

*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 Josexo 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, Josexo 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/uncatalaisrael/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 milieux" (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 missa ni nada, ni se casa, ni hace la comunió, ni se bautiza); are people "who hurt Jesus" (van fer mal a Jesús); "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’espendor 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. Debuting 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?*, 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*," *Tessaræ: 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).

genueflects 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 mitzvahed* 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?* 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

Hazel Gold teaches at Emory University, where she is Associate Professor of Spanish and a core faculty member of the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies. She is the author of *The Reframing of Realism: Galdós and the Discourses of the 19th-Century Spanish Novel* (2003) and co-editor with J. M. González Herrán et al. of *La historia en la literatura española del siglo XIX* (2017). Her research focuses on literary and cultural studies of modern Spain and the Sephardi legacy, including “Illustrated Histories: The National Subject and ‘the Jew’ in Nineteenth-Century Spanish Art,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 89-109. She is currently co-chair of the Film Evaluation Committee of the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival and in 2021 will begin serving a multi-year

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*.

term on the Forum Executive Committee for Sephardic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures of the Modern Language Association.

Keywords: Martí Sans, *L'estigma?*, *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, Judeophobia, Cross-cultural Relations

How to quote this article:

Hazel Gold, "Pedagogies of Citizenship: Sepharad and Jewishness in Spanish and Catalan Documentary Film and Television," in "Genealogies of Sepharad," eds. Daniela Flesler, Michal R. Friedman and Asher Salah, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 18 (December 2020), DOI: 10.48248/issn.2037-741X/III48