
*Jewish Spain* is a study of how various forms of cultural production in modern Spain represent and deploy the Jewish experience in Spain. Linhard is one of a group of scholars taking a much-awaited new look at the Jewish imaginary in modern Spain, who came together in 2011 to edit a special issue of *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* titled *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era* (12.1), reissued in 2013 by Routledge as an edited volume with the same title. These essays are nothing short of a manifesto of new Spanish Jewish cultural studies, an area that has long been wanting a champion. In this sense, *Jewish Spain* is an exciting departure in the study of the Jewish experience and memory in modern Spain.

Linhard brings together a variety of interrelated topics in this study, with the goal of explaining how “writers and witnesses narrate instances of Jewish life in Spain’s turbulent twentieth century by invoking the remote past” (4). Her focus is on how these works “[bundle] the various contradictions inherent in the idea of a ‘Jewish Spain’ “into coherent narratives” (4), laying bare the ideologies and political contexts that shape the narratives in question. Linhard reads a variety of sources, including personal memoirs, novels, films, and touristic itineraries and supporting materials. She frames her inquiry primarily using concepts drawn from memory and trauma studies, which links her work to the fields of Holocaust, Memory, and Transition (to democracy in Spain) studies. As the title suggests, she also makes some effort to locate her work in the field of Mediterranean studies, but mostly this is simply a framing function of the geography of the authors and works (Spain, France, Salonika, Morocco, Egypt, Israel) rather than of any sustained theoretical program.

In chapter one, “Mapping Nostalgia: *Velódromo de invierno* and *Sepharad*” (31-64), Linhard studies two contemporary novels, written respectively by Juana Salabert, a Spanish author born in France, and Antonio Múñoz Molina, a Spanish author. Both titles appeared in 2001 to critical acclaim and have generated considerable critical bibliography since their publication. In this chapter, Linhard explains “contradictions and ambiguities” inherent in the realities that “made deliverance from the Holocaust in Spain possible” (32). In both cases, she concludes that nostalgia is the narrative resource that enables authors to weave a stable sense of identity from a chaotic, contradictory, and traumatic reality.

Chapter two, “Exile in Sepharad: *The Mezuzah in the Madonna’s Foot* and *Memorias judías*” (65-90), examines two memoirs of Jewish experience in Spain. The first (*Mezuzah*) is a personal account by Trudi Alexy narrating her own process of traveling through the monuments of Jewish Spain in search of her own crypto-Jewish (Marrano) heritage. The second (*Memorias*) is a collection of oral histories of Spanish Jewry during the twentieth century edited by Martine Berthelot. Alexy, a Christian, narrates her own journey through Spain in search of her family’s Marrano history. Her narrative strategy is to punctuate her travels with historical anecdotes about documented cases of the persecution of crypto-Jews as a kind of foil for the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust. According to Linhard, this “provides [Alexy’s] narrative with a desired coherence” (81) at the price of essentializing the crypto-Jewish experience, and flattening the differences between the Spanish Jewish experiences of the sixteenth and
twentieth centuries. The profiles of the modern-day Jews in *Memorias* also juxtapose the present with the past, but the tendency is more contrastive, emphasizing the ability of modern Jews to survive and even thrive in Spain despite the anti-Semitism and instability they faced throughout.

In chapter three, “Responsible for the fate of the world: Ángel Sanz Briz and Jorge Perlasca” (91-122), Linhard turns her focus to a historical episode drawn from the drama of the World War II era. Ángel Sanz Briz was a Spanish diplomat in Hungary who is celebrated as a hero in the Jewish world for having issued hundreds of Spanish visas to persecuted Jews during the war. Jorge Perlasca was an Italian national in the employ of the Spanish embassy who continued Sanz Briz’s work on his own initiative after Sanz Briz died. Linhard demonstrates how Sanz Briz’s legacy as a heroic humanitarian was deployed by the Spanish Right as proof of Franco’s philosemitism, a sort of recasting of Republican philosemitism of the first quarter of the twentieth century. Linhard explains that Perlasca’s actions have been similarly celebrated, though his motives were not tied to Spanish national themes, as Perlasca was not a Spanish citizen nor was he of Spanish heritage.

Taking us from Hungary to Morocco, chapter four is titled “History’s Patio: Spanish Colonialism in Morocco and the Jewish Community” (123-52), and is a comparative analysis of Ángel Vásquez’s novel *La vida perra de Juanita Narboni* (1976) and Farida Benlyazid’s 2005 film adaptation. In this chapter Linhard points out the ways in which both Vásquez and Benlyazid assess the transformations of Northern Morocco’s pluriconfessional society in its transition from free trade zone to Spanish protectorate to independence. She demonstrates how early Francoist philosemitism morphs into a more aggressive position as the Civil War progresses. Linhard points out that while Vásquez’s novel demonstrates the importance of an essentialized Oriental other to the Spanish colonial project, Benlyazid’s film adaptation shows us the “consequences of colonialism that persist in the contemporary relations between Spain and Morocco” (139).

The fifth and final chapter is titled “Touring the Remainders of Sepharad: From Heritage Travel to the ‘Ruta Walter Benjamin’” (153-82) and is a study of tourist routes that commemorate two historically linked crossings of the Pyrenees: the northward crossing of Republicans fleeing Franco, the southward movement of Jews fleeing Vichy France. Both routes are memorialized as contemporary touristic attractions by the French and Spanish governments, and in this chapter Linhard analyzes the touristic materials and constructed experiences marketed to those travelers seeking to connect with the past. Linhard compares the construction of a Spanish Jewish memory at play in these sites to that of the historic Jewish quarters of Spain, and how these two are linked by their curators and by the tourists who visit them.

*Jewish Spain* is a fascinating and mostly very engaging read. Linhard’s approach is innovative, synthetic, and creative. There are poetic moments in her prose, such as the opening and closing meditations of the pro-Palestinian graffito on the plaque commemorating the Jewish Quarter of Barcelona (1-4 and 182). There are, however, a number of minor issues that may distract the reader from the overall impact of Linhard’s argument. The theoretical framework might have been more rigorously developed. While the material on trauma and memory is very well wrought, the Mediterranean studies framework is little more than an accident of geography, and while the various chapters are located geographically throughout the Mediterranean region (Spain, France, Morocco,
Salonika, etc.), Linhard does not use the Mediterranean as an object of analysis to bring together the examples as she does so effectively with themes of memory and nostalgia. In chapter one (and this may just be the bias of a medievalist) Linhard’s treatment of Sephardic nostalgia and longing for Spain does not mention its interplay with Jewish longing for Zion, historically the template for all Jewish nostalgia. At times documentation is less than rigorous. For example, in chapter four, footnotes 2-5 provide supporting information about the Spanish protectorate in Morocco but do not cite specific publications. Likewise, the section on Walter Benjamin in chapter five provides no bibliography about Benjamin, his life and works.

These are, however, minor distractions to a very stimulating, exciting, and original study that will do a great deal to stimulate discussion of the memory of Jewish Spain. In addition, Linhard’s book will doubtlessly inspire other scholars to delve into this important, under-cultivated area of research.

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