

*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. Hatzí 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, *Mío 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 reír, haz reír! Vida y obra de Enrique Jardiel Poncela* (Sevilla: Renacimiento, 2015); Juan Carlos Pueo, *Como un motor de aviación: 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 Paso 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 Zionistic 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: Alfaquequeras, 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 Ajeteada 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 hebrea. 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, *Eugenesia 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 Evengelina’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 Mexico: Espasa-Calpe de Mexico, 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 mi 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 había [*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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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.