenç Villatoro, who has written that Catalonia today, as in the past, is “unimaginable” without the significant presence of the Judeo-Catalan

⁴⁴ “Uno de los crímenes más serios contra el pueblo judío tuvo lugar en 1492 cuando los denominados Reyes Católicos ordenaron la expulsión de los judíos de Sefarad. Este primer episodio de antisemitismo de Estado, admirado por Adolf Hitler y que va a intentar superar, es la piedra angular del trágico historial español de intolerancia. Hoy esta intolerancia toma la forma del desprecio a los derechos de la minoría catalana.” Quoted in Álvaro Sánchez, “Ponsatí compara en la Eurocámara la expulsión de los judíos con el ‘desprecio’ a la ‘minoría catalana,’” *El País*, February 12, 2020. Accessed June 20, 2020, https://elpais.com/politica/2020/02/12/actualidad/1581509044_434408.html. The Federación de Comunidades Judías de España issued a statement flatly rejecting this homologous portrayal of the persecution of the Jews during the Holocaust and the legal pursuit by the Spanish government of Catalan secessionists. As noted by Martine Berthelot, “Juifs et Catalans ou l’effet miroir de quelques stéréotypes,” *Juifs de Catalogne* (Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2011), 143, such comparisons are unilateral: Catalans are compared (or compare themselves) to Jews, but not the reverse.

⁴⁵ “‘El jueu és a Europa el que el català és a Espanya,’” *elMón. Cultura*, September 8, 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015, https://www.elmon.cat/cultura/quot-el-jueu-es-a-europa-el-que-el-catala-es-a-espanya-quot_566974102.html.

⁴⁶ Illas, “On Universalist Particularism,” 81. Illas stresses that these expressions of Catalan philosemitism are based on an admiration for Zionism rather than any explicit appeal to Judaism qua religion. In particular, the founding of the state of Israel represented a symbolic source of inspiration for Catalanist discourse.

community.⁴⁷ As a result, the film’s argument treats contemporary Spanish and Catalan Jewry as a monolithic collectivity. *L’estigma* similarly glosses over the confluences and divergences that exist between the central Spanish state and the autonomous communities, in their attitudes toward Jews, as well as within the Jewish communities themselves at different moments and under changing political regimes.⁴⁸

If Sans’s message is complicated by these lacunae, so too is its delivery. *L’estigma?* centers on the historical injury inflicted on Jews as a marginalized group but it is difficult to judge how Sans’s interpellation of his audience has been received. Tyler and Slater warn that

this understanding of stigma as something that can be ameliorated, either through forms of social action which focus on “educating people” about particular stigmatised conditions, or by “schooling the stigmatised” to better manage their stigmatized difference, frequently neglects to address structural questions about the social and political function of stigma as a form of power.⁴⁹

The interviewees who speak in the film’s coda advocate for: better and more sensitive education of Spaniards; for a more responsible and evenhanded press; for the introduction of religious or cultural Judaism into Spanish public life as a “factor of normalcy” (factor de normalidad); for the need to find “rules of

⁴⁷ Viçenc Villatoro, *Els jueus i Catalunya* (Barcelona: Barcanova, 2011), 9.

⁴⁸ Aliberti remarks that in some cases “the local Jewish legacy became... a means for highlighting their own policy, which differed from that of the central government (as occurred with the Catalan commemorative program within the framework of Sepharad ’92)” (el legado judío local se convirtió... en un medio para subrayar su propia política, diferente de la del Gobierno central [como sucedió con el programa conmemorativo catalán en el marco de Sefarad ’92]). Davide Aliberti, *Sefarad: una comunidad imaginada (1924-2018)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2018), 288. For Aliberti, the memory war that erupted in 1992 over the 500th anniversary of the Expulsion turned into a faceoff between two opposing versions of the history of Spain’s Jews: “the official history written by the government, and an ‘other’ history, vindicated during the Catalan commemorative event” (la historia oficial, escrita por el Gobierno, y una historia, “otra,” reivindicada durante el evento conmemorativo catalán). Ibid., 30.

⁴⁹ Imogen Tyler and Tom Slater, “Rethinking the Sociology of Stigma,” *Sociological Review Monographs* 66, no. 4 (2018): 729.

coexistence” (reglas de convivencia) that will permit society to “create an order that includes the other, even when the other represents the rival or the foreigner” (fer un ordre que inclogui l’altre, fins i tot quan l’altre representa el rival o a l’estranger). However, *L’estigma?* is framed as the search of a single individual to better understand Spain’s “Jewish question.” This approach may promote empathy for a Jewish other (e.g., I recognize my own ignorance and wish to learn) or it may make it easier for the viewer to shrug off engagement (the problem is Sans’s, not mine). That *L’estigma?* is caught in this conundrum is owing in part to Sans’s structuring of his film as a personal odyssey, but it is also attributable to the nature of the documentary genre, which can allow viewers to hold reality at arm’s length:

What documentary may produce (like fiction) is less a disposition to engage directly with the world than to engage with more documentary (or fiction)... We come to value and look forward to the pleasure of engaging the world at a distance, looking out through the windows of our theaters and living rooms onto a world that truly remains “out there,” with all the assurance this provides about the importance of our engagement with a historical world that we have simultaneously postponed in order to attend to a representation of it.⁵⁰

The challenge facing documentaries that seek to vindicate minoritarian identities is to move beyond restating the problems of stigmatization and exclusion and connect with an audience that acknowledges these struggles and feels implicated in the film’s message that is addressed to them. As a social activist filmmaker, Sans stated clearly his objective for *L’estigma?* to reach beyond a small circle of Jewish viewers and be seen by a majority public that might not initially be drawn to the film’s theme.⁵¹ When *L’estigma?* premiered, the director relied on traditional

⁵⁰ Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality. Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 180.

⁵¹ David Castillo, “Estigmatitzats per sempre?,” *El Punt Avui*, January 25, 2013. Accessed September 19, 2015, <http://www.elpuntavui.cat/article/612598-estigmatitzats-per-sempre.html>. In addition to his work as a documentarian, Sans is known for his engagement with social justice projects, including his work with the General Directorates of Juvenile Justice and Prisons in the

distribution channels (e.g., release in local theaters; film festivals; reviews; DVD sales), supplemented with a modest online presence. According to information in the press kit provided by Altervideo, *L'estigma?* was shown on ten separate occasions between 2012 and 2014. There were single showings in Uruguay, Colombia, Poland, Hong Kong, and New York; in Spain, the film was presented twice in Barcelona and once in Alcañiz, Girona, and Madrid. Several of these screenings took place as part of local Jewish film festivals and were followed by audience discussions with one or two of the experts who are featured in the film, either in person or via Skype. *L'estigma?* received positive press coverage on Jewish websites and in popular publications such as *El Punt Avui* and the online cultural magazine *Núvol* but was not reviewed in the major daily newspapers (*ABC*, *El Mundo*, *El País*). It was also shown on TV3/Televisió de Catalunya (2014) and, according to network figures, reached 38,000 viewers; currently, it is available on the Spanish streaming service Filmin. For those who have managed to view it, *L'estigma?* stands out as the only documentary to fully explore the long shadow cast by Judeophobia in Spain, doing so at a moment when Spain increasingly celebrates a discursively imagined Sepharad of *convivència* that has been conveniently repackaged for international consumption.⁵²

Promoting Identification through Mass Televisual Culture: *Cuéntame cómo pasó*

Cuéntame cómo pasó holds the record as Spain's longest running television series. Debating in September, 2001 on the state-operated public television network TVE-1 and airing without interruption since then, *Cuéntame* recently concluded its 20th season and remains highly popular; it has already been renewed for a 21st season. Viewership ran to approximately 5 million people per episode in the early

Justice Department of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia. He has taught courses for prison educators and organized a video workshop for youths under court supervision.

⁵² For compelling analysis of how the Jewish past has been leveraged by the Spanish tourist industry, see Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, "Marketing *Convivencia*: Contemporary Tourist Appropriations of Spain's Jewish Past," in *Spain is (Still) Different*, eds. Eugenia Afinoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 63-84, as well as their "Hervás, *convivencia*, and the heritagization of Spain's Jewish past," *Journal of Romance Studies* 10, no. 2 (2010): 53-76.

years of the program, with some individual episodes reaching as many as 10 million; currently, it is watched on average by 3 million Spaniards along with countless additional viewers in Europe, the U.S., Canada, and Latin America who tune in weekly to follow the saga of the Alcántara family and are devoted readers of the show's fan blogs, wikis, and official web page.

In comparison to *L'estigma*,⁵³ an intellectually-driven survey of the religious, social, and political biases that have historically targeted Jews in Spain and particularly in Catalonia, *Cuéntame* is first and foremost a vehicle for popular entertainment. As such, it exemplifies the material conditions and rhetorical functions that characterize mass televisual productions. These include the reliance on the formal narrative structure of the episode, which functions as “a unit of meaning even in long-running stories,” and an emphasis on “formulaic patterns of conflict and resolution.”⁵³ The series centers on the vicissitudes of the fictional, middle-class Alcántara family: husband Antonio (Imanol Arias) and wife Mercedes (Ana Duato); their four children Inés (Irene Visedo), Carlos (Ricardo Gómez), Toni (Pablo Rivero), and María (Paula Gallego); and Mercedes's mother Herminia (María Galiana), who lives with them in the San Genaro neighborhood on the outskirts of Madrid. As their stories unfold, so too does a detailed panorama of events taking place in Spain and internationally with which their lives are intertwined in a sort of docufiction. Beginning with the very first episode, set in 1968, the series has tracked the social, economic, and political transformations that remade Spain from the final years of the Franco dictatorship through the consolidation of democracy: the intensification of student and worker unrest; the death of Franco in 1975 and the installation on the throne of his approved successor, Juan Carlos I; the passage of a new constitution in 1978; the expansion of an economic boom with roots in structural changes already set in motion in the 1960s; the abandonment of political and cultural isolationism in favor of rapprochement with Europe beginning in the 1970s. *Cuéntame* has rightly been acclaimed as a chronicle of Spain's so-called Transition (the interval during which democratization occurred, 1975-1982), an impression heightened by the meticulous

⁵³ Kathryn VanArendonk, “Theorizing the Television Episode,” *Narrative* 27, no. 1 (2019): 66, 67.

attention paid by the team of scriptwriters to period detail. The show incorporates archival news footage, carefully curated set decorations, and accurate costuming; it also draws from an extensive catalog of popular music which forms the soundtrack of the lives of the Alcántaras.

In narrating the story of the Alcántara clan, *Cuéntame* follows a linear chronology that is simultaneously marked by a highly complex use of time. Voice-over by the 40ish Carlos, speaking from an indeterminate present, opens each episode, thereby framing the enclosed action within the domain of memory. This retrospective vision is filtered through the contemporary perspective that governs the series' making and is also reflective of current events. Media commentators and cultural studies scholars are in agreement that *Cuéntame*'s project is *tout court* the construction of a shared national memory built upon recuperated personal memories, what has been described as the conversion of history into "memory-patrimony" (*memoria-patrimonio*).⁵⁴ This is accomplished by the framing device of Carlos's voice-over narration and by the focus on a tri-generational family story whose members have differing experiences of the past (lived by them as their present) that the show reconstructs. Not only does *Cuéntame* participate in the memory boom that has overtaken Spain during the past three decades; it also exemplifies how collective memory in Spain has been mediated through radio and especially television, symbolized by the TV set in the Alcántaras's living room, which they acquired during the very first episode of the show. The family gathers around it to watch history in the making unfold. Critics including Santana, Corbalán, and Smith stress that memory in the series is saturated by nostalgia, relying on the evocation of private emotions to mediate "the intellectual goal of understanding subjects and institutions."⁵⁵ The prevailing tone of *Cuéntame* is

⁵⁴ Francisca López, "España en la escena global: *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 11 (2007): 138.

⁵⁵ See, respectively, Mario Santana, "Screening history: television, memory, and the nostalgia of national community in *Cuéntame cómo pasó* and *Temps de silenci*," *Tessarae: Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 21, no. 2 (2015): 153; Ana Corbalán, "Reconstrucción del pasado histórico; nostalgia reflexiva en *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 10, no. 3 (2009): 341; Paul J. Smith, "The Emotional Imperative: Almodóvar's *Hable con ella* and Televisión Española's *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," *MLN* 119 (2004): 364-365.

conciliatory, described as “benevolent” and saturated by a “saccharine idealism” (idealismo edulcorado).⁵⁶

All these characteristics of the series are on display in Episode 317, “Nunca digas nunca” (Never say never).⁵⁷ The episode takes place in June of 1985, a date that Imanol Arias—a very well-known actor in Spain who plays paterfamilias Antonio—described to *El País* as symbolic of “the year of reencounter” (el año del reencuentro).⁵⁸ Above all, Arias is referring to the national reencounter of Spain with Europe; in 1985 Spain signed the treaty marking its admission into the EC. With democracy firmly entrenched and threats of another coup rapidly fading, Spain was no longer a European outlier. Entry into the European Community was a form of certification of Spanish (post)modernity and neoliberalism. The episode is also a family event, a reunion of its far-flung members. Carlos visits from Brussels, where he has been living, and his brother Toni, a London-based foreign correspondent who has been working on assignment in Beirut, returns to Madrid when he is offered a plum position as a newscaster on Spanish Television’s Channel 1 (TVE-1)’s nightly news show.⁵⁹ Metaphorically, it is also the occasion of Spain’s reencounter with the legacy of Sepharad. Toni (previously divorced) comes home with his new girlfriend, Deborah Stern (Paloma Boyd), a British Jew whose family traces their lineage back to medieval Spain. The question of the incorporation of Deborah and her family into the lives of the Alcántaras and, by extension, their reabsorption into the Spanish nation, is first broached when Toni introduces Deborah to his siblings. Deborah is portrayed as beautiful and accomplished, an algorithmic analyst who works for a multinational corporation in the field of information technology and is a winner of the Turing Prize, the so-called Nobel Prize of Computing.

⁵⁶ Santana, “Screening history,” 153; Rueda Laffond and Guerra Gómez, “Televisión y nostalgia,” 403.

⁵⁷ *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, episode 317 (season 18), “Nunca digas nunca,” created by Miguel Ángel Bernardeu, directed by Agustín Crespi, Antonio Cano, Moisés Ramos and Óscar Albar, aired February 23, 2017 on Radio Televisión Española.

⁵⁸ Natalia Marcos, “Los Alcántara inician el resto de su futuro,” *El País*, January 12, 2017. Accessed September 17, 2018, https://elpais.com/cultura/2017/01/10/television/1484063802_165726.html.

⁵⁹ The two channels of Radio Televisión Española, TVE-1 and TVE-2, have since been renamed La 1 and La 2.

INÉS: I think she's taller than mom. She's very pretty.

CARLOS: Listen, what about this Stern business?

TONI: Stern. . . Well, she's Jewish.

CARLOS: She's what?

TONI: She's a Jew born in London. Her father emigrated from Budapest after the war and her mother is Sephardi.

INÉS: Oh, that's why she speaks Spanish so well.

TONI: She speaks four languages. She's very smart.

CARLOS: And you're going to bring her home?... Without warning?

TONI: Well, I was thinking that you both could bring up the subject... That's what siblings are for, right?

CARLOS: But she's Jewish.

TONI: I don't think it will matter to Dad and Mom.

CARLOS: It's going to shock them a little.

TONI: It shocked her family that I'm Christian.

INÉS: Are they very religious?

TONI: She isn't. Her grandfather in particular, he's the most Orthodox.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ INÉS: Yo creo que es más alta que mamá. Es guapísima.

CARLOS: Oye, ¿y lo de Stern?

TONI: Stern... Es que es judía.

CARLOS: ¿Que es qué?

TONI: Es judía nacida en Londres. Su padre emigró de Budapest tras la guerra y su madre es sefardí.

INÉS: Ah, por eso habla tan bien el español.

TONI: Habla cuatro idiomas. Es muy lista.

CARLOS: ¿Y la vas a llevar a casa?... ¿Sin avisar?

TONI: Bueno, había pensado que vosotros podías ir avanzando el tema... Para eso están los hermanos, ¿no?

CARLOS: Pero es judía.

TONI: No creo que les importe a papá y a mamá.

CARLOS: Un poco sí que les va a chocar.

TONI: A su familia le chocó que fuera cristiano.

INÉS: ¿Son muy religiosos?

While Toni is delayed at work, Deborah arrives at his parents' home unaccompanied, bringing as a gift a record album of Sephardi ballads that reminds her of her childhood; the camera briefly lingers on the image of the album cover of Spanish musician and folklorist Joaquín Díaz's *Romanzas y cantigas sefardíes* (1972). When her hosts express surprise that she speaks Spanish, Deborah explains that her mother's ancestors lived in Spain many years ago, leading to the following exchange:

ANTONIO: During the war, because of what happened with the Germans?

DEBORAH: No, long before that, in the fifteenth century. My mother's family is Sephardi.

INÉS: They were the Jews that left Spain, Dad.

ANTONIO: I know, dear, I know. The ones whom the Catholic Kings kicked out.⁶¹

Antonio and Mercedes, disconcerted, adjourn to the kitchen to discuss matters: should they serve the platter of sliced ham they have prepared? This is the first of several comedic moments that arise during the course of the episode because of their uncertainty over the correct religious protocols to use with Deborah. Their nervousness only increases when they learn that Deborah's parents and grandfather have made the trip from the UK to meet their daughter's boyfriend's family.⁶² Knowing they will have to invite the entire Stern clan for dinner provokes another crisis, similarly played for laughs, as Antonio meets with a rabbi in the synagogue in hopes of learning the do's and don'ts of entertaining Jewish guests. As Hebrew music plays on the soundtrack, Antonio dons a *kippah*,

TONI: Ella no. Su abuelo sobre todo, es el más ortodoxo.

⁶¹ ANTONIO: ¿En la guerra, con lo de los alemanes?

DEBORAH: No, mucho antes, en el siglo XV. La familia de mi madre es sefardí.

INÉS: Eran los judíos, papá, que se fueron de España.

ANTONIO: Ya lo sé, hija, ya lo sé. Los que echaron los Reyes Católicos.

⁶² The Stern family represents a composite of world Jewry. Deborah's mother and maternal grandfather are Sephardi; her father Lajos, from Budapest, is Ashkenazi and a Holocaust survivor. (The number tattooed on his forearm is briefly shown in one scene).

genuflects needlessly before the open ark, and asks the rabbi's guidance: he already knows they do not eat pork, but are they permitted to drink wine? He is surprised to learn that Orthodox Jews consume only kosher wine, and even more so to discover that vineyards in Jerez and La Rioja are already producing and exporting it. He confesses his inexperience, mistaking the rabbi's reference to a kosher diet for "a Jewish weight-loss diet" (*una dieta de adelgazamiento judía*). The rabbi assures him that the Stern family is accustomed to dealing with people of other faiths, adding, "All we Jews are [used to this]" (*Todos los judíos lo estamos*), an acknowledgment of their status as a religious minority always in negotiation with a majority population.

A subsequent bedtime conversation between the spouses, meant to better inform Mercedes, simultaneously offers viewers a recap of the rules of *kashrut* as well as an excursus on the history and diasporic migrations of Spain's Jews, as Antonio reads aloud to his wife from a volume of the 1971 *Enciclopedia Universal Danae*. The episode presents additional instruction for viewers unacquainted with Jewish traditions through Abraham (Miguel Canalejo), one of the series' secondary characters. Abraham is the offspring of a mixed marriage between Olga, a Christian Spaniard who runs the neighborhood bar-restaurant El Bistrot frequented by the Alcántaras, and a Moroccan Jew who subsequently abandoned his wife and son. When Mercedes enquires about the Star of David he wears around his neck, Abraham, who has Asperger's syndrome, launches into a rapid-fire recitation:

I'm not Jewish because I'm baptized. If I were Jewish, I wouldn't work on Saturdays. And I wouldn't eat pork. Or shellfish. Jews don't eat anything that comes from the ocean that doesn't have scales. And they also don't eat rabbit or camel meat. And the same thing with beef, they don't eat it if the rabbi hasn't killed it.⁶³

⁶³ "Yo no soy judío porque estoy bautizado. Si fuese judío no trabajaría los sábados. Y tampoco comería cerdo. Ni marisco. No comen nada que venga del mar que no tenga escamas. Y tampoco se comen la carne de liebre ni la del camello. Y con la ternera pasa igual. No se la comen si no la ha matado el rabino."

Not just Antonio is worried about the impression the Alcántaras will make upon the Sterns. Toni is equally nervous over the planned meeting of the two families: “My father has never seen Jews... He’s going to bombard them with questions” (Mi padre no ha visto judíos... les va a freír a preguntas). He tries to reassure his mother about the Sterns as she fusses in the kitchen over the shrimp she bought and now cannot serve: “Es gente muy normal” (They are very normal people). If Toni represents the new Spaniard who respects difference and for whom an interfaith relationship is of little consequence, his father embodies a prior generation, uncertainly charting a path through a turbulent period in which social and political norms are being upended. The vast majority of Spaniards watching this episode likely share Antonio’s ignorance, in effect learning along with him. As his character is constructed in *Cuéntame*, Antonio models for the audience a new form of citizenship, based on a growing interethnic sensitivity, that emerged in the 1980s but is equally valid in 2017 when this episode was first broadcast.

In his willingness to learn, Antonio stands in diametrical contrast to Herminia, his 80-something mother-in-law who has lived most of her life under the dictatorship and appears refractory to Spain’s newly liberal politics and culture. Where her son-in-law consults with a rabbi, Herminia consults with Father Froilán, her parish priest; the two of them are scandalized by Toni and Deborah’s relationship. Herminia was weaned on the traditional Catholic theology that accused the Jews of deicide, a view that even Vatican II’s encyclical *Nostra Aetate* (1965) has failed to shake loose from her. She confirms with Father Froilán: “Because the Jews were the ones who killed Christ, right?... When I was young, they were right to tell us in church that the Jews should be killed” (Porque fueron los judíos los que mataron a Jesucristo, ¿eh?... Con razón cuando yo era pequeña, nos decían en la iglesia que había que matar a judíos).⁶⁴ Although the priest informs her that that this was a symbolic practice that has since been abandoned, he nonetheless stokes Herminia’s dread, warning her of the problems that will ensue if Toni and Deborah have children since Jewishness is inherited through matrilineal descent: “if your grandson has a child with that woman, God forbid, he’ll be born Jewish”

⁶⁴ In *L’estigma*, the Capuchin priest and scholar Enric Cortès, among other speakers, recounts the prejudicial characterization of Jews as Christ-killers that he was taught as a child.

(si su nieto tiene un hijo con esa chica, Dios no lo quiera, le sale judío). While Herminia grimaces at the thought of a Jewish grandchild, the priest delivers the coup de grâce: “And when you least expect it, bam! they circumcise him” (Y cuando menos se lo espere, ¡zas! Se lo circuncidan). Eerily echoing the Edict of 1492, the priest advises that Herminia’s family are apostolic Roman Catholics and must remain so; Deborah must convert. Though far less intransigent than her mother, Mercedes expresses similar prejudices and reservations; she worries that a future grandchild may not be baptized and remembers that as a child she was told that Jews have tails. Antonio promptly admonishes her: only ignorant people believe this; Deborah, by contrast, is “a genius” (una lumbrera). The binary opposition between ignorance and knowledge of the Sephardi world structures not just these scenes, but in fact the entire episode.

The dinner table scene forms the episode’s climax. Deborah’s family arrives, excitedly speaking a mix of English, imperfect Spanish, and Ladino. Herminia and Menahem, Deborah’s grandfather, immediately get off on the wrong foot; Herminia’s exclamation “¡Ay, Jesús!” when she sneezes provokes a debate regarding Jewish guilt for the death of Christ, followed by Menahem’s retort that while the former has not been proven, what is indeed verified is that “the Spanish Inquisition threw us out of our homes” (la Inquisición Española echó de nuestras casas a nosotros). Gradually, though, the tensions start to ebb; Menahem and Herminia agree to disagree, repeating “to each his own.” The religiously observant Menahem has brought his dinner with him, kosher *lajmashin* (turnovers filled with tomato, onion, and chopped meat, a favorite Sephardi food). He offers one to Herminia, who tastes it and, in an epiphanic moment of discovery, exclaims approvingly: “Empanadillas de carne” (meat empanadas, a common dish in many Spanish households).

The final minutes of the program spin the evening’s events as a story of new-found commonalities, reinforced by the reintroduction of Carlos’s voice-over: “If a Spanish Christian family and a Jewish family settled in London meet for dinner, what are the chances that they resemble each other as closely as two drops of water?” (Si una familia cristiana española y una familia judía asentada en Londres se encuentran para cenar, ¿cuántas probabilidades hay de que sean tan parecidas

como dos gotas de agua?). Menahem even suggests the possibility that his family and the Alcántaras may have a shared genealogy, no doubt referring to the intermarriage that often was transacted between *conversos* and “Old Christians” before and after 1492: “Maybe you don’t know that your ancestors were Jewish” (A lo mejor ustedes no sepan que sus antepasados eran judíos), which elicits a tentative response from Herminia: “I don’t know. Maybe.” (No sé. Quizás). The final lines of dialogue belong to Antonio and Mercedes, as the former contemplates the future of his winemaking business; he wonders aloud what his wife thinks of the possibility of their bodega producing kosher wine.

The manner in which the scene concludes suggests how *Cuéntame* ultimately seeks to present the history of the nation and its collective memories as consensual. By underscoring how the Alcántaras demonstrate a willingness to embrace the Sterns, the show reinforces the nation-as-family analogy and projects “a view of the passage of time that is always positive, both personally and financially.”⁶⁵ The feel-good ending of the episode corroborates the role of emotion in promoting viewers’ identification with these Sephardi Jews who epitomize not vindictiveness but rather nostalgia, a point which is made when the script recycles the *topos* of the key to the home, now lost, that Menahem’s ancestors once occupied in Toledo and where the Sterns say they still have family.

The ability to identify with unfamiliar Jewish traditions is also supported by the conventions of dramedy. *Cuéntame*’s mix of pathos, tension, and humor—the unease provoked by the intimacy of Toni and Deborah’s interfaith relationship, contrasted with the humorous verbal repartee and situational misunderstandings that arise out of the characters’ unfamiliarity with Jewish religious observances and customs—seems ripe for drawing in an audience who, like the Alcántaras (an “average” Spanish family), may have had little or no previous exposure to Jews. Paul Julian Smith, citing philosopher and legal scholar Martha Nussbaum’s explanation of the relationship between feeling and knowledge, contends that television series like *Cuéntame* that are structured around forms of emotional

⁶⁵ H. Rosi Song, *Lost in Translation: Constructing Memory in Contemporary Spain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 103.

cognition can extend an “education for compassionate citizenship.”⁶⁶ This is what the creators of *Cuéntame* appear to be promoting; surely there is hope for a more tolerant society if even the dogmatic Herminia is able to break out of the straitjacket of Franco-era ideology and declare in her final words in the episode: “Hey, the Jewish family is the same as ours. The only thing is they got their religion wrong” (Oye, la familia de los judíos es igual que la nuestra. Lo único es que se han equivocado de religión). If, as Smith affirms, *Cuéntame* “invites its audience to be responsible and to understand recent history,”⁶⁷ this episode invokes both a current and a more remote history of prejudice and marginalization that the program hopes to dispel without, however, alienating an older generation of viewers who were indoctrinated under Francoism to view Jews with suspicion. Viewed from this angle, the “Nunca digas nunca” episode confirms Smith’s observation that in today’s Spain television series often function as “a kind of democratic pedagogy.”⁶⁸ In addition to its popular entertainment value, the Deborah-Toni storyline functions as a vehicle for participatory destigmatization strategies intended to cultivate a more informed citizenry. Yet it also becomes clear that acceptance of Deborah and what she and her family represent is dependent on the erasure of difference; echoing Toni’s earlier words to his mother, Herminia observes with satisfaction that “they” [Deborah’s immediate family, and, by extension, Jews] are like us: “they’re normal people” (es gente normal).

In line with the multitemporal structure that characterizes the series, the push toward cultural consensus and respect for religious difference that can be detected in this particular episode surely reflects the events of 2017 as much as it does those of 1985. In the reconstruction of history that *Cuéntame* pursues, the encounter between the Alcántaras and the Sterns on Spanish soil can be viewed as a response to the Constitution of 1978, which definitively legislated the separation of Church and state. Since the Sterns have traveled from London to Madrid, their meeting with the Alcántaras may also be related to the agreement signed in 1985 between

⁶⁶ Quoted in Smith, “The Emotional Imperative,” 374.

⁶⁷ Paul J. Smith, “The Approach to Spanish Television Drama of the New Golden Age: Remembering, Repeating, Working Through,” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 83, no. 1 (2001): 68.

⁶⁸ Paul J. Smith, *Spanish Lessons: Cinema and Television in Contemporary Spain* (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 4.

Spain and the UK that resulted in the reopening of the border between Gibraltar and Spain, a symbolic gateway to Europe. Of course, given the presentist turn that distinguishes *Cuéntame*, the Toni-Deborah subplot undoubtedly echoes more recent events as well. Of these, the most prominent involves the passage in June of 2015 of the law granting citizenship to Sephardi Jews with Spanish origins (Ley de concesión de nacionalidad a sefardíes originarios de España). Quoting this legislation, “Today’s Spain, with this law, wishes to take a firm step toward achieving the reencounter of the definitive reconciliation with the Sephardi communities,” a sentiment echoed by King Felipe when he declared in Madrid’s royal palace before an audience of government ministers and representatives of the Jewish community: “one of the branches of the Spanish nation, sadly separated from it in its day, formally returns to the common trunk.”⁶⁹ The parable of return to the homeland works to the Spanish government’s advantage, as it does for many Sephardim; it supports the vision of Spanish democratic identity by re-invoking the myth of *convivencia*.

Conclusion

L’estigma? and *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, working within their respective generic paradigms of documentary film and network television, strive to make visible a Jewish community that has remained largely imaginary to Spaniards. By their efforts to demystify religious and cultural traditions and dislodge calcified stereotypes, they gesture toward the gradual normalization of what continues to be a fraught relationship between Spaniards and the nation’s internal others and the legacy of Sepharad. The destigmatization process they endorse proceeds, however, inconsistently. In the case of *Cuéntame*, Deborah becomes a regular member of the ensemble cast on the heels of the “Nunca digas nunca” episode; although her romance with Toni becomes a throughline of subsequent seasons of

⁶⁹ “La España de hoy, con la presente Ley, quiere dar un paso firme para lograr el reencuentro de la definitiva reconciliación con las comunidades sefardíes.” “Ley 12/2015, de 24 de junio, en materia de concesión de la nacionalidad española a los sefardíes originarios de España,” accessed November 15, 2015, <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2015/06/24/12>. The King’s remark (“regresa formalmente al tronco común de la nación española una de sus ramas que, en su día, fue tristemente separada”) is quoted in Remírez de Ganuza, “El Rey recibe.”

the show, acceptance of their relationship realistically progresses by fits and starts. When in a subsequent episode an angry Antonio, while feuding with Mercedes, accidentally damages Deborah's computer, he heatedly instructs Toni to "tell Lauren Bacall that I'll buy her a new computer, and a kosher one at that," an example of the frictions that continue to arise in the Alcántara household over Deborah's growing role in their lives. Deborah, however, stands her ground and defends the difference that her future in-laws' family would seek to expunge. She rejects Toni's suggestion to announce their intention to live independently of any religion: "For you, it's easier, you're Christian. For a Christian, living on the margins of religion is an act of rebellion. For a Jew, it's a renunciation" (*Para un judío es claudicar*).

In the debut episode of season 20 (#349, "El año de la serpiente" [The Year of the Serpent]) they are married in a traditional Jewish ceremony, but the focus is not on Jewish ritual but instead on the happy mingling of global traditions at the reception—a *Hora* danced to "Hava Nagila," followed by Antonio's request to the band to play the popular Mexican song "Cielito lindo." The season closes with the premature birth of their daughter Sol (#358, "Que será, será" [What Will Be, Will Be]), without discussion of whether she will be baptized. The final frames of *L'estigma*? similarly focus on the next generation. The boy being *bar mitzvah*ed gives his speech to the congregation as Sans, in voice-over, affirms that Judaism stands at the origin of Spanish culture; he muses that all Spaniards, owing to the history of forced conversions, are part Jewish in their makeup. The documentary concludes with a title card on screen containing a quote from the Mishnah (Pirkei Avot, 4: 3): "Despise no man and do not discriminate against anything, for there is no man that does not have his hour, and no thing that does not have its place." Hope is retained that viewers can be educated and opinions changed. Sans deliberately punctuates his title with a question mark: is the stigma that marks Jewishness necessarily inescapable?⁷⁰ The film compiles a preponderance of evidence of Spanish and Catalan Judeophobia; the ending leaves the door open.

⁷⁰ The enquiring nature of Sans's title offers a notable contrast to the title of an earlier monograph, *El estigma imborrable* (The Indelible Stigma), dealing with anti-Jewish sentiment in Spain. See Jacobo Israel Garzón et al., *El estigma imborrable: reflexiones sobre el nuevo antisemitismo* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2005).

The resulting fluctuation between didacticism and hesitation that characterizes *L'estigma*⁷¹ is similar to the vacillation in *Cuéntame*, between its presentation to viewers of a civic pedagogy and ambivalence toward the multicultural, pluralistic landscape that such a pedagogy apparently promotes. Even so, both offer examples of how cultural productions may reframe and put into circulation a different (his)story about the relationship of Spain and Catalonia to the legacy of Sepharad and Jewishness. Certainly, they approach the act of storytelling from radically different perspectives: one is a social issues documentary that is intellectually-driven; the other, a popular television series that delivers “infotainment” by appealing to viewers’ emotions. The latter has been seen by millions of viewers; the former enjoyed a limited theatrical release and unremarkable coverage by the press. Nonetheless, there is a strong resemblance between the narrative structures they respectively hinge on. In *L'estigma* Sans shares his own personal discovery of difference and its significance for his society; in *Cuéntame*, the fictional Alcántara family travels a similar road, encountering difference and struggling to accept that the boundaries erected between themselves and perceived others are due to be dismantled. Offering a deeper knowledge of the Jewish and Sephardi world and introducing new attitudes toward it into the public consciousness, both aspire to promote this same self-reflexivity among their audiences.⁷¹

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⁷¹ I extend my thanks to Daniela Flesler, Michal Rose Friedman, and Asher Salah for their rigorous reading and incisive comments on the draft of this article. Thanks are also due to my colleague Elva González, who first drew my attention to the relevant episode of *Cuéntame*.

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Spain's Jewish Genealogies in the "Sephardi Portraits" of Daniel Quintero

by Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa

Abstract

This essay focuses on the "Sephardic Portraits" of Daniel Quintero (Málaga 1949-), a leading Spanish figurative painter. In these paintings, composed over the last twenty-five years, Quintero portrays contemporary Sephardi figures alongside medieval and early modern Iberian Sephardi Jews. To provide a face to these historical figures (Maimonides, Samuel Halevi, Benjamin of Tudela, Gracia Mendes) Quintero finds inspiration in contemporary Spaniards. Alongside these portraits, a group of still lifes connect the past and present of Jewish Spain. Seen through the methodology of "curatorial dreaming" proposed by Shelley Ruth Butler and Erica Lehrer, these portraits and still lifes construct a genealogy and perform a particular cultural memory. They establish a relationship between a past that remains in the faces, gazes and gestures of those who forgot it and a present that works to make those traces visible through a re-engagement with the memory of Jewish Spain.

The increased visibility of "things Jewish" in contemporary Spain has re-energized, and in certain cases awakened for the first time, a wide array of desires to explore modes of reconnection to Spain's Jewish past and its memory. In this context, Daniel Quintero's work stands out as an effort to reconnect with the Iberian Jewish past that also reflects critically on the questions engendered by this process.

Born in Malaga in 1949, Quintero is a leading figurative painter who for over fifty years has been exploring what he describes as an "abstract naturalist" visual style in which figures, landscapes and portraits emerge from the canvas out of a keen attention to the abstract components of light, reflections and shadows emanating from the painted subject. His artistic practice has been intimately connected to the

representation of the human figure since 1965, when he became a student in Amadeo Roca Gisbert's Art academy in Madrid. Quintero went on to complete his studies at Spain's preeminent art school, the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid. Yet, Roca Gisbert's lessons have proved to be enduring guides throughout Quintero's career. Like his mentor, Quintero emphasizes the importance of pencil and charcoal drawing as the foundation of his work; he understands his artistic practice as a continuation and revision of the tradition of the great Spanish classical painters, and his innovations incorporate the well-established genre conventions of portrait, still-life, and landscape paintings.

Quintero was only twenty years old when his work as a portrait painter captured the attention of gallerist Juana Mordó, who at the time was the most important dealer of Spanish modern art. In 1972, Quintero's work entered the international art scene through a collective exhibition organized in London to showcase the work of Antonio López García (1936-) and a group of young new-realist Spanish painters. Quintero's work for that exhibition, entitled *En el Metro* (In the Subway, oil on canvas, 1972), depicted a hyperrealist portrait of a man and a woman as they stand behind the timeworn doors of the Madrid subway. His inclusion in this seminal exhibition seems to have generated the perception of a close connection between Quintero's work and that of the Madrid new-realist painters. Quintero himself, however, has expressed repeatedly that his work has no link to Antonio López García's, neither as a disciple, nor as a follower of his aesthetics. Perhaps the most visible evidence of this difference is that, unlike the work of López García and his disciples, which gravitates towards landscape painting, Quintero's artistic practice is centered on the portrait, which informs his approximation to other genres. Over more than 50 years, he has painted official portraits of leading figures in the realms of culture, science and politics, including members of the Spanish Royal family, film director Pedro Almodóvar, writer Manuel Vicent, Manuela Carmena—painted in 1993 during her time as a judge, before she became Madrid's mayor (2015-2019)—as well as former presidents Adolfo Suárez (1976-1981) and Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo (1991-1992).

In contrast with these portraits of contemporary public figures, his “Sephardi portraits” stand as a project deeply embedded in a sustained and intentional exploration of a single topic, the larger process of Spain’s “reconnection” with Jewish history, culture and practices. The project encompasses complementary groups of paintings on which Quintero has worked since the early 1990s. The first group portrays contemporary religious and political leaders of Sephardi communities in France and Spain. The second group consists of imaginary portraits of various medieval and early modern Iberian-Jewish historical figures. Besides these two, a third group is composed of still lifes of food arrangements and material symbols of traditional Jewish celebrations. While thematically these paintings belong to three distinct temporalities (the present implied in the contemporary portraits, the past evoked by the historic portraits, and a trans-historical dimension embodied in symbols and rituals captured in the still lifes) they all show a remarkable convergence in terms of themes and style.

As Stuart Hall reminds us, identity, like memory, is not something that can be “discovered” or “recovered,” but something that is continually in production, something that is practiced in particular social and cultural contexts. The stories communities tell about their pasts are of utmost importance in this process, especially in terms of how these stories affect people belonging to particular groups and communities. As Hall puts it, “far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found... identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.”¹ Quintero’s paintings construct a particularly rich story of a shared Iberian-Jewish past. They are also emblematic of how this past has been re-explored and claimed in contemporary Spain.

In order to read these paintings as interventions in the ongoing process of re-engagement with the memory of Jewish Spain, and the new identity positionings this process has set in motion, we experiment with what Shelley Ruth Butler and Erica Lehrer call “curatorial dreaming.” Curatorial dreaming is “an innovative

¹ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 225.

method of engaged cultural analysis and critique,” a way for critics and scholars to “curate our arguments” through imagining exhibitions of our own.² As Butler and Lehrer argue, “[e]xhibits naturalize particular ways of looking at the world. They can also clear paths for new ways of seeing.”³

Our “dream exhibition” places Quintero’s paintings in dialogue with the great Spanish masters. We view his portraits as formally embracing and intervening in many of the conventions explored by painters such as Diego Velázquez, Francisco de Goya and José de Ribera. They all belong to a peculiarly Spanish tradition of developing the portrait as a tool of social commentary. Similarly, Quintero’s still-life paintings contain frequent allusions to the classical *bodegón* paintings of the Spanish baroque by artists such as Pedro de Acosta, Blas de Ledesma, Juan Sánchez Cotán, Francisco de Zurbarán and Pedro de Medina Balbuena. Like them, Quintero’s still lifes endow everyday foods and wares with a sense of symbolic immanence. While being intensely material in their realism, their composition and status as representation endows them with a mystical dimension. Yet, this group of paintings also push these classical Spanish visual traditions into a conceptual territory that they had all but overlooked: explicitly, Quintero embraces in them the Iberian Jewish past and present.

Like Velázquez and Goya, Quintero’s equal artistic treatment of both the social elite and the downtrodden implicitly humbles the powerful and dignifies the marginalized. If Velázquez focused his eye on the dignity of the court jesters and Goya rescued the figures of street children, the old, poor and infirm, Quintero turns his attention to present-day inhabitants of Spain or in close proximity to Spain, who in different ways occupy positions of marginality. He also focuses on prominent medieval Iberian Jews who have traditionally been relegated to the margins of Spanish cultural and social history. While he has painted the portraits

² Shelley Ruth Butler and Erica Lehrer, “Introduction: Curatorial Dreaming,” *Curatorial Dreams. Critics Imagine Exhibitions*, eds. Shelley Ruth Butler and Erica Lehrer (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2016), 4.

³ Ibid, 6. Several of the paintings analyzed in this article were part of an exhibition of Daniel Quintero’s Sephardi-themed work at the state-owned Museo sefardí in Toledo, entitled “Memoria escondida/Hidden Memory.” We collaborated in this exhibition, writing the text that introduced visitors to the paintings.

of some of the most powerful members of the political and cultural elite, his “Sephardi portraits” focus attention on groups of people who do not have a high degree of social visibility within contemporary Spain.

Quintero’s account of his own interest in Jewish culture and Sephardi history describes how at age of twelve, he became fascinated by Hebrew letters and calligraphy: “From my first contact with it, I was drawn to that writing, so compact and abstract. It was like a world asking me to immerse myself in it.”⁴ This early fascination with Hebrew calligraphy denotes an experience of revelation not unlike those expressed by the increasing number of people who identify as *converso* descendants in Spain and in the Luso-Hispanic world at large.⁵ For many of these individuals who “discover” their *converso* roots this revelation results in a radical transformation of personal identity, in a claim to have recovered what they see as their “authentic” selves. For Quintero this revelation becomes mainly an aesthetic and epistemological search: he converted to Judaism, but he does not claim to be a descendant of *conversos*; he does not speak of a “recovery” of origins, nor does he make his religious beliefs a significant part of his public persona. It is his work that carries an implicit and complex reflection on the present inheritances derived from the historic Jewish presence in Spain.

Quintero’s portraits of contemporary Sephardi Jews imply a welcome home qualified by equal parts of symbolic aesthetic restitution, joyful discovery and acknowledgement of their subjects’ experiences gathered in the Sephardi diaspora.

⁴ Fietta Jarque, “Daniel Quintero recrea sus emociones ante la cultura sefardí,” *El País*, September 6, 2000. Accessed December 10, 2020, http://elpais.com/diario/2000/09/06/cultura/968191209_850215.html.

⁵ See Benmayor and Kandiyoti’s essay “Ancestry, Genealogy and Restorative Citizenship” in this volume for a discussion of self-identified converso descendants’ interest in the Spanish and Portuguese laws of nationality. See also Kandiyoti, *The Converso’s Return. The Afterlives of Conversion in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), which analyzes the cultural contexts and literary production that have emerged from the reawakening of interest in converso history, ancestry and identity in the Americas, Europe, and Turkey in the last few decades. See also Charles A. McDonald, “Return to Sepharad: Citizenship, Conversion, and the Politics of Jewish Inclusion in Spain,” (PhD diss., New School for Social Research, 2019) and Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez-Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020).

Quintero's conscious update of the visual rhetoric of the Spanish classical and baroque both honors these Sephardi subjects and inserts them into the long list of portraits of kings, queens, noblemen, saints and common Spanish folk portrayed by the great Spanish masters. This subtle aesthetic embrace inserts the portraits starkly at the center of Spain's visual tradition. Historically successive and self-interested Spanish politicians and governments have performed eager gestures of welcoming back of Sephardi Jews to the Spanish flock, from Ángel Pulido's characterization of Sephardi Jews as "Spaniards without a homeland," to the famous 1992 declaration by King Juan Carlos that in Spain "Jews are in their own home"; and ultimately the legal recognition offered to descendants of those Jews expelled in 1492 in the 2015 Law of Nationality.⁶ Unlike these political gestures, Quintero's paintings embody acts of homecoming that do not flatten or erase the identity, nor the multiple attachments of Sephardi Jews, but rather embrace the complexities entailed in this recognition. The portraits contain a symbolic inclusion, but also an acknowledgment of the protracted historical and cultural distance, as well as respect for the difference of the subjects they feature.

Compositionally, the portrayed subjects appear enveloped in an evanescent atmosphere that fades away toward the frame of the canvas. The color palette, characterized by a revealing, celebratory luminosity conjures a sense of immediacy and material presence. By contrast, the titles and garments identify the portrayed subjects as coming from remote times, distant places or overlooked marginal proximities. This subtle play with temporality reappears in the paintings at every formal and thematic level. Through this creative anachronism, in these paintings Sepharad becomes simultaneously a trace of the past and a contemporary presence.

⁶ The senator Ángel Pulido y Fernández (1852-1932) became the leader of philosephardism, a movement that sought to expand Spain's influence in the Mediterranean and advance Spain's colonial ambitions over Morocco through the cultivation of links with Sephardi Jews. Pulido consistently downplayed Sephardi Jews' Jewish identity. Much of the rationale and language of the 2015 Law of Nationality for Sephardi Jews, which provides a path to citizenship to those who can prove descent from Jews expelled from Spain in 1492, is connected to these early twentieth-century philosephardi views of Sephardi Jews that emphasize their "Spanish" identity. For more on the philosephardi echoes in this Law, see Tabea Linhard, *Jewish Spain. A Mediterranean Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

The portraits establish a relationship between a past that remains in the faces, gazes and gestures of the present, and a present that works to make those traces visible.

For example, the painting *Anglo Sefarad* (oil, charcoal and tempera on Japanese paper, 2007) (fig. 1) shows a life-size full-length portrait of an elegant young man from Madrid's Jewish community who stands in front of us, returning our gaze. The composition reminds us of Goya's portraits of aristocratic figures like the similarly arranged *Duque de San Carlos* (1815). Unlike the dark ominous tones that surround Goya's portraits, a set of luminous hues of blue and white place the subject of *Anglo Sefarad* in an inviting atmosphere, fully open for the viewer to enjoy. Within it, however, hints of the Sephardi layers of history and experience emerge symbolically from the dandy-like cane, top hat, the white tallit with blue stripes and the sobriety of the black-and-white attire. While some of these elements might be familiar to the average Spanish viewer, they also function as indices of subtle historical and cultural distances. The top hat, for example, may be perceived as a familiar playful symbol connecting the young man to now past conventions of upper-class celebrations and cosmopolitan elegance. Yet, top hats have been used in England (and other countries as well) as a special Shabbat garment by Spanish and Portuguese synagogue officers and congregants.⁷ Through this polysemic game, the portrait conveys familiarization while simultaneously capturing historical and cultural difference.

⁷ For a history of the use of top hats in Sephardi communities in England see Abraham Gilam, *The Emancipation of Jews in England 1830-1860* (London: Garland Publishing, 1982), 4-6.



Fig. 1. Daniel Quintero, *Anglo Sefarad*, oil, charcoal, and tempera on Japanese paper, 150 x 97 cm, 2007, Private Collection (Courtesy of Daniel Quintero).

Similarly, *Rav Knafo* (oil on board, 2009, fig. 2) portrays the rabbi of Bayonne's community, a community that holds a strong historical connection to the Jews expelled from Spain. Again, the composition resonates with joy and lightness. The smiling Rabi Knafo holds a book in a pose that closely resembles Velázquez' portraits of humble people as philosophers and wise men. In particular, we can look at the aesthetic filiation with his portrait of *Esopo* (Aesop, 1640) similarly holding a book, although in much darker, tenebrous tones. Rabbi Knafo's portrait provides a sense of dignity to the subject and of immediacy and closeness to the viewer. But the subject is not immediately apprehensible: the Hebrew characters on the book, the unshaven face, and the simplicity of the suit and the black hat provide reminders that the Jewish difference is not to be flattened out. The paintings do not represent Sephardi Jews as "Spaniards without a homeland." They do not erase the multiple attachments of Sephardi Jews or downplay the possibly uncomfortable difference that Sephardi Jews, as Jews, bring with them to Spain.

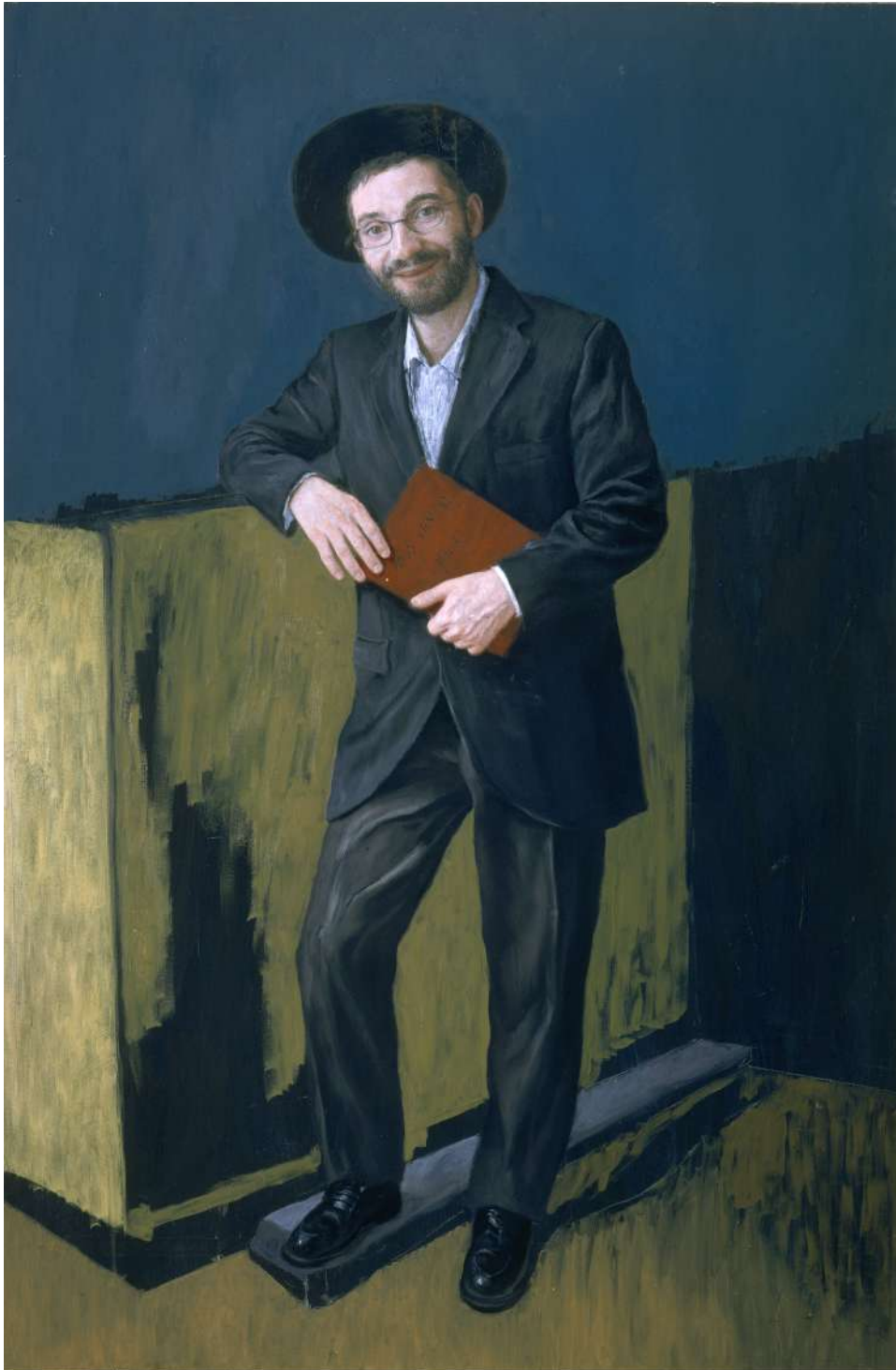


Fig. 2. Daniel Quintero, *Rav Knafo*, oil on wooden panel, 136 x 90 cm, 2009, Private Collection (Courtesy of Daniel Quintero).

The book is a leitmotif of several of Quintero's portraits of contemporary Sephardi men, all of whom appear joyfully reading and studying their books, as we can see in *Rabbi Baruj Garzón* (2007) or *Rabino estudiando Torá* (Rabbi Studying Torah, 2013) (fig. 3). In this last portrait, Rabbi Moshe Bendahan, who presides over the Jasdei Leah Sephardi synagogue in Madrid, appears against a blue background that Quintero characterizes as “Moroccan blue,” Morocco being the place from where the Bendahan family migrated to Spain in the 1960s.



Fig. 3. Daniel Quintero, *Rabino estudiando Torá* (Rabbi Studying Torah), oil and tempera on canvas, 78 x 114 cm, 2013, Private Collection (Cortesy of Daniel Quintero).

If these portraits of present-day Sephardi Jews insert their subjects into a quintessentially Spanish classical visual tradition and thus as subjects of Spanish culture, Quintero's Sephardi still lifes take this idea of a joyful and respectful welcome one step further. Composed using many of the conventions of the Spanish baroque still lifes, the paintings implicitly reflect on the complex shared ritual and symbolic practices that crisscross Spanish and Sephardi religious celebrations. The similarities are so striking that, at first sight, these might be perceived as Jewish renderings of a Catholic Iberian tradition. Yet, more

powerfully, they reveal the Jewish elements present in classic Spanish mysticism, which both inspired and achieved expression through the baroque still life. Thus, in *Acerca de Pesaj* (About Pesach, 1990) (fig. 4) the traditional food elements of the Passover feast appear represented with the characteristic classic Spanish still life's frugality and careful attention to the geometric balance of the composition.



Fig. 4. Daniel Quintero, *Acerca de Pesaj* (About Pesach), oil on cloth, 38 x 72cm, 1990, Private Collection (Courtesy of Daniel Quintero).

In fact, the painting draws from the style of two mystical painters in this tradition: Juan Sánchez Cotán (1560-1627) and Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664). Cotán's intense attention to the food at its most humble materiality (see Cotán's *Bodegón de caza, hortalizas, y frutas*, 1602) combines with Zurbarán's emphasis on the depiction of tableware (trays, cups, dishes) in such detail that the objects of the painting appear materially palpable (see Zurbarán's *Bodegón con cacharros*, 1650). *Acerca de Pesaj* adds two narrative references placed at opposite corners of the composition. One depicts an Egyptian pyramid on the prayer book's cover; another image, adorning the cup that holds the *haroseth*—a symbol of the mortar used by Israelite slaves in Egypt—displays a whitewashed tiled-roof house resembling a traditional Southern Spanish home. The Passover meal serves as the bridge connecting these two symbols of the Exodus and Jewish life in Iberia.

La noche de la Mimona (The Night of Mimouna, 1998) (fig. 5) also emphasizes foods and tableware but its style has moved away from classicism into expressionism and abstract naturalism. The *Mimona* festival, celebrated by Moroccan Jews on the last night of Pesach, is a Sephardi holiday with origins in the mid-eighteenth century. The mystical dimension reappears here in the translucent quality of the objects portrayed, discernible thanks to the contours, reflections, and decorative fringes indicating their North African origin. The foods symbolizing hope and redemption and the glass tableware appear as ethereal presences floating on a water-like “Moroccan blue” fluid background.



Fig. 5. Daniel Quintero, *La noche de la Mimona* (The Night of Mimouna), oil on cloth, 89 x 180 cm, 1998, Private Collection (Courtesy of Daniel Quintero).

Norman Bryson argues that the classical Spanish painters' still lifes (like those of Zurbarán and Cotán) create a space in which the mundane transmutes into the supermundane showing the “interpenetration of the ordinary and unassuming with what is exalted and sacred.”⁸ By situating itself in relation to these classical paintings, *Acerca de Pesaj* and *La noche de la Mimona* show the ease with which Sephardi traditions converse with the mystical Catholicism the still lifes represent. In effect, this dialogue makes visible the possibility that the interpenetration of mundane and supernatural in the baroque still lifes was possible because of the

⁸ Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 79.

existence of another “interpenetration,” another hybridity: that of the shared symbolic universes which emerged among Jews, Christians and *conversos* in medieval and early modern Spain.

Quintero has explained how, “Siempre, desde el principio, he trabajado el retrato, incluso a través de otros géneros como el bodegón” (From my beginnings, I have always worked in the portrait genre, even by means of other genres such as still life).⁹ Looking at these still lifes as portraits by other means, *Acerca de Pesaj* and *La noche de la Mimona* are portraits of Sephardi Jewish subjects steeped in both Jewish and Catholic traditions and of the mystical threads that run between them. In these still lifes we can see the depiction of North African Jewish cultural objects through the conventions of the Spanish baroque. As a result, in these paintings it is impossible to maintain any kind of binary opposition between Sephardi and Spanish. In doing so, these “portraits by other means” gesture to the Jewish elements that lay invisible as frames of reference for many of Spain’s most traditional ways of constructing its national identity. They show Jewishness as a constitutive part of what has been traditionally understood as Spanish culture.

Quintero’s conscious update of the visual rhetoric of the Spanish classical and baroque traditions in the still lifes and the portraits of contemporary Sephardi Jews finds a complementary gesture in his portraits of contemporary people embodying historical figures of the Iberian Jewish past. Along with his working on Sephardi contemporary figures, Quintero has been carefully searching for models to portray historical figures of medieval and early modern Iberian origin. Quintero’s portraits bring these historical characters back from oblivion and invisibility by reimagining them in the faces of his contemporaries. More specifically, in the case of most of these models, contemporary Spaniards who have undergone experiences of marginalization, injustice or exile.¹⁰ He sees in them

⁹ “Siempre, desde el principio, he trabajado el retrato, incluso a través de otros géneros como el bodegón,” Pablo Bujalance, “Daniel Quintero abre en el Episcopal la mirada más amplia a su pintura,” *Malaga Hoy*, January 24, 2008. Accessed December 10, 2020, http://www.malahoy.es/ocio/Daniel-Quintero-Episcopal-amplia-pintura_o_116388808.html

¹⁰ Cultural critics have written about how the Iberian Jewish experience of loss and exile has served as a prism through which to reflect on and represent other Spanish and global historical occurrences and traumas. See Stacy N. Beckwith, *Charting Memory: Recalling Medieval Spain*

characteristics that transcend their physical appearance. By looking at their physiognomy as a landscape shaped not so much by genetics, but by their thought and history, Quintero finds in their features a cartography shaped by experiences commensurate with those of the historical figures he wants to depict. He is not exactly painting a person but composing a retrospective construct of these historical figures. This construct is the byproduct of the experiences and works of these individuals, based on traces of their lives that have reached us and to which we have access hundreds of years later.

Some of those lending their faces to the portraits are themselves Jewish; others are not. Symbolically, these Jewish and non-Jewish portraits of the present recall or become traces of the Iberian Sephardi heritage. In them, the debts of past and present violence merge together, one resounding upon the other. The experiences of those posing for these portraits in the present speak to the experience of medieval and early modern historical figures evicted from their homes and removed from traditional Spanish history.¹¹ And the experiences of these historical figures speak to contemporary inhabitants of Spain. The resulting portraits interrogate how to recompose the faces of a community that has been made invisible through a prolonged and deliberate historical process: what traces remain of that which disappeared with those expelled or converted? How to see again that which could not be seen for centuries? Through these visual juxtapositions of past and present, contemporary notions of Spain shift by looking at these notions through the genealogy of Sepharad. These paintings bring this genealogy to the forefront by inserting Jewish subjects at the heart of Spain's visual tradition.

(New York: Garland, 2000); Yael Halevi-Wise, ed., *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Tabea Linhard, *Jewish Spain*.

¹¹ In an article in *El País*—Spain's leading newspaper—about Quintero's portrait of Maimonides using a homeless man as a model, writer Manuel Vicent talks about “personajes sefardíes de la Edad Media que fueron desahuciados de la historia española” (Sephardi figures that were evicted from Spanish history), Manuel Vicent, “Un mendigo llamado Maimónides,” *El País*, November 10, 2017. Accessed December 10, 2020. https://elpais.com/cultura/2017/11/10/actualidad/1510348645_173248.html?id_externo_rsoc=whatsapp.

In one of the earliest paintings in this series, *Emiliano Maté como Maimónides* (Emiliano Maté as Maimonides, oil on canvas, 1991) (fig. 6), a vagabond, Emiliano Maté, lends his face to Maimonides, the prominent Jewish philosopher, doctor, and Rabbi from twelfth-century Cordoba.



Fig. 6. Daniel Quintero, *Emiliano Maté como Maimónides* (Emiliano Maté as Maimonides), oil on canvas, 42 x 33.5 cm, 1991, Private Collection, (Courtesy of Daniel Quintero).

For several years, Quintero had noticed Maté sleeping on a public bench in the Cuatro Caminos neighborhood of Madrid. He learned that Maté had to quit his job as an architectural draftsman to care for his chronically ill and elderly mother. Eventually Maté's inability to pay his co-op's expenses as the area gentrified, led his neighbors to take over his apartment and forced him into homelessness. As a form of protest, Maté made the sidewalk across the street from his former apartment his new home. He sat there as a homeless man for thirty years. Quintero felt drawn to him and his story. After speaking with him several times, he convinced Maté to come to his studio and pose for him for several sessions. They spoke about Maimonides, whom Maté already knew about. In the portrait that resulted from these sessions, the traces of resigned suffering in Maté's persona, the weight of his story as reflected in his body, allow us a glimpse into Maimonides' experience of religious persecution and recurrent exile. The portrait simultaneously vindicates Maté's dignity and intelligence and Maimonides' legacy. The homeless philosopher of the past meets the destitute homeless philosopher of the present.

A similar experience occurs with the portrait *Benjamin de Tudela* (Benjamin of Tudela, oil and tempera on cloth, 1996) (fig. 7). The historical figure was a twelfth-century Jewish traveler and adventurer born in Tudela, Navarra, in 1130. De Tudela began his journey around 1165, visiting Europe, Asia and Africa, and wrote an account, *The Travels of Benjamin* (also known as *Sefer ha-Masa'ot*, *The Book of Travels*), describing the many cities and peoples he encountered, with an emphasis on the Jewish communities he came across.¹² Quintero's model for the portrait was a street performer who busked as a "living statue" in the gardens of the Retiro Park in Madrid. His extreme thinness and his blue, almost translucent gaze seemed to Quintero those of a seasoned traveler. These features helped the painter establish an imaginary relationship between the performer and Benjamin de Tudela. At the time of Quintero's encounter with the model while walking in the Retiro Park, the painter happened to be reading Tudela's *The Book of Travels*.¹³

¹² Martin Jacobs, " 'A Day's Journey': Spatial Perceptions and Geographic Imagination in Benjamin of Tudela's *Book of Travels*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 2 (2019): 203-32.

¹³ Interview in Daniel Quintero's studio, Madrid, July 2016.



Fig. 7. Daniel Quintero, *Benjamín de Tudela*, oil and tempera on canvas, 112 x 85 cm, 1996, Private Collection, (Courtesy of Daniel Quintero).

As in the case of Maimonides described above, a prominent and influential figure of the Jewish-Iberian past is embodied in a contemporary Spaniard who is defined by precariousness and vulnerability. Benjamin of Tudela's twelfth-century encounters with different peoples, geographies and customs in his long travels far

away from his home in the Iberian Peninsula find a commensurate and paradoxical experience in the body of a street performer in 1990s Madrid. The street performer encounters people from all over the world (the Retiro park is a favorite of international tourists, as well as groups of immigrants who can enjoy this free public space in the center of Madrid) without moving at all, as a living statue.

The portrait *Gracia Mendes* (oil, charcoal, and tempera on cloth, 2005) (fig. 8) depicts the powerful and famed sixteenth-century Sephardi businesswoman Doña Gracia Nasi. Also known simply as “La Señora,” she was born in Portugal in 1510 into one of the wealthiest Jewish families of the time. The Nasi family had probably emigrated to Portugal from Spain in 1492, opting for exile instead of conversion to Christianity, but, together with other Portuguese Jewish families, they were forced to convert in 1497. Gracia’s Christian name was Beatriz de Luna. Quintero’s portrait uses her married name, Mendes: her husband was Francisco Mendes, a prominent *converso* merchant who, upon his death, left her in charge of administering his fortune, jointly with his brother and business partner Diogo Mendes. Mendes was Francisco’s Christian last name and Benveniste his Spanish-Jewish one. Francisco’s family had also emigrated to Portugal from Spain, probably in 1492.¹⁴ After the establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal in 1536, Beatriz de Luna left Lisbon and established her family subsequently in Antwerp, Venice, Ferrara, and finally in Constantinople, where she adopted the name Gracia Nasi. Throughout her life, Gracia Mendes-Nasi was a patron of Jewish culture and initiatives and a benefactor of New Christians trying to escape Spain and Portugal and resettling in Italian cities and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵

¹⁴ See Herman Prins Salomon and Aron di Leone Leoni, “Mendes, Benveniste, De Luna, Micas, Nasci: The State of the Art (1532-1558),” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 88 (1998): 135-211 for a reproduction and discussion of the letters penned by the King and Queen of Portugal vouching for the reputation of the Mendes brothers and for the different names by which these distinguished families were known.

¹⁵ See Cecil Roth, *Doña Gracia of the House of Nasi* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948); Libby Garshowitz, “Gracia Mendes: Power, Influence and Intrigue,” in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, eds. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally Beth MacLean (Urbana Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995): 94-125, Andrée Aelion Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Doña Gracia Nasi* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2002).

The model that Daniel Quintero found for the portrait of this legendary figure was the Spanish writer Esther Bendahan. Born in Tetuán within a Sephardi family and community, as a child Bendahan moved to Madrid with her family in the early 1970s and has lived there ever since.¹⁶ Her experiences of exile, dislocation and adaptation as a Sephardi Jewish woman born in Morocco and raised in Spain, occupy a central place in Bendahan's work as a fiction writer (see, especially, her 2006 autobiographical novel *Déjalo, ya volveremos*). She has also been the director of cultural programming at the Centro Sefarad-Israel since its inauguration in the year 2007, and as such she has played a key role in Spain's official efforts to strengthen diplomatic links with Judaism, Israel, and the Sephardi diaspora.¹⁷ Through this institutional role she has also been able to lend support and offer a cultural platform and, thus, a degree of visibility to Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jewish artists and intellectuals living in Spain.

¹⁶ Bendahan is one of the very few Hispano- Sephardi writers in Spain today. For a thorough account of the history and social organization of Hispano-Moroccan Jews, see Jacobo Israel Garzón, *Los judíos hispano-marroquíes (1492-1973)* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2008). The Jewish communities in northern Morocco were re-hispanized at the time of the establishment of the Spanish Protectorate (1912-1956). Bendahan grew up speaking Haketía (a mix of Spanish, Hebrew and Arabic) at home, but her first schooling in Tetuan (the capital of the Protectorate) was in one of the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), a tool of French cultural expansion among Jews living in Muslim countries. Spain was never able to compete with these schools in terms of cultural and linguistic influence. See Isabelle Rohr, *The Spanish Right and the Jews, 1898-1945: Antisemitism and Opportunism* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 17. Following Morocco's independence in 1956, and again in the context of the Six Day War in 1967, most Moroccan Jews left Morocco for Israel, Latin America, Canada, France or Spain. In Spain, they organized the basis of today's Jewish communities.

¹⁷ The Center was created in 2007 as part of Spain's diplomatic efforts towards Israel and the Jewish world. It was added to pre-existing Centers or "Casas" dedicated to cultural relations and public diplomacy with different parts of the world: Casa América, Casa Asia, Casa Árabe, Casa África.

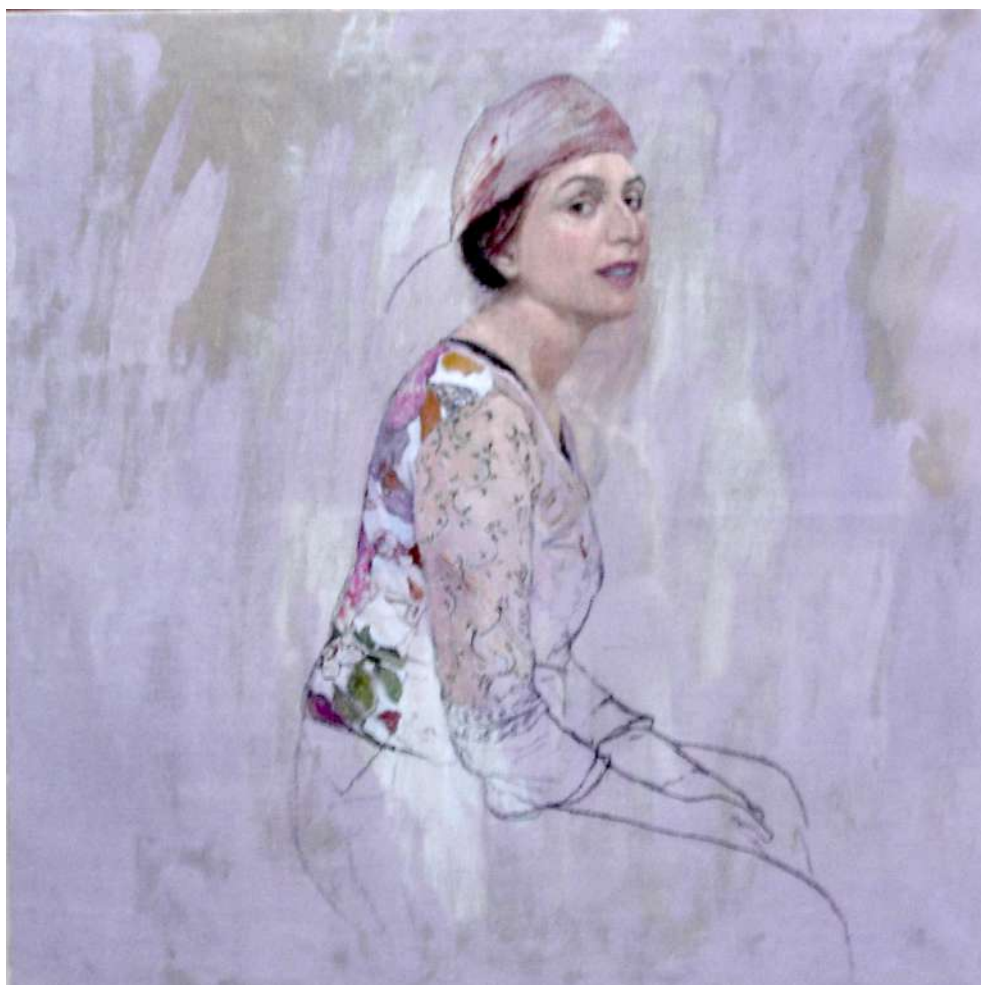


Fig. 8. Daniel Quintero, *Gracia Mendes*, oil, charcoal, and tempera on cloth, 94 x 95 cm, 2005, Private Collection (Courtesy of Daniel Quintero).

In this portrait of Gracia Mendes through Esther Bendahan, we see once again a commensurability of experiences between the historical figure portrayed and the present-day model used to portray it. Both are strong, influential women in their communities, marked by experiences of mobility and diaspora, committed to supporting Sephardi causes and culture.

In this portrait we can also see clearly the deep collaboration that Quintero establishes with his models in the process of constructing these historical portraits. Quintero has explained how

Me cuesta más trabajo a veces encontrar un modelo que pintar el cuadro, porque, al final, un retrato se hace entre dos, no solamente el pintor. Son el pintor y el modelo los que trabajan conjuntamente (Often it is more difficult for me to find a model than to paint the portrait, because, at the end, a portrait is constructed by two people, not just the artist. The artist and the model work together).¹⁸

Bendahan was interested in the idea of posing for a portrait of “la Señora” when Quintero proposed it to her, because she was well aware of Gracia Nasi’s historical significance and had written an article about her. Bendahan moreover chose to wear garments that she herself owned at the many modeling sessions the creation of the portrait entailed.¹⁹

Perhaps it is the portrait *Retrato de Samuel Ha-Leví* (oil on canvas, 2000) (fig. 9) which best exemplifies the hopes implicit in this group of paintings and, more generally, of Spain’s efforts, in the last thirty years or so, to revisit and re-evaluate the Spanish Jewish past. The painting, owned by the Sephardi Museum in Toledo, portrays Halevi, the treasurer and diplomat from the fourteenth century who built the Synagogue of el Tránsito in Toledo. Halevi had risen to a position of great prominence and wealth by successfully managing King Pedro’s finances and overseeing his tax collection. He also served as the King’s confidential advisor, taking part in many important political and economic decisions. Even so, in 1360 or 1361, shortly after the synagogue’s completion, he and his kinsmen throughout Castile were arrested in Toledo for reasons that were never clearly stated and still remain uncertain to this day. As Yitzhak Baer describes it, “[h]e was taken from Toledo to Seville; and, after an attempt had been made to extort a large sum of money from him, he died in prison under torture, like other Jews before him.”²⁰

¹⁸ “El entorno de Daniel Quintero,” interview on the TV program *Shalom*, accessed December 10, 2020, <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/shalom/shalom-entorno-daniel-quintero/5125018/>

¹⁹ Email communication, December 29, 2019.

²⁰ Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992.), 364.

Halevi served Pedro at an especially difficult time for Iberian Jews. The spread of the Black Death beginning in 1348, for which Jews were blamed, produced general religious and social unrest and violent attacks on Jewish communities throughout Castile and Aragon. The civil war that ensued in 1366-69 between Pedro and his half-brother Enrique of Trastámara had devastating consequences and intensified the already increasing wave of anti-Jewish sentiment. Enrique, seeing an opportunity to use Pedro's political and economic reliance on Jews such as Halevi as a propaganda tool, began calling his brother "King of the Jews." The accusation that Pedro showed special favor to Jews was completely false, but it has had a "persistent lure, power and effectiveness."²¹ As a result, Jews were further persecuted and, in the case of several communities in northern Castile, massacred upon Enrique's victory. Years after this civil war, representations of Halevi as the archetype of the hated Jew who takes advantage of Christians were still widely disseminated in Toledo and Castile. In 1378, shortly after the end of the Trastámara civil war, Ferrand Martínez, Archdeacon of Écija, began his vehement sermons in Seville inciting violence against Jews. His preaching resulted in the unprecedented massacres and mass conversions that destroyed most Jewish communities and their material culture in Spain throughout 1391.²²

The model for the portrait of this consequential historical figure for Spanish Jewish history was Máximo Cajal López (1935-2014), the Spanish diplomat who acquired notoriety in 1980 as ambassador in Guatemala when a group of indigenous Guatemalan peasants occupied the Spanish embassy to protest their harrowing working conditions. With the embassy surrounded by the police and armed forces, Cajal offered himself as negotiator to find a peaceful solution to the occupation. The Guatemalan government, however, decided to raze the embassy, which eventually burned. Thirty-seven people died, including Spanish diplomats, Guatemalan opposition politicians and indigenous leaders. Cajal escaped through a window and survived with third-degree burns over most of his body. At that

²¹ Clara Estow, *Pedro the Cruel of Castile, 1350-1369* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995), 173. "The love of Jews" was a common, powerful form of criticism labeled against Christian Kings and frequently arose around debates over the limits of royal power. The accusations against King Pedro are a perfect example of this phenomenon, Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York-London: W. W. Norton & Co, 2013), 197-200.

²² Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1, 362-369.

time, Spain was consolidating a mostly peaceful transition to democracy after the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975. Cajal's calls for dialogue during the occupation of the embassy in Guatemala were emblematic of the recent lessons of Spain's transition to democracy, seen at this time as an example for how to reach consensus through dialogue among highly divergent political views.

After returning to Spain, Guatemalan and Spanish right-wing groups tried to discredit Cajal. Guatemalan sources close to the positions of General Lucas García, Guatemala's president at the time, accused Cajal of being a communist who had collaborated with the peasants to organize the assault. Nevertheless, Cajal continued a successful diplomatic career. However, upon the publication of his 2003 book arguing for the need to return the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla to Morocco, many Spanish political figures questioned his loyalty to Spain. The public uproar escalated to the point that his party, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), revoked his membership. Although not literally, like Halevi, Cajal was also sacrificed by the government he had served.²³

²³ Máximo Cajal, *¿Ceuta y Melilla, Olivenza y Gibraltar. ¿Dónde acaba España?* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2003); Id., *Sueños y pesadillas: memorias de un diplomático* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2010).



Fig. 9. Daniel Quintero, *Retrato de Samuel Ha-Leví* (Portrait of Samuel Ha-Leví), oil and tempera on wooden panel, 108.9 x 79.8 cm, 2000, Museo Sefardí (Toledo, Spain) (Courtesy of Daniel Quintero).

While painting the ambassador's official portrait, Quintero was inspired by Cajal's face and the gravity of his expression, in which he perceived traces of the suffering

left by these events. Cajal fully embraced the idea of embodying Samuel Halevi and participated very effectively in the creative process, resulting in “a perfect symbiosis” (Quintero’s characterization) between the two figures.²⁴ In linking Halevi to this contemporary Spaniard, the diplomat who embodied the values of a newly democratic Spain in the 1980s, the painting invites us to reimagine the death of the medieval Jewish Royal treasurer in relation to the courageous life of Cajal. The painting blends the plight of the two men.: Halevi, the Jew condemned to death by the King he served, whom Christians were taught to hate,²⁵ becomes re-imagined in Cajal: the contemporary diplomat who tried to avert tragedy through dialogue, endured criticism by many of the people for whom he worked, and banishment from his political party. Present and past come to illuminate and influence each other.

The portrait further invites viewers to contemplate themselves critically as part of a democratic society that defends tolerance and dialogue. Red, a color associated with the bloodshed of violence, becomes here the ethereal substance from which Halevi’s head and hands emerge. In its trans-historic condensation of dual historical periods and people, the painting helps us entertain an alternative vision of Spanish identity. Cajal provides visible presence to Halevi, and through it, to the silenced history of Jewish Spain. Halevi, in turn, suggested not only in the countenance of the portrait but also in the clothing and the color red, allows us to historicize Cajal’s role in Spanish political life.

If these portraits performatively represent the experiences of contemporary people in Spain as “traces” of historical figures of Iberian Judaism, the portraits of today’s Sephardi Jews perform a reciprocal genealogical connection by representing figures of the Sephardi diasporic present through Quintero’s conscious update of the quintessentially Spanish visual tradition. These portraits and the still lifes as

²⁴ Email communication, August 21, 2015.

²⁵ The antisemitic legends surrounding the figure of Halevi still hold power today. See Flesler and Pérez-Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020) for a discussion of different commemorations of Halevi’s figure in Toledo’s public plaques and monuments.

“portraits by other means” present Sephardi identity as both internal and external to Spain, as part of Spain but not subsumed by it.

It is worth remembering that the emergence of the Inquisition in Spain was intimately related to an anxiety of indifferentiation. After the unprecedented mass conversions that took place in 1391, it became impossible to distinguish who was a Christian and who was a Jew. The Inquisition’s main charge was to re-establish the boundaries that conversion and coexistence had blurred.²⁶ As Jonathan Ray has explained, the phenomenon of the *conversos*, as well as the blurring of the lines between Christianity and Judaism it produced, “represents one of the most important and enduring legacies of the Jewish presence in medieval Iberia.”²⁷ When Quintero uses non-Jewish Spaniards for his portraits of medieval Iberian Jews (Emiliano Maté for Maimonides, the Retiro Park performer for Benjamin de Tudela, Máximo Cajal for Halevi), it is possible to interpret this choice of models as suggesting a possible genetic continuity, along the lines of the claims of those who self-identify as descendants of Iberian Jews. Could there be “traces” of those medieval Jews in present-day Spaniards? Could present-day Spaniards be descendants of those Jews who converted to Christianity and stayed in Spain, eventually blending in and “forgetting” their Jewish identity? Yes. But this tantalizing yet mainly unverifiable²⁸ possibility is not the focus of the portraits. As we have shown, the relationship of models and historical figures is more

²⁶ David Nirenberg, “Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain,” *Past and Present* 174 (2002): 10-12.

²⁷ Jonathan Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 160. The precise status of the *conversos*, their degree of “Jewishness,” the sincerity of their conversion, and the motivations behind their actions have been the subject of numerous and heated debates. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of Crypto-Jews* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002); David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014).

²⁸ Jonathan Freedman, “Conversos, Marranos, and Crypto-Latinos: The Jewish Question in the American Southwest (and What It Can Tell US About Race and Ethnicity),” in *Boundaries of Jewish Identity*, eds. Susan A. Glenn and Naomi B Sokoloff (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 194. See also Kandiyoti, *The Converso’s Return* and McDonald, “Return to Sepharad.”

complex than that, encompassing relations between past and present that suggest not necessarily genetic continuity, but rather ways of being in the world through experiences that can speak to one another.

In modern and contemporary Spain, antisemitism has developed in spite of the near absence of Jews, the widespread ignorance about their pre-1492 presence and the strategies of gradual erasure and silencing imposed on *conversos* and their descendants. In this context, the newly gained, yet tentative, visibility of Spain's Jewish past has ignited a wide array of identifications, misidentifications and what Emmanuel Levinas calls acts of "obligation." At times obligation presents itself as an epiphany which reveals the presence of "humanity as a whole, in the eyes that look at me."²⁹ These eyes, and the face, are for Levinas "the living presence" of another person as an undeniable expression, a discourse that "speaks to me and invites me to a relation."³⁰ Those eyes are thus the face, the presence and they are also the trace.

Levinas defines a trace as "a presence of that which properly speaking has never been there, of what is always past."³¹ He pushes the trace beyond its primary indexical relation to an absent referent that remits to an indefinite past, the footprints on the sand that point to the person that once walked on that beach. For him the very presence of the trace becomes evidence of the existence of an absolute other stemming from an unrecoverable past. In this sense, the trace, he argues, is like a sign in that it points to a meaning, but, unlike a sign, it refuses disclosure.³² The trace is a presence that refuses to fully reestablish its relation to that in which it originated. In Levinas' argument, the human face becomes the ultimate incarnation of his concept of "the trace" as he points to the inherent abstractness of our faces and their ultimate resistance to disclose that of which they are a trace.

²⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1991), 213.

³⁰ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 66 and 198.

³¹ Emmanuel Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," in *Deconstruction in Context*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 345-59 and 358.

³² In his words, "Disclosure which reinstates the world and leads back to the world, and is proper to a sign or a signification, is suppressed in traces," Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," 357.

Our own curatorial dreaming of Quintero's paintings seeks to make explicit their creative memory work; that is, the ways these paintings explore traces of the past in the present and of the present in the past. Through their status as signs that simultaneously point to and refuse to fully disclose a meaning, these traces have the generative ability to open up a space in which to reimagine not only the Iberian Jewish past, but also the post-1492 Iberian Jewish futures that never were, and a present constituted by all of these temporalities.



Fig. 10. *Memoria escondida/Hidden Memory*, Exhibition of Quintero's portraits at the Museo Sefardí, Toledo. @Daniel Quintero.

Through its aesthetic engagement with classical traditions of seeing and painting, Quintero's work constructs a narrative about a shared past that, as described by Hall, offers the possibility of new conceptions of cultural identity. His "Sephardi Portraits" invite viewers to expand their understanding of Spain in order to acknowledge its Jewish genealogies—the full extent of the implications of its Jewish past in its present—and the full belonging of Spain's Jewish communities to the Spanish nation past and present.

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Keywords: Sepharad, Jewish Art, Jewish Spain, Memory, Daniel Quintero

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Ancestry, Genealogy, and Restorative Citizenship: Oral Histories of Sephardi Descendants Reclaiming Spanish and Portuguese Nationality

by Rina Benmayor and Dalia Kandiyoti

Abstract

The 2015 Spanish and Portuguese nationality laws for descendants of Sephardi Jews are unusual in their motivation to redress wrongs committed more than half a millennium ago. Both have enabled descendants of those Sephardi Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, or forced to convert to Christianity, to claim citizenship status through naturalization. The laws have elicited ancestral and contemporary stories that speak to the personal and social meanings applicants give to these citizenships. Through extensive oral histories with fifty-five applicants across four continents, we examine our narrators' views on the laws' deep roots in a genealogical concept of belonging, based on familial and biological heritage and the persistent criterion of the bloodline. We argue that the responses of Sephardi applicants complicate traditional notions of genealogical inclusion, unveiling instead a multiplicity of meanings attached to identity, belonging, and contemporary citizenship. While Spain and Portugal's offer of what we call "restorative citizenship" requires the demonstration of biological and genealogical certainties, we argue that those seeking Spanish or Portuguese nationality complicate, expand, and sometimes subvert state constructions of citizenship as well as transform their own identities and belonging. More than recuperating a lost Spanish or Portuguese identity, many Sephardi descendants are discovering or deepening their ties to ancestral history and culture. Sephardi genealogy is also being mobilized in a contemporary global and European context in which citizenship and belonging are no longer defined exclusively by nation state territoriality, but rather through claims to new hybrid, multiple, and flexible identities.

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Introduction

Since the rise of discourses about historical injustices, remote ancestors have had new ways of occupying our imaginative spaces in the present. Their sufferings might reach us through the experiences and narratives of their descendants and, more rarely, they are acknowledged through state actions and policies. In 2015, Portugal and Spain enacted two historic nationality laws granting the right of full citizenship to descendants of Sephardi Jews. Unusual in their motivation to redress wrongs committed more than half a millennium ago, each one positions the special dispensation in a somewhat different way. The Portuguese law highlights the “right of return” to descendants of Portuguese Sephardi Jews¹

We are very grateful to our narrators for sharing their experiences and views, providing us with the basis of this study. We also appreciate the referrals to additional applicants offered by our narrators and others involved in the process. We thank Defne Özözer of Boğaziçi University for her skillful translation and transcription of an interview in Turkish, and Daniela Flesler, Michal Rose Friedman, and Asher Salah for editing this special issue. Early versions of this study were presented at the Genealogies of Sepharad Research Group’s symposia (organized by Stacy Beckwith, Michal Rose Friedman, Tabea Linhard, and Asher Salah), the Association of Jewish Studies, the Oral History Association, and the UCLadino conference at UCLA (organized by Max Modiano Daniel).

¹ *Regulamento da Nacionalidade Portuguesa* (Decree Law) No.30-A/2015, Feb 27, revises the country’s 2006 Nationality law to include Sephardi descendants. It reads, in part: “O presente diploma vem permitir o exercício do direito ao retorno dos descendentes judeus sefarditas de origem portuguesa que o desejem, mediante a aquisição da nacionalidade portuguesa por naturalização, e sua integração na comunidade nacional, com os inerentes direitos e obrigações.”

while the Spanish law states the desire for “historical reconciliation” with the Sephardi community.² Both have enabled descendants of those Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 or forced to convert to Christianity to claim citizenship status through naturalization. Importantly, the granting of citizenship (*nacionalidad/e*) is based on the genealogical proof of Iberian Sephardi ancestry, even if applicants are not Jews.

The response from Sephardi Jews worldwide has been notable and mixed. Many embrace the laws and their intentions, even if they cannot meet all the application criteria; others question and criticize the elaborate requirements (particularly of the Spanish law); and some ask why one would want to become a citizen of countries that persecuted and expelled their ancestors. Nonetheless, applicant numbers have been considerable and continue to climb. By July 2019, Portugal had reportedly approved 10,000 of some 33,000 applications in an ever-growing stream.³ On October 2, 2019, one day after the application deadline, the international press announced that the Spanish Ministry of Justice had received 132,226 applications. Of these, some 60,000 were received as of August 31 and almost 72,000 in the final month of September alone.⁴ The sum of applicants to both countries is remarkable. As of October 2, approximately 5,800 individuals

“Decreto Lei n.30-A/2015,” *Diário da República Eletrónica*, September 28, 2019, <https://dre.pt/pesquisa/-/search/66619927/details/maximized>, accessed November 8, 2020.

² The Spanish law was restricted to a period of three years (2015-2018) and later extended for one year. “Ley 12/2015, de 24 de junio,” *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 151, Sec. 1: 52557, <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2015/06/24/12/dof/spa/pdf>, accessed November 8, 2020. It reads, in part: “Se antoja justo que semejante reconocimiento se nutra de los oportunos recursos jurídicos para facilitar la condición de españoles a quienes se resistieron, celosa y prodigiosamente, a dejar de serlo a pesar de las persecuciones y padecimientos que inicualemente sufrieron sus antepasados hasta su expulsión en 1492 de Castilla y Aragón y, poco tiempo después, en 1498, del reino de Navarra. La España de hoy, con la presente Ley, quiere dar un paso firme para lograr el reencuentro de la definitiva reconciliación con las comunidades sefardíes.”

³ Cnaan Liphshiz, “Portugal Approves 10,000 Citizenship Requests from Descendants of Expelled Jews,” *Forward.com*, July 17, 2019, <https://forward.com/fast-forward/427782/portugal-approves-10-000-requests-citizenship-sephardic-jews/>, accessed November 8, 2020.

⁴ Miguel González, “‘Los sefardíes ya no son españoles sin patria’, proclama el presidente de la comunidad judía,” *El País*, October 2, 2019, https://elpais.com/politica/2019/10/02/actualidad/1570019211_938436.html, accessed November 8, 2020.

had received Spanish nationality with no rejections reported.⁵ Given the volume, it may take several years to know the final number of citizenships granted.⁶ Nonetheless we have found that the laws have already elicited ancestral and contemporary stories that speak to the personal and social meanings applicants give to these citizenships.

Through extensive oral histories with fifty-five applicants across four continents, we have gathered individual experiences and reflections on the historical and ideological underpinnings of the laws. Specifically, in this paper we examine our narrators' views on the laws' deep roots in a genealogical concept of the belonging, based on familial and biological heritage and the persistent criterion of the bloodline. We argue that the responses of Sephardi applicants complicate traditional notions of genealogical inclusion, unveiling instead a multiplicity of meanings attached to identity, belonging, and contemporary citizenship. More than recuperating a lost Spanish or Portuguese identity, many "normative" Sephardi descendants as well as those whose ancestors abandoned Judaism centuries ago, are discovering or deepening their ties to Sephardi history and culture.⁷ Other narrators emphasize the practical rather than the symbolic or cultural reasons for their application, though often there is a mixture of motivations. What is more, Sephardi descendants are mobilizing genealogy in a contemporary global and European context in which citizenship and belonging are no longer defined exclusively by nation state territoriality. People seek security amidst economic and political crises and claim new hybrid, multiple, and flexible

⁵ Sal Emergui, "Casi 6.000 judíos sefardíes obtienen la nacionalidad española," *El Mundo*, October 1, 2019, <https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2019/10/01/5d926a3bfdddf23568b45c3.html>, accessed November 8, 2020.

⁶ Based on the volume of applications to Spain, an emendation was issued shortly before the October 1, 2019 deadline, applicable only to those who had initiated an application prior to the deadline. The emendation extended the timeframe for completing application paperwork to December 2020. See, Ministerio de Justicia, "Circular de la dirección general de los registros y del notariado sobre el plazo para presentar la solicitud para la concesión de la nacionalidad española a los sefardíes originarios de España," September 6, 2019, <https://www.mjusticia.gob.es/cs/Satellite/Portal/es/ciudadanos/nacionalidad/concesion-nacionalidad/circular-direccion-general>, accessed November 8, 2020.

⁷ We use the term "normative" to indicate a common understanding of Sephardi Jews primarily as those with historically continuous Sephardi Jewish identification and practice, a definition presumed in the preambles of both laws.

identities. While Spain and Portugal's offer of what we call "restorative citizenship" requires the demonstration of genealogical certainties, we argue that those seeking Spanish or Portuguese nationality complicate, expand, and sometimes subvert state constructions of citizenship. Moreover, applicants often transform their own identities and belonging.

A Transnational Oral History Project

Our purpose in turning to oral history has been to explore how state claims for "reconciliation" and "right of return" size up against the perceptions and motivations offered by the applicants themselves.⁸ Our research questions included:

- 1) What motivates the desire to seek these citizenships?
- 2) How has applying for or receiving citizenship affected identity and belonging among Sephardi applicants? What, if any, new identities has the application process produced?
- 3) And, does state-sanctioned memory overlap with or differ from the collective memory of descendants?

Our work draws on a global applicant pool. From January 2017 to October 2019, we interviewed 55 individuals from twelve countries who applied for or had received their citizenships, comprising 33 women and 22 men, ranging in age from their early 20s to mid 80s. Our narrators⁹ come from Turkey, the United States, Latin American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela, as well as from South Africa, Israel, the United Kingdom, and

⁸ For perspectives on state claims see Maite Ojeda-Mata, *Modern Spain and the Sephardim: Legitimizing Identities* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2017); and Davide Aliberti, *Sefarad: Una comunidad imaginada (1924-2015)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2018). Detailed analyses of the processes that led Spain and Portugal to enact these laws and how these laws are perceived among politicians in Spain and Portugal are addressed in a volume of collected articles and essays on reparative citizenship that we are currently co-editing.

⁹ Oral history prefers the term "narrator," recognizing agency and the constructed nature of narratives, rather than "interviewees," "human subjects," or "informants."

Switzerland.¹⁰ More than half of our interviewees (31) were from Ottoman (Eastern Sephardi) communities; three of Moroccan origin; six from Western Sephardi communities; and fifteen self-identified as descendants of *conversos* (forced converts to Christianity during the medieval and early modern periods). Forty-two of our narrators applied for Spanish citizenship and thirteen for Portuguese, including four who for various personal reasons are pursuing nationality in both countries.

We began by seeking out applicants among family and friends and “snowballed” from there. This method, coupled with our use of remote interviewing, significantly widened our reach.¹¹ We conducted most of the interviews via Zoom, a remote conferencing platform that allows for direct recording in audio and video. This medium enabled us to “travel” to our narrators, but it also produced some unexpected surprises. We discovered that face-to-face screen conversations, while remote and virtual, could also be very intimate. In fact, despite physical

¹⁰ Among these were nine who had applied to Spain under a 1924 Royal Decree granting special dispensation to Sephardis. See Cnaan Liphshiz, “Spain and Portugal Naturalize Nearly 5,000 Sephardic Jews,” *Forward.com*, November 26, 2017, <https://forward.com/fast-forward/351900/spain-and-portugal-naturalize-nearly-5-000-sephardic-jews/>, accessed November 8, 2020.

¹¹ Along with personal referrals, we contacted lawyers, Jewish community organizations and scholars involved with these laws in order to expand our list of potential narrators, nationally and internationally. In effect, we gained a wide geographical range, as the list of countries cited above confirms. Our sample also displays a healthy variety of generational responses. Overall, approximately 80% of the people contacted responded positively to our invitation. Others either did not respond or decided, upon further thought, not to participate. Our sample does not reflect the volume of applicants from any particular country, as these numbers were not available to us at the time; however, we made efforts to include the most likely applicant pools, geographically speaking. Economic class and older age also limited our sample. The financial implications of the laws’ requirements has been limiting; consequently our sample reflects a range of middle and upper middle-class individuals with financial means. The cost of applying, which for Spain included travel to Cervantes Institute hubs to take tests and travel to Spain to sign the application in person, excluded many potential applicants. In addition, many elderly who were attracted to acquiring citizenship for symbolic cultural reasons, were excluded, if not by the tests (which were waived for this demographic), by the requirement of physical travel. Finally, our reliance on remote interviewing to obtain a geographically rich body of material meant that narrators needed to have computer access; the Zoom platform did not require more than a simple operation of clicking on a link to be connected. In a few cases where the bandwidth was insufficient, interviews were recorded over the phone.

distancing and the differentials of position and power that affect all conversations, narrators seemed generally cordial and forthcoming in sharing stories about their backgrounds, motivations, and experiences as seekers of dual or multiple citizenship. Our inquiry was also shaped by a crossing of traditional boundaries between researcher and subject. We are Sephardi Jews of Ottoman and Turkish background, and Benmayor was both a principal investigator and narrator, having received Spanish citizenship in 2018 under the new law. This afforded us a degree of “insider” insight into the application process and contributed, through shared experience, to positive rapport-building with many previously unknown individuals. Of course, all conversations are shaped by the narrators’ decisions of what to share and what to reserve and how they perceive the intent of the inquiry. In response to the purposefully open-ended quality of our questions, many narrators used the interview as an opportunity to share their understanding of and research into historical sources and consider their feelings and motivations for pursuing citizenship, conveying a level of candor and self-reflection.

Remote interviewing has also enabled a transnational scope that expresses the diasporic spread and complexities of Sephardi ethnic and cultural identities. In keeping with best practices in the field of oral history, our interviews were open-ended, averaging 60 to 90 minutes and conducted in English, Spanish, Portuguese or Turkish, languages in which one or both of us are fluent.¹² Our “conversations” were organized around the themes of family history, Sephardi identity and cultural practices, motives for seeking citizenship, and the significance of acquiring multiple citizenships. Our interest was to explore the panorama of meanings narrators attached to these historic gestures by the Spanish and Portuguese states, understanding that oral history narratives are always subjective, selective, and a product of the interaction and collaboration between the

¹² Narrators were able to choose whichever of these languages they felt most comfortable using. Most of our interviews were in either English or Spanish, with a handful in Turkish and a couple in Portuguese. While we are both conversant in Judeo-Spanish and French, we did not encounter a preference for either among our narrators. Those of an older generation who might still speak Ladino or Haketia were linguistically dominant in either English or modern Spanish. Three narrators, whose native tongues are Hebrew and Turkish, were interviewed in English because they are bilingual, having received extensive education in English.

interlocutors.¹³ In this paper we analyze one key issue illuminated by our findings, namely the uses of and ideas about genealogy and descent by the states and our narrators.

Heritage Citizenship

The Portuguese and Spanish nationality laws for Sephardi descendants emerge at a time when meanings of citizenship are expanding beyond the once exclusive tie to a singular nation state. Dual and multiple citizenship have come to be recognized by a growing number of countries in Europe and worldwide. As one scholar notes, there is “a globally more relaxed attitude toward dual citizenship... without a prior residence requirement.”¹⁴ Contemporary migrations, wars, border dissolutions (the break-up of the Soviet Union), extra-territorial ethnic populations, and transnational migration networks all have contributed to a rethinking of national belonging and “heritage” citizenship.¹⁵ “External citizenship” based on ethnicity, both within and outside national borders,¹⁶ and even “investor citizenship” complicate and expand the meaning of national

¹³ Regarding the interpretive value and uses of oral history, see Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2006), 32-42; Alistair Thomson, “Memory and Remembering in Oral History,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 77-95.

¹⁴ Christian Joppke, “The Instrumental Turn of Citizenship,” in “Strategic Citizenship: Negotiating Membership in the Age of Dual Nationality,” special issue, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 6 (2019): 869.

¹⁵ Yossi Harpaz, “Ancestry into Opportunity: How Global Inequality Drives Demand for Long-distance European Union Citizenship,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no. 13 (2015): 2081-2104. Accessed November 8, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1037258>; Yossi Harpaz and Pablo Mateos, “Strategic Citizenship: Negotiating Citizenship in the Age of Dual Nationality,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 6 (2018): 843-857, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1440482>; Szabolcs Pogonyi, “The Passport as Means of Identity Management: Making and Unmaking Ethnic Boundaries through Citizenship,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 6 (2019): 975-993. Accessed November 8, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1440493>.

¹⁶ Edith Oltay, “Concepts of Citizenship in Eastern and Western Europe,” *Acta Univ. Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies* 11 (2017): 43-62. Accessed November 8, 2020. <https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/auseur.2017.11.issue-1/auseur-2017-0003/auseur-2017-0003.pdf>.

belonging.¹⁷ In the post-World War II years as well as in this more recent context however, few countries have attempted to re-incorporate into the nation the descendants of the victims of historical trauma with the goal of reconciliation or reparation. Germany's constitution made the reinstatement of citizenship possible in 1949 for those who were deprived of it during the Nazi regime and for their descendants. Other countries, among them Israel, Ghana, and Greece, also offer a "return" to places of remote origin, though this opportunity is positioned primarily as a reinstatement of a lost belonging rather than also being a reconciliatory one as in the cases of Spain and Portugal. The dispensation in Israel allows worldwide Jews to settle there; the citizenship and residence opportunity in Ghana (which declared 2019 as the "year of return") is extended to those whose African ancestors were enslaved several hundreds of years ago. Spain's Historical Memory Law (2007) restores nationality to the descendants of exiles from the Spanish Civil War. And, in 2017, Greece offered to reinstate nationality to the descendants of Greek Jews who were victims of the Holocaust. Spain and Portugal's invitation to citizenship via naturalization for descendants of expelled and forcibly converted Iberian Jews takes place in the context of these developments in Iberia, Europe and elsewhere, though they are discursively different in their emphasis on reconciliation in redressing a "wronged" population.¹⁸

The 2015 Spanish law, however, is not entirely the product of contemporary forces, as it has historical antecedents. As early as the late eighteenth century and

¹⁷ Jelena Dzankic, "The Pros and Cons of *Ius Pecuniae*: Investor Citizenship in Comparative Perspective," European University Institute Working Paper, RSCAS (2012-2014), EUDO Citizenship Laboratory, accessed July 27, 2019. https://www.academia.edu/2231487/The_Pros_and_Cons_of_Ius_Pecuniae_Investor_citizenship_in_comparative_perspective.

¹⁸ Despite their uniqueness, the Spanish and Portuguese laws invite comparisons with these and other cases. Although such a comparison is not within the purview of this essay, legal, political, and other approaches that take into account overlaps and differences among various laws merit further study. For other relevant comparisons on multiple citizenship, see e.g. Harpaz and Mateos, "Strategic Citizenship" and Pogonyi, "The Passport," which also analyze the new forms of incorporation by various states of non-territorial individuals with presumed ancestral and other historical links. The implications for nationalism and the imagined citizenship community would also benefit from extensive examination.

extending throughout the nineteenth, Spanish and Portuguese consulates in the Ottoman Empire and Morocco were known to give Spanish passports and patents of protection, granting special “protected” status but not full citizenship rights to select Sephardi Jews, usually businessmen and community leaders.¹⁹ These special protections became expressions of a philosephardism that emerged in the 1890s among Spanish diplomats, politicians and intellectuals like Angel Pulido, Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, José Amador de los Ríos and others, in response to Spain’s imperial decline in the Americas, the Philippines, and colonialism in Morocco.²⁰ In Portugal too there were attempts to adopt Iberian Jewish descendants as a part of colonial and trade projects in Africa and the Mediterranean.²¹ Sephardi communities came to be seen as potential energizers and partners in new economic, colonial, and diplomatic endeavors.

Spanish scholars and politicians became fascinated with Sephardi Jews’ maintenance of ancestral language, folklore, and cultural traditions for centuries in diaspora. This attraction kindled new interest, research, and efforts to reintegrate this group back into the national narrative, regardless of how Jews of Spanish origin might perceive their connection to Spain after four centuries of separation. Philosephardi efforts to reincorporate Spanish Jews into the nation eventually led to a Royal Decree, issued in December 1924, extending full citizenship through naturalization to “individuals of Spanish origin that have been

¹⁹ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), Chapters 1 and 2. Also see: Ojeda-Mata, *Modern Spain*; Pablo Martín Asuero, “The Spanish Consulate in Istanbul and the Protection of the Sephardim (1804-1913),” *Quaderns de la Mediterrània=Cuadernos del Mediterráneo* 88 (2007): 169-178; 169; Id., “La imagen española de los judíos otomanos (1790-1907),” *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebreos* 45 (1996): 135-47; 138.

²⁰ See Aliberti, *Sefarad*; Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 2020); Daniela Flesler, Tabea Alexa Linhard, and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, eds., *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era* (London-New York: Routledge, 2015); Michal Rose Friedman, “Reconstructing Jewish Spain: The Politics and Institutionalization of Jewish History in Spain, 1845-1940,” *Hamsa: Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies* 1 (2014): 55-67; Tabea Linhard, *Jewish Spain: A Mediterranean Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 123-152; and Ojeda-Mata, *Modern Spain*.

²¹ Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 30-32.

protected as Spaniards...”²² Although that Decree expired in December 1930, the Spanish state continued to grant special dispensations to a limited number of applicants, until the 2015 law. The 4,535 pending applications under previous dispensations (many of which had been under review for ten years or more), were expedited and the first to be considered and approved under the new law.²³ The 2015 Spanish law, then, continues and extends this often deeply ambivalent and markedly Catholic, national, philosephardi narrative.²⁴ With florid and emotional language, the Preamble asserts a continuous Sephardi collective memory and nostalgia for Spain:

The children of Sepharad maintained an abundance of nostalgia immune to the transformation of languages and generations. They preserved Ladino or Haketia, old Spanish enriched by borrowings from the languages where they settled. In the language of their ancestors, they preserved prayers and recipes, games and ballads. They maintained the customs, respected the names that were molded by their origins, and accepted without rancor the silence of a Spain slumbering in oblivion... Pulsating through time is a love for a Spain that is at last aware of the historical and emotional load the Sephardim have carried.²⁵

The language of the Portuguese law, though more moderate, also expresses a desire to reweave the exiled “Portuguese Jews,” similarly positioned as loyal to their origins, back into the nation:

Despite the persecutions and exile from their national territory, many Sephardi Jews of Portuguese origin and their descendants maintained not

²² “Leyes y normas históricas,” <http://bauldelasleyes.blogspot.com/2014/04/real-decreto-de-20-de-diciembre-de-1924.html>, accessed November 8, 2020.

²³ Liphshiz, “Spain and Portugal.”

²⁴ For a fuller discussion of this deep ambivalence regarding the Jewish absence and presence in Spain, see Michal Rose Friedman “Jewish History as ‘Historia Patria’: Amador de los Ríos and the History of the Jews of Spain,” *Jewish Social Studies* 18, no. 1 (2011): 88-126; Ojeda-Mata, *Modern Spain*.

²⁵ “Ley 12/2015, de 24 de junio,” *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. All English translations are ours, unless otherwise noted.

only the Portuguese language, but also the old traditional Jewish customs practiced in Portugal, preserving for generations their family surnames, objects and documents attesting to their Portuguese origins, along with a strong memory that led them to call themselves “Portuguese Jews” or “Jews of the Portuguese nation.”²⁶

From the perspective of Sephardi communities that have lived for centuries outside of the Iberian Peninsula, an “abundance of nostalgia” and the faithful transmission of cultural practices presumed by the laws fail to take into account transculturation, syncretism, and post-Iberian integration in other societies. Clinging to the notion of a strong Spanish or Portuguese identity among the exiles, the preambles emphasize the reincorporation of Sephardi Jews into the nation through nationalistic, linguistic, cultural, and emotional markers. Framed through philosephardism, Jewish loyalty to an Iberian identity enables state recognition and reconciliation and permits re-entry into the national bodies from which they were expelled.²⁷ In complex and problematic ways, this historical and cultural tie is also given a biological twist through the requirement of genealogical and genetic evidence of ancestry. In the remainder of this essay, we address the ways in which genealogy, culture, and identity as produced by state discourses are refracted by the Sephardi descendants we interviewed.

The Genealogical Conundrum: “It’s Still All About the Blood”

The 2015 nationality laws are firmly rooted in biological and genealogical concepts of belonging. They establish specific criteria for documenting proof of ancestry, which generates a complex and fascinating foray into history, culture, and identity.²⁸ Both laws stipulate that Jewish entities (authorized rabbis or Jewish

²⁶ “Decreto-Lei 30-A/2015,” *Diário da República*.

²⁷ For an analysis of the politics behind the Spanish and Portuguese states’ decision to introduce these laws see, Ojeda-Mata, *Modern Spain*.

²⁸ Additionally, the Spanish law requires two tests: a history and culture test (CCSE) and for those not born in a Spanish-speaking country, a Spanish proficiency test (DELE A2). Applicants are also to give evidence of a “special connection” to Spain, which can be fulfilled by a history of travel, educational interest, property ownership, contribution to Spanish institutions, or other evidence.

communities) will certify an individual's Sephardi origins based on a range of evidence. Recognizing the limitations of genealogical tracing over five centuries, the laws allow applicants to submit evidence that is both genealogical and cultural. In the case of Spain, genealogical evidence comprises documents that establish a Spanish Jewish bloodline,²⁹ such as vital records (birth, marriage, death, naturalization documents, and in the case of *converso* descendants, baptismal records). Cultural evidence may include a *ketuba* (Jewish marriage certificate) in the Castilian tradition;³⁰ genealogical studies by experts or recognized academic entities; a Sephardi surname report written by a recognized expert;³¹ an accreditation of the use of Ladino or Haketia (the two Spanish languages of the Sephardi diaspora); passports, Jewish burial records; or any other document that can help prove Spanish Sephardi ancestry.

The Portuguese requirements are similar and include: a certificate from a Jewish community with collective religious person status... that certifies the tradition of belonging to a Sephardic community of Portuguese origin, materialized, namely, in the family name of the applicant, native language, ancestry, and family memory.³² In the absence of such a certificate, applicants may submit proof to “demonstrate direct ancestry or family relationship”:

A certified document, issued by the Jewish community that the applicant belongs to, proving their usage of Portuguese expressions in Jewish rites or as a language spoken by them in the heart of that community, Ladino and

And finally, applications must be submitted in person *before* a notary in Spain. The Portuguese law has none of these extra requirements, but does ask applicants to prove their genealogical connection to Portuguese Jewry by submitting extensive family trees, which many can do given the endurance of extensive archives of the Sephardi communities that settled in Amsterdam, London, and the Americas.

²⁹ Descendants of converts to Christianity are asked to provide documentation of the converted Sephardi ancestor and thereafter for each generation in the bloodline.

³⁰ Federación de Comunidades Judías de España, “Documentación” accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.fcje.org/documentacion/>.

³¹ Both laws note that a Sephardi surname is an important marker of identity, but is by itself insufficient as the sole or primary evidence of Sephardi origins.

³² From an unofficial translation of the Portuguese requirements. See “About the Portuguese Sephardic Jews [sic] Law/Conditions,” accessed 21 September 2019, <http://www.sephardicjewsportugal.com/info/>.

certified records, such as registers from synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, as well as residence permits, property titles, deeds of will, and other pieces of evidence of family connection from the applicant through direct ancestry or family relationship in a collateral line of a common parent from the Sephardic community of Portuguese origin.³³

As we can see from these specific requirements, the presented evidence can include a mixture of more recent cultural and ritual documents (such as Jewish marriage certificates or burial records) and proof of remote lineage. Cultural evidence helps establish the continuity of lineage. However, it is ancestry that determines eligibility. Citizenship cannot be awarded to those without the “right” ancestors; for example, those acculturated into Sephardi communities but who are not of exilic Iberian Jewish descent are technically not eligible.

Some descendants of Portuguese Sephardi origin have the genealogical advantage of being able to document their ancestry back to the seventeenth century, and in some cases as far back as sixteenth-century Spain. Faced with their own Inquisition, a majority of Portuguese Jews eventually converted to Catholicism. Fleeing later persecution as *conversos*, many took refuge in Amsterdam, London, Livorno or the Americas and some “re-converted” to Judaism. A number of their descendants are able to create quite extensive family trees thanks to detailed archives that have survived the ravages of wars and natural disasters in those cities and countries. Indeed, applicants to Portugal are encouraged to include as extensive family trees as possible, along with other documents, as evidence of their Sephardi ancestry. Judith Summers, a writer and researcher from the United Kingdom, was able to reconstruct her Portuguese line in one afternoon through the Dutch and British online archives. She explained:

My grandmother’s family were all called “da Costa,” and through her father I can trace back all the da Costas, all the way back to the seventeenth century in Braganza.³⁴

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Interview with Judith Summers by Rina Benmayor, January 17, 2018, via Zoom.

However, for the majority of Sephardi Jews whose ancestors sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire or North Africa, there is a huge gap between the fifteenth century and the very spotty late nineteenth-century records extant in these regions. Most of our Eastern Sephardi narrators can only trace their family trees back to grandparents or great grandparents. Herein lies the tension. The very states that historically sought to cleanse themselves of their Sephardi populations and their archives and memories now ask for documentary proof of ancestry. Despite the historical amputations, such descendants of Spanish Jews are asked to present themselves to the state as genealogical subjects, rather than as primarily cultural Sephardi individuals, even when their more immediate identification is based on familial history, culture, language, culinary traditions, rites, and rituals.

While cultural belonging and evidence thereof is important to the processes of approval, cultural practices alone do not “prove” blood and are not sufficient by themselves to meet the qualifications of the laws. Despite the variability of documentation, the laws are fundamentally based on Sephardi descent rather than current religious or cultural belonging in Sephardi or other Jewish communities. As such Spain and Portugal can recognize as a Sephardi descendant a New Mexican or Venezuelan Catholic with a single New Christian ancestor who had converted from Judaism in the Middle Ages, as well as a Turkish or Argentine Jew whose ancestors remained Jewish across centuries, at least to the best of their knowledge. Despite the contents of the preambles that seemingly assume current, normative Sephardi identity, the intent of the laws seems to be the inclusion of *converso* descendants as a way of recognizing not only expulsion but also forced conversion. This means that non-Jews can and have been given citizenship, on the basis of their Sephardi ancestry rather than current identification.

Hence, lineage is the key determinant of belonging, and thereby, of citizenship.³⁵ Why is it important to underline that the citizenship dispensation is undergirded

³⁵ Applications are processed and legitimated by the Spanish or Portuguese Ministry of Justice. Prior certification of ancestry is required and obtained through Jewish community organizations: the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain and authorized entities in other countries; in Portugal, the separate Lisbon and Porto communities. Spain and the Lisbon communities accept non-Jewish descendants while the Porto community stipulates current Jewish affiliation. See “Portuguese Nationality for Sephardic Descendants: Preliminary Notes (March 1, 2018),” *Com*

by ancestry or “blood,” and what are the symbolic and practical implications and consequences of this policy? Judy Berck, one of the first American Sephardi Jews to receive her Portuguese passport, did not fail to note the historical irony:

It’s a little disturbing how much, how important the bloodline is. And the Portuguese consul spoke about that too. The whole reason that Jews were, you know, hounded and the *conversos* and *Nuevo Cristos* [*sic*] were hounded was because of their impure blood and that hasn’t changed. I mean now I’ve got the right blood, but it’s still all about the blood line. They like the blood now. And I can bring it back.³⁶

Berck’s comment signals the dark history that surrounds the notions of descent, lineage, and heritage in Iberia. As of the fifteenth century, forced or voluntary conversion to Christianity by Muslims and Jews was perceived with suspicion and as insufficient for assimilation into the “old” Christian majority. The bloodline became a tool for distinguishing and oppressing those Christians of Muslim and Jewish origin.³⁷ Hence, ancestry as a proof of Sephardi belonging, the persistence

Unidade Israelita Porto Portuguese National Sephardic Descendants English Pdfs Resources, accessed January 17, 2019, http://www.comunidade-israelitaporto.org/resources/pdfs/Portuguese_Nationality_for_Sephardic_Descendants_English.pdf.

³⁶ Interview with Judy Berck by Rina Benmayor, November 8, 2017, via Zoom.

³⁷ On “limpieza de sangre” (purity of blood) and its codification see Alberto Sicroff, *Los estatutos de limpieza de sangre: Controversias entre los siglos XV y XVII* (Madrid: Taurus, 1985). For a collection that broadly examines the concept see the essays in María Elena Martínez, David Nirenberg, and Max Sebastián Hering Torres, eds., *Race and Blood in the Iberian World* (Zurich-Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012). See also David Nirenberg, “Was There Race Before Modernity? The Example of ‘Jewish’ Blood in Late Medieval Spain,” in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, eds. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 232-264. For a wide-ranging study of blood, including in Iberia, see Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). Discourses of blood and racialism endure, albeit in different forms, beyond the medieval period: On the racist aspects of philosephardism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries see Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009) and Michal Rose Friedman, “Re-conquering Sepharad: Hispanism and Proto-Fascism in Giménez Caballero’s Sephardist Crusade,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2011): 35-60. Accessed November 8, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2011.556876>; Daniela Flesler, Tabea Alexa Linhard, Adrián Pérez Melgosa, eds., *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era* (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2013).

of “blood” as a marker of identity, and the way community members, experts, and officials in Spain and Portugal pore over documents to verify authentic Jewish descent (albeit now for inclusion rather than exclusion) can still be sensitive for Berck and others.

Moreover, the issue of evidence, missing due to historical erasures, bespeaks an inherent problem with the genealogical quest. In her critique of genealogical practices and ideas, Julia Watson argued that genealogy is the purview of the privileged, of those whose ancestral past has not been suppressed by compromising historical factors such as slavery, displacement, poverty, or adoption. Watson also suggests that the quest for “pedigree” and “who begat whom, where, and in what line is knowledge that secures a patriarchal mooring in an increasingly destabilized world.”³⁸ While there is more to genealogical practice than the exercise of privilege, it is certainly challenged by the trajectories of multiple compulsory displacements, minoritization, and political transformations, such as those in the history of Sephardi Jews. Spain and Portugal’s insistence on lineage is not unique among most modern states’ citizenship regimes, in which the bloodline, usually through parents or grandparents (*jus sanguinis*) plays a role in the transmission of the benefit. These “reconciliation” laws require ancestry not of one or two generations, but dating back hundreds of years.

If genealogy constitutes the state-designated path to recognition and citizenship, how then does one construct the connection to the past, given the gaps in historical memory and the absence of concrete documents? Mexican Sephardi author Myriam Moscona, born to a Bulgarian Sephardi family, explains the genealogical challenge that most Eastern Sephardi Jews face:

It’s very difficult for a family to know exactly what happened 500 five hundred and fifty years ago... at the time of the Expulsion in 1492, when that diaspora took place. Why did some end up in Greece, others in

³⁸ Julia Watson, “Ordering the Family: Genealogy as Autobiographical Pedigree,” in *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography*, eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 307.

Turkey, others in Bulgaria? Surely, it was a gradual process. What I do know is that several generations of my family lived in Bulgaria... of that I have no doubt. But how did the process take place and from what town in Spain did my ancestors leave, I have no idea and I'm sure my mother would not have known either.³⁹

Similarly, Marcelo Benveniste, Argentine cofounder with his wife Liliana of the electronic weekly magazine *ESefarad*, began tracing his genealogy at the age of thirteen. However, he maintained that although he cannot trace his family back very far, knowledge of his family's historical trajectory and their strong Sephardi culture are proof enough for him of his ancestry:

I come from a clearly Sephardi family. Sephardi from childhood, in the home, in the day to day, a family that has its origins on the island of Rhodes. My four grandparents were born on the island of Rhodes. To be honest, when I started to work for the Jewish community I had to abandon my own genealogy search so I could help others. So I never was able to trace our tree very far back. But I know that my ancestors came from the Jewish community of Rhodes. And with my surnames and my family roots, my surnames are Benveniste, Alhadeff, Berro, Israel, names that existed in Spain before the Inquisition, and if we add the sentimental, the emotive dimensions, okay, so I can't trace the line scientifically... but the origins are in Spain, without a doubt.⁴⁰

Benveniste is more profoundly interested and invested in Sephardism than some, but what he imparts about the normative Sephardi's genealogical consciousness is rather common. It is based not on documented ancestry but on a deep sense of cultural belonging based on historical knowledge, geographical location, as well as family and community customs and practices that are passed down through oral tradition from generation to generation.

³⁹ Interview with Myriam Moscona by Dalia Kandiyoti, March 15, 2017, via Skype.

⁴⁰ Interview with Marcelo Benveniste by Rina Benmayor, November 2, 2017, via Zoom.

The Burden of Authenticity and New Sephardisms

While the Spanish and Portuguese laws allow descent to be isolated from culture as the primary category of belonging (given that those who do not profess Jewish or crypto-Jewish cultures or religions can receive citizenship), Myriam Moscona, Marcelo Benveniste, and other narrators have profound affinities and knowledge of their Sephardi heritage and view “blood” and ancestry as integrated into and inseparable from an important *cultural* continuum. But there is no monolithic “Sephardi-descendant perspective”: applicants have varying degrees of awareness of their familial and cultural roots. Many applicants, especially young ones, had not previously considered their Sephardi origins or practices in a deliberate or probing manner but found themselves asserting these because of the citizenship opportunity. Even for the narrators who came from Sephardi-identified families and straightforward, almost exclusively Sephardi lineage as far as the limited records can show, this was sometimes an identification not central to their self-definition. In Turkey, where Sephardi Jews constitute the majority of the Jewish population (which also includes Karaite, Ashkenazi, Georgian, and Iranian Jews), Jewish and Sephardi are often viewed as equivalent. Hence, many Turkish narrators referred to themselves more frequently as “Jewish” rather than as “Sephardi.” Furthermore, tracing genealogy played less of a role in the legal process for many applicants, such as those from Turkey, primarily because extensive genealogies are not possible, and other “evidence” (including Castilian *ketubot*, knowledge of Sephardi languages, belonging to an historical Sephardi community), was presented in lieu of proof of lineage that reaches back centuries.⁴¹

Although the requirement of remote ancestry or even proving contemporary Sephardi belonging can seem off-putting or simply difficult for some narrators, Liliana Tchukrán Benveniste, noted Argentinian Ladino teacher and singer, pointed out how the search for documentary evidence and the process of applying

⁴¹ For a comprehensive analytical study of Turkish Jews who have applied for Portuguese citizenship, see Gabriela Anouck Côte-Real Pinto and Isabel David, “Choosing Second Citizenship in Troubled Times: the Jewish Minority in Turkey,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 5 (2019): 781-796.

for citizenship itself can lead to historical restoration and a stronger sense of historical and genealogical belonging:

We have friends of our generation who call themselves Sephardi because they have a surname or because they learned a few things in the home but they are very removed from Sephardi culture. Rather, assimilated into Ashkenazi culture and to Ashkenazi traditions because of marriage, or where they live. And I think that [the citizenship law] has encouraged people to go rummaging in their grandparents or parents attics, to look in the homes, speak to those still alive in the family and ask about their Sephardi Jewish culture, about the customs about documents that may have survived. This has led many people who had no spiritual or family reason to come closer to Sephardi culture. And so I think this is a lovely consequence for us Jews, a kind of rescue of contemporary Sephardi culture.⁴²

This is especially true for those born after 1950, and for the children of mixed Sephardi/Ashkenazi or Sephardi/gentile marriages. In the Americas, where Jewish communities are Eastern European-dominant, Sephardi identity can often figure as a vague piece of family background. As younger generations seek to fill the gaps in their ancestral knowledge, they rescue pieces of their past and in the process sometimes acquire a stronger Sephardi identity as a result of newly found information. For example, “Sarah Carmona,”⁴³ an American whose father is Sephardi and mother is Swedish, confessed that what little she knows about her Sephardi great grandmother comes from the transcript of an oral history interview recorded years ago:

Yeah, so I learned a lot more about it [my ancestry] through this process of going through the citizenship process and we were able to trace back to great-great grandparents, names anyway; I don’t know very much about them. All four of my great-grandparents on my dad’s side were

⁴² Interview with Lilliana Tchukran Benveniste by Rina Benmayor, November 8, 2017, via Zoom.

⁴³ Quotation marks around narrator names indicates a pseudonym chosen by the narrator.

immigrants to the US. They came from, on my dad's mom's side they are from Turkey and my great-grandmother was born in Istanbul I think, and she grew up in Turkey... She's the one that I know the most about because I have a transcript of an audio interview with her for some other Sephardic project that was really interesting to read. She spoke Ladino and she was alive for a little while when I was younger.⁴⁴

While some younger applicants have tenuous connections with their Sephardi pasts, others attributed their motivation in seeking citizenship to close grandparental bonds. Liz Levine, from Seattle, attributes her pursuit of a Master's in Spanish linguistics to her relationship with her Ladino-speaking grandmother. She explained her interest in acquiring Spanish citizenship as a way to honor her *nona*:

The Spanish one [citizenship] is closer to me, you know, it's closer to my heart because I learned a whole other language for my grandmother. She and I always had that special connection because I was the only one of her six grandchildren that actually bothered to learn Spanish so that I can communicate with her in Spanish. When I spoke at her funeral, I gave my eulogy in Spanish... All of her other Sephardic relatives there really appreciated that one of the grandchildren was able to give her that tribute and I really felt strongly that it had to be done that way... For me... studying Spanish language and culture for so many years and having that special bond with my grandmother, I said, I have to get the Spanish citizenship. I kept saying, "I'm gonna do this to honor you," and I only wish she had lived to see the end of it. She was so alive when I started the application. I kept telling her "I'm gonna make this right. I'm gonna get back what your family deserved. I'm gonna take back what's ours," and so I'm working on it.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Interview with "Sara Carmona" by Dalia Kandiyoti, June 11, 2017, via Zoom.

⁴⁵ Interview with Liz Levine by Rina Benmayor, January 31, 2018, via Zoom.

While Levine is emotionally invested in her heritage through her family, in other young applicants a complex and more ambivalent set of feelings and ideas regarding Spanishness, Portugueseness or Sephardism can also emerge. Among Turkish narrators a self-questioning sometimes took place regarding authenticity. Often applying with their families and not always taking charge of the process themselves, those in their 20s and early 30s wondered about what exactly was “in evidence” about their Sephardiness. Many of our narrators are quite conscious of the gaps in their knowledge, given the lack of information about ancestry and the routes of exile from Spain in addition to the weakened ties of the more recent-born to Sephardi practices and languages due to assimilation. “Aylin,” who grew up in Izmir, was exposed, like many in her age group (early-to-mid-30s), to Sephardi culture predominantly through the language and music of her grandparents:

Because of the language, being around since my childhood, I can say that my strongest connection to being Sephardic is the Spanish that was used in the house, in my grandparents’ house... And also my grandmother who lives in Israel and who came to Turkey every summer, liked to sing and she was singing Ladino songs, which I really enjoyed.⁴⁶

But her Sephardi identification was otherwise circumscribed, and she has long disconnected from the Jewish community. Faced with the requirement to construct themselves as complete and authentic Sephardi Jews when applying for citizenship, some narrators perceived their identities as in fact unstable or partial. “C.E.,” a 32-year-old man born in Izmir and resident of Istanbul, was able to trace his origins to the early nineteenth century, with the arrival of his great-great-grandfather, Ishak, to the town of Urla, near Izmir. According to family sources, he was fleeing the plague in Bayonne, France, which had a settlement of Portuguese *conversos* as of the sixteenth century. But C.E. explained that there is no documented evidence of this either in Bayonne or Portugal. He does have an exceptional link to the past because his great-great-grandfather lives in the collective memory of Urla through the neighborhood that bears his name, Hadji Ishak. However, under the requirements of both Spain and Portugal, this familial

⁴⁶ Interview with “Aylin” by Dalia Kandiyoti, April 14, 2017, via Zoom.

and local story by itself would be an insufficient piece of evidence of Sephardi identity. Additionally, C.E. himself has feelings about the lack of extensive documentation that the process of becoming Spanish again, as it were, has provoked, which other narrators share. We might call this a “historical anxiety” about genealogy and cultural transmission. C.E. discussed this nagging sense of lack:

It comes from my historical ignorance... I’ve been studying and researching my past for many years. I understand in theory why I have these rights [to citizenship]: that it is a reparation, an apology, and because this was denied to previous generations. But in my case, that historical consciousness is not yet resolved.⁴⁷

The citizenship process, then, compels an investigation into the genealogical and historic past that can accentuate and bolster existing Sephardi identity, as in the example of “Sara Carmona,” but the demands for documented authenticity can also produce an insecurity and anxiety, as with “C.E.” of Istanbul, given the archival abyss most people face.

Sometimes, the search for the genealogical past can produce more uncertainties than concrete facts. In these cases, the void may become filled with suppositions, conjectures, and imagination about the migratory trajectories and identities based on conventional notions of ethnicity, religion, or inherited belonging. A somewhat different identity connection to Iberia emerges among those who have discovered Sephardi descent recently and/or descendants of *conversos* and crypto-Jews. The search and discovery of Sephardi heritage among our Christian narrators who are Latinx/Hispanics from the U.S.A. or are from Latin America is often prompted by the 2015 laws, though they may also be preceded by familial rumors about possible past Jewish ancestry. The burden of authenticity falls differently on these applicants, who may lack a public identity as Sephardi or legitimation by a Jewish community, especially if they are not Jewish-identified at the present. Information about the laws often reaches Latin Americans and U.S.

⁴⁷ Interview with “C.E.” by Dalia Kandiyoti, November 22, 2017, via Zoom.

Latinx/Hispanics in a context: whether through lawyers and mediators advertising the opportunity or word of mouth or social media, narrators find out not only about the legal dispensation for Sephardi Jews but also about the prevalence of hidden Jewish roots in the Americas of which they may not have been previously aware. Ironically, thanks to Catholic parishes' baptismal and other vital records, many of these individuals, whether from Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, or New Mexico, may be able to find more documented "proof" and information about their remote ancestors than, for example the "normative" Eastern Sephardi Jews from the former Ottoman and North African regions can hope to have.

Our narrators of *converso* descent speak about their connection to a distant Sephardi past in a rather different way than others. Upon unearthing evidence of *converso* ancestors, some assume the original identities of those men and women as part of their own and declare themselves to be Sephardi. Some narrators spoke emotionally of how the genealogical findings revealed "who they really are." Ana Maria Gallegos of New Mexico, a region strongly associated with a crypto-Jewish past, felt that genealogy and these new citizenship opportunities provided her with a new identity and answers to old questions about herself and her origins:

I'm so happy to know who I am... I've always felt, I don't know... I wouldn't say "different" but I'm very happy to know who I am. I never really knew who I was, even... I never knew where my ancestors came from and it always was really interesting to me and I never knew where to start... A lot of people in northern New Mexico knew that they were part of the conquistadores that came. I never knew that. And so now I know our whole history and stories and stories and stories. I'm just very happy to identify as Sephardic.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Interview with Ana Maria Gallegos by Dalia Kandiyoti, March 23, 2018, via Zoom. There has been, particularly but not only in the past few decades, widespread oral culture about the crypto-/Jewish origins of many Hispanos/Latinx in the Southwest of the U.S. and particularly in northern New Mexico. For arguments affirming a continuity of crypto-Jewish existence in New Mexico, see Stanley Hordes, *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008) and Seth Kunin, *Juggling Identities: Identity and Authenticity Among the Crypto-Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). For an

The discovery of previously unknown roots can be so powerful that it becomes the focal point in reframing a more holistic self-identity. Often, the discovery eclipses attention to other genealogical origins, such as the indigenous ancestries of many New Mexican *converso* descendants. As Eviatar Zerubavel points out in *Ancestors and Relatives*, the genealogical quest is always selective, dependent on our choosing some branches that we are interested in or need, leaving aside the others.⁴⁹

We were struck in our interviews by the power and depth of meaning that other subjects, not only *converso* descendants but those newly discovering their ancestry, can attach to their discoveries and invest in Sephardism through research or identification. For example, Glayci Errúas, from Brazil, discovered through conversations with her mother and aunt that her great grandfather was actually Jewish and Sephardi, buried in the Jewish cemetery of Manaus, in the Amazon basin. Because of intermarriage, his descendants became Christian. Motivated in part by the desire to give her children future global options, Errúas and her minor children applied for and have received Spanish citizenship, but also intend to apply to Portugal (a process which takes longer for children). She reflected on the significance of her ancestral discovery, expressing the degree to which these findings become internalized and shape the consciousness of identity:

For me, personally, it's as if something were missing. When I began to discover more about my ancestors, about my roots, it was as if I were discovering myself at the same time. So, I dare say that it is the discovery of deeper knowledge. You learn more about your personality, understand more about your reactions, something you were born with despite all the influences of your upbringing. It's something that involves your soul; it's something more internal, more intimate. I discovered my ancestry and at

overview of dissenting perspectives on the contemporary survival of crypto-Judaism in the region, see e.g. Michael P. Carroll, "The Not-So-Crypto Crypto-Jews of New Mexico: Update on a Decades-Old Debate," *Religion* 48, no. 2 (2018): 236-251. For an analysis of the meanings of discoveries of converso ancestry, see Dalia Kandiyoti, *The Converso's Return: Conversion and Sephardi History in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

⁴⁹ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the same time I learned more about the history of the Inquisition, as if something had been torn from me, that belonged to me. At some moment, the connection was severed. Wiped out. And it's as if you feel the need to retake hold of your roots, of where you come from, your appearance, your culture. So bringing that into the present, and particularly with the concept of citizenship, I mean, of retaking that, or the place that was in some ways yours, where you participated, where you managed to build through your heritage, it's truly fascinating.⁵⁰

Given that Errúas's sentiments as a recent discoverer of Sephardism are based on her newly found ancestor and a quest spurred by the 2015 laws, we might ask: what does being Sephardi mean if its source is primarily genealogical and biological? On the one hand, the isolation of ancestry and the "right" blood is historically and currently problematic for reasons we have signaled. At the same time, however, descendants enable Spain and Portugal to achieve reconciliation and return rights, a measure of compensation for past wrongs involving forcible conversions, whether or not the descendants have been previously unaware of such wrongs committed against their own ancestors. Our narrators' stories corroborate Zerubavel's observation in that the citizenship laws have indeed brought selective attention toward this part of their biological inheritance, meshing documentation with a genealogical imagination.

Malleable Identities

While the legitimization of nationality relies on the archives of dominant and repressive institutions to re/produce ancestral certainties, we are aware that the laws are mobilized in the context of the contemporary quest for flexible and multiple identities and nationalities. Indeed, the preamble of the Spanish law states that "Sephardi communities" have "envisioned a pragmatic and *global identity* for the emerging generations" [emphasis added]. Paradoxically, on the one hand, the genealogical imperative of the state is to identify a single source of

⁵⁰ Interview with Glayci Errúas by Rina Benmayor, February 7, 2019, via Zoom.

ancestral belonging in Iberia, which implies fixed identities, possibly reinforcing traditional notions of family, ancestry, and nation. On the other hand however, many states are also poised to produce further multiplicities, as we see in the Spanish positioning of “pragmatic and global” Sephardi Jews as well as in the recent investment of European states in promoting heritage-based citizenship to those outside of their national borders.⁵¹

For our narrators, the test of Sephardi and Iberian authenticity can ironically unleash or suppress a multiplicity of belongings rather than an entrenchment in the “restored” recovered nationality. While dual or multiple citizenship expands the space for more complex constructions of belonging, none of our narrators speak about becoming Spanish or Portuguese. Few of those we interviewed, including those who applied out of political and economic security concerns, have declared an intention to move permanently to Spain or Portugal. Most spoke of frequent visits, perhaps establishing a pied-à-terre, or spending some time in their ancestral places. Applicants also asserted that they will always identify primarily with their home countries. However, even then, national identity is complicated by positionality for many Sephardi individuals. “Raşel,” a woman from Istanbul in her 70s, articulated this in a statement that is typical of her generation, including in its multilinguality mixing Turkish with French, which expressed the exclusions that national/ist identity can produce:

I did not learn to say “I am a Turk”. What I knew was that I was a Jew and we said this at home. Turks, were outside, they were present in public life, in *l'espace publique*, if you will. We were in the *espace privée*. There was no such thing as being a Turk in the *espace privée*. We could be called “Turks;” we could speak the Turkish language, but we were not Turks as *identité*: we were Jews.⁵²

⁵¹ For references on extraterritorial citizenship, see footnotes 12-15 above.

⁵² Interview with “Raşel” by Dalia Kandiyoti, January 15, 2018, via Skype. On the history of the term “Turk” and on Turkishness, see Aron Rodrigue “Reflections on Millets and Minorities: Ottoman Legacies,” in *Turkey Between Nationalism and Globalization*, ed. Riva Kastoryano (New York: Routledge, 2013), 36-46; Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Republic of Paradox: The League of Nations Minority Protection Regime and the New Turkey’s Step-Citizens,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 657-679.

Such complexity of diasporic and national identities is often directly linked to the quest for a new citizenship.

Naturalization as Spanish or Portuguese can occasion what Sarah Abrevaya Stein has termed “extraterritorial dreams.” But these dreams are much less about being “nationals” or “citizens” of Spain or Portugal and more about *further* multiplying identities, as well as making the ancestral past more proximate. Many of our narrators speak about an open, cosmopolitan citizenship or multiple identities, not only Spanish or Portuguese but also Mediterranean or European and even seeing themselves to be “citizens of the world,” as Miriam Farhi Rodrigue, an Israeli from Istanbul asserts.⁵³ Jack Gilles, whose Sephardi grandfather fought in the Greek Resistance during the Second World War, adopts a predominantly European and Mediterranean identity, along with the Greek, American, and to a minor degree Sephardi Jewish:

I have such a strong connection to Europe, such a strong connection to that side of my family... For me it comes down to not so much Spain but a European identity... I already identify as very European... I’m very, very comfortable in Spain like I’m very very comfortable in Greece. It’s a very similar culture. It’s a Mediterranean culture. I don’t think having documents will make me feel... I already feel very connected to that culture.⁵⁴

While some narrators told us about solidifying their Sephardi identity through the quest for citizenship, including those newly discovering or invested in Sephardiness, their experience did not necessarily narrow their ideas about belonging. Ethan Russo, an American of Monastirli descent on his father’s side, suggested: “It shouldn’t be a divisive thing. Not a repudiation of being American. Just recognition that we all come from somewhere. A lot of us are more related in ways we hadn’t thought about before.”⁵⁵ Similarly, Luz, a Venezuelan sociology professor, drew the connection between the medieval historical ideals of

⁵³ Interview with Miriam Farhi Rodrigue by Dalia Kandiyoti, August 16, 2017, via Zoom.

⁵⁴ Interview with Jack Gilles by Rina Benmayor, January 3, 2017, audiorecording.

⁵⁵ Interview with Ethan Russo by Rina Benmayor, January 10, 2018, via Zoom.

convivencia and tolerance (myths in themselves, perhaps) that she sees as critical in today's global society:

That's why I believe that this initiative taken by the Spanish government is very positive from the standpoint that for today's world it is a testament to the importance of coexistence and tolerance among peoples who may have dissimilar cultures and interests but who can live together in community.⁵⁶

In addition to a cosmopolitan sense of self and world, pragmatism, adventure, and opportunity also drive the applicants, especially those in their twenties and thirties. Many of those under the age of fifty show little interest in a new nationality as a way of attending to the ancestral past. Rather, they have more practical reasons, though it must be noted that many of those acting on strong affective and symbolic ties *also* had such motivations. They include the desire for a European Union passport for travel, study, work, health care, or re-settlement, and what we are calling a “reserve citizenship” to be used on the occasion of a future need, especially in light of unpredictable political circumstances in their countries of residence. Multiple citizenship as an insurance policy against political and economic insecurity is a motivation for many, including the citizens of Venezuela, Brazil, Turkey and the U.S., owing to ongoing instability, violence, and/or exclusion and discrimination. This impulse became news in the United States when *The New York Times* published an article on election day in November 2018 about Latinx/Hispanics in the U.S. seeking Spanish citizenship as Sephardi *converso* descendants.⁵⁷ The article emphasized this quest for Spanish nationality as due in part to the most recent wave of racism against Latinx in the country.

As we have noted, scholars refer to “instrumental citizenship,” to describe the acquisition of citizenship that is decoupled from identity and/or from residence

⁵⁶ Interview with “Luz” by Rina Benmayor, April 12, 2017, via Zoom.

⁵⁷ Simon Romero, “Some Hispanics with Jewish Roots Pursue an Exit Strategy: Emigrate to Spain,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 2018. Accessed November 6, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/06/us/jews-sephardic-hispanic-spain-new-mexico.html>.

in the territory.⁵⁸ The instrumentalization of Spanish or Portuguese citizenship is apparent in many of our narrators' lack of attachment to current Iberian nation-states or identities. However, emotion and symbolism can still be triggered, unlike in some other instrumental citizenships,⁵⁹ or passports acquired only for the ease of travel or education. As we have seen in the examples of Ana María Gallegos and Glayci Errúas, even when newly discovered, an emotional attachment to Sephardi heritage can form, along with practical motivations and other identities, local or cosmopolitan. Such complex identifications and instrumentalizations lie outside of the purview of the official rhetoric of the Spanish and Portuguese citizenship laws.

Conclusions

While the "Sephardi laws" of 2015 in Portugal and Spain are uncommon enough to be startling to many, they are also part of increasingly prevalent patterns in European citizenship, before and despite Brexit. The state-led expansion of diasporic and globalized identities is embedded in the granting of "external citizenship," as we mentioned earlier. At the same time, however, the rhetoric of the Spanish and Portuguese laws seeks to incorporate Sephardi Jews through nationalist markers in terms of linguistic, cultural, and emotional loyalty and perdurability. For two reasons, this is not unexpected: as scholars of Jewish Spain have explained in various contexts, there is a longstanding, officialized recuperation of Sephardi history by the Spanish state.⁶⁰ In our estimation, the spirit, rhetoric, and language of the Spanish and Portuguese preambles are a continuation of ideas about the steadfast Iberianness of the exiles and their descendants. Moreover, "external citizenship" is offered frequently to those considered "fellow nationals," even if they have never been to the territory of the granting state. As scholars have discussed, non-territorial birthright citizenship,

⁵⁸ Joppke, "The Instrumental Turn of Citizenship."

⁵⁹ See, for example, the study of Turkish elites who acquire U.S. citizenship to build prestige: Evren Balta and Özlem Altan Olcay, "Strategic Citizens of America: Transnational Inequalities and Transformation of Citizenship," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 6 (2016): 939-957.

⁶⁰ See footnotes 20 and 21, above.

which is practiced widely in Europe and other areas, reinforces ancestry-based nationalism and also can disenfranchise or exclude those residing within the state's boundaries. This is a growing rather than diminishing practice, as dual nationality becomes more liberalized.⁶¹ The flexibility of citizenship coexists with forms of increased nationalization. Therefore, the nation-based framing of Sephardi inclusion is not surprising, despite the expansions that accompany it.

Genealogy and ancestry-based legal identities, then, can be both inclusionary and ethnonationalistic. More rarely, they can also be part of a restorative gesture toward some targeted populations, such as in the case of the citizenship laws for Sephardi Jews.⁶² In the spirit and/or the application of the law, ironies and paradoxes emerge: even though the states acknowledge “pragmatic and global” identities, as we indicated above, and individual applicants embrace a potential flexibility and multiplicity of nationalities, the primacy of ancestral credentials seems to fix belonging by locating it in biological inheritance, even though officials recognize the impossibility of tracing an uninterrupted bloodline back to Iberia. Moreover, the Spanish law's motivating claim, that Jews of Spanish origin maintain an uninterrupted feeling of nostalgia for the “homeland” from which they were expelled and to which they now can return, is grounded in the idea of a fixed national identity. This ignores the complexity of how Spain and Portugal have figured in the diasporic Sephardi imagination.⁶³

⁶¹ For references, see footnotes 15-18, above.

⁶² Descendants of Muslims and Moriscos, who were forcibly converted and/or expelled from Iberia, are not included in the Spanish or Portuguese laws of return or reconciliation. For a critique, see Janan Bastaki, “Reading History into Law: Who Is Worthy of Reparations? Observations on Spain and Portugal's Return Laws and the Implications for Reparations,” *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 4, no. 1 (2017): 115-128.

⁶³ Sephardi Jews' post-exile relationship to Spain and Portugal underwent an evolution too long and complicated to summarize here. After a couple of centuries, a long period of isolation from Iberia as well as memories of persecution characterized much of the Sephardi experience. As noted earlier, the maintenance of language and custom was not fixed but evolved as well. There was some Jewish response to Iberian philosephardism emerging more than a century ago, including in Spanish colonial contexts, but nationalisms, competing colonialisms, genocide, and multiple migrations rather than an Iberian orientation shaped the outlook and fate of Sephardi Jewry in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For some Jewish attitudes toward Spain, see Paloma Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim: The Jews from Spain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 173-175. For *converso* or crypto-Jewish descendants, an Iberian Jewish past was by and large suppressed, despite some continuities, rather than preserved in the ways official discourses suggest.

Our oral history project has shown that “restorative citizenship,” as we call this recuperation of an ancient belonging, can also have unexpected outcomes that go beyond the search for genealogical certainties and nostalgic returns: rather than a recovery of Iberianness, we find that for our narrators the quest for Spanish or Portuguese nationality can actually contribute to a more extensive awareness of transhistorical and transnational Sephardi culture and history, whether or not the identification was significant, weak, or even non-existent prior to the citizenship process. Thus, the invitation to “become Iberians again,” might more aptly be described as a path to complex identities, which include new forms of Sephardism and European and cosmopolitan citizenship. If there is any nostalgia, it is instead for lost Sephardi communities, languages, customs, and social relations that have disappeared or transformed over the course of the centuries. The Sephardi descendants’ perspectives compel us to refine and question, rather than take for granted, the differences and overlaps between descent, identity, nationality, and citizenship.

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Keywords: Sephardi Jews, Spanish and Portuguese Citizenship, Genealogy, Multinational Identities, Oral History

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Francesca Trivellato, *The Promise and Peril of Credit: What a Forgotten Legend about Jews and Finance Tells Us about the Making of European Commercial Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 424.

by *Oliver Schulz*

Ideas according to which Jews dispose of a sort of hidden knowledge providing them with exclusive advantages in economic life have for long been a widespread phenomenon in economic thinking and continue to be an important aspect of current economic anti-Semitism.¹ The stereotype of “Jewish bankers” running the world in the pursuit of their own interests and using their economic and financial power to control every aspect of politics and society tends to show up regularly in times of crisis and expresses deeply rooted fears about capitalism and its often complex functioning. Not surprisingly, the Jewish origins of leading figures in world finance are regularly brought up in conspiracy theories and help reduce the complexity of capitalist economy and the modern world by pointing at individuals to blame according to these theories. In this context, even the Rothschild reference stemming from the nineteenth century is still used—and apparently understood by the public—as French comedian Dieudonné’s repeated remarks on the Rothschild bank and its dominance of French politics clearly show.²

In this context, research on anti-Semitism tends to stress the longevity and the continuity of stereotypes—not just in the field of economic anti-Semitism—as well as the fact how anti-Semitic stereotypes tend to evolve over time and are regularly updated. One prominent example for this phenomenon is the early modern stereotype of the “Jewish usurer” which would blend into the stereotype

¹ The idea of a “special relationship” between Jews and money and finance has been the topic of recent exhibitions by the Jewish Museums in Frankfurt and in London. See Fritz Backhaus, ed., *Juden. Geld. Eine Vorstellung: eine Ausstellung des Jüdischen Museums Frankfurt am Main*, 25. April bis 6. Oktober 2013 (Frankfurt am Main [et al.]: Campus, 2013); Joanne Rosenthal and Marc Volovici, eds., *Jews, Money, Myth* (London: Birkbeck 2019). Due to the coronavirus pandemic and the containment measures in 2020, it has unfortunately not been possible to consult the catalogue of the London exhibition.

² On the “Rothschild” stereotype see Fritz Backhaus, “Die Rothschilds und das Geld: Bilder und Legenden,” in *Shylock? Zinsverbot und Geldverleih in jüdischer und christlicher Tradition*, eds. Johannes Heil and Bernd Wacker (München: Fink, 1997), 147-170.

of the “Jewish capitalist” in the nineteenth and twentieth century.³ The study by Francesca Trivellato to be discussed in this review essay takes an early modern legend on Jews and their economic practices as a starting point, discusses the spread and the reception of the legend by authors in different countries and puts the phenomenon into a broader perspective.

The author, who published *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven CT [et al.]: Yale University Press, 2012), has a wide expertise in economic history and in the history of anti-Jewish stereotypes in economy and economic thinking, thus shows, for instance, how commentators of this legend were themselves rooted in a long tradition of various representations of Jews and their participation in economic life (e.g. Karl Marx, Max Weber and Werner Sombart who relied on representations of Jews stemming from the late-medieval period).⁴ After the introduction, the book proceeds in eight chapters and closes with conclusive remarks with the title “Coda.” After the coda, there are three very useful appendices with information on early modern European commercial literature, the earliest formulation of the legend and, finally, an overview of Etienne Cleirac’s works, one of the main authors analyzed in detail by Francesca Trivellato in her book.

The first chapter is an introduction into the topic of marine insurance and bills of exchange and uses Etienne Cleirac’s claim made in *Us et coustumes de la mer* published in 1647 that Jews had invented both financial instruments as a starting

³ See my preliminary remarks on the emergence of the “Jewish capitalist” stereotype in nineteenth-century France: Oliver Schulz, “Der ‘jüdische Kapitalist’. Anmerkungen zu Ursprung und Entwicklung eines antisemitischen Stereotyps im Frankreich der 1840er-Jahre,” in *Antisemitismus im 19. Jahrhundert aus internationaler Perspektive/Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitism in International Perspective* (Schriften aus der Max Weber-Stiftung), eds. Mareike König and Oliver Schulz, vol. 1, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 41-58. On “usury” see. Jerry Z. Muller, “The Long Shadow of Usury. Capitalism and the Jews in Modern European Thought,” in *Capitalism and the Jews*, ed. Jerry Z. Muller (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 15-71.

⁴ See as well Francesca Trivellato, “La naissance d’une légende: Juifs et finance dans l’imaginaire bordelais du XVII^e siècle,” *Archives Juives* 47, no. 2 (2014): 47-76. Accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-archives-juives1-2014-2-page-47.htm>.

point for his presentation and discussion of this topic. The author points out the conflict between the necessity of these instruments for long-distance trade in a more and more impersonal market, on the one hand, and the intense debates it triggered in which bills of exchange were assimilated to usury at times. In chapter two, Trivellato studies the making of the legend about Jews and their role in inventing bills of exchange. An important aspect to be found in Cleirac's account deals with the fact that, in his interpretation of the topic, Jews had invented these bills in order to keep their property when they were expelled. In this chapter, intertextual references such as the link with Giovanni Villani's chronicle used by Cleirac to reinforce his claim on the origins of the bills of exchange show the transnational dimension of the phenomenon and the circulation of ideas in early modern Europe. Chapter three then deals with usury, regularly evoked in the debates about bills of exchange. It is very interesting to note how an early-modern writer such as Cleirac criticized non-Jewish moneylenders who followed allegedly Jewish economic practices, that is, usury. The following chapter four is an in-depth study of the setting in which Cleirac wrote his book, that is, Bordeaux and its Jewish community in the seventeenth century. In this context, there was the particularity of Jews in Bordeaux who did not openly practice their religion ("crypto-Judaism"), which brings up the issue of the "invisible Jew," dear to later generations of anti-Semites. The following chapter then deals with the "canonization" of the legend and addresses Jacques Savary's *Le parfait négociant*, published in 1675. Savary, recognized as author of merchant literature, worked on Cleirac's presentation of the legend and made its spread more efficient, thus contributing to the affirmation of the legend on the Jewish origins of the bills of exchange. In dealing with Jews and Armenians, Savary also used Orientalist discourse to describe their role in Mediterranean trade. Chapter six discusses the role of Montesquieu in the spread of the legend in Europe, an author well-known in other contexts and important for the development of political thinking, as well as further developments up to the debate on Jewish emancipation in the age of the French Revolution. Chapter seven with the title "Distant Echoes" presents the reception of Cleirac's legend in England, the Holy Roman Empire, Italy and the United Provinces before chapter eight addresses its reception in the nineteenth century by analyzing authors such as Marx, Weber and Sombart.

The study is very well written and is based on an extensive and impressive bibliography in several languages. The author uses the relevant literature in the field and even addresses topics outside her main focus, such as Armenian trade and the Middle East in the early modern period on the basis of extensive current and relevant research literature. In the following, I would like to discuss a few aspects which seem to be particularly interesting and promising for further study of the issue of credit, its link with economic activities of Jews and, finally, with ideas on “moral economy,” not just in the early modern period.⁵

The study is based on two early modern documents on trade found by the author: Etienne Cleirac's *Us et coutumes* published in Bordeaux in 1647 and Jacques Savary's *Le parfait négociant*, a manual for merchants published in 1675. The fact that these are manuals which describe good economic practice imply that concepts of “moral economy” are inherent in both documents. Furthermore, the author also points out that such publications on commerce and credit covered a far larger topic in the seventeenth century than just commerce because they could not be separated from moral, political and social ideas (p. XIII). As the study of such a large topic would be endless, she decided to turn to the legend that Jews had invented maritime insurance and bills exchange, a legend which was actively circulating for about 250 years. The legend is without any real foundation and the real history of these financial instruments is well-known, but, due to this, it is even more interesting because it is a good example which shows that ideas matter and can become a social and political reality with their own dynamic, even if they could not be farther away from truth (pp. XIII-XIV). And this is even more rewarding in this case because the example studied here proves the longevity and continuity of stereotypes, a fact often asserted in research but rarely analyzed in depth and over longer time periods (p. 17).⁶

⁵ On the concept of “moral economy,” see Edward P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th century,” *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 76-136; James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1976); John Bohstedt, *The Politics of Provisions: Food Riots, Moral Economy, and Market Transition in England, c. 1550-1850* (Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate, 2010).

⁶ For instance, the author evokes the “fusion of the figure of the medieval Jewish pawnbroker with that of the all-powerful early-modern Jewish merchant” and shows the longevity and permanent adaptation of well-established stereotypes.

Apart from the research interest the topic represents in itself a case-study for early-modern economic history and the research on anti-Semitism as a case-study in this period, and there are several aspects of particular interest for researchers who specialize in nineteenth-century anti-Semitism which I would like to comment upon here. The fact that “Jewish invisibility” played a role already in early modern Bordeaux where this invisibility went hand in hand with forced conversions and acculturation of the Jewish population, giving rise to fears of “crypto-Judaism,” announces debates that would take place in the context of Jewish emancipation in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century. In the context of Jewish emancipation, the “invisible Jew” was also a main problem for many non-Jews. However, the fear of the “invisible Jew” also reflects the highly irrational character of certain debates, because, on the one hand, Jews were encouraged to give up their religious and cultural traditions and not to be recognizable as “Jews” anymore, but, on the other hand, when this was achieved, acculturation and assimilation were highly criticized because Jews could no longer be identified easily, which would nourish fears and rumors of a “Jewish” society within society. This would give rise to all sorts of conspiracy beliefs, such as Jews forming an exclusive and secret community which acted against the interests of Christians, and not just in the field of economy. The question of conversion from Judaism to Christianity, be it forced in the early modern period or more voluntary in the nineteenth century in order to have access to public service and to allow social ascension, for instance, would play an important role in the creation of the stereotype of the “invisible Jew,” an important topic in anti-Semitic discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth century (p. 5.).

Another aspect already debated in early modern Europe concerned the opposition of commodity trade based on ethics, that is, “moral economy,” on the one hand, and profits from speculation, on the other hand, being an expression of “economic parasitism.” Not only does “parasitism” allow for the racialization of anti-Semitism, which would actually occur in the nineteenth century, but this idea also reflects the alleged “unproductive” character of financial transactions, “speculation” in general and any employment in the world of finance. Thus, the early modern debate on moral standards in economic life would continue into the

nineteenth century when “speculation” was juxtaposed to “productive” labor and “morality,” in agriculture in particular.⁷

Another interesting aspect concerns the topic of usury and the role of the Catholic Church in the debate and the creation and spread of this stereotype. Usury, which has been one of the most powerful anti-Jewish stereotypes, was largely practiced by non-Jewish bankers and moneylenders as well, contrary to what the stereotype claimed. Moreover, Jewish usurers and, later on, bankers being part of “high finance,” were a minority compared to their non-Jewish colleagues, but nevertheless, “usury” became an anti-Jewish stereotype, the same as the bankers representing nineteenth-century capitalism, when Jewish bankers were targeted and not their Christian counterparts.⁸ This meant several things: on the one hand, the term “Jewish” was dissociated from Jews and referred to anything which was considered to be bad economic practice (such as “usury” or capitalism and some of its features in the nineteenth century considered to be particularly negative) (pp. 54-55 and 57).⁹ On the other hand, this reinforced anti-Semitic discourse because economic practices considered to be bad were essentialized as “Jewish” which strengthened existing stereotypes and would also allow for the racialization of the topic. Francesca Trivellato rightly points out that paintings from the early modern Spanish Low Countries show Christian moneylenders with “Jewish”

⁷ Derek Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 2001), 39; Schulz, “Der ‘jüdische Kapitalist’”, 46. On “speculation” as opposed to “work” in nineteenth-century French Utopian Socialist thinking see Jean-Philippe Schreiber, “Les Juifs, rois de l’époque d’Alphonse Toussenel, et ses avatars. La spéculation vue comme anti-travail au XIXe siècle,” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 79, no. 2 (2001): 533-546.

⁸ On nineteenth-century developments and the real place and number of Jewish bankers in finance at that time, see Michel Winock, “Le temps de l’intégration,” in *La France et les Juifs de 1789 à nos jours*, ed. Michel Winock (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 29-49; 30-31. On “usury” in anti-Semitic discourse in Alsace and its unilateral focus on Jews, Michael Burns, “Emancipation and Reaction: The Rural Exodus of Alsatian Jews, 1791-1848,” in *Living With Antisemitism: Modern Jewish responses*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz (Hanover-London: University Press of New England, 1987), 19-41; 25. On anti-Jewish violence in Alsace in 1848, Daniel Gerson, “Die Ausschreitungen gegen die Juden im Elsass 1848,” *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 87 (1990): 29-44.

⁹ On the characterization of nineteenth-century capitalism as “Jewish” see David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York-London: Norton, 2013), 430-439.

physical attributes, which foreshadows a development that would be seen again in later periods (p. 65).

Another interesting aspect brought up by authors such as Cleirac and Savary and spread throughout Europe via translations, among others, concerns what was perceived as the Jewish domination of Mediterranean trade. In this context, other groups such as Greeks and Armenians and their role in trade in general and in Mediterranean trade in particular are mentioned. Trivellato stresses the fact that Jacques Savary underlined the dominant position of Jews in Mediterranean and colonial trade and tended to overrate the importance of Greeks and Armenians, which could be explained by religious bias, the two latter groups being Christians but not Roman Catholics (p. 102). Armenians and Greeks are interesting examples for the study of forms of structural economic anti-Semitism, e.g. in Mediterranean trade or in trade relations with the Ottoman Empire. In fact, some stereotypes the majority population associated with both groups reflect attitudes similar to those shown with regard to Jews, that is, an alleged overrepresentation in trade and in economy in general. In nineteenth-century Balkan nationalisms this would blend with anti-liberal and anti-modern discourse on the dichotomy between the city, on the one hand, inhabited and dominated by minorities such as Greeks, Armenians and Jews, and the countryside, on the other hand, inhabited by the Christian Orthodox majority population engaged in agriculture and rural economies. This dichotomy reflects the antagonism to be found in Western Europe between urban and rural spaces as well as considerations on “moral economy” as opposed to capitalist economic practices. In this context, another interesting aspect would be the study of the relations between these three communities and their place in trade and economy in different late imperial contexts (Russia, Ottoman Empire, Habsburg Empire) (pp. 108 and 110-111).¹⁰

¹⁰ See the remarks made in 1890 by Konstantin Jireček, the first Secretary of Education in the Bulgarian Principality, according to which Jews would have difficulties in competing with “cunning” Vlach, Armenian or Greek village traders or innkeepers. Stefan Troebst, “Antisemitismus im ‘Land ohne Antisemitismus’: Staat, Titularnation und jüdische Minderheit in Bulgarien 1878-1993,” in *Juden und Antisemitismus im östlichen Europa*, eds. Mariana Hausleitner and Monika Katz (Berlin: Harassowitz, 1995), 109-125; 111. On anti-Greek violence in Bulgaria in the early twentieth century, not exclusively motivated by economic motives, see Ibid., 113. On structural similarities between anti-Jewish and anti-Armenian sentiment in late nineteenth-

Trivellato also points out further negative connotations of Jews in the early modern period, not just in economic terms, such as the idea of a rootless people without any sort of patriotism, which already echoes the later anti-Semitic stereotype of “cosmopolitanism” and fits well with economic considerations such as Jews inventing financial instruments only they know and master to hide their wealth and spirit out of the country out of fear of confiscation (p. 149).

Another aspect brought up by the author in the early modern context and worth studying in later periods concerns differentiation within the Jewish community itself, between Sephardic Jews, on the hand, and mainly Ashkenazi, on the other hand, who seemed to correspond more to anti-Jewish stereotypes, not only in economic terms. This would be an interesting topic for a case-study of port cities with well-established Sephardic communities, such as Amsterdam, London or Hamburg, and their reactions to the arrival of Ashkenazi Jews as well as the attitudes of the non-Jewish society towards these different Jewish communities (p. 6).

The nineteenth century is not studied in detail by the author, but this is not a criticism at all because the focus of the study lies elsewhere, and the author herself stresses the fact that the analysis of the reception and the spread of the legend in the nineteenth century would require a study of its own. But with what has already been said in this review article, Francesca Trivellato indicates various very interesting topics and approaches to early modern history which could be easily applied to a study of the nineteenth century as well. One important point she addresses again is the question of the “morality of commercial credit” which reflects the debates, in particular on “moral economy,” studied in the chapters before (p. 162).

century Bulgarian press articles and, for instance, references to Armenians as “parasites” see Veselina Kulenska, “The Antisemitic Press in Bulgaria at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish Issues* 3 (2012), <http://www.quest-cdejournal.it/focus.php?id=296>. Accessed August 20, 2020. This interesting topic would merit further study.

Such a study of the nineteenth century and the long-term continuity of the legend on the bills of exchange could cover several aspects and angles already present in recent research. One important question to be dealt with would concern the attitude of nineteenth-century left-wing political movements which, particularly in the early phases of existence, were far from being free of anti-Semitism. On the contrary, even though anti-Semitism on the Left remained rather a minority phenomenon, it is true that certain schools of socialist thinking such as the French Utopian Socialists largely contributed to anti-Semitism as it would develop particularly in the later nineteenth century.¹¹ Important aspects within this topic are the overlapping of left and right-wing anti-Semitism and their mutual reception, as well as, more generally speaking, the reception and circulation of anti-Semitic ideas between Western and Eastern Europe, such as between pre-Marxist socialists from Russia (the *Narodniki* in particular) and Western Europe.¹²

Finally, in methodological terms, the valuable study by Francesca Trivellato, who transcends national and linguistic boundaries and thus fulfills a claim often made in research literature but rarely put into practice due to various problems, which shows how a study of “international” anti-Semitism can be done by focusing on one particular example such as a legend on Jewish economic activity and its subsequent spread throughout Europe. Thanks to modern technologies and the ongoing digitization of library holdings, this has become much easier, because text software allows for easy recognition of terms and keywords within the documents and makes such a topic less boundless than it used to be even just a couple of years ago.

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¹¹ See Schulz, “Der ‘jüdische Kapitalist’.” On left-wing anti-Semitism see, among others, Michel Dreyfus, *L’antisémitisme à gauche. Histoire d’un paradoxe, de 1830 à nos jours* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011); Catherine Fhima, “La gauche et les Juifs,” in *Histoire des gauches en France. Vol. 1: L’héritage du XIXe siècle*, eds. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), 379-403; Michele Battini, *Socialism of Fools: Capitalism and Modern anti-Semitism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

¹² Schulz, “Der ‘jüdische Kapitalist’,” 56-58. On the *Narodniki* and the pogroms in the 1880s see Claudio Sergio Ingerflom, “Idéologie révolutionnaire et mentalité antisémite. Les socialistes russes face aux pogroms de 1881-1883,” *Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 37 (1982): 434-453; 439, https://www.persee.fr/doc/ahess_0395-2649_1982_num_37_3_282856. Accessed August 14, 2020

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Francesca Trivellato, *The Promise and Peril of Credit: What a Forgotten Legend about Jews and Finance Tells Us about the Making of European Commercial Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 424.

by Germano Maifreda

The Promise and Peril of Credit is one of those very rare books that—precisely because it programmatically intersects with several fields, disciplines, and intellectual tradition, “and fits neatly into none” (p. 218)—manages to be a milestone in several disciplinary fields: economic history, the history of economic thought, Jewish history, and cultural history in its intertwining with politics and society. In fact, the volume indicates a new direction towards an authentically interdisciplinary history of the long-term relations and mutual influences between economy, society and culture.

The book’s aim is twofold. First, to demonstrate that the tale of origins of marine insurance and bills of exchange as inventions of Jews was once so well-known that it can justifiably be called a legend. Second, to shed new light on Europe’s cultural and intellectual entanglements with economic modernity, by understanding the significance and reverberations of such legend. Marine insurance and bills of exchange are among the most valuable by-products of what the Belgian historian Raymond de Roover originally called the “commercial revolution of the Middle Ages”—one that was propelled by institutional more than technological change. By focusing on the specific character of the medieval European economic transformation and its social and cultural byproducts and reception, Trivellato presents a completely innovative approach to the themes (central to the economic history and economic theory of recent decades) of the relationships between institutions and economic development, the very nature of institutions, and the reasons for their existence—in this continuing the work already undertaken in her previous award-winning monograph *The Familiarity of Strangers*.¹

¹ Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2009).

Chapter one of the book investigates the historical characters and functioning of bills of exchange and premium-based marine insurance. Two credit contracts designed to facilitate transactions conducted at distance and therefore inevitably uncertain, by the mid-seventeenth century (when the legend took shape) had become indispensable to long-distance trade and were handed by merchants of all sorts and background. Of course, those instruments were invented by no single person or group. After being introduced in medieval Italy, both of them went through a long period of incubation and incremental evolution. In the mid-fourteenth century, merchants ceased to notarize them, and this is a shift of particular importance for Trivellato's purposes since it allows her to follow the process by which a high degree of (both Jewish and Christian) mercantile self-regulation in the certification of property rights was granted in the late Middle Ages. These quintessential instruments of commercial credit, which laid the grounds for a highly personalized financial market, were not backed by land or bullion managed by the state or central bank, but were mainly based on single merchants' reputation and inter-group communication via business letters. Yet in the perception produced everywhere, bills of exchange especially possessed the illusory idea that they could be bought and sold by anyone, and transmitted the erroneous but indelible impression that they were like paper money.

Chapters two and three identify the making of the legend of the Jewish invention of bills of exchange and marine insurance in mid-seventeenth century Bordeaux and in the writings of the provincial French lawyer Étienne Cleirac (1583-1657). At a time when the increasing impersonality of market exchanges was perceived by Christians as threatening established social hierarchies and traditional forms of authority, Cleirac's account depicted Jews as possessors of superior financial skills, which rendered them apt to circulate financial instruments, such as bills of exchange, whose opacity separated insiders from outsiders. In the eyes of Christians and of a long Christian economic, theological and philosophical tradition (Jewish scholars who challenged Church doctrine in matters of Jewish moneylending and usury were neither accessible nor of interest to Cleirac and his audience), opacity was also a defining trait of the Jews, one that blended their religious and economic infidelity and rendered them suspect of in-group maneuvering. Accusations of religious infidelity and economic cunning thus

became mutually reinforcing, creating what Trivellato calls “a legend rather than a myth because Cleirac casts it as a historical narrative” and “a legend rather than an anecdote because [...] it had an astounding resonance over the following centuries among writers who touched on economic themes in France and across Europe” (pp. 46-47).

In the central part of the book, Trivellato formulates her model of explanation of the affirmation of the logic that undergirds the legend. A *contractus innominatus* (“nameless contract,” a category developed by medieval jurists to indicate contracts that did not have a specific equivalent in the Roman civil law of obligations), marine insurance and bills of exchange belonged to a momentous period in the late medieval history of European law: one during which urban commercial elites emerged and long-distance trade demanded full contractual rights be given to social groups that until then had been regarded as inferior to the titled nobility. When, in the early phase of European globalization, these legal and social transformations accelerated, they provoked what Trivellato evocatively defines as “a crisis of legibility in the market” (p. 64). International merchants that in the sixteenth and seventeenth century increasingly operated outside the traditional guilds had to resort to new means to prove their good reputation: and it is precisely at this point that the legend of the Jewish invention of marine insurance and bills of exchange (erroneous as it was) provided early-modern European society with an answer to a vital question which (from the historiographical point of view) had been already placed by Trivellato at the center of *Familiarity of Strangers*: how were investors and entrepreneurs wishing to enter into a voluntary bilateral agreement with someone outside of their immediate circle to verify the integrity and expertise of the contracting party? The legend answered this question by evoking drawing symbolic boundaries in a new world: one in which intangible financial instruments and change in traditional merchants’ corporate status made the impersonality of the market threatening—but also potentially beneficial.

Why did this multi layered sociocultural process start in Bordeaux? Chapter four provides an answer to this question. The only French port city in which a Jewish community could reside (under the veil of New Christians status), Bordeaux saw

a very specific local combination of Christian fears of crypto-Judaism and the changing legal framework of trade after the 1673 Colbertist *ordonnance de commerce*. The European crisis of discernability in the boundaries separating Jews and Christians had begun after the mass conversions of Spanish Jews during the 1390s, which is here explored in its deep consequences. The ambiguity (in the eyes of Christians) of the condition of forcibly converted Jews, and the subsequent waves of fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Iberian forced baptisms and expulsions, is here convincingly interwoven by Trivellato with the seventeenth-century French debates on the compatibility of aristocratic status with overseas trade, which in turn was provoked by the creation of legal incentives for aristocrats to invest in overseas trade after Colbert's reforms. In this context (which is, in many respects, comparable to similar historical contexts of economic-cultural uncertainty, such as the 2008 financial crisis and, perhaps, today's sanitary crisis), the legend would therefore have been functional to provide simple and effective social reassurance to the key problem raised by the self-regulation of the commercial sphere: namely, how to detect dishonest economic actors when they operate outside a corporate regime of verification.

Chapters five and six follow the (remarkably ineffective) refutations, and permutations the legend assumed in late seventeenth and eighteenth-century France. They do so by stressing both the persistence and the malleability of Christian images of the Jewish economic role, and through an innovative reading of accepted historical accounts of the relationship between economic, social and political order that regarded commerce as a progressive force. Contrary to what Albert Hirschman's optimistic classic account claims, the literature on commerce starting from the last quarter of the seventeenth century and of all the eighteenth century is shown by Trivellato to develop a tendency to refer to Jews and other minorities as present in European and global marketplace as sinister characters not to be trusted. A reflection of the Christian-French local merchant oligarchies' opposition to Colbert attempts to capitalize Jewish (and Armenian) extensive trade networks in the Mediterranean, such tendency was disseminated by the bestsellers of the eighteenth century *ars mercatoria*, which often regarded Jews as wielding excessive influence in world finance and international commerce, and linked this phenomenon to specific policies, including Colbert's.

Fittingly, Trivellato here debunks two entrenched narratives about Jews in mid- and late-eighteenth century France. First, that eighteenth century commercial developments and financial markets involving (mostly Sephardic and port) Jews were driving forces in the transition from early-modern toleration to modern equality. Rather, she shows that the Enlightenment (and especially Montesquieu's) portraits of the progressive role of the Jews in the European commercial society were far from "egalitarian," since they embraced a concept of equality of rank, and abhorred the idea that commerce might erode traditional hierarchies. Second, she questions the idea that the emancipation of the Jews introduced by the French Revolution has been a sort of gradualist development that had begun in the early-modern period, especially for the "port Jews" of Sephardic extraction, provided of a higher amount of wealth and wider international networks in comparison with their Ashkenazi co-religionists. Trivellato instead—also by putting David Sorkin's theses to the test—argues that "commerce played a minor role, if any at all, in the political emancipation of Jews" (p. 155). Amid the arguments marshaled during the French Revolution in favor of Jewish emancipation, the virtues of commerce were indeed never used by pro-Jewish advocates. "Commerce [...] embedded Jewish and Christian merchants in networks of economic dependence," she concludes,

[... but] these privileges [...] were only acceptable in a society in which the majority population was clearly separated from Jews and the latter could not aspire to full membership in it. When equality became a possibility, few heralded the Jews of southwestern France as archetypes of the virtues of commercial credit in contrast to the Jews of northeastern France, who remained emblems of usury (p. 157).

In the aftermath of the Revolution, the poor economic condition of the majority of French Jews and entrenched suspicions about their usurious character had a decisive effect on the stalling of the advancement of formal equality. Again, usury became the symbol of the suspicion that Jews (now newly invisible as "citizens") might be unable to partake in civil and political society as fair players, because of their lacking of patriotism. As emancipation promised to eliminate every last vestige of formal discrimination against Jewish economic actors, Cleirac's concerns

from a century and a half earlier about the inability to detect fraud in the new paper economy regained purchase.

Chapter seven analyzes the legend's echoes beyond France up to 1800, and how they intersected with a variety of discourses about the morality of commercial credit in Britain and United Provinces, the Holy Roman Empire, the Italian Peninsula, Iberia, and among Jewish writers before and during emancipation. Besides demonstrating that the habit of attributing to Jews the invention of bills of exchange reached its zenith in the nineteenth century, Chapter eight provides a deep description of the contemporary historical events (including Jewish emancipation, nationalism, authoritarianism, the politics of anti-Semitism, racial theories, and Zionism) through which the grand theories of Marx, Sombart and Weber about the Jewish (and Christian) role in the creation of modern capitalism came into being. While Marx's *On the Jewish Question* and Sombart's *The Jews and Economic Life* appear as profoundly influenced by early-modern economic debates (the former arguing that the Jews "worshiped" bills of exchange, even if they did not invent them, since they represented the capitalist society in its totality; the latter accepting the legend in its version related to endorsable bills instead of bills of exchange, notwithstanding coeval specialists of commercial law at the time had openly rejected it), Weber broke with this tendency and "inaugurated the process of the Christianization of capitalism" (p. 198) that became dominant in the twentieth century.

In its welcome Coda, this volume deals with general historical periodization and present-day competing views on the way in which the transition from the medieval period to modernity unfolded. The interest the German giants of modern social thought put into discovering what was new in modern capitalism implied a growing emphasis on historical ruptures and periodization. In their work, descriptions of historical change as a series of progressive stages of development, and of transformations in the legal framework of economic organization, couple with the search for "origins" of economic concepts and phenomena. According to Trivellato, this also explains the recent process of forgetting the legend of the Jewish invention and dissemination of bills of exchange. Since in late-twentieth century economic history business history is no

longer integral to the study of the past, and recently the center of gravity in the Anglophone economic history of preindustrial Europe has unwelcomely moved away from southern Europe, the golden age of bills of exchange (and other issues underlying the legend) “slipped under economic historians’ radar” (p. 219). I will return to this point shortly.

The volume concludes with seven extensive Appendices, which (among other things) discuss the virtues and limitations of printed bibliographies and online databases collecting texts of the pre-modern mercantile and economic tradition (these priceless tools that we all use, but to which too often we forget to address an open tribute), and carefully list the bibliographical references in Sombart’s *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (1911)—an antidote to the uncritical uses of this flawed empirical account that are surprisingly still practiced today.

Scholars in Jewish history, whose academic field in the last few decades has been constructing its own methodological physiognomy across Europe, Israel, and the US, will find their discipline-building process challenged by this book. This is especially true where—following in the footsteps of Jonathan Israel—Trivellato stresses the need for Jewish history to remain open to the study of Jewish-Christian relations, in order to illuminate broader dynamics that affected early-modern Europe at large (see esp. pp. 222-223). Central points of European Jewish-Christian relations history are also addressed: namely anti-Judaic traditions, and the need to use (as this book does) the textual and archival sources that were produced internally in the Jewish world in order to grasp the Jewish reactions to Christian cultural constructions, and the proactive capacity of the Jews to oppose them.

Researchers who are comfortable with placing their work under the disciplinary umbrella of the history of economic thought will find in this book compelling arguments to prompt them to reconsider the issue of what constitutes a canonical work in their discipline, and how those works shaped European ideas about the birth of capitalism. Moreover, by carefully questioning the relationship between the discursive representations of Jews and commerce on the one hand, and the immediate historical circumstances in which those representations took shape on the other, this book makes it possible to take significant steps towards a historical,

empirically based theory of the economic discourse. Inevitably, any attempt to study the forms economic knowledge took in medieval and early modern Europe is conditioned by the forms and methods the field assumed in mid-eighteenth century, when it became a distinct discipline among other human and social sciences. Any intellectual operation fixing the premises which led to the affirmation of a science is in some measure conditioned by what that science has become today: so it is difficult to resist the temptation to pick and choose from past discourses regarding economy those which are closest to, or perhaps overlap with, positions espoused by economists of our own time. It is almost inevitable that those who take a narrow neoclassical view of economics may not find in this book any enrichment in the history of the “economic” knowledge. But those who assume that the privileged theories and objects of today’s economic debate are so precisely because a specific discipline—Economics—has chosen and distinguished them from other theories and social phenomena, may find in this book a powerful warning to resist the temptation to treat the past as a mere repository of hasty “premises,” “forerunners” and “anticipations” of the present. And an invitation not to choose among the data that the past offers in all their variety those on which our present reality casts a false glow of inevitability.

As far as the realm of the economic history is concerned, *The Promise and Peril of Credit* puts at the center of the stage a crucial problem that in current scholarship had seldom been addressed so unequivocally as in this book: that of the interplay between inward beliefs and values on the one hand and institutional formations on the other. Although they does not aim to provide a definitive answer or a single model about this, the results of Trivellato’s experiment complement *The Familiarity of Strangers* in demonstrating not only that the market is not necessarily synonymous with anonymity, individualism, or respect; but also that the apprehension that anonymity socially and culturally generates (and the lack of fairness that can periodically plague competitive markets) carries new risks. Given the raging topicality of this subject after the 2008 financial crisis—and, in some respects, even in light of today’s pandemic crisis—both the research method followed in this book and its results can only inspire new investigations and intense debate.

It will be of interest—providing a sort of litmus test—to observe what place and reception this book will have in today’s economic history arena. To allow us some prefigurations in this regard is the acute analysis that Trivellato herself makes of the main current trends in her own discipline. Due to her multicultural academic and intellectual mastery, the author of this book is in the best position to highlight evidence that the search for the “right” institutional asset for the explanation of modern growth almost exclusively in the historical frameworks of (Protestant) Northern Europe or the US has produced thematic compartmentalizations, omissions, forgetfulness of themes and interrelationships, which a new (authentically global) history of capitalism should reconsider and, I think, finally overcome.

The segmentation of the economic history academic field (often migrated from history to economics departments) and its dominant interpretative neoclassical paradigm have contributed widely in expunging culture from the list of variables to be taken into consideration when analyzing the causes of past economic growth and decline. The new institutional economic historians are still struggling to find not only shared ways to integrate cultural beliefs into their models, but, more broadly, to clarify their relationship with mainstream economics itself. As Luigi Pasinetti has recently suggested, perhaps the economic analysis of social institutions needs to be re-oriented by opening up a separate field of investigation outside the realm of neoclassical economics.² Although something is now changing especially in the United States, often as a consequence of the 2008 financial crisis, whose interpretation within the mainstream methods of economic theory looks impracticable, what Trivellato defines a “disciplinary and methodological balkanization” (Ibid.) between humanistic and social scientific research still persists across the Western academia.

² “The theoretical framework of neo-classical economics allows little room for institutional economic analysis. In fact, it prevents a satisfactory development of it. At the same time, those institutional investigations claiming reliance on the neo-classical model derive prestige and legitimation from its theoretical strength.” L.L. Pasinetti “Economic Theory and Institutions,” *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*, to be published. Accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0954349X19305272>.

As an unwelcomed consequence of all this, a socioeconomically telling cultural formation such as the legend of the Jewish invention of the bills of exchange could be easily confined by economists and political and social scientists to the status of a seemingly idiosyncratic narrative, and its interpretation abandoned to an alleged specialism apparently pertaining to the realm of the intellectual or of the Jewish history. An explicit resumption in the book's introduction of the general lines and limits of today's new institutional economics' debate on institutions, cultural beliefs and "mental models" could perhaps have contributed to deconstructing this suggestion preventively. I would also have found challenging Trivellato's direct engagement with Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis, particularly in its relations with the category of "practice" as social object. A deepening of this approach would allow the "karstic" metaphor used in *The Promise and Peril of Credit*—in order to designate the periodic historical re-emergence of associations between Jews and credit—a further expansion.³ This metaphor being central in Foucault's work, its thorough reception and re-elaboration could result in its renewed, conducive usability even within a renewed realm of the history of economic knowledge. I would also have found compelling an elaboration by the author regarding the position this book assumes within the vein of the original Italian microhistory, as the methodology and the laboratory she has put in place (employing a forgotten legend to uncover the more general structures and dynamics of a persistent social formation) is apparently both subsumable and innovative of that tradition. This is because the book is not only interested in uncovering the interconnection between multiple phenomena (as traditionally Italian microhistorians did) but also on identifying causal processes of change over time.

The hope is that economic historians will seize the opportunity offered by this astonishing book to reflect on how much simplification there is in their entrenched distinction between "practices" and "representations." And that they

³ As Trivellato writes: "By choosing karstic topography [...] as a metaphor, I emphasize the intricate and sometimes unpredictable webs of meaning that connected a wide range of associations between Jews and credit across the landscape that I have surveyed. [...] Our task is to interpret small differences, the hardest ones to decipher. To do so requires that we stress the permanence of discursive traditions alongside local struggles and the intentional disturbance introduced by certain authors while simultaneously making room for contingency" (p. 192).

accept not only the evidence that, as Trivellato points out, “cultural constructions of propriety in credit markets do not speak solely to questions of representation but also fulfill regulatory functions” (p. 11), but also that an economic history that does not have a theory of discursive practices is hopelessly unaccomplished.

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Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 368.

by Joanna Beata Michlic

Judeo-Communism is one of the most powerful and long-lasting modern scapegoating and victimization myths directed against Jews. The aggressive hate speech of the Jobbik party, which entered the Hungarian parliament in 2010; vulgar posts about Judeo-Communism, allegedly responsible for the decades of suffering and the loss of independence of East European nations under the communist yoke, which circulate widely on mass and social medias in post-communist Baltic states, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Ukraine; and also the writings of professional historians such as Ernst Nolte (1987) and Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein (2004): these are all good examples of the vast range and proliferation of this myth in the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty first century.¹

From its inception to the present, the myth has showed a remarkable ability for self-transformation and adaptation under different political, social and cultural conditions. Its latest dangerous global manifestation is the accusation against Jews of causing the current Covid-19 pandemic, as reported by the UK Government's independent adviser on anti-Semitism, Lord John Mann and molecular biology expert Dr Lewis Arthurton in a 20-page report, "From antivaxxers to antisemitism: Conspiracy theory in the Covid-19 pandemic."² Given the ongoing rise of various anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, Paul Hanebrink's monograph *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* is a timely and urgently needed analysis of this powerful, pan-European, antisemitic stereotype. The book has already been highly praised by historians of the Holocaust, modern Germany

¹ See, for example, Joanna Beata Michlic, "Judeocommunism," in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Cultures*, ed. Dan Diner, vol. 6, (Leipzig: The Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture, 2015), 584-588.

² Aaron Reich, "Antisemitism rising in anti-vaxxer movement, UK study finds," *Jerusalem Post*, October 22, 2020. Accessed November 3, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/antisemitism-rising-in-anti-vaxxer-movement-uk-study-finds-646575>.

and Eastern Europe for its sophisticated explanation of the power and persistence of the myth of Judeo-Communism over more than one century. This is the first study that treats the subject in a comprehensive manner, covering the history of the myth in both transnational and national contexts, from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the first decade of the third millennium. For that reason, the book should definitely be made an essential reading in upper undergraduate and graduate university courses not only in history, but also in sociology, journalism and media communication. In our current world, increasingly driven by dangerous post-truths and alternative knowledge, the book can also be viewed, on a more general level, as a timely warning and reminder of how easily false ideas become powerful social beliefs and tools for evaluating reality, directly linked to violence against national, ethnic, religious and cultural minorities.

A Specter Haunting Europe is an elegant looking monograph, consisting of an introduction, seven chapters and an epilogue. In the first chapter, Hanebrink discusses the origins of the myth among various political and cultural elites in European societies during the first decade of the twentieth century. He convincingly argues that the idea of Judeo-Communism was rooted in the “three venerable pillars of anti-Jewish thought” (p. 28). According to Hanebrink, the first pillar was the long-term, persistent association of Jews and Judaism with heresy and social disharmony that can be traced to the Medieval period. The second pillar was the widespread belief in an international Jewish conspiracy. Its most notorious example, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a Russian forgery, was first published in Russia in 1903, and accused Jews of seeking, through devious means, total rule over Christian societies. By 1920s, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was translated into 16 languages and circulated worldwide in the press, including a British newspaper, the *Morning Post*, and the *Dearborn Independent* of American tycoon Henry Ford. The third pillar was anti-Semitic belief in Jewish religious fanaticism, with its most dangerous accusation of blood libel. Yet, in tracing the roots of the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, Hanebrink does not seem to pay enough attention to another set of crucial anti-Jewish beliefs portraying Jews as an alien, “Asiatic folk” incompatible with the fabric of national communities of Europe. These ideas had already developed in Central and Eastern Europe as the flip side of romantic nationalism by the middle of the nineteenth century. In

Germany, they, can be traced, in a nascent form, to the writings of Johann Gottfried Fichte and Karl Marx, himself a baptized Jew, and in Poland, to two conservative writers, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and Zygmunt Krasiński.

This latter set of beliefs contributed to the development of and interacted in a powerful way with the myth of Judeo-Communism and had devastating repercussions on the scope and scale of anti-Jewish violence in twentieth century Poland. Here I can give a lesser-known example: in 1858, Niemcewicz published the pamphlet *Rok 3333 czyli Sen niesłychany* (The Year 3333 or an Incredible Dream), which he had written three decades before. In the pamphlet there is a vision of a future Warsaw that becomes a Jewish city and is renamed *Moszkopolis*.³ To the readers at the time of publication, this pamphlet was a humorous story, but by the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth the work was frequently circulated and quoted as a warning, foreseeing the tragic future of Poland's transformation into Judeo-Polonia. In the anonymous edition of 1913, the pamphlet's introduction described it as a warning against the "dangerous alien who slowly digs a grave for Poles." In 1932, the Polish-aculturated Jewish writer Roman Brandstaetter called it "the most malicious pamphlet about Jewry written in Polish literature."⁴ The intertwined beliefs in Judeo-Polonia and Judeo-Communism would become part of the same powerful anti-Semitic trope propagated by anti-Communist discourse, which would intensify among right-wing nationalistic circles in the 1930s. Characteristically, in this discourse Communism was defined as an ideology and a movement that stood in total opposition to Polish nationalism and Polish statehood. The actual fact that the communists in inter-war Poland supported a non-national agenda intensified the classification of Communism as a primarily anti-Polish movement and ideology, advocating an anti-Polish ethos. In 1936, a special committee, the so-called Komitet Prasy Młodych (Youth Press Committee), was set up in order to fight Communism and at the same time promote the ideology of Polish nationalism,

³ *Moszkopolis* is made up of two words: *Moszek/Moshko*, a diminutive of the name Moses, and *polis*, which means city in Greek

⁴ Roman Brandstaetter, "Moszkopolis," *Miesięcznik Żydowski* (Jewish Monthly), 1932. Cited in Maria Janion, *Do Europy, Tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2001), 123.

which was defined in opposition to Communism. In the late 1930s, some key politicians, representing the government, endorsed this definition. This interpretation of communism inevitably led to the reinforcement of the stereotype of the pro-Soviet, pro-Communist and anti-Polish Jew on the eve of the Second World War.

In Chapter two, Hanebrink paints a compelling, detailed and disturbing picture of how Judeo-Communism reached its zenith in terms of its political, social and cultural scope and impact in the aftermath of the First World War and during the short interwar period of 1918 to 1939, when Europe was engulfed in real and imagined fears of the first newly established communist entity, Soviet Russia (1917), and the swift rise of communist movements and political parties in European nation-states. The author uses an impressive range of examples to illustrate how lay people, conservative and nationalist politicians, journalists and writers of both secular and religious ideological orientation, and Christian clergy began to use constantly terms such as Judeo-Bolshevism, Judeo-Masonry and “Red Jews” to describe what they perceived as the chief enemy of Christian European civilization and its nation-states and respective national interests. Hanebrink masterly shows the links between the spread of Judeo-Communism and anti-Jewish violence in different parts of Eastern Europe since the final part of the First World War - the war that was supposed to end all wars. He rightly asserts that in that region, “the idea of Judeo-Bolshevism was inseparable from violence against Jews” (p. 45) and was used as an argument to rationalize anti-Jewish violence as a legitimate act of national self-defense, in spite of international condemnation of such violence as a violation of humanitarian norms since the end of the First World War.

In Chapter three, that opens with the powerful statement “Judeo-Bolshevism made Adolf Hitler” (p. 83), Hanebrink shows how the myth of Judeo-Communism was employed by German Fascism from the birth of this deadly racist ideology, first as a tool to consolidate power within Germany, and secondly as a tool to launch a genocidal international war to fulfill the Nazi colonization project. One of the most important aspects of Hanebrink’s discussion of the role of Nazi Germany on the international stage in interwar Europe is the powerful

description of how ethno-nationalist conservative political elites in countries such as Hungary and Romania welcomed, without hesitation, Hitler's racist vision of the world and his leadership of an international anti-Communist front after 1933. However, in contrast to the well-illustrated discussion of the dilemmas among French and Spanish nationalists, Hanebrink does not seem to pay enough attention to the contradictions among the ethno-nationalist conservative elites in interwar Poland, including the leaders of the Catholic Church. It is true, as Hanebrink states, that "Polish nationalists had little enthusiasm for a German-led international crusade against Judeo-Bolshevism" (p. 112) and yet, when it came to defining Polish Jews as the key internal national enemy, their conceptualization resembled the Nazi German categorization of German Jews as the national enemy, though they insisted that:

We are not racists [...] Our main goal is to serve the nation. There is no conflict between our nationalism and Catholicism. We define the Jews as the enemy of our nation and as a foreign element, which has caused the degeneration of European culture and civilization [...] The battle of the Polish nation with the Jews does not stand in conflict with the Roman Catholic Church, but in fact serves its interest.⁵

In Chapter four, Hanebrink poignantly demonstrates how the idea of Judeo-Communism was crucial to the Nazi German conception and implementation of the Final Solution against European Jews. He also takes the reader on a tour of how the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism continued to be a powerful tool of perception of reality not only in Nazi Germany, but also among the East European nations that politically collaborated with Nazi Germany during the war, such as the Baltic states, Hungary, Romania, and Ukraine. That was the case also in Nazi-German and Soviet-occupied Poland, where, by the time of the German and Soviet invasions of September 1939, the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism was used to make

⁵ "Katolicyzm, rasizm i sprawa żydowska," *Myśl Narodowa* 51 (1935), 1-2. Cited in Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2008), 86. *Myśl Narodowa* was the main theoretical newspaper of the National Democrats, the chief ethno-nationalist party and movement in Poland.

sense of a world that was breaking free from the Polish right-wing ethno-nationalists' control and intellectual grasp.

Hanebrink also convincingly demonstrates how the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism continued to be the chief tool of the language of hatred and how the myth was used to initiate, rationalize and justify anti-Jewish violence during the Second World War in Nazi-collaborative East-European states such as Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary and Ukraine, as well as in German-occupied Poland. The myth of Judeo-Communism, with its deadly implications, intensified in the region during the so-called First Soviet Occupation, from September 1939 to the summer of 1941, for which Jews as a collectivity were blamed, and for which they paid a heavy price. For example, in Nazi-occupied Poland, anti-Jewish violence orchestrated by members of local communities swept north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the country, especially during the interregnum period in the summer of 1941, when the Soviet army had fled and the Germans had not yet established their rule fully in those areas. Another salient issue to the discussion of the deadly implications of the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, namely its effect on the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. The last two decades of historical investigation have shown that the myth was one of the main factors responsible for the low societal approval of rescue activities of Jews from Nazi persecution in wartime Poland, because helping a Jew was identified in radical underground Polish right-wing anti-Semitic propaganda as helping the key national enemy and, as a result, some non-Jewish Polish rescuers of Jews also paid a heavy price by being beaten up, harassed and killed by local underground radical anti-Communist military units.

In Chapter six, that forms the most original and fascinating part of the book, Hanebrink deals with the important issue of how the myth of Judeo-Communism was transformed in the aftermath of the destruction of Hitler's empire and the emergence of the new, postwar Europe, divided between a Communist dominated East and a liberal democratic West. He masterly shows how in the West the discourse on anti-Communism was totally reshaped in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The myth of Judeo-Communism was completely erased from Western anti-Communist politics, political thought and debates. In the United States,

which became the new Safe Heaven for many Jewish survivors of the Holocaust from German-occupied Europe, the idea of Judeo-Bolshevism was replaced by the idea of a Judeo-Christian civilization that, in turn, became a pillar of postwar anti-Communist thought. In the new Cold War climate, the United States transformed itself into a central player in a new struggle against the Soviet power. There was simply no room, in the American reshaped vision of anti-Communism, for the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism. The ideas of freedom, truth, the West and its Judeo-Christian civilization, as conceived in the postwar American political discourse, became central aspects of anti-Communist Cold War thought and politics not only in the USA, but also in liberal western Europe. In postwar Germany and Austria, the process of reshaping the key tenets of anti-Communist ideology and discourse took place gradually, helped also by the fact that many Christian thinkers had been persecuted by Nazi Germany. Postwar anti-totalitarian discourse allowed Western Germans and Austrians to re-imagine the concept of a Christian Europe and to enter a dialogue with American Cold War anti-Communist thought. However, in the Soviet zone of influence in Eastern Europe, the myth of Judeo-Communism did not, and perhaps could not, undergo the same transformation because of the political situation in the region. The brutality of the Soviet occupations and the visibility of a small minority of Jews among Jewish Holocaust survivors in the new communist governments definitely contributed to the persistence of the myth of Judeo-Communism as a powerful social truth. The communist regimes, soiled with widespread anti-Semitism within their own rank and file, were not interested in the effective and total removal of the myth of Judeo-Communism from the official communist thought. They were also powerless in eliminating it from the underground anticommunist social memories within their respective nations.

Hanebrink rightly notes the continuity of the myth of Judeo-Communism between the communist and post-communist periods in the Soviet zone of influence, but he does not seem to pay enough attention to the key narratives about Jews that circulated during the Sovietization period in the aftermath of the Second World War among the underground anti-Communist political camps in the region. Narratives that would resurface with a vengeance after 1989.

For example, looking closely at early postwar Poland behind the Iron Curtain, there is no doubt that the idea of Judeo-Communism outlived the devastating Second World War period. During the political struggle over the future of the Polish state, from 1945 to 1949, the main fighting anti-Communist organizations categorized the communist take-over as Communism with a Semitic face, namely Judeo-Communism. The only novel aspect of Judeo-Communism at that time was the claim of the actual realization of Judeo-Polonia, which the Polish nationalist press had feared so much since the late nineteenth century. In the eyes of the illegal political opposition, this goal was achieved by the remnants of the Jewish community who had survived the Holocaust, and who were hardly distinguishable from non-Jewish Poles. At the same time, in the illegal anti-communist press, communist non-Jewish Poles were sometimes portrayed as being totally controlled by the Communist Jews.⁶

Interestingly, during the 1960s the myth of Judeo-Communism also underwent a major transformation in the discourse among the Polish Communist elites ruling the country. It was reversed to the theme of Judeo-anti-Communism, the claim that it was the Jews who prevented the successful political and economic development of communist Poland, and not the non-Jewish Polish comrades. This cleverly modified myth was used to justify the official state-sponsored anti-Jewish/anti-Zionist purge of 1968. The theme of the anti-communist Jew as the polluter of the communist PZPR (*Polish United Workers' Party*) was invariably intertwined with the basic ethno-nationalist theme of the Jew as the polluter of the Polish state and the Polish nation. The message conveyed in these two intertwined themes was that if it were not for the Jewish comrades, Polish communism could have developed in agreement with Polish national traditions since 1944, and would thus have become a popular people's ideology. Were it not for the Jewish Communists in the Polish communist movement, the Polish Peoples Republic would have become a prosperous country, without any economic, social and political troubles. This explanation of all the ills that troubled socialist Poland since its foundation in 1945 resembled the National Democracy movement's explanation of all Polish social, economic and political ills

⁶ Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 200-201.

during the interwar period. The use of such arguments by the communist regime in the 1960s was the Party's attempt to present itself as the people's party, and to become more popular within an ethnically homogeneous society. These arguments drew on the stock of popular ethno-national sentiments that were shared by the majority of the non-Jewish Polish rank and file of the PZPR and its leadership.⁷

In Chapter seven, titled "Between History and Memory", Hanebrink engages with the topical issue of the persistence of the myth of Judeo-Communism in post-communist Eastern Europe, and painstakingly analyses how the myth has become central to the politics of Holocaust memory in the region. This is a central topic not only for the study of the memory of the Holocaust, but also for the current troubling politics of post-communist Europe. As it is now widely recognized, the concept of the memorialization of the Holocaust arrived in Eastern Europe only in the aftermath of what the historian Padraic Kenney calls a "carnival of revolution"⁸ in communist Eastern Europe that led to the political and economic transformation of 1989 and 1990.⁹ In the climate of ascending liberal democracy in the region during the early 1990s, the Western-born model of the memorialization of the Holocaust as an international and European project for the education of civil society, had been endorsed by the emerging local liberal democratic elites. No doubt, they had also pragmatically recognized that the Holocaust had become the contemporary European entry ticket, as discerningly observed by the late Tony Judt in *Postwar*.¹⁰ However, from the beginning of the implementation of the Western model of memorialization, with its culture of apology to the Jewish victims, the local ethno-nationalist and conservative elites did not only disapprove of it, but, in fact, rejected it outright. Drawing on the theory of twin totalitarianisms, Nazism and Communism, they insisted on the importance of the

⁷ Ibid., 252-253.

⁸ Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe, 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁹ For a systematic study of the developments of the Western model of memorialization of the Holocaust in post-communist Europe between the 1980s and 2010, see John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic, eds., *Bringing the Dark Past to Light in Postcommunist Europe* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).

¹⁰ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 803.

memorialization of the Red Holocaust as a greater evil in the twentieth century history of their respective nations. Thus, they rejected the Western conceptualization of the Holocaust as a fundamental event in the European history of the twentieth century.¹¹ At the same time, they began to feed on Western memorialization practices of the Holocaust for the purpose of acquiring new models and strategies to develop their own version of remembrance of the Red Holocaust and the Second World War. As a result, they have also been engaged in the production of a home-grown ethno-nationalist version of the (anti)-memorialization of the Holocaust filled with new-old anti-Semitic narratives and anti-Jewish tropes.

The myth of Judeo-Communism is one of the central anti-Semitic tropes in the sinister (East)-European ethno-nationalist reworking of these nations' dark past, and their role in the history and memory of the Holocaust. It serves various purposes: it replaces troubling memories of anti-Jewish violence in the summer of 1941 and the early post-Holocaust period. In political debates and historiography of right wing ethno-nationalistic orientation, the theme of Judeo-Communism is used to rationalize, justify and neutralize this violence. Moreover, radical ethno-nationalists use the myth as a tool to forget dark aspects of the Holocaust in the history of their respective nations and, at the same time, to emphasize their own national victimhood and "collective innocence" with regard to the treatment of their respective Jewish, and other, minorities.¹²

¹¹ On the Holocaust as a fundamental event in European political cultures, see, for example, Dan Diner, "Restitution and memory: the Holocaust in European political cultures," *New German Critique* 90 (2003): 36-44; Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a problem of historical culture: theoretical and analytical challenges" in *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, eds. Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003), 18. On the importance of memory as a leading cultural term in history, see Alon Confino, "Remembering the Second World War, 1945-1965: Narratives of Victimhood and Genocide," *Cultural Analysis* 5 (2005): 1-23, with the response by Robert G. Moeller, http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/volume4/vol4_article3.html, accessed November 20, 2007.

¹² On the problem of whitewashing the Holocaust in post-communist Europe in the post-2015 period, see Jelena Subotić, *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance After Communism* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2019); Robert Rozett, "Distorting the Holocaust and whitewashing history: toward a typology," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 13, no. 1 (2019): 23-36; Joanna Beata Michlic, "The Return of the Image of the Jew as Poland's Threatening Other: Polish

In the Epilogue, Hanebrink rightly claims that the “figure of the Jewish Bolshevik continues to flicker around the issue of European identity” (p. 282). However, the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism does not only transpose into totally new debates about European identity, as Hanebrink states, but it also continuously undergoes various modifications in order to demonstrate that the Jew is the central culprit that controls and manipulates the world to the detriment of ordinary, real people, not only in Europe, but also in the global world. In the current growing climate of discontent and instability on both sides of the Atlantic, different strands of anti-Semitism of both left-wing and right-wing origin take geographical and ideological trips. As a result, they merge and mutually feed on each other. For this reason, it would be important to carry on this study and research how the myth of Judeo-Communism currently interacts with other global anti-Semitic tropes in both transnational and national contexts. No doubt, Hanebrink’s impressive monograph represents a vital inspiration for such a study.

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national identity and antisemitism in the third decade after the end of communism in 1989,” in *Research Handbook on Nationalism*, eds. Liah Greenfeld and Zeying Wu (Oxford: Elgar Edward, 2020), 406-427.

Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 368.

by Zoltán Kékesi

In his book *A Specter Haunting Europe*, Paul Hanebrink presents a sweeping history of the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, covering one hundred years of history of anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe. The author of the previous *In Defense of Christian Hungary* (2006), an excellent study on Christian nationalism in interwar Hungary, Hanebrink examines in his new book a central element of modern anti-Semitism in the region and beyond. While focusing primarily on Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Romania, Hanebrink describes “the belief that Communism was a Jewish plot” (p. 4) as a truly transnational phenomenon that extended to Western Europe and across the Atlantic as well. The book traces the emergence of the myth in post-revolutionary Europe, examines its dissemination during the interwar period and the Holocaust, follows its transformation during the Cold War, and analyzes its reemergence in today’s “memory wars.”

Impressive in its scope and depth, the book makes a strong case for an approach that goes beyond merely exposing and refuting the myth and asks, instead, “why it has been and remains so powerful” (p. 5). Such an approach, Hanebrink argues, “requires the historian to ask what the idea meant to those who used it and treated it as “real,” not to investigate to what extent it was or not true” (p. 26). Hanebrink elaborates nuanced answers to questions such as “what did [the myth] mean in different political contexts? How did it circulate across borders and from one regime to another? How was it transformed over the course of the twentieth century?” (p. 7). Despite the vast scope of the subject, Hanebrink manages to reconstruct micro-contexts of anti-Jewish discourses in which the semantic and political potential of the myth can be fruitfully explored.

“A gang of young women, of dubious appearance, Jewish like all the rest of them,” wrote the papal nuncio in Munich, the later Pope Pius XII, in 1919, in a report to Vatican officials on what he encountered as he visited the headquarters of Bavaria’s new Soviet regime. At the residence of Ludwig III, the last king of Bavaria, he

found a “female rabble,” led by “a young Russian woman, a Jew and a divorcée.” For him, she could only be the “mistress” of a more powerful personality, Max Levien, a Russian-German communist whom he also described, falsely, as Jewish. In his eyes, the new occupants of the royal residence were all of Jewish decent and Eastern European origin, low social status, questionable moral standards, and criminal mindset. For him, the sight of a “female rabble” at the residence of a deposed monarch signaled what that combination of despicable characteristics could bring about. Some of the revolutionaries, indeed, were women: although the Bavarian Soviet Republic ultimately failed at subverting gender hierarchies, and all its leaders were men,¹ it did support female participation to an extent that shocked contemporaries, as it did the later Pope Pius XII.

This brilliantly chosen opening scene, right at the beginning of chapter one, allows Hanebrink to illustrate the profound social and political change that the revolutions of 1917, 1918, and 1919 introduced. At the same time, it allows him to explore patterns of perception that later merged into the mythical notion of “Judeo-Bolshevism.” Finally, it helps him demonstrate how far these perceptions traveled: they emerged from and contributed to a cross-European—and transatlantic—consensus: “The letter reflected what many Europeans believed: Jews were the face of the revolution” (p. 13).

The papal ambassador is the first in a series of travelers and correspondents that Hanebrink introduces. Coming from Rome, Paris, London, and elsewhere, they commented on the revolutionary upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe and informed audiences in Western Europe and across the Atlantic. A British journalist traveling revolutionary Russia and two French writers, Jérôme and Jean Tharaud, traveling revolutionary Hungary, produced counter-revolutionary discourse and co-authored the emerging vision of Judeo-Bolshevism. Hanebrink weaves their voices masterfully together with those of their local counterparts in Germany, Hungary, Romania, and elsewhere, proving that the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism “took shape within [...] transnational networks of anti-Communist

¹ Andrea Kampf, “*Frauenpolitik und politisches Handeln von Frauen während der Bayerischen Revolution 1918/19*” (PhD diss., University of Hagen, 2016).

thought” (p. 9). His approach invites further studies of multi-directional transfer processes. Such studies could elaborate on how reports on the revolutions were received, echoed, and elaborated in Western societies and then re-circulated in Germany and Eastern Europe—as in the case of the travelogues of the Tharaud brothers or Henry Ford’s *The International Jew*.

Hanebrink’s account includes Jewish responses as well, outlining how Jewish leaders and communities protested the allegations that associated Jews with revolutionary politics, documented anti-Jewish atrocities, organized relief aid for the victims, and analyzed anti-Jewish discourse in order to refute it. As Hanebrink shows, early responses by Jewish liberals anticipated later scholarly efforts to explain Jewish political participation, questioned the “Jewishness” of the revolutions, and addressed the contradictions of modern Jewish identities. Some of them examined the “*political* rationale” (p. 51) behind the allegations and atrocities—the approach that Hanebrink himself pursues.

In the book, however, essentially no voice is given to Jewish Communists, nor is there any detailed account of Leftist responses (Jewish or not). One of the unnamed women in the report of the papal ambassador may very well have been Frida Rubiner, a communist militant, journalist, editor, and translator, who was born to a Jewish family in today’s Lithuania. During the Soviet Republic in Munich, she probably served as the head of the propaganda committee. Subsequently, she edited *Die Rote Fahne* in Vienna and Berlin before she occupied press—and propaganda—related positions in Moscow. How did she address anti-Communism and anti-Semitism in her writings? Counter-revolutionary discourse constructed a distorted and racialized image of her and other like-minded radicals, used to demonize and denigrate Jews and (Jewish and non-Jewish) Communists.

Indeed, revolutionaries were not entirely silent about anti-Semitism. In Munich, for example, as anti-Jewish atrocities unfolded, the revolutionary Central Council condemned the acts and issued a proclamation signed by Ernst Toller, a German-

Jewish writer and one of the leaders of the Bavarian Soviet Republic.² Certainly, responses from Jewish Leftists were embedded in the complexities of modern Jewish history and, on the other hand, in the complicated relationship that Social Democracy and Communism had with the “Jewish Question.” Although Hanebrink mentions some of these responses in passing (p. 73), the omission of a more detailed discussion reinforces the perception that the Left remained silent and disregards Leftist anti-racist traditions, as well as specifically Leftist traditions of anti-Jewish prejudices. A discussion of the latter would have provided the necessary context for chapter five as well, where Hanebrink turns to the transformation of the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism “Under Communist Rule.”

In the book’s opening chapter, Hanebrink traces the origin of the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism to the three “pillars” of anti-Semitism: the association of Jews with subversion and social disorder, the assumption of an international Jewish conspiracy, and the allegation of Jewish fervor and fanaticism (pp. 28-30). This allows the author to provide the reader with some historical context without getting lost in the details of modern anti-Semitism, leaving it to later chapters to outline the necessary historical background in each geographical context.

A different way to contextualize the myth would have been to look into the prejudices that associated Jews with specific political ideas and socio-economic systems of the modern age such as Liberalism, Capitalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Socialism. Such associations persisted throughout the period that the book covers and generated, historically, a configuration of anti-Jewish notions in which anti-Communism formed one—sometimes crucial—component. Indeed, each of these associations “gave an international perspective to parochial anxieties about the nation and its enemies” (p. 32), as they offered a distorted representation of supra-national phenomena that threatened to undermine national sovereignty, social order, or local-ethnic culture. This wider semantics is somewhat missing from Hanebrink’s account, despite the fact that notions such as the international *Finanzjudentum* were widely mobilized in the interwar period and were

² Michael Brenner, *Der lange Schatten der Revolution* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019), 102-103.

instrumental for policies of exclusion, expropriation, and extermination. They were pertinent to anti-Allied propaganda as well and lived on after the Second World War in new forms. A more thorough consideration of this wider set of associations would have been essential for a discussion of anti-Jewish sentiments during Communism, too.

Besides specifically anti-Jewish tropes, Judeo-Bolshevism conjures up monstrous images of the “East” as well. The Jewish Communist is commonly depicted as a “destructive border-crosser” (p. 8) who endangers the nation as well as the community that the nation is seen as being part of: Europe, Christianity, or Western civilization. The mythical image of Judeo-Bolshevism is thus inseparable from notions of Europe’s Eastern Others, racially defined images of Asian (or Slavic) “barbarism,” as well as a toxic sense of European superiority. The figure of the “Eastern Jew” had the potential to unify these discourses and embody an enemy that was at once outside in the “East” and inside the societies of Europe and those across the Atlantic.

Despite these general characteristics, the meaning of the myth varied according to time and place. In chapter two, “The Greater War,” Hanebrink traces the emergence of the myth in Eastern Europe’s “long World War I,” investigating the “interrelated meanings” (p. 82) of the myth as it took shape in (today’s) Poland, Ukraine, Romania, and Hungary. In this chapter, Hanebrink zooms in on anti-Jewish atrocities as they unfolded in the wake of collapsing empires, border conflicts, civil wars, and (counter-)revolutions. Chapter three, “Refashioned by Nazism,” takes the reader back to Munich, “a gathering place for counterrevolutionaries across east-central Europe” (p. 85), and the cradle of national socialism, examining how “Judeo-Bolshevism made Hitler” (p. 83) and how, as the title suggests, national socialism refashioned the myth. Hanebrink describes the shift after 1933-1934 that turned Judeo-Bolshevism from an image of internal threat into a symbol of an external enemy, making it an essential element of Hitler’s vision of a new Europe. From Spain to Hungary, Fascist and pro-Fascist regimes that presented their countries as “defenders of Christian Europe” were challenged to commit themselves to the idea of “an international anti-Communist front” under national socialist leadership (pp. 120-121). If territories in Eastern

Europe appear as zones of (counter)-revolutionary unrest and anti-Jewish atrocities in chapter two, they re-appear as the epicenter of mass murder in chapter four, titled “A Barbarous Enemy.” Here, Hanebrink focuses on the Eastern Front of World War II and explores how the idea of Judeo-Bolshevism influenced German genocidal practices and “forged a consensus between the Germans and their [local] helpers” (p. 143). This chapter closes with Hanebrink’s insightful analysis of how the prospect of German defeat transformed the myth yet again into “the idea of the West under attack” that would “outlive the Nazi regime in remarkable and unexpected ways.” Later, in chapter six, Hanebrink returns to (West-)Germany and explores the ways in which the Catholic-conservative elite reframed anti-Communism for the Cold War age by suppressing its earlier anti-Jewish components and drawing on the emerging transatlantic notion of a “Judeo-Christian civilization.”

Chapter five, on the other hand, discusses—less convincingly—the reformulation of the myth in Communist Eastern Europe.³ Especially in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, as Hanebrink explains, “deeply entrenched stereotypes that identified Communism with Jews profoundly shaped popular perceptions of Soviet occupying forces and the Communist parties that rose to power with their support” (p. 166). Indeed, during the decades to come, Communist parties manipulated popular sentiments in various ways and were, to different degrees, responsible for the persistence of anti-Jewish prejudices. Yet, the emerging image of the “cosmopolitan” and “Zionist” Jew, accused of “sabotaging” Communism and acting as an agent of “Western imperialism,” cannot be taken as merely a coded version of the Judeo-Bolshevist myth. Rather, it used stereotypes that had long associated Jews with Cosmopolitanism, Liberalism, and Capitalism in order to link Jews with the enemies of Communism. For an understanding of how the identification of Jews with Communist rule did persist in the period we may need to look at discourses that were less public and therefore often difficult to trace.

³ In this regard Hanebrink’s approach is similar to André Gerrits’s interpretation in *The Myth of Jewish Communism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009).

Ultimately, chapter five and six leave the reader with the impression that the myth, at least in its clear-cut form, faded away from Cold War Europe before it resurfaced as memory in Post-Communism. In chapter seven, Hanebrink discusses the German *Historikerstreit* and post-Communist memory politics in Eastern Europe and beyond. In this context, far right discourses on “Jewish perpetrators” of Communist crimes re-enter the stage in response to new norms of transnational Holocaust memory. Surprisingly, however, there is no mention of Fascist and neo-Fascist currents that in post-1945 Europe (and beyond) channeled radical anti-Jewish ideas. There is thus a missing link in Hanebrink’s account between pre-1945 anti-Semitism and today’s far right discourses.

One place to start such a chapter could be, again, Munich, where many Eastern European radical nationalists, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Hungarians, and others, gathered after the collapse of the Fascist regimes. Although they would subsequently disperse throughout the “Free World” and create transnational networks of politically committed communities, Munich would remain an important center for radical nationalist exiles. In the former *Hauptstadt der Bewegung*, they established organizations that influenced émigré politics throughout the Cold War.

In spring 1949, the Ukrainian-led Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN) organized a large protest against Communism in Königsplatz, the former monumental center of National Socialist Munich.⁴ The ABN was established in 1943 by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists with an outspoken anti-Jewish agenda. After the war, under the leadership of Yaroslav Stetsko, the ABN became a significant Cold War anti-Communist organization, bringing together delegates from Eastern European exile communities and operating from Munich until its dissolution in the 1990s. How did their pre-1945 beliefs transform during the Cold War? Recent scholarship suggests that even where Fascist and overtly anti-Jewish references were suppressed—as was the case in the cult of Fascist leader Stepan Bandera in the Ukrainian diaspora—long-distance nationalism and anti-

⁴ Ann Holian, “Anticommunism in the Streets: Refugee Politics in Cold War Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (2010): 134-161.

Communism created a potent cultural context for the return of the notion of the “Jewish perpetrators” of Soviet crimes. Communities in the Ukrainian diaspora played an important role in the ensuing “memory wars” from the 1980s onwards.⁵

Also working from Munich, journalist Lajos Marschalkó became the most prolific proponent of radical anti-Jewish ideas in the Hungarian diaspora. His book *The World Conquerors* (1958) portrayed the postwar world as an “uncanny materialization” of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and re-formulated the old myth for the age of Cold War hysteria. In his account, Jewish Capitalism and Jewish Communism conspired to take hold of the world. In the early 1960s, a report on “organized Anti-Semitism in the United States” published by the American Jewish Committee called attention to the book’s “widespread circulation.”⁶ At the same time, a correspondent of The Wiener Library, a London-based documentation center of Nazi crimes, noted that the book had become “something like a bestseller.”⁷ Marschalkó’s books circulated clandestinely in Hungary too, where they became respected classics in neo-Fascist circles after 1989. While overt forms of anti-Semitism were mostly relegated to the margins of the postwar world, it is precisely a look at these margins that can help us understand historical transfers and trajectories.

Similarly, the German national socialist exiles in Argentina organized platforms that helped re-formulate pre-1945 views. In their *refugio seguro*, they elaborated a national socialist memory of the war as well as an understanding of the postwar order. The journal *Der Weg*, published in the late 1940s and 1950s in Buenos Aires and distributed in West-Germany as well, perpetuated, among other things, the myth of a Jewish-Communist conspiracy.⁸ Their take on the Cold War political order did not differ much from what Marschalkó propagated. To what extent did

⁵ See John-Paul Himka, “A Central European Diaspora under the Shadow of World War II: The Galician Ukrainians in North America,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 37 (2006): 17-31; Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, “Holocaust Amnesia: The Ukrainian Diaspora and the Genocide of the Jews,” *German Yearbook of Contemporary History* 1 (2016): 107-144.

⁶ American Jewish Committee, *Bigotry in Action* (New York: 1963), 19-20.

⁷ Robert Major, “Hungarian «Martyrs»,” *The Wiener Library Bulletin* (October 1963): 53.

⁸ Holger M. Meding, “*Der Weg*,” *Eine deutsche Emigrantenzeitschrift in Buenos Aires 1947-1957* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1997), for the myth of Jewish Communism, see especially 89-92.

these publications influence the emerging neo-Nazi scene in West-Germany or elsewhere? How did the German far right relate to the notion of Judäo-Bolschewismus before and after 1989? How did *Nation Europa* (1951-2009), for example, probably the longest standing far-right journal inside (West-)Germany, re-articulate national socialist notions of Europe and its enemies? In order to understand how anti-Jewish discourse resurfaced in competition with Holocaust memory in West-Germany and in post-Communist Eastern Europe, I think it is indispensable to look at (neo-)Fascist discourses and channels of transmission in the postwar era.

Finally, in an “Epilogue” Hanebrink hints at more recent anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic discourses that point to routes of transformation beyond modern and contemporary forms of anti-Jewish attitudes. By taking the reader to Budapest in the summer of 2015 and describing anti-immigrant sentiments and policies in the United States and Europe, Hanebrink points to the urgency and the wider political context of critical thought and historical understanding.

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Christoph Jahr, *Paul Nathan. Publizist, Politiker und Philanthrop 1857-1927* (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2018), pp. vii+302.

by *Johann Nicolai*

Christoph Jahr's monograph about Paul Nathan deals with the personal history of this representative of liberal-bourgeois German Jewry from the middle of the 19th century to the interwar period.

A contextual-narrative bracket is Nathan's sudden death and funeral in 1927. In the introductory chapter, *Aus dem Leben gerissen* (*Torn out from life*), (pp. 9-22) and the two final chapters, *Erbe* (*Heritage*) (pp. 223-23) and *Erinnerung* (*Memory*) (pp. 233-245), Jahr points to the main aspect to his research concerning Paul Nathan: his remembrance. The prologue by Peter Raue already highlights the fact of the German Jew Nathan falling into oblivion in the German context (p. 7). This matter marks a major motivation for the creation of this monograph. In contrast to that, Alfred Wiener's commemorative article to his close friend Nathan in the AJR-Journal of April 1957, discussed in the "Memory" chapter (p. 235), highlights the fact that Paul Nathan was at least not unknown among the German-Jewish emigrants in London. Hence, the notion of the all-forgotten Paul Nathan appears to be a particular German perspective at this point. On the other hand, this point of view convincingly reflects the sluggish appreciation of accomplishments by Jews from Germany in their home country even in the second half of the 20th century. This phenomenon is also documented in the treatment of the entrepreneur, philanthropist and likewise close friend of Nathan, James Simon (1851-1932).

Simon came only slowly back to public memory after the naming after him of a recreation area near the Burgstrasse in Berlin (2007) and the James Simon Gallery on Museum Island (2009).

A similar recognition was not given to Paul Nathan, who served his home city as a publicist and publisher, as a left-leaning liberal and later social-democratic politician and, finally, as the founder of the philanthropic Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden (Aid Association of German Jews), 1901-1938.

Not even in Israel, where Nathan laid essential foundations for the Technion University in Haifa, is there any street named after him. However, at least a relief from 1959 honors the engagement of Nathan at the entrance of the Old Technion.

Another source of reference for the monograph about Paul Nathan is Ernst Feder's biography from 1929, which was a valuable source for Jahr's own research, but also a matter of methodological distinction. Explicitly Jahr acknowledged the use of Feder's biography as a source for those documents that were lost or dispersed during World War II (p. 16.). At the same time Jahr criticised Feder's handling of the sources as "journalistically generous" and "not in accordance with strict scientific criteria of a biography" (p. 17). This criticism underlines once more the necessity of Jahr's own analysis of the life of Paul Nathan as a first strictly scholarly biography. Jahr's approach focusses on two main aspects: first, the linguistic accessibility of the monograph, compromising "dust-dry scholarliness" and "imaginative storytelling" (p. 21). Second, it should be a discussion of Nathan's *vita* in his life contexts and networks. As a consequence, the monograph is not a strictly linear narrative that tells Nathan's life from birth to death. Rather it is a segmentation into different thematic blocks, which focus on several stages of life and thematic facets.

The first of these thematic blocks is the chapter entitled "Zeit und Mensch" (Time and Man) (pp. 23-86) that covers family and social structures as well as historical contexts in which Nathan acted. For the sake of readability, this chapter is again subdivided into the short passages "1857" (pp. 23-31), "Familie, Kindheit, Jugend" (Family, Childhood, Youth) (pp. 31-35), "Kindheit und Schule" (Childhood and School) (pp. 35-42), "Körper und Geist" (Body and Mind) (pp. 42-56), "Freunde" (Friends) (pp. 57-72) and, finally, "Werte" (Values) (pp. 73-86). This structure makes it possible to some extent to locate specific passages in an encyclopedic way. Yet the language flow also allows a continuous reading experience of the entire chapter.

The following second thematic block, "Publizist" (Publisher) (pp. 87-119) deals with the professional field in which Nathan happened to be most successful: his profession as a journalist and publisher. Again the chapter is subdivided into the passages "Schreiben für die Nation" (Writing for the Nation) (pp. 81-102) which predominantly covers Nathan's work for the newspaper *Die Nation* founded by the liberal Theodor Barth. In this context Nathan became visible mainly as a protagonist of political left-liberalism during the time of the German Empire.

It is noteworthy at this point however that Jahr used a wordplay at this point referring to the name of the newspaper *Die Nation* as well as to the term "*nation*" in its original meaning, implying the patriotic notion of Nathan's journalistic work.

The next passage, “Schreiben gegen den Antisemitismus” (Writing against Antisemitism) (pp. 103-119) deals with Nathan’s alignment with the Centralverein (Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith), which was Germany’s by far largest Jewish organization until the November Pogrom of 1938. Its original intention was to defend German Citizens of Jewish Faith against antisemitism by themselves. In the course of the expiring 19th century, however, the Centralverein extended its internal debates about its own positioning. Since Paul Nathan himself acted “noticeably discreetly” (p. 106), it is even more notable that he even became the deputy chairman to the longstanding Julius Brodnitz in 1920.

Another, yet much less successful professional field of activity reflects the thematic block “Politiker” (Politician) (pp. 121-170) that obviously deals with Nathan’s political involvement. Jahr discusses this topic in three divisions in accordance with Nathan’s political affiliations, illustrating the intensity of the breach of the party change in 1921: “Liberale Politik” (Liberal Policy) (pp. 122-133) and “Sozialdemokratische Politik” (Social democratic policy) (pp. 133-141). The brevity of the passages shows that Nathan’s political leanings were not particularly pronounced. In political liberalism he quickly reached the limit of his ambitions because of the fear in the party of antisemitism, should there be too many Jews on the candidate list (p. 130). Whereas in the social democrat party, against which Nathan polemicized in 1890 as being “state despotism” (p. 134), he never really found a political home owing to his bourgeois lifestyle. In a letter to his friend and fellow liberal Hugo Preuß in 1920, Nathan began to transfigure central aspects of the party’s ideology: “the term ‘class struggle’ has only the function of a political relic” (p. 138). Only in the last passage, “Nationale Politik” (National Policy) (pp. 142-170) does the author begin to discuss Nathan’s political success in relation to his response to the Jews of Czarist Russia being threatened by pogroms, which constituted the core of his political work. This section is very closely connected to the final thematic block, “Philanthrop” (Philanthropist) (pp. 171-222). As in the chapters before, this block is structured into three subchapters, “Wohlfahrt organisieren” (Organising Welfare) (pp. 171-182), “Wohlfahrt für Palästina” (Welfare for Palestine) (pp. 183-208) and, lastly, “Gute Fahrt in die neue Welt” (Safe journey into the New World) (pp. 208-222).

The first passage introduces to the beginning of Nathan’s involvement in welfare and his international work with the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in France, the Anglo-Jewish Organization in Great Britain and US-American philanthropic networks mostly linked to Jacob Schiff. Nathan’s particular engagement for Palestine under Turkish rule was mostly focused on education, where he quickly

came into competition with French and British welfare organizations. The peak of the cultural conflicts was the war on languages in 1913 at the Technion in Haifa. The last aspect of this thematic block covers the organization of transatlantic emigration from Eastern Europe to North America, which became a major task of the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden until the beginning of World War I. Paul Nathan was a frequent traveler to Poland, Romania and Russia and well knew the effects of the pogroms that were regularly ravaging these lands. To prevent similar effects in Germany, he decided to establish an organization that would lead East European Jews as quickly as possible through Germany to North America, where they were welcome as new emigrants.

In sum, Christoph Jahr's monograph on Paul Jahr has recorded more than the long-awaited story of an unjustly forgotten German-Jewish personality: it is a biography, a political and historical lesson and a piece of excellent literature in one. It falls into the line of literature following Abraham Barkai's monograph of 2002, *Wehr Dich!*, on the history of the Central Association of German citizens of Jewish faith that opened up a full new discussion on non-Zionist Jewry in diaspora.

And for the introductory investigation into the work with refugees in the early 19th century by the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden—which deserves its own monograph (p. 21)—Jahr's work also has astonishing relevance for questions of migration policy in our own days.

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Martin Goodman, *Josephus's The Jewish War: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. xi+186.

by *Steve Mason*

Princeton's "lives of great religious books" series includes biblical and talmudic volumes, the *I Ching* and *Gita*, the *Koran* and *Book of Mormon*. Why Josephus' *Jewish War* would find a place, and not (one assumes) Thucydides' *Peloponnesian* or Caesar's *Gallic War*, is not obvious, even if we all grant that this book later became religiously entangled in its rich 2000-year "biography." But categories hardly matter. If it took this series to entice the uniquely qualified Professor of Jewish Studies in Oxford to produce such a gem, we can only be grateful.

In just 140 small-format pages and four proper chapters, Goodman manages to canvas: Josephus' life and writings (pp. 1-17); the uses of his *Jewish War* among Christians from 100 to 600, Jews from 100 to 1450, and Christians from 600 to 1450 (pp. 18-44); Christians and Jews, separately, from 1450 to 1750 (pp. 45-70); and finally, under "Controversy," new doubts about Josephus and both scholarly and popular uses of the book among Christians and Jews (pp. 71-134). A brief epilogue (pp. 135-140) scouts the current scholarly scene, and a substantial appendix (pp. 141-159) offers translated passages from the *War* "with a life of their own." Back matter is as concise as the rest: just 13 pages of endnotes, two of bibliography, and ten for the general index.

Nothing like this book exists. It is a triumph. In the space that remains, I shall try to indicate why I say that, intermingling samples of the goods with remarks on Goodman's distinctive approach.

His treatment of the war, Josephus' role in it, and the resulting book (*The Jewish War*) could have elicited a fat volume, given Goodman's publication record in these areas. With laudable restraint, however, he crisply captures general trends in research (e.g., *War* was not commissioned by the Flavians, but Josephus wrote as a Jewish author), generously notes possibilities raised by others (e.g., Josephus may have used irony to safely criticize the regime; the lost Aramaic, once a focus of

research, may not even have existed), and stimulates the reader to further inquiry. Distinctive elements include Goodman's view that there was an "independent Jewish state" from 66 (p. 2), that Josephus' *Life* defends his support of Rome (p. 3), and that some passages in *War* "would have made sense only to Jewish readers" (p. 12).

Goodman's treatment of the period from 100 to 600 in Christian circles opens with the arresting claim that *War*'s early survival should be "credited entirely to the early Church" (p. 18). This is perhaps not quite so clear. Many historians, including this reviewer, find the verbal correspondences between Josephus and Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.12-13) so close as to indicate a literary relationship, and the grammarian Aelius Herodian (in Marcus Aurelius' reign) cited Josephus dozens of times as the assumed authority on eastern names. Eusebius' exploitation of Josephus' fame makes the best sense if he did not invent it. But thus far Goodman reflects common views. He departs from the majority in holding that the Latin Josephus of the fourth century, mentioned by Cassiodorus in the sixth, was the paraphrase we call Pseudo-Hegesippus and not the literal translation known from ninth century manuscripts (pp. 22-24). The great Byzantine scholar's awareness of a "marvelously clear" Latin translation of the Greek *War* in seven volumes relieves him of including that work in his translation project; his team produced only the *Antiquities* and *Apion*. Goodman doubts that Cassiodorus could have regarded the later-attested Latin as an acceptable translation, whereas Pseudo-Hegesippus meets a high literary standard. But that paraphrase has only five volumes, and no one could consider it a clear translation of Josephus' Greek.

The real punch in this chapter comes from Goodman's deft introduction of the *Sefer Yosippon*, a 10th century Hebrew work compiled from various Latin sources, featuring the Latin *Antiquities* and Pseudo-Hegesippus' mash-up of the *War* but replacing the latter's Christian embellishments with Jewish perspectives (pp. 31-35). This hugely important work remains under-studied (it still lacks a modern English translation), not least because of the variety of forms and the traditional confusion about its author: a fusion of Josephus and one of his incidental characters, Joseph ben Gorion (*War* 2.658). It is a singular virtue of Goodman's book that he stays with the *Yosippon* after introducing it, charting its

enormous influence in Jewish communities through the following centuries, and the confusion between it and Josephus' own work until modern times.

Deceptively simple, too, is Goodman's survey of the Greek and Latin manuscripts of Josephus from the latter half of the period covered by this chapter. Readers who get headaches trying to follow the trajectories of either *Yosippon* or the manuscript tradition will welcome this calming oasis, watered by expertise with nothing to prove.

The third chapter gives a valuable overview of the printed editions and translations of Josephus. Particularly helpful is Goodman's nuancing of a common scheme that sees Christians as pro-Josephus and Jews as anti-, first for religious and then for nationalist-Zionist reasons. In sharp and salutary contrast, this chapter shows Jewish communities much influenced by the *Yosippon* and generally proud of their ancient compatriot (or co-religionist) before the rise of nation-states. These important notes open a space for the minority view, respectful of Josephus, that Goodman finds also among early Zionists. Even among the majority of Zionists, who undoubtedly came to disparage Josephus as a traitor and coward, Goodman documents considerable respect for his indispensable histories.

One section of the fourth chapter, "the Book among the Jews", is glaringly disproportionate to the rest (pp. 90-134). It slows to provide several pages each on prominent movements (e.g., Wissenschaft des Judentums) and figures (*inter alios* I. Halevy, Z. Yavetz, K. Schulman, Z. H. Masliansky, L. Feuchtwanger, S. Guttman, Y. Yadin), whereas even important persons received a couple of lines in earlier sections. But this is not a complaint. Goodman's discussion of famous figures in relation to Josephus' *War* and the *Yosippon* is pure gold.

With respect to the current scholarly scene, Goodman does his customarily concise job in conveying the main issues. I feel obliged to challenge one point. In an appreciative nod to the Brill Josephus commentary, which I edit, he connects my work with one side of the "continuing controversy as to whether the correct translation of the Greek word *ioudaios* should be 'Jew' (referring to religion) or

‘Judaean’ (referring to place of origin), an issue of particular significance in the interpretation of [...] the Gospel of John” (p. 138). Beginning with the Series Preface to each commentary volume (2000-), however, I have stressed that I do not consider this a question of “correct translation”—a category mistake, it seems to me—but rather of coming closest to what ancient auditors heard in *Ioudaios* and words of its kind, which we normally transliterate as ethnic labels. I used this, indeed, as an example of scholarly diversity within the commentary project. Although I have noted other scholars’ interest in the Gospel of John’s *Ioudaioi*, such a marginal text plays no role in my arguments about ancient values and categories.

This little book is something to treasure. Anyone with sufficient interest in Jewish or western history will find it readable, informative, and stimulating of further investigation. Even advanced students or specialists in one of the many areas it covers will learn from the rest. We are much in Goodman’s debt.

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Ian S. Lustick, *Paradigm Lost: From Two-State Solution to One-State Reality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 194.

by *Menachem Klein*

This is a book of great intellectual honesty and courage. From the late 1960s until a decade ago Ian Lustick, a highly respected political sciences professor at the University of Pennsylvania, was an active advocate for the Two-States Solution (hereafter TSS), but today sees it as “a dead solution walking” as he titles chapter four. Thus, the book is both an academic analysis of what went wrong with the TSS and a personal account.

The book is short: 194 pages of which 41 are endnotes and references that show the author’s wide knowledge and the extensive research he put into writing it.

In chapter one, the author presents the negative outcomes of the “iron wall” that the Zionist project successfully established. By the “iron wall,” Israel imposes itself on the Arabs. However, there is a cost for the Zionist historical success. The “iron wall” that protects Israel from its Arab neighbors also divides it from seeing new realities developing on the Arab side and identifying peace opportunities.

Chapter two is dedicated to the high cost of what the author calls “Holocaustia,” a destructive collective memory that rules over Jewish self-identity. Right-wing politicians manipulate the Holocaust memory and move it from history to the present day and from Nazi Germany to radical Arab and Muslim countries. This determines the way in which an imminent existential threat is perceived.

In chapter three Lustick discusses how the Israeli lobby in the US succeeded in blocking any American policy that Israel opposes. Serving as Israel’s long arm, the lobby rooted into the US political system and society has created the notion that criticizing Israel’s policy towards the Palestinians equals anti-Semitism. Consequently, Lustick concludes, the Israeli left is wrong assuming that the US will “save Israel from itself.” Moreover, the problem is not just with Israel’s policy, the author argues: “it is with the Zionist political formula” (p. 82). Unfortunately,

Lustick does not explain if his personal account leads him to endorse post-Zionism or whether he calls for a replacement of the “iron wall” with another Zionist model: for instance, the multi-ethnic state that Jabotinsky, who developed the “iron wall” concept, supported once the “wall” had achieved its goal.

Chapter four has two parts. The first, based on Karel Popper and Thomas Kuhn, is a theoretical discussion on paradigms and their possible pathological outcomes. Thereafter, the vast majority of the chapter sums up the rise and fall of the TSS. Lustick recalls the well-known arguments in favor of the TSS: the destructive results of Israeli settlements in heavily populated Palestinian territories, the need to maintain Israel both Jewish and democratic, and keep the US on its side. Interestingly, the author skips the issue of the Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war. TSS supporters disregard or underestimate this issue, as if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict limited to the occupation of 1967 territories. Israeli hawks rightly raise this issue against TSS advocates. Lustick could have used this point to show another weakness of the TSS.

In chapter five, Lustick’s contribution to the long list of publications on the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations, the author looks at the one-state reality (OSR) that Israel created between Jordan and the Mediterranean. Israel rules exclusively over this area. Arabs living there, both inside Israeli internationally recognized sovereign area and the occupied territories, “have different access to the Israeli political arena and experience the power of the Israeli state differently” (p. 123). The de-facto annexation creates a growing demographic problem for Israel. Between Jordan and the Mediterranean, there is an equal number of Jews and Palestinians. Wishing to preserve its superiority and the Jewish State concept, in the twenty-first century Israel developed an apartheid-style ruling system based on ethnicity rather than skin color that provides Jews with more civil rights and access to state resources. It should be noted, that from the Jewish State perspective, Israeli Arabs are no less a burden than those living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Together they form up half of the population that challenges Israel’s claim to be the only democracy in the Middle East. The OSR pushes Israel further away from the liberal democratic model. It is not by chance that Israel faces a democracy deficit.

Circumstances today are vastly different than they were half a century ago, when negotiations toward a TSS were first suggested. Radically different conditions require different strategies, and they are not likely to come from Leaders of organizations whose *raison d'être* has been tied to the TSS [...] the struggle for peace *between* Jews and Arabs can no longer be separated from the struggle for equality *of* Jews and Arabs” (pp. 125-126).

According to Lustick a single shared state is unachievable through negotiations between Jewish and Arab representatives as is the TSS. Instead, he offers a bottom-up long-distance journey of building Jewish-Arab political alliances, “reducing political inequality, highlighting and mitigating social and economic discrimination and insisting on equal protection of all citizens’ lives and property” (pp. 131-132). He favors “getting somewhere better than ‘here’” over “how to get ‘there’” (p. 138). Indeed, the March 2020 Israeli elections signaled the development of this track when unprecedented number of leftist Zionist Jews voted for the Arab Joint List helping it to achieve 15 seats in the Knesset. West Bank Palestinians discuss the option of abandoning the TSS and struggle for getting full civil rights from Israel. One can just imagine what would happen if both Jewish and Arab citizens were to join the West Bankers.

Finally, three critical points. First, Lustick relates to the OSR as a paradigm equivalent to the TSS one. He does not discuss the option that the OSR replaced peace negotiation as the tool to achieve TSS. Theoretically, Palestinian struggle for equal rights, with the help of progressive Jews, may lead Israeli Jews to prefer the TSS over a bi-national state.

Second, Lustick writes on “the law of unintended consequences” (p. 140). However, what for a social scientist looks like a law, for historians is obvious. Quite often history is made by unpredicted and unintended consequences.

Third, the Palestinians as an active agent are missing from the author’s analysis although they have a share in the demise of the TSS, at least by maintaining the split between Fatah rule in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza Strip.

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Antonella Salomoni, *Le ceneri di Babij Jar. L'eccidio degli ebrei di Kiev* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2019), pp. 350.

by *Simone Attilio Bellezza*

Over the last decade, academic interest in Babyn Yar has increased dramatically. The name refers to the ravine at the outskirts of Kyiv where 33,771 Jews were murdered on September 29-30, 1941. This episode of the Shoah has become the most representative example of what is now called the “Holocaust by bullets,”¹ even if it is also one the most difficult to explain.

Nonetheless what is left of the area where the massacre took place is one of the most contested “sites of memory” in Europe, the scene of a clash among different actors with contrasting politics of memory. The confrontation has been exacerbated by the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2014, which is informed also by opposing interpretations of World War Two. For these reasons, in recent years, historians and other scholars have published many articles, collections of memoirs, and monographs about these issues, often as the result of a fruitful collaboration between Ukrainian and foreign scholars.² Salomoni’s book certainly succeeds in informing the Italian reader about the findings of the most recent research into the various topics connected with Babyn Yar, but the actual scope of the work goes well beyond the mere task of summarizing the international scholarly debate. The book is an attempt to outline the first all-encompassing story of the multiple strategies of memorialization of the Babyn Yar tragedy, not only through the analysis of memoirs and other writings, but also by describing the modification of the landscape, i.e. the material transformations of the site. By bringing together two strands of research that usually evolve independently,

¹ The expression was introduced into the historiographic debate by Patrick Desbois in his *Porteur de mémoires. Sur les traces de la Shoah par balles* (Paris: Michel Lafon, 2007).

² Such as the team of historians working with the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, whose chief historian, Karel Berkhoff, is expected to publish an innovative reconstruction of the massacre; see Vladyslav Hynevyh and Paul R. Magocsi, eds., *Babyn Yar. Istoriia i pam'iat'* (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2016). Berkhoff recently resigned (April 2020) from his position for disagreements with Il'ja Khrzhanovskij, the newly appointed artistic director of the Babyn Yar memorial complex.

Salomoni has managed to make a history of Babyn Yar that is at the same time political, cultural, social and environmental.

The volume consists of a foreword, an introduction, six chapters, and an epilogue: both foreword and epilogue reproduce more or less famous poems addressing the events and the memory of Babyn Yar. The “Introduction to the Event” is a sixty page section with a reconstruction of the events that occurred in the ravine from the fall of the Ukrainian capital into the hands of the Nazis until the Soviet reconquest. In this section, Salomoni quotes numerous testimonies from victims and witnesses, providing the reader with a wide range of cases that together form a good illustration of the different aspects of the Holocaust as it was implemented in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. The first chapter describes the first attempts made by Soviet Jews to make sense of the tragedy, with an analysis of the first poems and the efforts to reconstruct the events made by the famous journalist and writer Ilya Ehrenburg. The second chapter, which deals with the resurgence of anti-Semitism in post-WWII Ukraine, describes in depth Ehrenburg’s reconstruction of the Soviet resistance to a full disclosure of the events at Babyn Yar. Salomoni correctly connects the genesis of an anti-Semitic policy in Stalin’s USSR, under the pretext of a campaign against “cosmopolitanism,” to the emerging strong popular anti-Semitism against those Jews who were trying to return to their houses and received no support (if not overt hostility) from Ukrainian political authorities. The third chapter focuses on the Soviet regime’s efforts to produce its own version of the events that occurred in Babyn Yar, in order to hide the fact that Jews were the specific target of the persecutions and to present the massacre as a simple episode of violence against the civil population. The strategy also involved local authorities and their efforts to conceal the site of the killings through a series of urbanistic changes, which eventually resulted in the disappearance of the ravine and almost complete destruction of the Jewish cemetery, transforming the area into a residential neighborhood. On March 13, 1961, these reckless land works caused the collapse of a dam and the following mudslide (known as the Kurenivka mudslide), in which no fewer than 1,500 people died. Partly because of this new tragedy, the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko became interested in the previous events. The fourth chapter describes in detail the three most famous attempts by Soviet intellectuals to revive the memory of

Babyn Yar: Yevtushenko's renowned poem *Babi Yar*, Dmitri Shostakovich's thirteenth symphony that was inspired by it, and the novel-memoir *Babi Yar* by Anatoly Kuznetsov, who witnessed the massacre as a young teenager. The most interesting part of the book, however, are the fifth and sixth chapters, which describe the efforts of the Ukrainian Jewish community to revive the public memory of the Shoah in Kyiv and the fight for the construction of a monument commemorating the victims. Curiously enough, the main organizer and protagonist of these actions was Viktor Nekrasov, an ethnic Russian writer born in Kyiv, who was eventually accused of "Sionism" by Soviet authorities. His key role in drawing into the struggle the democratic faction of the Ukrainian national dissent is well reconstructed and sheds light on the origins of the alliance between the Jewish communities in Ukraine and the Ukrainian national movement, a political affinity with important consequences also in post-Soviet times, as the relevance of Jewish politicians in today's Ukraine illustrates. Defeated by international pressure, the Soviet authorities eventually agreed to the creation of a monument in Babyn Yar, but once again it did not refer to the Jews killed in the Holocaust but was just another rhetorical celebration of a deliberately a-national Soviet heroism.

Only the last few pages of the last chapter are dedicated to a brief description of the creation of a new monument, this time in the form of a menorah, in 1991, when Ukraine had already taken the path toward independence. This is perhaps the only real flaw of this book, which excludes from its analysis the last thirty years of history of this site of memory, years that have proved to be very intense and that have transformed the area into one of only four National memorials within the new Ukrainian state, but one which hosts different projects of memorialization by the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance and other international organizations.

As the long and useful footnotes show, Salomoni's work is the result of a meticulous knowledge of the published sources together with a targeted search of unpublished documents in the post-Soviet archives. Overall, this book represents an original way to study the processes of construction (or destruction) of the memory of the Shoah, through the particular case of Babyn Yar.

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Mark L. Smith, *The Yiddish Historians and the Struggle for a Jewish History of the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), pp. 462.

by Daniela Ozacky-Stern

On February 1, 1945, a woman survivor addressed a large gathering of the Histadrut (Labor Federation) in Tel-Aviv, to tell the audience—who heard it for the first time in person—what had happened to the Jews in Europe during The Second World War. She spoke Yiddish, her mother's tongue, and the language of most victims of the Holocaust. Not everyone in the room understood it but those who did were engrossed and deeply moved. Ruzka Korczak was a survivor of the Vilna Ghetto and a former partisan in the nearby forests, a member of Ha'shomer Ha'tzair, zionist socialist youth movement, certainly a heroin in the eyes of the listeners, who were overwhelmed by her stories.¹

David Ben Gurion, the head of the Histadrut and a few years later the first prime minister of the newly born state of Israel, stood up to speak after her. He started by criticizing Korczak for speaking in “a foreign and grating language”... but could not continue his speech and had to step down, because of the rage that swept the attendees.²

This notorious incident was reported widely and thus strongly affected the Israeli attitude towards the Yiddish language and its speakers for years to come. The passionate desire to build a new Jewish nationhood, and a different life from that of the Jews in the diaspora, with Hebrew as its pivotal common language, was at the basis of Ben Gurion's remark.

Given this background, it is no wonder that scholarly works on the Holocaust written in Yiddish were not well received nor widely read in Israel at the time.

¹ The full version of the speech can be found in the *Moreshet Archive* (located at Givat Haviva, Israel), D.I.441.

² Dina Porat, “With Forgiveness and Grace: The Meeting between Ruzka Korczak and the Yeshuv and its Leaders,” *Moreshet Journal* 52 (1992): 14-15; Rachel Rozanski, “A foreign and grating language indeed? The question of Ben Gurion attitude to Yiddish after the Holocaust,” *Iyunim Be'tkumat Israel* 15 (2005): 463.

Moreover, most of the “Second Generation” children born in Israel, America and around the world to Holocaust survivors had not mastered this “foreign” language and could not read these works nor use them for research in later years, until now.

Mark L. Smith took it upon himself to do justice to five historians who were Holocaust survivors themselves and wrote pioneering books and papers on the Holocaust in the early years after the war. Despite being pioneers in this academic field, they have not been properly acknowledged due to the language of their writing—Yiddish. Smith analyzes their methodologies and their unique “Jewish way” of telling a story and puts their works in the wider context of writing Jewish history in Yiddish in the 20th century.

The historians he refers to are Philip Friedman, Isaiah Trunk, Nachman Blumental, Joseph Kermish and Mark Dworzecki. All are briefly introduced in the first chapter, which provides some personal details and summaries of their careers before the war. The author claims that “each historian merits an individual treatment, but as this study relates to a group phenomenon, I have preferred to allow the details of their lives to emerge within the themes to be discussed” (p. 22). They all shared historical awareness and sense of urgency, and despite their personal suffering—or perhaps because of it—started right after the war to collect testimonies, documents, and evidences, so as not to leave any detail unremembered.

Friedman, who had earned a doctorate in history in Vienna in 1925 and was already a well-known and active historian before the war, became the first director of the Central Historical Commission of Poland (CJHC), established as early as November 1944. Blumental, previously a researcher of Jewish ethnography, joined him while in Lublin and so did Kermish, who had gained his doctorate in Polish history two years before the war. Trunk, Friedman's former student, joined them in early 1946 when he came back from exile in the Soviet far East.

The four of them became known as “the leading historians of the CJHC.” Together with Rachel Auerbach, one of the few survivors of the Oneg Shabat documentation and research organization which was active in the Warsaw Ghetto,

they were able to collect and organize over 6,000 survivors' personal testimonies, laying an important infrastructure for future research.³

Mark Dworzecki walked in a different path. A medical doctor who worked in the hospital of the Vilna Ghetto during the war and later was deported to concentration camps, he managed to escape a death march in April 1945 and settled in Paris. There, he published his first study on the Vilna Ghetto in Yiddish,⁴ which according to Smith became “one of the most ubiquitously cited sources” on this place (p. 31).

Smith points out several important and unique characteristics of the body of research created by these five scholars: it dealt with the victims and not with their perpetrators; it investigated *life* of Jews under the Nazis, rather than their *death*; it did not consider the Holocaust a rupture in Jewish life and history but rather its continuation; their approach was “non-martyrological” and anti-lachrymose and focused on the Jewish struggle to sustain life. As Isaiah Trunk argued: “until the moment of final destruction, the ghetto *existed* for two-three years... For us, the question of how the ghetto lived is no less important than the question of how it was murdered” (p. 65).

I find this approach very refreshing and brave and would like to argue that some of the early works of Holocaust history written by survivors in Hebrew in Israel display similar features. I refer to books about the Jewish resistance by former partisans in the forests of Lithuania and Belarus, which were written in the 1940s and 1950s by authors like Ruzka Korczak, Chaim Lazar, and Moshe Kahanovitch.⁵

³ *Oneg Shabat* (Joy of Shabbat) was an underground archival initiative headed by historian Emanuel Ringelblum, that was active in the Warsaw Ghetto, with the aim of collecting information and documenting the Jewish lives in the ghetto. Three survivors of this clandestine archive were Rachel Auerbach, Hersz Wasser and his wife Bluma Wasser. They all immigrated to Israel over the years.

⁴ Mark Dworzecki, *Yerusholayim d'life in kamf un umkum* (Paris: Folksfarband in Frankraykh, 1948). See its details in p. 396, in “Bibliography of Mark Dworzecki.”

⁵ Ruzka Korczak, *Flames in the Ashes (Lehavot Baefer)* (Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1946); Chaim Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance (Horban Vamered)* (Tel Aviv: Massuot, 1950); Moshe Kahanovitch, *War of the Jewish Partisans (Milhemet Hapartizanim Hayehudim)* (Tel Aviv: Ayanot, 1954).

I tend to agree with Smith's argument that the new field of Holocaust historiography has been created by survivors, whereas Jewish historians who managed to leave Europe before the war and continued their career in historical research in America or in Israel did not write about the Holocaust but rather focused their attention "only to earlier periods of Jewish history or to locations outside of Europe" (p. 110). Israeli historian Boaz Cohen discusses this in length in his book about the development of Holocaust research in the early years in Israel.⁶

Resistance was another significant issue discussed by the Yiddish historians after the Holocaust, "the question of questions," as the author puts it (p. 230). Here too, Smith points to a different approach in the works under discussion. He shows how they were the first to identify other ways of resistance apart from taking arms. They worked at a time when Jews were accused of passive behavior during the war and were blamed for going to their death "like sheep to the slaughter."⁷ These Yiddish historians were the first to point out that spiritual steadfastness, struggling daily for existence and survival, or holding on in hiding were no less heroic than actively fighting in the ghettos and in the forests, and they wrote about it passionately. Moreover, they dared to discuss the fact that the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, for example, and the organization of partisan groups in the forests had come only in the final stages of the war and asked the question why were they so late? Friedman and Trunk published an article in April 1953, a decade after the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, in which they analyzed and explained the various obstacles to the mounting of an armed Jewish resistance and came to the conclusion that "Despite Jewish resistance coming so *late*, it came *much sooner* than that of other oppressed people" (p. 233). Smith identifies two waves of discussion around this dilemma in the work of Yiddish historians: the first started in 1945 and lasted until 1953 as a response to the internal dialogue of the survivors themselves; the second came later, after the Adolf Eichmann trial in 1961, and

⁶ Boaz Cohen, *The Future Generations. How will they know? The Emergence and Development of Israeli Holocaust Research* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010) (in Hebrew).

⁷ This phrase refers to those who supposedly went to their death without resisting, and Jewish Holocaust survivors were accused of passivity in the face of Genocide, See Neima Barzel's article "The Concept of Bravery in the Holocaust, From Collective National Memory to Privatized National Memory" *Dapim for the Holocaust Research* 16 (2000): 86-124.

lasted till 1981. In recent years some of these works have been translated and quoted in new research on the Holocaust and Jewish resistance (p. 237).

This is an important point, because as I see it, none of these five Yiddish historians remained anonymous to the general public nor to the Holocaust studies academic community. All of them continued their mission and published important scholarly works on the Holocaust in Hebrew and in English that were much appreciated. Kermish and Blumental joined Yad Vashem (Israel's official Holocaust memorial center), Trunk was affiliated with the Ghetto Fighters House (Holocaust memorial in the north of Israel), Friedman was involved with the Yivo-Institute for Jewish Research, and taught at Columbia University and Dworzecki, who was active in Holocaust survivors' organizations in Israel, established a chair for Holocaust studies at Bar Ilan University and continued to publish works in Hebrew. It cannot be claimed that they disappeared from the Holocaust research scene. And yet, Smith's thorough research and the rich bibliography attached to it are extremely important. Over 100 pages of his book are devoted to a meticulous list of the Yiddish historians' articles, papers, and books, thus enabling readers to understand and appreciate the scope of their contribution. The author hopes "to encourage greater use of the Yiddish historians' work" (p. 319) and he certainly provides the tools for this.

By conclusion, I would like to sum up the uniqueness of this phenomenon of survivors-researchers-historians, who arose out of the ashes and vowed to tell the unbelievable story of the Holocaust in the language of its victims. As Smith emphasizes time and again, their most significant contributions were:

1. Writing about the history of the Jewish councils (Judenrates) in the ghettos.
2. Pointing to the continued influence of prewar political affiliations in defining relations among Jews under Nazi occupation.
3. Stressing social differentiation and class conflict.

4. Identifying forms of unarmed Jewish resistance during the Holocaust and highlighting them.

5. Proving the Holocaust to be an integral continuation of former processes in Jewish history, rather than considering it as a separate field of research (pp. 316-317).

6. Relying on testimonies, eye-witness accounts, and memoirs, in the absence of documentary sources (p. 315).

I can testify from my own experience researching Jewish resistance in the framework of partisan units, that all of the above is still valid in Holocaust studies today. Strange and even tragic, in my view, is the fact that politics did play a major role not only in the ghettos but also among fighters and partisans and has later affected the historiography and remembrance of the Holocaust.⁸ Testimonies given in later stages of the survivors' lives, especially video testimonies, such as the valuable collections in the *USC Shoah Foundation Visual Archive* and *The Fortunoff Archive* at Yale University, are again used as solid sources after most of them had passed away. Also, it is common knowledge among researchers today that even though the Holocaust was a mega-event in Jewish history, it does not mean that it is a separate part of it, in the same way in which it is an integral part of the Second World War itself.

In the end, it becomes obvious that these Yiddish historians were indeed pioneers in their vision, perceptions and methodologies and I salute Mark L. Smith for giving them the platform and honor they deserve in his notable work.

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⁸ On this issue see my article: Daniela Ozacky Stern, "Executions of Jewish Partisans in the Lithuanian Forests: The Case of Natan Ring", *International Journal of Military History and Historiography* 40 (2020): 219-244.

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Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Martin Buber: A Life of Faith and Dissent* (New Have and London: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 440.

by *Enrico Lucca*

Published in the famous *Jewish Life* series of Yale University Press, Paul Mendes-Flohr's biography of Martin Buber has been long awaited by scholars of German-Jewish thought and intellectual history. The author is known as one of the leading scholars in the field and among other important contributions he is the co-editor in chief of the Buber *Werkausgabe* (published by Gütersloher Verlagshaus). Meanwhile, other significant portraits of Buber have appeared in the last years both in French (by Dominique Bourel) and in Hebrew (by Zohar Maor).¹ In comparison with Bourel's work, Mendes-Flohr's biography is far more concise (almost half in length)—fitting the style of the series, which aims to address a wider audience than the academic readership—and yet it manages to describe accurately all the main stations in Buber's life and to capture the essence of his teaching. Being an intellectual historian, the author connects the most significant episodes in Buber's biography with the development of his thought, discussing in length the content of his books together with the main philosophical discussions Buber was involved in. As for the use of sources, besides relying on the enormous amount of Buber's published correspondence and work, Mendes-Flohr took advantage of personal communications by members of Buber's family, namely his son Rafael and his grandchildren, as well as his disciple Ernst Akiva Simon, who disclosed to him interesting aspects and at times juicy anecdotes about Buber's everyday life in Germany and Jerusalem. At the same time, the book is often enriched by references to unpublished correspondence housed in Jerusalem archives.

The book is divided in eleven chapters. Chapter one describes Buber's infancy and youth, starting with the traumatic experience of being abandoned by her mother at the age of three, which led him later to ponder on the deep existential and religious meaning behind human encounters (p. 3). The author devotes quite a few pages to Buber's relationship with his paternal grandparents, who belonged

¹ Dominique Bourel, *Martin Buber. Sentinelle de l'humanité* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2015); Zohar Maor, *Martin Buber* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2016).

to the Galician Jewish intellectual and financial elite. To them Buber owned his familiarity with Biblical Hebrew and rabbinical sources, and the love for literature, not to mention his first encounter with the German language. In particular, the author describes very well the contentious relationship between Buber and his grandfather Salomon, a well-known and celebrated scholar, showing young Buber's desire to continue his work, though "in his own fields" (p. 10). It comes as no surprise that Buber dedicated to him his first book on Hasidism, *The Stories of Rabbi Nachman* (1906), which can be seen as a sort of conciliatory gesture, since Salomon had little sympathy for both his grandson pursuing an academic career and his joining Zionism. Chapter two follows Buber from Lemberg (Lviv) to Vienna and his evolution from a liberal Polish nationalist position (p. 19) to his commitment to Zionism, which he had first encountered during his short stay in Leipzig in the winter Semester 1897-1898. In 1899 Buber addressed the third Zionist conference and was later invited by Theodor Herzl to serve as the editor of the main Zionist newspaper *Die Welt* (p. 29). Buber did not last long in this position, and following the leading role he took in the so-called Zionist Demokratische Faktion his relation with Herzl became much more confrontational. After few years of sleepless Zionist activity, in 1905 Buber decided to devote himself exclusively to his own literary work (p. 40).

Chapter three and four are dedicated respectively to Buber's early philosophical and intellectual influences and to his first literary and editorial endeavors. Mendes-Flohr situates Buber at the margins of academia, placing him in the category of those intellectuals, who were "educated at the university" and "continued to follow its scholarly debates and developments while maintaining a scornful distance from it" (p. 43). He then describes his encounters in Berlin with Wilhelm Dilthey, Georg Simmel—whom he appreciated for his essayistic style and his interest in sociology—and especially with Gustav Landauer. They first met in the Berlin anarchist commune Die Neue Gemeinschaft and Landauer was destined to have a remarkable influence on the shaping of Buber's thought, in particular during the First World War, until his tragic death in Munich in May 1919. Buber's plans to write a *Habilitation* thesis are examined in chapter four, which tracks Buber's sojourn in Florence, where far from Zionism he experienced a "burst of

creativity” (p. 58), and his return to Berlin in the fall of 1906, coinciding with his transformation “from a publicist into an author” (p. 60).

Chapter five analyzes Buber’s leading role in the Western European “Jewish Renaissance” that sprang from Prague and the local Zionist youth circle “Bar Kochba” and that he contributed to spread westwards, in particular through his famous *Three Speeches on Judaism* (1911). Of great importance is the description of Buber’s attitude toward the First World War, which at the beginning saw him celebrating it as a supreme mystical experience of “metaphysical significance” (p. 98). Mendes-Flohr attributes Buber’s later change of mind to his discussions with Landauer and specifically to a meeting between the two in July 1916, which led to “a radical transformation in Buber’s thinking, —marked by a fundamental break with his *Erlebnis* mysticism” (p. 108). Such a transformation paved the way to Buber’s conception of a philosophy of dialogue. In chapter seven another important character in Buber’s biography is finally introduced: Franz Rosenzweig. After recalling the occasion of their first meeting and how they came to embark on the lifelong and extremely arduous task of translating the Hebrew Bible into German, Mendes-Flohr summarizes their intellectual confrontation, and in particular their disagreement on the significance of Jewish law and religious precepts. Chapter eight is dedicated to Buber’s last years in Nazi Germany before his emigration to Palestine in late March 1938. The author finds the theological debates in which Buber was involved particularly significant, as he was on the one hand fighting a wave of neo-Marcionism in interwar Germany and on the other trying to reaffirm the importance of a “God of Creation,” an effort which resulted in the foundation of the pioneering inter-religious journal *Die Kreatur*. To illustrate the complexity of the historical period, and the persistence of some anti-judaic tones even in contemporary liberal Protestant theology, Mendes-Flohr devotes quite a few pages to the debate between Buber and the theologian Karl Ludwig Schmidt, which took place only two weeks before Adolf Hitler was named chancellor (pp. 176-181). The chapter ends with Buber’s appointment to the Hebrew University as a professor of Sociology and his arrival in Palestine at the age of sixty. Mendes-Flohr emphasizes how the decision was taken by Buber with a “heavy heart,” uncertain as he was whether he would have been able to acquire

in Hebrew the rhetorical and pedagogical skills needed for his educating mission in what became his new home (p. 201).

The last three chapters focus on Buber's activities in Palestine, both at the Hebrew University, where he had quite a significant influence on the Israeli *schola* of sociology, as well as a public intellectual mostly active in groups and organizations that sought a peaceful resolution to the Jewish-Arab conflicts (for example the League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement in the late 1930s or the Ihud movement in the early 1940s). At the outbreak of the 1948 war following the Israeli declaration of independence, Buber was forced to leave his home in the Arab-Jewish neighborhood of Abu Tor and to resettle in Talbiya, in a large house whose Arab owners had taken refuge in Turkey. Buber took care to return their belongings to them (p. 256). A few pages are dedicated to Buber's return to Germany in the aftermath of the Holocaust, when he accepted to address a German audience again, and despite the resulting criticism in Israel and the objections even of his closest friends. To this decision the author connects also Buber's encounter with Heidegger, which took place in the late spring of 1957 (pp. 279-286). Finally, the author offers a brief summary of the most important contributions of Buber to Israeli cultural life and debates, focusing in particular on his dispute with Scholem on the interpretation of Hasidism (pp. 305-309), his encounter with groups of young *kibbutznikim* (pp. 311-312), and his campaign against the execution of the death penalty in the Eichmann case (pp. 317-318).

It should be added that the book is well written and offers a very pleasant reading experience. As a minor critical remark some German names and titles in the footnotes have been spelled incorrectly and for this reason at least the book would have profited from a more careful editing.²

² See for example: p. 187 *lessen* (*lesen*); p. 326: the book from which the quote in the epigraph is taken has been published of course in 1985 (and not 1885); p. 348 *Donnestagsgesellschaft* (*Donnerstagsgesellschaft*); p. 353 *literaratische* (*literarische*); p. 361 *Weizsächer* (*Weizsäcker*); p. 362 *jahr* (*Jahr*); p. 366 *Interntationales* (*Internationales*); p. 368 *Poland* (*Polen*); p. 372 *Politizer* (*Politzer*).

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David Kowalski, *Polens letzte Juden. Herkunft und Dissidenz um 1968* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), pp. 243.

by Beate Kosmala

Even though all the Warsaw Pact states followed the anti-Israeli policy of the Soviet Union in connection with the Six-Day War in 1967, only the People's Republic of Poland used this course to purge the party apparatus and public life of persons of Jewish descent. In the course of the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968, thousands of Polish citizens of Jewish origin saw themselves forced to emigrate. Despite the wealth of publications on both the opposition movement in Poland and the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968 since the 1990s, David Kowalski sees a "fundamental research gap," since previous studies have either looked only at the opposition movement or concentrated on its Jewish aspects.

The author focuses on a group of students at Warsaw University who were active in the opposition movement of 1968 and whose members had in common that they had (mostly communist) parents of Jewish origin in more or less high professional positions. In addition, many of these young people belonged to the informal Club of Contradiction Seekers (Klub Poszukiwaczy Sprzeczności) in Warsaw in the early 1960s, where up to 60 young people (until its dissolution in 1963) met to discuss politics, philosophy and culture. Despite the fact that their Jewish origin played at most a subordinate role for the students, they shared a certain social milieu with a specific background of experience. Their socio-cultural environmental conditioning and political values are the subject of this study.

The book is based on twenty interviews conducted by the author, autobiographical texts, official documents (reports and minutes of the Interior Ministry's Security Service, court transcripts), but also biographical texts of parents of the subjects, in which the author sees the key to his inquiry.

When in January 1968 the removal of Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (Ancestors, 1832) from the National Theatre's repertoire was ordered by the Ministry of Culture, as all statements against the Tsar and the Russian authority (similar to current anti-

Moscow statements) had been met with frenetic applause, the dissident Jacek Kuroń together with friends around Adam Michnik and Jan T. Gross addressed a protest to the Polish Parliament (the Sejm). With this, “the small group of rebelling communist dissidents took the national flag in their hands”—in defense of the Polish nation, the author argues. On March 8, a protest rally at the Warsaw University campus was followed by a demonstration with about 1,200 students demanding freedom of speech and assembly and condemning state repression. It was to be the start of nationwide student demonstrations. The regime reacted with police operations, arrests and smear campaigns against “activists” and “ringleaders.” Individuals were identified as “Jews,” named by name and accused of “conspiracy.”

Based on the anti-Semitic reactions of the regime press to the student protest, the author identifies a common ideological core in the then current Minister of the Interior Mieczysław Moczar (1913-1983), the pre-war fascist Bolesław Piasecki (1915-1979), who was also politically active in the People’s Republic under new premises, and the nationalist pre-war politician Roman Dmowski (1864-1939). Despite opposing positions, they agreed “that Polish affiliation is determined to a large extent by ethnicity” (p. 67). Władysław Gomułka, chairman of the Polish United Workers’ Party since 1956, also used Dmowski’s categories almost literally in 1968 (p. 66).

This development towards an argumentation for exclusion based on ethnicity in the Communist Party was diametrically opposed to the political ideas of the young opposition members, who saw themselves “in the tradition of a pluralistic and culturally shaped understanding of Polishness” (p. 97). The author points out that as early as 1964 Michnik criticized Jacek Kuron’s and Karol Modzelewski’s “Open Letter,” which denounced the discrepancy between Marxist claim and bureaucratic reality and called for a real “workers’ democracy” (which was also significant for the New Left in Western Europe and the USA), because the demand for Poland’s national independence was missing. These 1968 oppositionists, who saw in Marxism not a dogmatic system but “a living philosophical inspiration” in the sense of the philosopher Leszek Kołakowski,

demanded human and civil rights and emphasized the importance of the constitutional state.

It is striking—thinks the author—that in 1968, instead of “criticizing and scandalizing the obvious anti-Semitism” (p. 155), the young opposition members refrained from addressing the subject in their leaflets. The author sees an explanation in the special political and family-related socialization of this group. Their parents had decided in favor of the communist idea, in favor of Poland and against Jewish affiliation. Nevertheless, the particularity of this milieu in the society of the People’s Republic of Poland could not be resolved. The young opposition members grew up under specific conditions that differed from those of the majority of society. These included, for instance, a different attitude towards the Soviet Union, non-affiliation with the Catholic Church and a lack of kinship networks resulting from the Holocaust. The milieu therefore remained largely self-contained. The author sees its attachment to the communist utopia in the yet unsolved minority problem of the interwar period. With the radical turning away from the Jewish way of life, they hoped to overcome the problem of Jewish particularism. Those young people (mostly from the Club of Contradiction Seekers) therefore understood their demands for more freedom rights in 1968 as universalistic.

This commendable study provides insights into the political, social and cultural characteristics of young opponents and examines the specific milieu from which their protest and demand for human and civil rights could have emerged. It becomes clear that rival concepts of “Polishness” still exist in the relationship between Polish and Jewish history. Overall, this work provides new insights into the character of the student protests of 1968 in Poland and their long-term consequences.

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Dafna Hirsch, ed., *Encounters: History and Anthropology of the Israeli-Palestinian Space* (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv: Van Leer Institute Press-Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2019), pp. 490.

by *Tamir Sorek*

In a recently published book on academia, two Israeli scholars accused the humanities for dealing with “esoteric topics that do not contribute much to humanity.” Historians in particular, were targeted as suffering from a “hoarding disorder” because, the authors argue, everything has already been written.¹ The book sparked a heated debate in the Israeli public sphere, in which right-wing and conservative commentators enthusiastically supported it while most of the criticism came from the left side of the political map.

Reading *Encounters: History and Anthropology of the Israeli-Palestinian Space*, would probably not change the mind of anyone involved in this debate. For readers like me, though, this kind of research project is exactly the reason why we should keep studying history, as well as investigating the ever-changing and contested image of the past. Humans, historians included, carve a narrative from the infinite details of the past that reflects and supports their interests and agenda. The demand to “stop studying” is rooted in an aspiration to preserve the existing dominant narratives, as well as the prevailing balance of power/knowledge. This volume strives to do the exact opposite.

The different chapters in this volume both express and shape several emerging tendencies in the study of Palestine/Israel, and more generally, in the humanities and the social sciences. At the core of these tendencies is the narrowing gap and the interaction between anthropology and history. Since the institutional arrangements in Israeli academia blur the line between sociology and anthropology, sociologists are also represented in this volume, and even some political scientists with a humanistic orientation. While both history and the humanistic social sciences have gone through significant changes over the past

¹ Oz Almog and Tamar Almog, *Kol shikre ha-akademiah* (All of academia’s lies) (Tel Aviv: Yediot Sfarim, 2020).

decades, historians have been increasingly shifting their gaze toward socio-cultural and micro history. Anthropologists and sociologists have developed growing interest in the past, focusing on its processing and representation in the present.

Therefore, many of the chapters take an anthropological look at the past, or an anthropological study of the representation of the past. Manar Hassan, for example, shows how the Palestinian city was excluded from both Zionist and Palestinian historiography and popular memories and the implications of these exclusions on the status of Palestinian women; Tom Pessah analyzes the ways Israeli soldiers have defined the battles in which they took part in 1948; Areej Sabbagh-Khuri shows how Palestinian villages, whose residents were expelled in 1948, are represented in communal texts written in the kibbutzim of ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir, founded on the ruins of those same villages; and Smadar Sharon analyzes how agricultural planning and the organization of the work process created a relationship of dependency between Jewish immigrants from Arab countries who settled in the Negev in the 1950s and the settling institutions. All four authors are humanistic sociologists by their training, they use analytical and theoretical lenses common in their original discipline, while their methods (archival research, oral history) are usually identified with the discipline of history. Similarly, Safa Abu-Rabia studies Arab Bedouin women as active agents in the narration of the history of expulsion and Regev Nathanson analyzes how various tour guides in Haifa narrate the history of the city. While both of the last studies are anthropological in their epistemology and methodology, they correspond with the historical scholarship on 1948.

As part of a growing trend in history as a discipline, all chapters in the book are committed to study real people and real concrete practices, rather than abstract ideas. A special attention is given to various aspects of popular culture and leisure activities, emphasizing their political relevance. Three of those deal with food and power (another rapidly growing interdisciplinary field). Alma Igra analyzes the struggle of female workers at the first cooperative restaurant in Tel Aviv against the efforts of the Histadrut (the general federation of Zionist workers in Palestine) to exclude non-Kosher meat from the restaurant. Dafna Hirsh's chapter examines the history of hummus consumption in Israel and the way the identification of

hummus with Arabness has been changed over the years. In a thriller-like captivating text, the anthropologist Naor Ben-Yehoyada examines the struggle over the establishment of a fish market in the Jaffa port, which led to the murder of a fish merchant. Similarly, Boaz Lev Tov presents a thought-provoking analysis of the parallel emergence of beach swimming as a leisure activity among Jewish and Palestinian societies during the first third of the twentieth century.

Blurring disciplinary boundaries in the humanities and the social sciences has been a trademark of critical scholarship since the Frankfurt School, and it frequently co-appears with an explicit aspiration of scholars to be politically relevant. Indeed, another major common thread in the volume is the reliance on a conflict paradigm for analyzing and discussing history. The authors' interpretive lenses include a variety of neo-Marxist, Foucauldian, and feminist approaches but they all consider the struggle over resources and power as central for understanding historical dynamics. As a result, they are aware of their own position in the political matrix, and they implicitly reject the growing political pressure to be "neutral," "objective" or "unbiased," denying the existence of a politically neutral language for writing history or anthropology.

Accordingly, throughout the book the colonial character of Zionism is not in question (although not in a reductionist way that ignores other aspects of the movement), and the authors frequently have an explicit moral judgment of the dynamics they describe. Many chapters deal directly or indirectly with different aspects of the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948. In the introductory chapter, Hirsch declares an aspiration to overcome the common scholarly tendency to treat 1948 as a historical watershed and suggests considering it instead as an important milestone on a historical continuum. It seems, though, that this is an impossible task. The Nakba remains the major point of reference in most of the chapters. Beyond the above-mentioned chapters by Natanzon, Aburabia, Pessah and Sabbagh- Khuri, Benny Nurieli shows how, during the military regime imposed on Lydda (1948-1949) the struggle between state authorities and its looting soldiers influenced the surveillance of the recently occupied space and population and how the authorities implemented a policy of starving the Palestinians in order to force them to work in the occupied fields. Similarly, one cannot read Na'ama Ben

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Ze'ev's research about rural migrants in Palestinian cities during the British mandate period without thinking that both the cities and most of the villages of origin of the migrants were destroyed immediately after the point in time where the chapter ends.

Editing an academic volume is a challenging task. Keeping the balance between thematic coherence and diversity of voices, ensuring high academic standards across the board, and convincing scholars to invest their time and efforts in a work that usually does not give them much credit in their institutions, are only part of the obstacles. This volume impressively overcame these obstacles, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in a cutting-edge and politically relevant scholarship on Palestine/Israel.

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