

Introduction

“Ask the Mediterranean”

One of the most emblematic locations in Barcelona’s medieval Jewish quarter, El Call, can be found at the corner of Marlet and Sant Ramon in the heart of the city’s Gothic quarter.¹ Three plaques are affixed to the walls of the house located at 1 Carrer de Marlet, a building that was restored in 1820. The first plaque, with a Hebrew inscription, is a copy of a plaque from the early fourteenth century, now kept in Barcelona’s history museum, Museu d’Història de Barcelona (MUHBA). The second features an inaccurate translation of the Hebrew inscription. The owner who commissioned the nineteenth-century restoration was probably responsible for encasing the original plaque inside the outer wall of the building and placing the panel that contains the translation.

The replica of the original plaque from the fourteenth century was vandalized: a close look at the plaque with the translation reveals traces of the words “Palestina Libre,” written diagonally across the text. Even though the graffito has been removed and the words are now barely visible to the naked eye, their presence can still be detected in Figure 1. The third plaque—affixed during a campaign that MUHBA initiated in the medieval Jewish quarter in 2007 to place explanatory signs on the streets and landmarks of the medieval Jewish quarter—provides a revised translation into Catalan and English of the original Hebrew text and also situates the inscription in the geographical and historical context of Barcelona’s medieval Jewish quarter (see Figure 2). The Hebrew text on the plaque from the fourteenth century actually reads: “Pious Foundation by R. Samuel ha-Sardi. His light burns on forever.”²



Figure 2. 1 Carrer de Marlet, Barcelona, 2013. Courtesy of José Linhard.

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The three plaques, together with the graffiti damage, speak to the manifold and often contradictory meanings that Jewish presence and Jewish absence attain in public spaces. The attempt to recover and restore remote Jewish history in Barcelona coincides with the conflation of Jewish history in its entirety with the current situation in the Middle East, which in many ways monopolizes discussions of all things Jewish in contemporary Spain.³ The different forms of writing and rewriting on these plaques—including the actual fourteenth-century inscriptions, the attempts to recover the memory of a population absent in the nineteenth century, the protection of Jewish heritage with the help of historical markers, and even the defacement of symbols of the past in a present-day struggle—conjure up the main themes of this book.

These plaques, along with many other forms of reminiscence to be discussed in the pages that follow, are part of ongoing processes that involve Jewish absence and presence and the fluctuating meanings of the past in the present. The main argument of *Jewish Spain* is that writers and witnesses narrate instances of Jewish life in Spain's turbulent twentieth century by invoking the remote past. Thus, narratives that are only apparently coherent emerge because any story about what was and is Jewish (and was and is perceived to be Jewish) in contemporary Spain is bound to be as contradictory as the expression "Jewish Spain."

This book traces the process through which memory work bundles these contradictions into coherent narratives. A close look at the fissures and inconsistencies in these accounts reveals that any story about Jewish Spain will always be tentative and open-ended. Although the book broadly addresses the multiple relationships that the term "Jewish Spain" entails today, its main argument centers on the uses of the past in texts that depict the memory of the survival of Jews in or because of Spain during World War II. Even after the Francoist dictatorship had ended in 1975, the official version of the events that still circulated held that Francisco Franco was responsible for saving Jews from the Holocaust and that the dictator had pulled the strings all along, even when he was forced to make difficult decisions.

Chaim Avni, Isabelle Rohr, Bernd Rother, and Danielle Rozenberg have studied the complex intersections among political opportunism, personal initiative, and, at times, chance that made deliverance from the Holocaust in Spain possible, either through exile in and transit through

the Iberian Peninsula or with the help of Spanish diplomats in occupied Europe. The historians conclude that notwithstanding the narrative the Francoist government spread during the postwar years, saving the Jews from the Holocaust did not result from official government policy, much less from Franco himself.⁴

Jewish Spain centers specifically on the varied ways in which accounts of these events appear in different forms of cultural production. The authors (witnesses, novelists, historians) invoke the past—specifically, the era of *convivencia* (coexistence of Christians, Jews, and Muslims in medieval Iberia), the anti-Jewish violence in the fourteenth century that led to massive conversions, the establishment of the Inquisition, and the 1492 expulsion of Jews from Spain—to provide coherence and meaning to the contradictory circumstances that made surviving in Spain during World War II possible for Jews. Additionally, the book shows that a comprehensive perspective on those circumstances—even on the Spanish Civil War itself—is only possible once they are considered in relation to the Sephardic diaspora and the history of Spanish colonialism in Morocco.

The term “Jewish Spain,” however, is a misnomer. Spain was never really Jewish, even though part of the Iberian Peninsula might have been. “Jewish Spain” therefore encompasses a series of historical contradictions that cannot be dissociated from the different representations of cultural memory that are the subject of this book: literary texts, memoirs, oral histories, biographies, films, and heritage tourism material. The book offers close readings of these different texts and discusses the strategies that authors use in their reconstruction of the past. *Jewish Spain* provides a comprehensive analysis of Jewish life in twentieth-century Spain and of the ways in which Jewish communities interact with other communities in key historical moments.

The foundations for modern Spain were set in the late fifteenth century, when Ferdinand and Isabella, *los reyes católicos* (the Catholic monarchs), unified the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. With the reconquest of al-Andalus and the ensuing conquest of the Americas, Spain became an empire firmly grounded in enslavement, exclusion, and the resulting homogenization of language and religion within the empire’s boundaries. But the same monarchs who forged this imperial nation would also sign the expulsion edict, calling into question the

very notion of a “Jewish Spain.” The term “Jewish Spain,” however, involves a nexus of relations centered on the complex history of Spain as it engages with European powers, countries along the Mediterranean, and the New World. Particular historical, geopolitical, cultural, and religious connections that mark contemporary Spain involve critical relations between the Spanish authorities and the Jews, illuminating the ways in which this century inevitably revisits and revises the past—or, in other terms, memories that are distinctively Mediterranean.

The Sephardic diaspora took place across the Mediterranean; the texts to be discussed locate their stories in the Mediterranean cities of Barcelona, Girona, Salonika, Tangier, and Tétouan, and a significant part of this book engages with Spanish colonialism in Morocco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The events during World War II that led to deliverance from the Holocaust in Spain also took place in the Mediterranean “theater of war.” Location, however, does not explain it all: the texts also involve other non-Mediterranean (at least in the geographical sense) sites, including Paris, Puerto Rico, and Budapest. The final verses of Marta Pessarrodona’s poem “Weissensee” illustrate why a Mediterranean framework is useful for understanding how the traumatic memory of exile during World War II traverses both Europe and the Mediterranean world. “Weissensee,” which describes the well-known Jewish cemetery outside Berlin, ends with the following lines: “A gravestone is missing / Walter . . . / Ask the Mediterranean . . .” (*Berlin suite*, 57).⁵ The missing gravestone would belong to German philosopher Walter Benjamin, who committed suicide in the border town of Portbou in 1940.⁶ By bringing up the Mediterranean, Pessarrodona foregrounds the relevance of Benjamin’s suicide not simply for German Jews but also for a cultural region that transcends political borders. Today, “Passages,” Dani Karavan’s memorial to Benjamin in Portbou, reminds us not only of the philosopher’s passing but also of the relationship between his turbulent life and times and the ever-changing sea that the monument overlooks. In a later essay, Pessarrodona returns to her own appeal at the end of “Weissensee” and writes of a “bloody sea” (“En defensa de Israel,” 229) that connects the violence of World War II with the historical Mediterranean world and the current conflict between Israel and Palestine. This is not to imply that these conflicts are equivalent or even comparable but rather that

an emphasis on the sea that “unites and separates” also means that any study of Jewish communities in Spain and in the Mediterranean region will necessarily entail an understanding of historical interactions among Jews, Christians, and Muslims and of the ways in which these interactions appear in different forms of cultural production.

The particular vision of the Mediterranean that materializes in these pages shares the attributes of “old maps,” those that according to Pedrag Matvejević “have lost their sharp edges; their colors have faded; they resemble memory” (*Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*, 95). The Mediterranean map traced in this book, with its soft edges and worn colors, not only resembles but indeed charts memory or, as Michael Rothberg (and Richard Terdiman) would phrase it, “the past made present” (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 4). This understanding of memory implies that memory is “a contemporary phenomenon” and that memory also is “a form of work, working through, labor, or action” (4). The two qualities of memory (memory as of the present; memory as a form of work) are crucial in a book that engages with the ways in which writers and witnesses make meaning of the Jewish past in contemporary Spain. Memory and its depiction are therefore at the center of the conflicts and controversies that inform the contradictory term “Jewish Spain.”

The different forms of memory work to be discussed involve a past of loss and a longing for a world that perhaps never was. At times the work of memory resists the drive to resolve the contradictions of the past in a tidy package. The stories that are discussed in the pages that follow have enduring effects in the present; their endings are open and tentative at best, despite ongoing attempts to provide a sense of closure or completeness; and they reveal a longing for a place and a time that never really existed. Thus, different reactions to loss, including trauma, melancholia, and nostalgia, become evident in the narratives that engage with and map the meanings of “Jewish Spain” in the tumultuous twentieth century. Trauma does not refer to a specific event or moment but to the ways in which an event that was not fully assimilated is belatedly experienced in the present. “To be traumatized,” writes Cathy Caruth, “is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 4). The actual events include those of distant but also more recent history, ranging from the start of the Inquisition

in 1478 and the 1492 expulsion to the Holocaust, which are often conflated in what Sebastián Miranda, a character in Juana Salabert's novel *Velódromo de invierno* (Winter velodrome) calls a "perpetual present" and a "magma" (73). Challenging simplified connections between the events that took place in the fifteenth century and those that occurred in twentieth-century Spain is one of the goals of *Jewish Spain*; underlining the persistent ways in which such connections appear in the different narratives about the past is another.

Melancholia, as formulated by Freud in his seminal essay "Mourning and Melancholia," begins as mourning, as a reaction "to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). The work of mourning makes it possible to overcome that loss, allowing, in Freud's terms, the ego to become "free and uninhibited again" (245). But melancholia ensues if the work of mourning, which for Paul Ricoeur can also be compared to the work of remembering (*Memory, History, Forgetting*, 72), cannot be carried out. Much of the literature on melancholia is devoted to a sense of closure or cure, in which mourning, not melancholia, is the desirable state following any kind of loss.⁷ Ranjana Khanna, who critiques the relationship between Freudian psychoanalysis and colonialism in *Dark Continents*, further emphasizes the differences between mourning and melancholia, arguing that the "success" of the work of mourning will always be tenuous because "there will always be some remainder of the lost object" (24).⁸ Khanna's understanding of "the inaccessible remainder" as "the kernel of melancholia, unknown, inassimilable, interruptive, and present" (24) is particularly pertinent: a map of "Jewish Spain" would feature the remainders that are the part of memory work that resists the drive to coherence.

"Nostalgia," a term originally coined in the seventeenth century to name an affliction that, once again, is a consequence of a loss, shares some of melancholia's traits. Nostalgia is a longing for a home (a place, a time) that has vanished. Because the 1492 expulsion and Sepharad itself are such prevalent motifs in texts that engage with twentieth- and even twenty-first-century Spain, understanding the ways in which nostalgia operates in this context is particularly important. Svetlana Boym differentiates between "restorative nostalgia," which "manifests itself in

total reconstructions of monuments of the past,” and “reflective nostalgia,” which “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time” (*The Future of Nostalgia*, 41). Both forms of nostalgia appear recurrently in the texts that engage with Jewish absence and presence in contemporary Spain. Restorative nostalgia materializes in a specific form in twentieth-century Spanish philo-Sephardism (which also is strongly nationalistic) as well as in colonialist discourse from the same period (which for the present study will be particularly important in relation to Spain’s presence in Morocco). The pages that follow, however, will focus primarily on the interaction between the two forms of nostalgia in a range of texts.

As will become apparent in the map that materializes in this book, the work of memory is inexorably linked to geography, to the actual locations on the Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean region, and across the space of the Sephardic diaspora. The plaques described at the beginning of this chapter and the four forms of writing that they display are also examples of what Pierre Nora has called *lieux de mémoire*, the places “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself” (“Between Memory and History,” 7); they are “moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded” (12). The *lieux de mémoire* are fragments of a past that in its entirety is as vast and unknowable as the sea. As Michael Rothberg notes, Nora’s conceptualization of memory has received substantial and rigorous criticism, despite its evident importance for any approach to the past. It is precisely the flaws of Nora’s conceptualization of the past, however, that also make it very suitable for the scope of this book. As Rothberg observes, Nora’s work involves a problematic binary opposition between history and memory that is characteristic of a “nostalgia-tinged tale of decline” and a “nostalgic plotting of loss” (“Between Memory and Memory” 4, 6).⁹ Because the very concept of a *lieu de mémoire* is, almost by definition, a nostalgic notion, it is appropriate for a discussion of Jewish Spain and the loss of Sepharad.

This book tells the story not only of the earlier-mentioned plaques but of many “moments of history torn away from the movement of history,” ambiguously located in the in-between, “no longer quite

life, not yet death,” including the ruins of Jewish quarters across the Iberian Peninsula that have been restored to showcase a heritage attraction for national and international tourists; the now vanished *Vélodrome d’hiver* (winter velodrome) where the Paris Jews were rounded up in 1942; the train tracks that once crisscrossed Europe, all leading to death and suffering; the plaques in Budapest, Israel, Zaragoza, and Rome that today commemorate the actions of two men (a Spanish diplomat and an Italian heroic impostor) to protect the Jews of Budapest; and the signposted route across the Pyrenees that Walter Benjamin took fleeing the Nazis and Vichy France in 1940. These more tangible places also conjure up other realms of memory of a more distant past: of Jewish life before 1492 (and, possibly, before 1391)—with the highly mythologized keys to their homes that Iberian Jews supposedly took with them on their long diaspora—and even Sepharad itself, or at least what Sepharad was and is imagined to be. These are the places of a Mediterranean memory.

The location of *Jewish Spain* within the field of Mediterranean studies—a field that Sharon Kinoshita has discussed as “less a way of defining or delimiting a geographic space (as in the famous formulation of the Mediterranean as the region of the olive and the vine) than a heuristic device for remapping traditional disciplinary divides” (“Medieval Mediterranean Literature,” 602)—makes it possible to tackle questions that are pertinent within a national and a transnational framework. Both contexts (and the relations between them) need to be addressed simultaneously in a book that is grounded in Spanish cultural studies and Jewish studies. The Mediterranean framing does not imply an easy evasion of the issues that arise when considering “the national” as a category of analysis. Rather, a close understanding of Jewish Spain within a Mediterranean context makes evident some of the unresolved questions and conflicts that lie at the heart of the Spanish nation today: the historical identification with a specific race, religion, and ethnicity; the consequent exclusion of all others; and the relationship between past and present.

Current conflicts in the Middle East polarize perceptions of Jews in such a way that, as seen with the plaques in Barcelona, remainders of a Jewish medieval past in Iberia have become part of a contemporary struggle over the meaning of Jewish absence and presence. *Jewish*

Spain will chart the relationships among these remainders, relationships that reveal what Michael Rothberg has called “multidirectional memory.” Rothberg’s *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Globalization* provides a productive way to understand how different histories of violence relate to one another. To move beyond a model of “competitive memory”—in which, for example, Holocaust memory and “historical memory” of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) would compete in “a zero-sum struggle for scarce resources”—Rothberg delineates a multidirectional form of memory, “subject to ongoing negotiations, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative” (*Multidirectional Memory*, 3). This suggests that rather than uncritically reassigning concepts developed in the context of traumatic memories of the Holocaust (such as Marianne Hirsch’s notion of “postmemory” in *Family Frames*), multidirectional memory makes it possible to understand instances in which memories of different moments come together, sometimes forcefully. According to Rothberg, “recognizing the multidirectionality of memory encourages us to pay close attention to the circulation of historical memories in encounters whose meanings are complex and overdetermined, instead of proceeding from the assumption that the presence of one history in collective memory entails the erasure or dilution of all others” (*Multidirectional Memory*, 179). Rothberg demonstrates that there is far more room for “the past made present” in national memories than we might initially think, but this does not mean that competition over memory is not a reality—it certainly is, as even the three historical plaques in the medieval Jewish quarter of Barcelona show. The ways in which the memories of different histories of violence relate to and even invigorate rather than silence one another (for the purposes of this book, memories of the Holocaust and the Spanish Civil War) constitute a crucial component of what “Jewish Spain” means today.

The debate on memory in Spain may have reached its zenith with the passing of the Law of Historical Memory in 2007. Although this debate takes place along clearly defined ideological lines, Spain’s extremely contradictory relationship with Jews in the 1930s and 1940s blurs these lines. Because projections of “what Jews are” constantly changed in this period, philo-Sephardic and anti-Semitic attitudes cannot be clearly aligned with either Republican or Nationalist Spain.

Thus, before discussing how the “historical memory” of the period operates, we need to understand the ways in which depictions of Jews were produced in reactionary and progressive discourse at the time and how these representations intersect with colonial discourse. In addition to revealing the importance of including Spain’s colonial relationship with Morocco in the history of the Civil War and the dictatorship, *Jewish Spain* will consider texts produced in Spain, the colonial metropolis, about the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco (1912–1956) that show the ways in which the identifications and roles of Jews constantly shifted, adjusting according to historical circumstances.

A historically informed scrutiny of these interactions will prevent an all-too-easy fusion of the medieval *convivencia* (a term that philologist Américo Castro uses to name the coexistence of the three cultures in medieval Iberia) and contemporary encounters, crises, and clashes among Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Mediterranean world. Castro, described by David Nirenberg as “the most influential advocate for the study of Jewish and Islamic influence on Spanish culture” (“Figures of Thought and Figures of Flesh,” 40), began paying attention to Jewish culture early in his career in the 1920s, when he was conducting a linguistic study of the language that the Jews of Morocco spoke.¹⁰ With his book *España en su historia* (Spain and its history, 1948), written from his exile in the United States, Castro was the first Spanish intellectual to argue that, before the 711 invasion, “Spain” did not exist.¹¹

I think that the adjective “Spanish” (*español*) cannot be strictly applied to those who lived in the Iberian Peninsula prior to the Moorish invasion. If we call the Visigoths, the Romans, the Iberians, etc. Spanish, then we must find another name for the people in whose lives is articulated everything that has been created (or destroyed) in that Peninsula from the tenth century till today. (*The Structure of Spanish History*, 46)

Castro’s argument lies at the heart of one of the main claims I make in this book, that understanding Spain today necessarily involves an engagement with the Muslim and Jewish past; Spain did not become “Spain” in spite of its Jewish and Muslim past (in many ways the position put forth by Castro’s opponent, Claudio Sánchez Albornoz) but

because of it. Castro's own work—which he also continuously challenged and revised in his lifetime—cannot today be taken at face value either. His vision of Jews in medieval Iberia is undoubtedly problematic, and although he made it possible, in 1948, to consider Spanish reality as one of religious, cultural, and ethnic pluralism rather than singularity, Castro's work contributed to a “mythification,” as Ana Menny terms it, of Judeo-Spanish history (“Entre reconocimiento y rechazo,” 143); or, in Paul Julian Smith's succinct account, “having rejected the shibboleths of racial purity and exclusivity, Castro goes on to set up a role for Jews and *conversos* that is dangerously ahistorical” (*Representing the Other*, 47).

Nevertheless, Castro's work shows that a Jewish element is always and unvaryingly present in Spain in the form of its remainders, traces, projections, fears, and desires. A similar argument may be made for Muslim presence, as María Rosa Menocal, David Wacks, Patricia Grieve, and Barbara Fuchs have shown in the context of medieval and early modern Spain, and as Luce López-Baralt has traced in the fourteen centuries her work spans.¹² Writing about twentieth-century Spain, Susan Martin-Márquez and Daniela Flesler show the intrinsic ways in which the past also informs the present in relation to Muslim Spain, and, more specifically, in Spain's relationship with Morocco. Martin-Márquez's *Disorientations* centers specifically on colonial discourse and Spanish colonialism in Africa, while Flesler's *The Return of the Moor* focuses on the depiction of contemporary immigration of Africans to Spain in relation to Spain's historical (and literary) relationship with the figure of the “Moor.” Both books are significant contributions that make it possible to further understand and articulate the international and trans-Mediterranean implications of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship and to include the history of Spanish colonialism in Morocco—mostly ignored or marginal at best—within contemporary international perspectives on coloniality and postcoloniality. Historians Sebastian Balfour and Isabelle Rohr discuss in great detail the contradictory policies and opportunistic rhetoric that shaped the Spanish presence in Morocco in the early twentieth century. In Martin-Márquez's and Flesler's books it becomes clear how these contradictions played out in everyday life, in low and high forms of cultural production, and how these contradictions persist in contemporary representations of North African immigration

in Spain. Both books are stellar examples of cultural analysis, revealing how important it is to understand Spain's colonial past in relation to the nation's increasingly multicultural society because, without taking into account both "Muslim Spain" and "Jewish Spain," it is not possible to understand and articulate what Spain was, is, and will be.

Since the three cultures that once shared the Iberian Peninsula are still involved in wide-ranging conflicts in the Mediterranean world, it is easy to turn *convivencia* into an object of nostalgia. We must understand this historically unique cohabitation through a consideration of the antagonistic relationships among the different cultures and the ways in which exchanges, ranging from trade to cultural translations, were possible. Demystifying medieval *convivencia* is beyond the purpose of this book because the events under discussion take place in the twentieth century, not in medieval Iberia. However, the era of *convivencia*, the establishment of the Inquisition, the expulsion, and the emergence of crypto-Judaism are recurrent themes in narratives of deliverance from the Holocaust in Spain.

In narratives of deliverance, different and often contradictory understandings of what *convivencia* entails always play a key role, revealing a fusion of past and present that effaces a 500-year history. David Nirenberg explains why such a fusion is so problematic in *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*:

This focus on the *longue durée* means that events are read less within their local contexts than according to a teleology leading, more or less explicitly, to the Holocaust. Similarly, instead of emphasizing local or even individual opinions about minorities, they focus on collective images, representations and stereotypes of the "other." The actions of groups or individuals are ignored in favor of structures of thought that are believed to govern these actions. Historians therefore act as geologists, tracing the ancient processes by which collective anxieties accreted into a persecutory landscape that has changed little over the past millennium. (5)

Following Nirenberg's model, *Jewish Spain* will focus on "difference and contingency" rather than on "homogeneity and teleology," but it will also show that in different works the authors clearly and perhaps consciously recreate the kind of "persecutory landscape" that Niren-

berg discusses. Thus, this book will not reveal what *convivencia* was or was not; rather, it will examine the shifting meanings that *convivencia* attains in specific moments in history that include the Spanish Second Republic (1931–1936), the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), World War II, the different commemorative events that took place in 1992, and, finally, the first decade of the twenty-first century, as new migratory flows, mainly from North Africa and Latin America, are radically redefining Spain's complex history of inclusions and exclusions.

The events and texts discussed in this book are by no means the only ones that are relevant for Jewish Spain; the essays collected in "Revisiting Jewish Spain," a 2011 special issue of the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, reveal the wide variety of forms in which "Spanish/Jewish junctures" (Flesler, Linhard, and Pérez Melgosa, "Introduction," 1) intersect with Spanish modernity.¹³ *Jewish Spain* is therefore not an exhaustive account but instead offers a series of multidirectional inquiries, ultimately aiming to show that constant processes of identification and disidentification with a Jewish other and with "Jewish Spain" intersect with cultural debates in different moments in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as in the past decade.

Hazel Gold points out that "in the later eighteenth and nineteenth century the figure of 'the Jew' inhabits the principal discourses of Spanish society—theology, philosophy, philology, politics, art, literature, journalism—even though Jews are nowhere to be found within the borders of the nation" ("Illustrated Histories," 90). Twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Spain saw many instances in which Jews and Jewish culture (for the most part perceived as absent from the Iberian Peninsula) resurfaced in cultural life and political discourse. These instances include the philo-Sephardic movement in the early twentieth century, which was inextricably linked with Spain's colonial ambitions and failures, the highly mythologized protection of Jews (Ashkenazim and Sephardim) during World War II, and the reconstruction of Jewish heritage for tourism purposes. The revalorization of Jewish cultural elements (which, like Muslim elements, form part of the cultural fabric of the Spanish past, present, and future) was marked by political opportunism throughout the twentieth century.¹⁴

Since 1992, when King Juan Carlos welcomed the descendants of the once expelled Jews back to Spain in a landmark speech at a synagogue

in Madrid, a return to Sepharad has become a common motif in diverse cultural fields. Because the Jewish population in Spain remains significantly small (approximately 40,000 individuals), this return is both symbolic and uneven, standing out against the absence, or at least near absence, of Jews. In the introduction to “Revisiting Jewish Spain,” the authors note that “this absence is overdetermined with meanings connected to questions of Spanish identity in relation to its silenced histories; to the current reaffirmation of local, regional, and intra-national identities within Spain; and to the remapping of these historical, local, regional, and intra-national identities within Europe” (1).

Contemporary representations of the historical relationship between Spain and the Jews—in popular fiction and mass media, as well as in Jewish cultural heritage tour materials—follow the kind of “conventional narrative structure” that Dominick LaCapra describes, with “a beginning, a middle, and an end, whereby the end recapitulates the beginning after the trials of the middle and gives you (at least on the level of insight) some realization of what it was all about” (*Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 156). Within this narrative structure “Jewish Spain” begins in medieval Iberia and the era of coexistence; the trials of the middle include persecution in the fourteenth century, the establishment of the Inquisition, and the expulsion. Throughout this narrative, struggles over “purity of blood” defined inclusions and violent exclusions in Spain. Jews remained absent from the Iberian Peninsula until commemorations of the expulsion initiated a complicated restoration of “Jewish Spain.” The narrative would then come full circle with a mythical return to Sepharad.

In 1990 the Sephardic Communities received the Prince of Asturias Award for Concord, an award that in 2007 was given to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. Today, the most visible manifestations of Jewish heritage in Spain are the restored synagogues, Jewish quarters (calls, juderías, or aljamas) of many cities and towns, the Jewish-themed museums (in Toledo, Girona, and Cordova), and the increasing opportunities to visit, either literally or virtually, the remnants of “Jewish Spain.” Tourism, despite its more leisurely connotation, therefore forms one of the ways in which the relationship between present and past is depicted in contemporary Spain. Tourism also needs to be taken seriously as one of the major factors that contributed to the

country's modernization process.¹⁵ Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, who have studied Jewish heritage tourism in Spain, show that although efforts to recover, reconstruct, and package Spain's Jewish quarters certainly provide new visibility for Jewish heritage on the Iberian peninsula, past prejudices and antagonisms toward Jews persist within the institutions (or are voiced by individuals who work for these institutions) that are staging the ruins of Sepharad. The Spanish publishing market has also benefited from a renewed interest in all things Sepharad: stories about convivencia, the Inquisition, the expulsion, and the return to the lost homeland have become popular subjects for best-selling novels.¹⁶

The narrative that culminates with the symbolic return to Sepharad after a 500-year absence is partial, even misguided, but it nevertheless continues to appear in diverse forms of expression. Rather than rectifying the deficient yet popular version of the history of "Jewish Spain," this book centers on the meanings that a perceived absence and a complicated presence of Jews entailed in the twentieth century. Thus, understanding "Jewish Spain" today requires zeroing in on those moments when Jewish history, literature, and identities intersect with Spanish history, literature, and identities, revealing the ways in which Jewishness is written in and out of Spanish national narratives. Although parts of *Jewish Spain* address Sephardic culture and history, this book is not about the Sephardim or about "Sephardism," a concept that Yael Halevi-Wise calls a "politicized literary phenomenon" (*Sephardism*, 5). Halevi-Wise recognizes a "Sephardic paradigm" (26), in a variety of literary texts that arise from diverse national and cultural contexts. She argues that "two political systems" inform the Sephardic paradigm: "on the one hand, the ethnic and religious pluralism known as *convivencia*, associated with certain periods of Islamic rule and the multicultural court of Alfonso X, and on the other hand, expulsion and inquisition associated with Catholic homogeneity in Iberia and its colonies" (26). The literature analyzed by the contributors to Halevi-Wise's collection shares common themes with the texts discussed in the pages that follow, particularly with regard to the ways in which the conflict between pluralism and homogeneity appears consistently in the texts that feature intersections between Jewish and Spanish life.¹⁷