

## Introduction

At the heart of this book is the literary interpretation of five texts that originated in early modern Europe between 1499 and 1627. In this process, I examine Romance literatures from a perspective that closely links the change in genres and the characteristics specific to literary texts of the time with early sixteenth and seventeenth-century history. This study considers essential texts of the epoch, the interpretation of which has hitherto focused mainly on the Jewish, “New Christian,” or Marranic<sup>1</sup> affiliation of their authors, whether alleged or actual: *La Celestina*; the *Dialoghi d'amore* by Leone Ebreo; the first picaresque novel, *Lazarillo de Tormes*; Michel de Montaigne's *Essais*; and João Pinto Delgado's poeticizing treatments of biblical texts.

It is the intention of this study to redirect attention away from the author's origins and toward an analysis of the texts themselves. Of particular interest in this context is the varying articulation of the early modern individual, portrayed in each of the analyzed texts in a specific way, yet always in interaction with Holy Scripture and the sphere of the sacred, in an act of artistic production. A particular role is attributed to the historical-theological backdrop of the Inquisition, the conversions, and the French Wars of Religion. The consciousness of autonomous productivity represented differently in each text is understood as a precondition for intellectual consciousness emerging into the modern age. The interpretations suggested here will not supply further arguments for the author's belonging; instead I will show that from a literary studies perspective, the development of early modern subjective consciousness can—at

least in significant part—also be explained as a universalization of Jewish experiences.

For the purpose of examining the diversity of early modern Romance literatures, their Jewish components are useful both as striking examples and as a point of departure for comparison and contrast. Many aspects of cultural diversity in Europe are mirrored in the history of European Jewry, since hardly any other minority had to solve the question of “identity” as urgently and in as differentiated a manner as the Jews.<sup>2</sup> As a history of the transformation of belonging, European-Jewish history is able to provide analytical categories that facilitate the examination of other affiliations and their relations to each other.

In situating the epistemic interest of this study, these introductory remarks include a historical contextualization as well as a detailed literature review. Romance studies have engaged with the Jewish contribution to Romance languages and literatures in phases of varying intensity. While this has mainly meant the study of texts written in the Judeo-Romance languages, the coexistence of Arabic, Jewish, and Christian cultures was certainly acknowledged as a historical background for Romance literatures overall. Spanish literature represented the most common point of reference for such considerations. In the first half of the twentieth century, Américo Castro (1885–1972) vehemently emphasized the importance of the respective constellations in cultural history. In his books *España en su historia* (1948) and *De la edad conflictiva* (1961), Castro had pointed out the influence of the Iberian Peninsula’s Jewish and Arabic history on the development of Spanish culture in comparison to the contributions of Visigothic culture. He analyzed Spain’s post-sixteenth-century decline as follows:

El motive era muy simple: la casi totalidad del pensamiento científico y filosófico y de la técnica más afinada había sido tarea de hispano-judíos, de la casta hispano-hebrea, integrada antes por judíos de religión, y desde 1492 por cristianos nuevos. . . . El retroceso cultural de los españoles desde mediados del siglo XVI no se debe a ninguna Contrareforma, ni a la fobia anticientífica de Felipe II, sino simplemente al terror a ser tomado por judío. En el capítulo II de la edición renovada de *La realidad histórica de España* (1962) hago ver,

sin sombra de duda, que la famosa limpieza de sangre del siglo XVI, el prurito de cristianidad vieja y de genealogía sin mácula judía, son mera transposición hispano-cristiana de lo que secularmente venía aconteciendo entre hispano-judíos.<sup>3</sup>

This passage from Castro's study shows that he sought a greater acknowledgment of the diversity of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century religious and cultural configurations; that said, his argument is shaped overall by the discourses of his time. For instance, it is not free of essentialist expressions describing allegedly "typical characteristics" of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, and of *conversos* and Marranos, thus hindering Castro's understanding of matters beyond these essentialisms in his otherwise often-stimulating analyses.

Castro's student Stephen Gilman mainly focused on the converted Jews' contributions to Spanish culture in his literary scholarship. In his view, not only were the *conversos* of central importance for Spanish government administration and religious reforms, but, most important, "the converts had given the world" the novel, the main literary genre of the modern age. Mateo Alemán, Alonso Nuñez de Reinoso, Jorge de Montemayor, the anonymous author of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Fernando de Rojas, Diego de San Pedro, and Alonso Martínez de Toledo had created this narrative genre.<sup>4</sup>

There was, however, considerable opposition to these perspectives that should be taken into account. In 1957, Spanish medievalist Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz,<sup>5</sup> exiled in Argentina, published his study *España, un enigma histórico*, which was conceived—among other things—as a reply to Américo Castro's theses. Sánchez-Albornoz summarized his rigorous rejection of Américo Castro's conception of history as follows:

The Jewish has contributed to the creation of the Spanish not on the paths of light, but on dark paths . . . , and it can produce nothing which distinguishes it against us, for it has left us so much deformation and misfortune and has damaged our potential for development as well as our historical credibility.<sup>6</sup>

Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz's abrasive polemic against Américo Castro represents a dispute among historians that has affected literary studies

as well. Following the end of the Franco regime and the subsequent democratization of the 1970s and 1980s, and since the five-hundred-year-anniversary celebrations of the epochal year 1492 at the latest, the study of Hispanic literature has increasingly turned toward analyses of Sephardic and Andalusian-Arabic culture and literature. Juan Goytisolo played a very significant role in the increased acknowledgment of matters concerning Spanish-Arabic relations. To this day, his literary, essayist, and journalistic works are aimed at opposing the denial of Arabic influences by Francoist Spain with an appropriate appreciation of its Muslim history and thus, as an author and essayist, contributing to a corrective appraisal of the Spanish past.<sup>7</sup> Taking a decidedly pro-Arabic position, however, Goytisolo considers the Jewish contribution to the development of the Iberian Peninsula's culture to be much less important than this study does.

Essential to a scholarly discussion concerning the significance of the Inquisition and Marranism for historical and philosophical study are Israël Salvator Révah's works on Portuguese literature and its connections with Judaism and Marranism. In their preface to an anthology dedicated to Révah (2001), Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon acknowledge the importance of Révah's scholarly works on Uriel da Costa, Manuel Fernandes de Villareal, Miguel de Barrios, and Baruch Spinoza, on the Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) language, and on the procedures of the Inquisition, and they have attempted to make these works accessible to future generations of scholars.<sup>8</sup> Révah's studies on Portuguese crypto-Judaism and Marranism in Amsterdam had already been compiled and thus made accessible to a new readership by Carsten Lorenz Wilke and Henry Méchoulan in 1995.<sup>9</sup> The works of Révah's contemporaries Haim Beinart, Julio Caro Baroja, and António Domínguez deserve mention at this point as well.

Any survey of interdisciplinary studies must also make mention of the fact that these questions were in fact articulated at a relatively early point. In 1859, the Leipzig publishing house of Hermann Mendelssohn published a monograph titled *Sephardim—Romanische Poesien der Juden in Spanien: Ein Beitrag zur Literatur und Geschichte der spanisch-portugiesischen Juden* (Sephardim—Romance poetry by the Jews of Spain: A study on the literature and history of the Spanish-

Portuguese Jews), which directed attention toward the importance of Spanish-Jewish culture for Spanish and European literature. Its author, Meyer Kayserling, thus opened up a new perspective for the still-new German-language study of Hispanic literature in several regards. Kayserling's study combined historical and literary analyses, a combination that was programmatic for him: "History is as inseparable from literature as literature is from history: a principle that historians of Jewish history and literature in particular would do well to take heed of."<sup>10</sup>

The nineteenth century also saw the birth of *filología hispánica* in Spain. Beginning in the middle of the century, numerous scholarly works on literature were published; and scarcely ten years before Meyer Kayserling's book, Spanish Jewry's contribution to Spanish literature was acknowledged for the first time—albeit very briefly—in the *Historia crítica de la literatura española* published beginning in 1860 by Madrid's professor of Spanish literature, José Amador de los Ríos (1818–1878). He also authored a history of the Iberian Peninsula's Jews, *Historia política, social y religiosa de los judíos de España y Portugal* (1875/76). Similarly, in his studies on the Sephardic *romancero* tradition<sup>11</sup> and his cultural studies monographs *Orígenes del español* (1926) and *La España del Cid* (1929), Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1869–1968) paid a great deal of attention to the particularities of the interactions among Christian, Jewish, and Muslim cultures in medieval Spain.

In post-World War II Germany, several overviews of the study of Hispanic literatures have been published since the mid-1990s that have provided the stimulus for further critical engagement with the productivity of Jewish culture in Spanish literature before and after 1492. Among these, the studies by André Stoll,<sup>12</sup> Manfred Tietz,<sup>13</sup> Dietrich Briesemeister,<sup>14</sup> Albert Gier,<sup>15</sup> Eugen Heinen,<sup>16</sup> Norbert Rehrmann and Andreas Koechert,<sup>17</sup> and Leo Pollmann<sup>18</sup> deserve to be mentioned. All of them have covered the pertinent thematic context from different angles and presented an overview. In Spanish-language Hispanic studies, the relevant works on this topic are those by Iacob M. Hassán and Ricardo Izquierdo Benito,<sup>19</sup> Felipe Pedraza Jiménez and Milagros Rodríguez Cáceres,<sup>20</sup> and Ángel Sáenz-Badillos and Judit Targarona Borrás.<sup>21</sup>

The year 1492 not only stands for the discovery of a new continent, it also marks the end of the last Muslim empire on Spanish soil: the beginning of the year 1492 saw the fall of the Emirate of Granada following the capitulation of Boabdil, last king of the Nasrid dynasty.<sup>22</sup> Although the Catholic kings had guaranteed the Muslims and Jews of Granada protection in the Treaty of Granada, all Jews who did not convert to Christianity within four months had to leave Spain according to the edict issued by the *reyes católicos* on March 31, 1492. Thus ended the tradition of Jewish life in Spain that went as far back as late antiquity, for Jews had already settled in Roman Hispania, mostly in the southern part of the peninsula. In Tarragona, Tortosa, and Mérida, burial slabs document Jewish settlements between 100 and 50 BCE. Following the Jewish revolts under Hadrian and Titus, the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Bar Kokhba revolt, the capture of Jerusalem, and the diaspora after 135 CE, many Jews fled to Sepharad and other regions in the Mediterranean.<sup>23</sup> The first written evidence of Jewish life on the Iberian Peninsula appears in the canons issued by the Synod of Elvira (ca. 306 CE, near contemporary Seville).<sup>24</sup>

Following Roderic's defeat by Tariq Ibn Ziyad in 711, the era of Al-Andalus began. The coexistence of Jews, Muslims, and Christians was greatly hindered by the rule of the Almoravids (1046–1147) and the Almohads (1147–1269), as a consequence of which many Jews moved north to the Christian states of Castile and Aragon, at whose courts they enjoyed protection as a religious minority. From the eleventh to the fourteenth century, Spanish-Jewish culture and philosophy flourished. Beginning in the fourteenth century, conversions of Jews to Christianity increased as a result of growing anti-Judaism in Spain.<sup>25</sup>

The Ottoman Empire granted freedom of religion to the Sephardim in the aftermath of the 1492 Spanish Edict of Expulsion, as a result of which about 200,000 Jews migrated to eastern Mediterranean lands. Thessaloniki and the entirety of the Balkans became a center of Judeo-Spanish communities, who maintained their cultural identity and language.<sup>26</sup>

The historiography of Spanish Jewry first culminated in the 1848 publication of a work by Elias Hiam Lindo.<sup>27</sup> This was followed by

a study by José Amador de los Ríos;<sup>28</sup> and then, in the beginning of the twentieth century, by a work by Yitzhak F. Baer on the Jews in Christian Spain, the first part of which was titled *Aragón and Navarre*, published in Berlin between 1929 and 1936;<sup>29</sup> and a book by Eliyahu Ashtor;<sup>30</sup> as well as several more-recent studies on the history of the Sephardim.<sup>31</sup>

The subject of the Spanish Inquisition has been well researched from a historical perspective and well covered by several general works from recent decades in particular. The reference texts include Henry Kamen's repeatedly revised study,<sup>32</sup> the various editions of Cecil Roth's seminal book,<sup>33</sup> Benzion Netanyahu's works,<sup>34</sup> and John Edwards's history of the Inquisition.<sup>35</sup> Ángel Alcalá complemented these general works with his studies on the persecution of intellectuals by the Spanish Inquisition,<sup>36</sup> while studies by Charles Amiel<sup>37</sup> and Francisco Bethencourt<sup>38</sup> have provided vital information on the Inquisition in Portugal. A German-language study on the Inquisition was authored by Fritz Heymann.<sup>39</sup>

The essays authored by Jaime Contreras and Gustav Henningsen<sup>40</sup> as well as those by Jean Pierre Dedieu<sup>41</sup> represent the basic reference texts for the methodical analysis of the archival material on the Inquisition used for this study. The volume *Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, edited by Mark D. Meyerson and Edward D. English, compiles essential essays on the subject.<sup>42</sup>

Luce López Barralt's study of the influence of Islamic culture on Spanish literature<sup>43</sup> is of relevance for literary studies, since it sheds light on a continuing desideratum in Hispanic studies for an Arabic studies perspective. There is no shortage of works on Judeo-Spanish texts but of analyses examining the productivity of Jewish culture for Spanish literary history overall.

In 1967, an article by Eugenio Asensio on the "peculiaridad" (*peculiaridad*) of *converso* literature was published in the *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*.<sup>44</sup> Ángel Alcalá Galve examined the image of Jews and *conversos* in the period between 1474 and 1516.<sup>45</sup> The publication of the anthology *Judíos, sefarditas, conversos: La expulsión de 1492 y sus consecuencias*, edited by Alcalá Galve, led to increased interest in the questions raised there. Twenty years ago, Eliyahu Ashtor had already

provided a highly useful introduction to the Spanish-language documents found in the Cairo Genizah and held at the University of Cambridge.<sup>46</sup> Richard David Barnett,<sup>47</sup> Josep María Solá-Solé,<sup>48</sup> and Ron Barkai<sup>49</sup> attempted to give an overview of the cultural coexistence of Arabic, Jewish, and Christian lives. Studies published in the 1990s by Ross Brann,<sup>50</sup> Miguel Ángel Bunes Ibarra,<sup>51</sup> Enrique Cantera Montenegro,<sup>52</sup> and Bernard Dov Cooperman<sup>53</sup> reinforced the substantial acknowledgment in literary studies of the triangle of Spanish, Muslim, and Jewish cultural influences.

Evidence for lost Jewish and *converso* literature in medieval Castile and Aragon was presented by Alan D. Deyermond in 1996.<sup>54</sup> An important impulse for increased interest in the amalgamation of Romance and Jewish culture and literature on the Iberian Peninsula was provided by the exhibition *Ten Centuries of Hispano-Jewish Culture* organized by the Genizah Research Unit and shown at the Cambridge University Library on the occasion of the five-hundredth anniversary of the expulsion of Spanish Jews.<sup>55</sup>

Miriam Bodian,<sup>56</sup> Thomas F. Glick,<sup>57</sup> and Yosef Kaplan<sup>58</sup> have presented vital studies on the development of a “European” *converso* identity. A survey of literature originating from Spain during the period of *convivencia* titled *The Literature of Al-Andalus* was published in 2000. It attempts to merge three philological perspectives—the three editors are scholars of Romance, Hebrew, and Arabic studies, respectively.<sup>59</sup> The main focus of this important book is on Islamic culture, however. The foundations for a proper history of *converso* literature were laid by Gregory B. Kaplan in 2002.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to these general works, many individual studies<sup>61</sup> have been published in the past twenty years, the broad spectrum of which renders individual mention or discussion impossible. They are mentioned wherever they touch on the relevant context. Apart from studies on individual authors writing in the Hebrew, Judeo-Spanish, or Castilian language that are focused mainly on literary history, a number of studies on the image of the Sephardim in various literatures and cultures that concentrate on historical memory have also been published.<sup>62</sup> An entire spectrum of historical studies on the history of Spanish Jewry after the expulsion of 1492 have been published in



recent decades—following the groundwork laid by Cecil Roth, Salo W. Baron, and Israël S. Révah in the first half of the twentieth century. Esther Benbassa and Aaron Rodrigue,<sup>63</sup> Yosef Kaplan,<sup>64</sup> Jonathan Israel,<sup>65</sup> and Paloma Díaz-Mas<sup>66</sup> offer both in-depth overviews and vital contributions to the understanding of Jewish history at the transition from the early modern age to modernity. With their anthologies, Charles Meyers and Norman Simms,<sup>67</sup> Joshua Stampfer,<sup>68</sup> Howard Sachar,<sup>69</sup> Ross Brann and Adam Sutcliffe,<sup>70</sup> as well as Yedida K. Stillman and Norman A. Stillman,<sup>71</sup> have compiled essential works on the subject of Sephardic history. Finally, there are numerous studies on the countries which became destinations for the Jews expelled from Spain, such as the Ottoman Empire<sup>72</sup> and the Netherlands.<sup>73</sup>

As we have seen, vital studies on the present subject of inquiry have been published in the fields of history, cultural studies, and the history of philosophy. What they all have in common, however, is that they cite literary texts mainly in an illustrative capacity as sources. This study offers an integrative philological analysis not merely concerning itself with the coexistence of cultures but also considering, in particular, the dimension and function of the literary use of language in this context. Its underlying concept derives from the research agenda of the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture, which is aimed at integrating Jewish history into general history in order to avoid isolating views from either non-Jewish or Jewish perspectives. With this in mind, the deficiency of some studies in particular becomes evident. Both Castro's studies and those based on his work do contain stimulating observations. However, their analytical sections invariably feature literary interpretations identifying the more or less precisely defined Jewish character of these texts either by citing the author's affiliation or a rather vaguely phrased "underlying atmosphere" of the texts. The methodological problems such an approach to literary texts entails provide the point of departure for the analyses presented here. What I am suggesting is a literary studies approach grounded in an interdisciplinary, philological close reading of the texts contextualized within cultural history.

Based on the sixteenth-century cultural constellations on the Iberian Peninsula, I will decipher emblems of affiliation contained in

literary texts without reproducing the essentialisms which characterized Castro's works on early modern Romance literatures.

Historian and literary scholar David Nirenberg has stated that both cultural and social studies are all too willing to label all manner of phenomena as "Jewish" without sufficiently considering the conditions and consequences of such attributions. He declares the search for evidence of an author's affiliation in his or her texts as a continuation of the discourse of the Inquisition, in a certain sense. Nirenberg contrasts this "genealogical reading" with a philological approach adequately and methodologically reflecting the literariness of the texts and thus also the literariness of *converso* affiliations.<sup>74</sup>

In the field of philosophy, a thematically relevant study by Yirmiyahu Yovel was published in 2009, which claims that *conversos* and Marranos had contributed significantly to the emergence of European modernity.<sup>75</sup> In his philosophical-cultural history, Yovel describes the role of the Marranos in the emergence of early modern subjectivity as pivotal, and he suggests the term "split identity" for these contexts. According to him, it had grown from the particular situation of the (forcibly) converted Jews into the general condition of all modern human beings. While Yovel's approach of philosophical argumentation differs significantly from my own perspective, his theses have been an important inspiration.

Ernst Robert Curtius was convinced that the lines of tradition in the Romance literatures could only be understood by relinquishing the perspectives of national philology and epochal distinctions in favor of a comprehensive view of European literary history.<sup>76</sup> According to him, the collective memories he categorized in the form of topoi could not be attributed to national cultures of knowledge but formed a European literature as an "intellectual unit reaching from Homer to Goethe." Yet the European aspect of Europe's history reveals itself by means of a degree of diversity that cannot be reduced to Greco-Roman antiquity or the Christian tradition of the "Occident." The history of European literature is also characterized by the traditions of the encounter between Christian, Jewish, and Muslim cultures in medieval Spain. Medieval and early modern European culture constituted itself by its very diversity in areas inseparably and deeply linked

with ethnic but also religious traditions; for many Europeans this mostly means Christian occidental tradition. As a result of the emancipation brought about by the Enlightenment, Jewish perspectives were integrated into this legacy; Islam has been included only since the end of the twentieth century. It is easily forgotten that the impact of both Judaism and Islam was present in European culture many centuries earlier: in the case of Jewish culture since the existence of Christianity and in the case of Muslim culture since the existence of Islam. Europe is founded on a cultural diversity that has only been recognized in recent times.

In this study I am trying, on the basis of five early modern literary texts, to understand the contribution of Jewish culture to the formation of modernity beyond generalizations and essentialist attributions. As a transnational community, Jews performed adaptations aimed at preserving as much of their own identity as possible, and doing so while appropriating as much foreign identity as required. Consequently, Jewish experience in the early modern era entailed a certain degree of maneuverability with regard to identities and belonging. This experience had the epistemic potential to radicalize the question of modernity itself. This specific cultural-historical configuration provides me with an analytical prism for the literary sources of this study and is also the reason why I challenge a rigid concept of hybridity. Language and literature are the primary emblems of cultural affiliation. While the term “literary hybridity” central to the basic assumption of this study evokes the continuous process of transformation and amalgamation of cultures, it is not without its problems regarding the period under consideration. In a way, it is only “correct” to speak of “hybridity” if there is homogeneity as well. Premodern societies were inherently hybrid, however, and the process of national and cultural homogenization is a characteristic of the path to modernity.

It seems that the key to the solution of this problem may be found in the sphere of the sacred, or more precisely, in liturgical-ritual and theological texts influencing literature and language. In the context of this study, the question that must be asked with regard to early modern literary texts is not about the affiliation of their authors but about

the sacred emblems contained therein. Thus a dimension of cultural history and perhaps even of cultural anthropology is added to the literary studies perspective of analysis.

The sacred emblems themselves are divided into several layers: primary emblems such as biblical subjects or references to rabbinical texts, for example, require a different kind of decoding than those phenomena that cannot be clearly attributed because they oscillate between different cultural manifestations. It is here that hybridity finds its true expression, and in these cases it is secondary emblems of affiliation that must be decoded in the analysis of the text.

I begin my analyses with a discussion of each text's respective literary form. The narrating, lyrical, and essayist "I" is a phenomenon emerging in the sixteenth century. Chapter 3 interprets the emergence of this narrative form as a process in the universalization of Jewish prisms of experience in the early modern age. The procedures of the Inquisition, the conversions and theological investigations into ancestry, origin, and affiliation, are taken to be the framework, or rather the preconditions, for the constituting of subjective consciousness. Those literary texts of the period in which traces of Jewish experiences are contained are interpreted as sources for the emergence of early modern subjectivity, and while there is no question that early modern subjectivity has other cultural roots as well, these cannot be considered in this study owing to the necessary limitations of its subject matter.<sup>77</sup>

Dan Diner has pointed out just how much the premodern Jewish self-image changed from a religion permeating all areas of life to new forms of Jewish belonging: this change affected the symbols of affiliation, at varying levels in cases of elements of sacredness, and it prompted the Jews to formulate universal values; hence they went beyond a narrow representation of their own interests.<sup>78</sup> In his essay *Geschichte der Juden: Paradigma einer europäischen Historie* (History of the Jews: The paradigm of a European history), Diner shows how individual Jewish communities made efforts to interlace the sacred laws regulating most of their lives with those of the integrating society. It was important to reconcile one's own law with the stipulations of a "foreign" rule in a "foreign" place. This was accompanied by a change in the Jewish interpretation of history: the ties to the sacred and the

sacred text receded into the background, while a profane and context-driven conception of history increasingly began to cover sacred textuality. Both the sacred and the profane realms of interpretation existed parallel to each other and interlaced with each other.<sup>79</sup>

I intend to render the consequences of my analytical findings productive for the development of Romance literatures in general. Based on a methodical engagement with the paradigmatic character of Jewish cultures of experience and knowledge, I will devise an approach that differs qualitatively from the rather additive attempts at unifying the various national literary histories as European.

Sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century texts reflect a peculiarity of Spanish history: the official homogenization beginning with the reign of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon seems like a modern phenomenon in the early modern era—just as the modern nation-states striving for ethnic homogeneity were to do four hundred years later, the early absolutist state attempted a definition of affiliations “by all means necessary” and through the institution of the Inquisition. In 1492, the Jewish communities, challenged by the circumstances of their time, had to choose between exile and conversion. With the transformative process of conversion, the emblems of affiliation changed as well. Thus the European perspective inherent in Jewish history may permit observations beyond the Iberian context.

I am testing my hypothesis outlined above using five different linguistic and period contexts from Romance-speaking Europe: the first text is the *Tragicomedia de Calixto y Melibea*, which has become known under the title *La Celestina*. Based on an acrostic in the dedication poem, this text is ascribed to Fernando de Rojas; however, there is no absolute certainty regarding the work’s author. This closet drama is almost invariably described as a “threshold” or as a “work of crisis” (Manfred Tietz) at the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The story of the tragic end to the love affair between Calisto and Melibea unites very different concepts of love, which are interpreted in various ways. The final act of this text, in particular, Pleberio’s lamentation for his daughter Melibea, who commits suicide, has consistently been read as a symbol of the tension between the Middle Ages and the emerging modern age revealing itself in the

text. Hartmut Stenzel has written the following on Pleberio's lamentation for the dead:

The renunciation of the world staged at the end of this work, its [*La Celestina's*] image of fortune's fancies and the world as a vale of tears[,] do indeed bear the marks of the late Middle Ages, yet they can be read as skeptical criticism as well. In this regard, it is telling that Fernando de Rojas hailed from a family of converted Jews, from the milieu of the so-called *conversos* . . . [; it is possible] that their skepticism and the constraints of persecution and the adaptive measures they were subjected to have shaped the path of Spanish literature into the Renaissance in a specific way. At any rate, the contradictions in *La Celestina* . . . can be read as evidence for a deliberation on the mechanisms of repression and exclusion which characterized Spain's transition to the Modern Age.<sup>80</sup>

This assessment serves to illustrate a peculiar aspect of many studies examining Jewish traces in Spanish literature. The analysis is not actually wrong, of course, for any articulation of skepticism and pessimism can naturally also be an articulation of "Jewish skepticism" and "*converso*" pessimism. However, it is hard to prove such a presumed "*converso*" ambience as described in the quote above by means of a philological analysis of the text—which is precisely what a literary studies perspective informed by cultural history would require. Based on the analysis of individual textual passages concluding with Pleberio's lamentation for his daughter, the first chapter elucidates the amalgamation of Jewish and Christian textual traditions in *La Celestina* instead of claiming them based on the insecure footing of the author's supposed origin.

The second chapter is dedicated to an analysis of Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'amore* (1505/1535). Their author was Lisbon-born Judah Abrabanel, who came from a prominent Sephardi family and became known as the "Hebrew Lion." He ranked among the most important philosophers and writers of his time. At the center of his main work written in Italian are contemplations on the essence of love. In three dialogues, the two noble characters Filone and Sofia discuss love as a cosmic concept. In the existing scholarship on this key treatise of the Italian Renaissance, two dominant lines of interpretation have evolved

that differ in their assessment of the Jewish perspective. Leaving this question aside, I will instead attempt to illustrate the simultaneous adoption of components from Christian, Arabic, and Jewish sources as a distinctive feature of this work.

The third chapter focuses on the picaresque novel. Although the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the first work of this genre, remains anonymous, the specifics of this text have repeatedly been interpreted with the author's assumed Jewish or *converso* belonging in mind. In this case, I will offer a new interpretation of its literary form based on an archival discovery. My aim is to show that a historical experience far transcending the specific context of a Spanish *converso*'s life has been molded in this text. In fact, it seems that the hybrid textuality of sixteenth-century Spain is characterized by a plurality of literary memory.

The fourth chapter covers the main work of one of the most innovative early modern intellectuals. Deliberations on Michel de Montaigne's ancestry, origin, and belonging documented in writing began as early as 1622, about thirty years after his death. In a letter, royal councilor and member of the Bordeaux magistracy Pierre de l'Ancre considered contemporary knowledge of Montaigne's family background a matter of course: "Bien qu'on die que le siuer de Montagne estoit son parent du costé de sa mere qui estoit Espagnolle de la maison de Lopes."<sup>81</sup> As both Carola Hilfrich and Elizabeth Mendes da Costa have pointed out, in the late fifteenth, sixteenth, and early seventeenth centuries, the adjective *Espagnolle* meant "Jewish without saying it."<sup>82</sup> At the time Bordeaux was one of the central places of refuge for the Iberian Peninsula's converted Jews trying to escape the investigations of their "purity of blood" rigorously carried out by the Inquisition there. But did Montaigne know of his grandparents' conversion and flight? Is his not speaking of his mother in the *Essais* a deliberate strategy?

The case of Montaigne once again clearly illustrates the problems concerning part of the scholarship on sixteenth-century Romance literatures. Taking previous attempts to explain Montaigne's project of self-realization as a possible engagement with his Jewish or Marrano belonging<sup>83</sup> as my point of departure, this chapter will try to understand Montaigne's text via his specific *écriture* rather than deliberate

on the author's religious affiliation. This analytical perspective is intended to shift the focus away from the author and toward the *Essais*' authoredness. The most important point of reference in Montaigne's works and particularly in the *Essais* does not consist in classical or contemporary authors, but in the empirically ascertainable "I." The specific connection between writing and constitution of the self in Montaigne is central to this chapter.

The fifth and last chapter of text analysis examines the main work of João Pinto Delgado, the *Poema de la Reyna Ester, Lamentaciones del Propheta Ieremias y Historia de Rut*, published in Rouen in 1627 and dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu. Menéndez Pelayo counted João Pinto Delgado among the most eminent poets of biblical subjects and stories in the entire peninsula: "There hardly are better *quintillas* in the entire 17th century and certainly none so free of pomposity, so inspired, and so rich in sentiment."<sup>84</sup> In three subsections, I analyze the transformation of the three biblical stories of Esther, Ruth, and Jeremiah into poetic form. Delgado's work is considered the end point of the historical developments informing the works discussed in this study dating from between 1499 and 1627. All of the dimensions of writing between the religions carved out in the earlier analyses are present in his work.

The individual chapters are not intended as overall studies of the respective works but rather as attempts to understand the thought and writing of these authors outside of a line of interpretation explaining their distinctiveness exclusively as a result of religious or ethnic belonging. Nor shall the results of individual studies, such as the contextualization of works in their period, the demonstration of their references to classical sources, or the summary of the history of their reception, be repeated at this point. It is the specific engagement with Holy Scripture and the sphere of the sacred in each of the five texts that is illustrated instead.

In the following, the terms *converso* and *marrano* are not used as synonyms. The term *converso* evokes the particular historical experience central to this study. In medieval and early modern Spain, the word *converso* described people of faith who had converted from Judaism to Christianity. Until the beginning of the fourteenth cen-



tury, the term was relatively neutral; it was only following the violent outbreaks against Jews and *conversos* in the fourteenth century, particularly in 1391, that it was transformed into a label for ancestry and origin, used not least by the Inquisition in order to mark a non-“Old Christian” affiliation. Up until the end of the 1420s it seemed as though the converts might gradually be integrated into the majority Christian society, for they gained access to areas from which they were previously barred as Jews. This situation changed massively in the fifteenth century, however, and attacks against converts, now increasingly imagined as Spanish society’s main enemy, occurred repeatedly.

The term *Marranic* will be detached from its literal, highly pejorative meaning and transferred to a different semantic context in this study. The origins of this term insinuating a sham conversion and continued practicing of the ancestral faith are derived in various ways from different languages, for example, from the Aramaic-Hebrew *mar anus* (“forced convert”). In his study on the origins of the word, Arturo Farinelli has explained that the term in his opinion was derived from a Spanish curse word, namely, the word for “pig,”<sup>85</sup> while Yakov Malkiel believed that the etymology of the word was most likely to be explained as a contraction of the Arabic *barrān*, *barrānī* (“foreigner”) and the Latin *verres* (“wild boar”).<sup>86</sup> This study aims to update the term in the sense of a metaphor, as Elaine Marks has done in her study on the Jewish presence in French literature,<sup>87</sup> for example, or in the sense in which Yirmiyahu Yovel used it in his above-mentioned philosophical reflection on Jewish historical experience,<sup>88</sup> and not least in the manner in which Dan Diner has transferred the meaning of “Marranic” in order to characterize Hannah Arendt’s writing.<sup>89</sup> The updates to the term made by this study are explained extensively in Chapter 5 and in the Conclusion. Finally, Chapter 5 also discusses the panorama of dual perspectives, which arises from the individual analyses, as one of the paradigms of the modern age.

My book examines 150 years of Romance literature in the early modern period. It tries to give the abiding question of its Jewish components a new direction in inquiry and to suggest an innovative way for literary studies to understand the contribution of Jewish experiences to the historical process of the crystallization of modernity.