HALAPID

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Table of Contents

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Editorial Policy of HaLapid

Halapid contributors come from all over the world. The editors respect different national writing styles and, where possible, have left each item in the author's style. We edit for grammar, spelling and typographical error.

Many contributions are memoirs or retelling or family stories and legends. They may or may not be historically accurate although they are indeed valid, sacred memories that have been passed along through time. We do not attempt to change individual perceptions as long as they are reported as such, but we do change obvious misstatements or historical error.

We reserve the right to edit material. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily of the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies or *HaLapid*. Articles from *HaLapid* may not be reprinted without permission.

Submission of Articles

HaLapid invites the submission of articles related to the mission of the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies. Submission deadlines are March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1. If the day falls on a Shabbat or other holiday, the deadline will be the first working day after that. Articles should be submitted by e-mail to *halapidscjs@gmail.com*.

From the Editor's Desk

Ron Duncan-Hart

With Gloria Abella in Phoenix

This is the first issue of *HaLapid* after Rosh Hashannah, and we wish each of you L'Shana Tova. With this issue *HaLapid* is launching its new format, which we hope will serve you, the readers, better and reach a wider public. The content will remain much the same as it has been with news about the Society and the activities of its members, personal life narratives, book reviews, and articles. Over the next year or so you will notice a slight change in the articles as we include more fiction and poetry related to the crypto Judaic experience. You are encouraged to submit articles or news notices for the quarterly issues of *HaLapid*, the voice of Crypto Judaism.

We would also like to welcome the new ***The Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto Jews,*** which will be launched in the near future. In contrast to HaLapid it will be an academic publication based on juried articles. It will be published annually, and it will be based at Florida International University. Dr. Abraham Lavender will be the Editor-in-Chief. For further information write to: abelavender@aol.com.

In its new format *HaLapid* is now accepting advertising related to the mission of the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies. Advertisements about books, conferences, services or other matters related to Society issues can be accepted. The prices according to size are:

Half Back cover $125.00
Full page interior (5.5 by 7.25 inches) $100.00
Half page (5.5 by 3.6 inches) $50.00
Quarter page (2.75 by 3.6 inches) $25.00
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Please submit artwork prepared for the appropriate size. To reserve space for advertising, give feedback on the content of HaLapid, submit an article or ask further information, write to Editor, halapidscjs@gmail.com. Keep open the dates, August, 2, 3 and 4, 2009 for the annual conference of the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies in Denver.

Meetings and Events

Sephardic Voices in Santa Fe

On October 19 the Museum of New Mexico Foundation sponsored a program along with the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies and the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society. It included musical presentations of Sephardic and Crypto-Judaic songs by Vanessa Paloma and Consuelo Luz. Poet Isabelle Medina Sandoval, novelist Mario X. Martínez and playwright/actor Carol López read selections from their works about their personal and familial experiences addressing their Jewish roots. A reception following the event honored the work of Cary Herz, New Mexico photographer of the crypto-Jewish experience.

Dr. Frances Levine, director of the Palace of the Governors/New Mexico History Museum said that this program was an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the secret Jewish roots of many New Mexican families. The program was organized by Dr. Stan Hordes and funded by Helene Singer Merrin and Seymour Merrin and the Museum of New Mexico Foundation.

For further information go to: www.nmjewishhistory.org/graphics/SephardicVoicesPressRelease.doc.

Left to right: Isabelle Medina Sandoval, Mario X. Martinez, Consuelo Luz, Carol López, Seymour Merrin, Vanessa Paloma, Helen Singer Merrin (barely visible) Fran Levine and Stan Hordes

Reception in the Palace of the Governors

Left to right: Sonya Loya and Gloria Abella Ballen talk to Isabelle Medina Sandoval.

Mario X. Martinez posing as himself after reading exerpts from his work ***Converso***.

Carol López on right with well wishers after reading a passage from her play about Jewish identity.

SCJS Meetings in Phoenix

Seth Kunin
Program Chair

The eighteenth annual conference of the Society was held in a very hot Phoenix Arizona in August. In spite of the heat outside, the conference, as always, was held in a very convivial spirit bringing together old and new friends. The theme of the conference, diversity in crypto-Jewish identities was established in the first panel, a discussion between Seth Kunin and Stanley Hordes.

The discussion centered on the wide-ranging identities found among crypto-Jews in New Mexico and beyond. Perhaps controversially, the discussion suggested that the idea of a single crypto-Jewish identity, and indeed a single Jewish identity was an imposition either by individuals within the community trying to establish normative boundaries, or outsiders, sometimes academics or journalists, setting the parameters of authenticity. The discussion suggested that all crypto-Jewish choices of identity including those who chose to be Jewish or Messianic were authentic choices and worthy of inclusion in conferences of the society.

The theme of alternative identities and choices was picked up in a number of different papers and panels during the remainder of the conference. It was a significant feature of the papers by Lillooet Nordlinger and Andrew Berns. Lllooet's paper on the conversion of the Donme Sabbateans to Islam picked up this issue in relation to a very different historical experience, conversion of a community by choice.. This paper explored the relationship of crypto-Judaism to Sabbatean movement. It was particularly relevant to our understanding of the complexity identity in its exploration of the reasons why over three hundred families chose to convert to Islam following the conversion of their messiah, Shabbatai Zvi. The experience of the Donme, the descendents of these conversos in many respects mirrors that of the crypto-Jews of Iberian origin. Andrew Bern's paper examined the life of Amatus Lusitanus (1511-1568). Amatus was a physician of converso origin, who although living most of his life as a practicing Catholic, chose at the end of his life to return to his ancestral Jewish faith. This paper highlighted the complexity of identity on the individual level, and illustrated the possibility of moving through different identity choices – in his case from Catholic to Jew. This fluidity mirrors that of the crypto-Jews that have spoken at many conferences of the society over the last eighteen years – though in some cases they have moved to a Christian identity or a crypto-Jewish Christian identity at the end of their journey.

The complexity of identity and how one might respond to this complexity was picked up in a panel exploring Jewish law and crypto-Judaism. While these papers specifically focused on the response to crypto-Jews who were choosing to return to Judaism, the complexity of the legal opinions reflected the fact that crypto-Jews were choosing to return to Judaism from many different places and experiences – and thus the difficulty in developing a legal response that could deal with this complexity. One of the aspects of the papers on Jewish law that distinguished them from previous panels on this issue was a focus on the Sephardic tradition – a tradition that was often much more sensitive to the crypto-Jewish experience than was the Ashkenazic tradition.

In the usual tradition of our conferences, we welcomed challenging voices. Rabbi Stephen Leon, Sonya Loya, Asher Norman and Uri Yosef presented a panel discussion that responded to the panel of Messianic Jews presented in the seventeenth conference in Albuquerque. These papers highlighted the missionizing aspect of Messianic Jews (and in their view the papers presented in Albuquerque). They also argued that Messianic Judaism was not a form of Judaism or an appropriate choice for crypto-Jews and had no place in conferences of the Society. This panel presented the alternative view to the opening panel, arguing that there was a normative form of Judaism from which Messianic Judaism had clearly departed. The panel provided an important alternative voice, which allowed us all to consider the issues more deeply.

Genetics and DNA are important aspects of identity that has been an increasingly important aspect of our conferences. In the eighteenth annual conference this theme was developed by two papers, one by Abe Lavender, which focused on the genetic origin of Jewish women from a number of communities, particularly focusing on that of the women of Belmonte. The genetic inheritance of women is particularly significant as it passes in a stable form from mother to daughter and is thus a very important means of tracing origins and connections. Genetics was also the theme of our keynote speaker, Jon Entine. We were particularly privileged to have Jon Entine at this year's conference. He is a well-known, if controversial author. His book Abraham's Children: Race, Identity and the DNA of the Chosen People (published in 2008) has direct relevance to the use of genetic information by crypto-Jews (and sometimes against crypto-Jews). His keynote address was a tour de force providing one of the most clear and comprehensive discussions of the use DNA as a marker for understanding identity and past history. His paper highlighted both the possibilities and pitfalls of using this form of information, while also highlighting the fact that cultural information and genetic information are mutually distinctive categories.

The conference also welcomed Francine Gaillour who spoke, with her son Ben, on the use of conventional expressions or *dichos* as a method of passing down Sephardic values and Halachic tradition. Francine and Ben explored

how New Mexican *dichos* compared to those of Sephardic Jews from Rhodes – and suggested elements from those sayings that may have reflected different aspects of the Sephardic tradition. This paper was suggestive of important avenues of research and provided a fascinating view into Francine's family's traditions from Northern New Mexico.

We also welcomed back Rabbi Garcia, who is now based in Phoenix Arizona, in a synagogue primarily for individuals of converso origin: Avdey Torah Hayah. Rabbi Garcia spoke to us of his recent experiences in building this synagogue, and its successes in reaching out to individuals exploring the Jewish aspects of their crypto-Jewish past. He also spoke of important work his is doing in reaching out to conversos in Brazil.

Myrriah Gomez of the University of New Mexico spoke on "Daughters of Transmission: The Representation of Crypto-Judaic Practices in New Mexico in 'The Merchant of Santa Fe'. This play by Ramon Flores is about a crypto-Jewish family in Santa Fe and a local Jewish merchant. The father wants his daughter to marry the merchant, but the conflict comes from their family not being openly Jewish.

As in the past we have explored artistic responses to crypto-Judaism. Cary Herz planned on presenting her new book of photographs to us. Unfortunately, due to her health she was unable to do so, and her book was presented by Mona Hernandez (who also wrote an afterword to that book). This was a very moving presentation, and I highly recommend the book as a very important contribution. Tragically, since the conference Cary has passed on. She was a good friend to the Society and the crypto-Jewish community and will be very sadly missed.

The conference also included two artistic presentations that were sponsored by the Sosin Foundation. These performances were for many the highlight of the entire event. I particularly enjoyed the Judy Frankel Memorial Concert performed by Vanessa Paloma. Vanessa provided a very lively and informative performance of Sephardic music. She sang and shared a wide range of songs both familiar and unfamiliar. The second artistic even was a dramatic reading of the play *Parted Waters*. This was a fascinating and moving contemporary drama, which explored many of the themes of this year's conference, particularly identity and assimilation in the experience of three generations of an Hispanic family.

In this article I have attempted to give you a feel of the eighteenth annual conference, touching on many (though not all) of the papers and presentations. This can of course only be a taste as much of what is most important goes on in between the papers and in the response to them. I am sure, however, that you will agree that it was a lively and fascinating conference and looks forward to many conferences to come – I hope to see and here from you at those conferences.

The 2008 Phoenix Conference

Gloria Trujillo

I would like to start off by saying this will be my last article on our annual conferences because, I've decided that it's time for me to finish some projects that have been put off far too long and to spend more time with my precious grandson. But, I'll still be actively involved with the Society helping out as the recording secretary.

I was fortunate to have attended the very first conference in 1990 at Fort Burgwin in Taos New Mexico. The group was small, but in the two and half days we were there, we laid out a solid a foundation for the Society. Amazingly, SCJS is still a very active and vibrant group even after seventeen years. Some thought we would only be around for a few years and would fade away.

Of our two original founders, Rabbi Stampfer, unfortunately is no longer active with the group, but Stan Hordes is now our current President. Along the way I've been fortunate to meet many individuals who have gone on to make great achievements in their lives and I am glad to say that they are still part of our organization.

We've held conferences in most cities in the southwest and sometimes beyond. We have met in Albuquerque (3), Denver (1), El Paso (2), Tucson (1), Phoenix (1), San Antonio (2), Taos (1), Los Angeles (2), San Diego (1), Miami (1) and Portland, Oregon (1). Next summer, we'll be meeting in the Mile High city of Denver, Colorado.

No, I didn't miss a year, it was 1994 and for me it remains the best and most memorable for me. It was the year the conference was held in the towns of Guarda and Belmonte Portugal. Looking back, I can truly say, it was the trip of a lifetime. I made life-long friends with the folks, Nan Rubin and Ben Shapiro who brought us the outstanding NPR radio programs "The Hidden Jews of New Mexico". I would also like to say "Hello" to Ramon Salas who was also an integral part of the team.

I have always looked forward to attending each conference, even though I wasn't always able to hear each of the presenters. My main goal was to make sure that the conferences ran smoothly and if the only major problem was the air conditioning or lack of, I was happy.

The dates of the Denver 2009 conference, as approved by the board are August 2, 3 and 4. Of course, I will be helping out in the transition and taking minutes at our future board meetings.

Artistic Highlights of the Phoenix Conference

The Judy Frankel Memorial Concert

Performer Vanessa Paloma

With the medieval harp and voice Vanessa Paloma created a magical moment as people were transported in time and space to the Sephardic world of which she sang. Between the songs she woven information from her current research on the links between women's spirituality, and creativity in Sephardic communities in Morocco. Vanessa is a soloist, performance artist, writer and lecturer. She is a Scholar in Residence at the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, Brandeis University for the Fall semester, 2008.

Vanessa Paloma

Artistic Response to Crypto Judaism

Photographer Cary Herz

The work of Cary Herz was discussed and some of her photographs were presented. A section honoring her work can be found in this issue. Peter Svarzbein presented photos from his project on crypto-Jews.

Play reading. *Parted Waters*

Author Robert Benjamin

A staged reading by the Arizona Jewish Theatre. Parted Waters is about the conflict of generations, as well as the deliberate withholding of truth that marks this conflict. In particular, Benjamin has chosen to focus on three generations of Hispanos in New Mexico. A more detailed description of the play is given by Kathleen Alcalá.

Robert Benjamin

The grandfather of this crypto-Jewish is Reynaldo, (played by Mark DeMichele) a traditional farmer with close ties to the land. He has reached the age where his son, Javier, (Andres Alcalá) and grandson are beginning to worry about his health. Javier is a software engineer with a steady job in the city, and conformist ideas about society. The grandson, Miguel, (Marcelino Quiñonez) had decided to leave his job and run for public office, a natural progression in the family, if not always a happy one.

This situation is heightened by Miguel's interest in a Jewish woman, Rachel (Jenn Taber) who is also his opponent's daughter. We wonder why she would work for her mother's opponent. The situation explodes when Miguel makes anti-Semitic remarks about the other candidate during a public debate. This is when Reynaldo insists, over Javier's objections, on telling him the truth: they are Jews.

By placing this topic in a contemporary setting, Benjamin makes it clear that this is not just a historical dilemma – all around us, this drama continues to be played out as families make choices about the past and the future. As Secretary of State Madeline Albright and countless others have found out, Jewish parents or ancestors chose secrecy as a way to protect their families. When the truth is revealed, it does not necessarily come with a tidy resolution. It does, however prompt the recipient of this news to reassess his or her place in the world. Benjamin's characters reflect these possibilities with sensitivity, honesty, anger and humor.

This is one of several staged readings for Parted Waters as it is prepared for a full production. The staging was followed by a question and answer session in which the SCJS audience enthusiastically participated.

A full production by Arizona Jewish Theatre is scheduled for March.

-- Kathleen Alcalá

Funding for the arts events was provided to the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies by the Sosin-Stratton-Petit Foundation for the Arts.

Kathleen Alcalá

Photos of the Phoenix Meetings

Art Benviniste

Lillooet Nordlinger, Roger Martinez and Andrew Berns

Francine Gaillour

Vanessa Paloma and Stan Hordes

Sonya Loya, R. Leon, Asher Norman Uri Yosef

Jon Entine

Rabbi Nissan ben Avraham

Harry Ezratty

Peter Svarzbein

Myrriah Gomez

Sonya Loya and Rabbi Leon

Stan Hordes and Seth Kunin

David Ramirez

Thank you Art for doing the photography
and the electronic media for the meetings.

SCJS Members

Becoming a Part of the Society

Roger Louis Martínez
Member-at-Large and Vice President of Conferences

Recently, the editor asked me to pen my own member profile for this issue of *HaLapid*. It is an odd task – to write about myself – and one certain to bring disaster upon me. Pride and false humility seem inescapable. Instead of providing you a list of carefully selected accomplishments, I want to speak about how I became a member of the society. I personally find other persons' life travels fascinating, so in that spirit, thank you for indulging me as I share my own.

Although the first society conference I attended was in El Paso (summer 2005), it was five years earlier with the unexpected death of my father, Eugene Martinez Carvajal, that I began my own journey to the society. Raised a devote Roman Catholic, his passing on Good Friday of 2000 was both auspicious and instrumental to a reawakening of a long hidden passion of mine first fostered as an undergraduate at the University of Texas – the study of interreligious cooperation and conflict.

It seemed little happiness could come from my father's death—it left a gaping cavern in my family's heart that only could be filled by piercing honesty about how we all wanted to live our lives from that moment forward. As fortune would have it, in 2002 I was living in Austin, which created the opportunity for me to re-engage with one of my former undergraduate professors, Dr. Denise Spellberg, who had years earlier exposed me to history of Iberia and its eight centuries of mixed Jewish, Christian, and Muslim ancestry. I now find it both amazing and fateful that I found my path back to the university to pursue my Ph.D. in History because it was Denise who ten years earlier, in 1992, expressed an intense interest in my father's stories about our family.

As long as I can remember, my father constantly told family tales about the origins of his maternal line, the Carvajals of San Antonio. Some of his stories were based on historical evidence like our clan's minor role in the revolution for Texas Independence. However, other less precise thoughts about the Carvajals and secret Jews, which thoroughly lacked any documentable basis, lingered in his mind and my extended family's collective imagination.

It is a persistent question in my family, "Are we related to Luis de Carvajal 'El Mozo'?" He is perhaps the best-known secret Jew executed by the Inquisition in Mexico City in 1596. I do not think we will ever be able find a satisfying answer to this question, yet I know the first day that I shared with Dr. Spellberg, herself the daughter of a mixed Jewish-Catholic marriage, that I was of the Carvajal lineage she envisioned me as the progeny of the Sephardim that came to the Americas. With that tap on the shoulder, I knew that some day in the future it would become my responsibility to locate and retrace the Sephardim's path through history, knowing that the task would be frustrating and often fruitless because *conversos* (Jewish converts to Christianity) and crypto-Jews intentional obscured their identities and the historical record so that they might hide in plain sight in the Spanish world.

What I do know about my family is that our ancestor, Mateo de Carvajal, a soldier from the provincial hotbed of crypto-Jewish activities, Nuevo Leon, was among the first to form the settlement of San Antonio de Bejar in the first decades of the 1700s. Certainly, the prospect of acquiring land and economic opportunity served as strong incentives for Mateo, his brother, and their families to relocate from Nuevo Leon to what would become San Antonio. However, why did the two brothers pursue this hazardous endeavor – one where a small number of Spanish families co-existed with some Native Americans, while aggressively engaging the Comanche?

Many scholars, such as Stanley Hordes, argue that geographic frontiers like New Mexico and Texas were common destinations for crypto-Jews, as well as others that the Catholic Church considered to be heretics. My initial forays into the historical records in the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City and the Bexar County Archives seem to suggest that San Antonio may have had a crypto-Jewish presence. In fact, in 1750, Diego Martin Garcia, a local friar in the Mission of San Antonio de Valero, wrote to his superiors in Mexico City to complain that he was completely ignorant of how he should investigate religiously questionable families in San Antonio. Although I could not find a formal reply from the Mexican Inquisition to Friar Martin Diego, his initial inquiry begs the question: Why else would a friar need to know how to investigate religious heresies, such as crypto-Judaism, unless he had reason to believe there were heretics in his midst? It is a question I am still trying to answer and one that pulled me into the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies.

Again, while my ancestors may never have been crypto-Jews, repeatedly throughout my scholarly career and travels I have encountered mixed

religious messages and tantalizing clues left by the Carvajal family. While the Carvajal surname encompasses a prodigious number of branches, my research has uncovered that one branch in particular, from the Spanish province of Extremadura, was particularly critical in the establishment of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (present day Mexico) and the early Viceroyalty of Peru (South America). Further, what made the Carvajals so successful as participants in Spanish military, state, and church institutions in the Americas was their occupational diversification that transpired during the early fifteenth century. Specifically, the Extremaduran Carvajals transformed and bifurcated itself into two distinctive professional lineages—those that continued the tradition of the mounted warrior (*caballeros* and *conquistadores*) and a new brand of men—churchmen and royal administrators (*obispos, arcedianos, frailes,* and *letrados)*. Together, these two arms of the same family collaborated to achieve common social and economic advancement goals in Spain, as well as abroad.

Understanding the historical trajectory of the Extremaduran Carvajals and their relatives that traveled to the New World has brought me to some provocative conclusions about this family—my family. Knowing that the Inquisition executed Luis de Carvajal in the late sixteenth century for his persistent adherence to the Jewish faith, I was surprised in the summer of 2003 to stumble—literally—across my father's long abated search for the Carvajals in a small church in Trujillo, Spain. While participating in the University of Texas' Tracking Cultures Program, which blends domestic and international travel with the academic study of Spain and the Americas, I was found myself in Trujillo's *Iglesia de Santa Maria La Mayor*. There, interred into the church's sixteenth century floor were countless graves for the Pizarros, Cervantes, Bejaranos, Vargas, and yes, the Carvajals—all of who had participated in the conquest of the New World. (Later I would learn that these Catholic families, all of who were intermarried with one another, shared ancestral connections to Jewish and *converso* families.) At the moment I found their gravestones, with my two most formative mentors by my side (Professor Spellberg and Professor Cory Reed), I resumed my father's pursuit of the Carvajals' obscured history as my dissertation project.

After six years of intensive study in over twenty-five archives and national libraries in Spain and the Americas, I feel that I have only scratched the surface of their perplexing family history. From Trujillo, Spain, I traveled to the family's ancient home, Leon, Spain, and there found their thirteenth century Christian roots as the "Karvillier" family, a minor noble family

of *caballeros*. Like their own horseback ride to the south during the *Spanish Reconquista* against Islam, in 2005 and 2006 I retraced their ride by rail and bus. As I systematically passed through Leon, Burgos, Zamora, Trujillo, Plasencia, Caceres, and Talavera de la Reina (their 200+ year journey taking me only months to complete), it became more evident to me that the Carvajal family of knights had stagnated socially and economically by the late fourteenth century. That in spite of continuous service to the Castilian crown as warriors, they simply could not compete against other more elite families for the most lucrative rewards—namely, seigniorial titles and their accompanying wealth-generating lands.

Then, something quite remarkable occurred in the first decades of the 1400s—the Trujillo and Plasencia line of Carvajals radically redesigned themselves from knights into church archdeacons and royal judges within one single generation. This sort of occupational and social transformation was unheard of in the late medieval world because of relatively rigid cultural norms. In essence, if your father had been a tailor, then you would be a tailor. Thus, what had made this transmutation of the Carvajals possible? What was the impetus? Who was involved and how had it transpired?

In the Kingdom of Castile and Leon during late fourteenth century, family mobility most likely could only be achieved by accessing the power and authority embedded in the monarchy and the church. While Rome was the center of the broader Catholic world, the northern city of Burgos was the administrative and ecclesiastical nexus for the Castilian kingdom. In turning my attention to Burgos, I encountered both new answers and an even more thought provoking questions about the Carvajal family, its extended family relations, and its familial network.

From the ashes of the horrendous anti-Jewish riots of the 1390s, one family in particular in Burgos rose to exceptional prominence in the royal administration and the church. It was none other than the Jewish converts to Christianity, the Ha-Levis, who renamed themselves the Santa Marias and Cartagenas. Bishop Pablo de Santa Maria and his sons (especially Gonzalo Garcia de Santa Maria and Alfonso de Cartagena) played key roles in the development and professionalization of the Castilian bureaucracy, as well as the Castilian Catholic Church. Even though the Santa Marias appear to have been sincere converts to Catholicism, it should be noted that they also retained some Jewish cultural and religious values and practices.

The Santa Marias were a key facilitator of the Carvajals' entry into the service of the church and royal administration, especially due to their

collaboration with Gonzalo Garcia de Santa Maria, the Bishop of Plasencia from 1423 to 1446. The relationship of the Santa Marias and Carvajals became so intertwined that by the mid-1400s the two families shared extended relations—thus, while I have not been able to prove they were directly intermarried, the two most likely viewed each other as part of a broader family network. Take a moment to contemplate this finding. It suggests that during an age of increasing Christian intolerance of Jewish and formerly Jewish populations, the Catholic Carvajal actively sought out social, economic, and family relationships with well-known Jewish converts to Catholicism.

Perhaps even more damaging to the Carvajals' Christian credentials was an early fifteenth century church agreement signed by Bishop Alfonso de Cartagena (again, a Santa Maria clansman) and the Jewish community of Burgos. Serving as a party to the agreement was a Jew by the name of Yucef de Carvajal. While I have never been able establish a relationship between Yucef de Carvajal of Burgos and the Carvajal family of Plasencia, I do find it intriguing that the *converso* Santa Marias and Carvajals repeatedly appear with one another in both cities.

It was with these findings in hand that my appreciation and understanding of the Plasencia Carvajals' social and religious identity began to broaden. At the most fundamental level of human consciousness, it forced me to ask the question: In fifteenth century Spain – who was a Catholic, who was a Jew, and what exactly did it mean to be a *converso*? Could one argue that the Carvajals were *conversos* because they not only shared extended blood relations with the Santa Marias, but also the Carvajals had redesigned themselves into church leaders and bureaucrats like the Santa Marias and even mimicked some of their family religious practices?

If we apply fifteenth and sixteenth century Spanish Christian religious norms to the Carvajal family, which argued with increasing fervor that any person with any Jewish ancestry was a Jew, then, the Carvajals were not only *conversos* themselves, but also Jews. Perhaps even more perplexing is the stunning conclusion that the Carvajals, by their own volition, chose to violate Catholic religious norms that highly valued *limpieza de sangre* (cleanliness of blood)—a defining characteristic of one's Christian purity.

Therefore it appears that the Extremaduran Carvajals, the key lineage to advance into the Americas, came to the New World carrying heavy religious baggage. It leads me to believe that when one branch of the Carvajal family was enduring the Inquisition in sixteenth century Mexico City, that another local branch was likely hiding a well-guarded family secret. That is, Dr. Leonel Cervantes de Carvajal, both the city's cathedral school headmaster

and an inquisitor, most likely was a descendant of the mixed religious heritage Cervantes-Carvajal family of Extremadura. Thus, according to the beliefs that Catholics held dear at the time, he was a Jew himself.

It is because of these discoveries and questions about my family, the Carvajals, that I became a member of the society.

Church in Trujillo, Spain

Roger Martinez in Archive

Crypto-Jewish Synagogue in Arizona Flourishes

Yvonne Garcia

Rabbi Yosef Garcia

Avdey Torah Hayah (ATH) of Arizona, led by Rabbi Yosef Garcia, began in August 2005, services conducted in Spanish and Hebrew. ATH is perhaps the only synagogue of its kind in the world, founded and led by a Hispanic Crypto-Jewish Rabbi expressly to serve Hispanic Crypto-Jews. Without funding other than the tithes of ATH's Rabbi and members, services are held in a private home, some days seriously over crowded. Most attendees identify themselves as "Judios Secretos", a few as "B'nei Anusim", but only those from within the USA call themselves "Crypto-Jews". Although most adult and all child members speak some English, most require their native Spanish for learning the complexities of Judaism and Jewish thought.

ATH, a full service synagogue, celebrates all life cycle events and all Jewish holidays. There have been three births and eleven circumcisions (two newborns, two children, and seven adults.) Jewish history, Hebrew classes and Tot Shabbat are offered. All children know the alephbet, and now five men and one nine-year-old girl are able to read Hebrew from the Sefer Torah. Everyone practices praying in Hebrew weekly since the Shabbat morning Shakarit service is interactively presented entirely in Hebrew with Spanish introductions. Some ATH members of Mexican descent have memorized nearly one hundred Psalms in Spanish, cantoring them in the same way it has been done within their family for several hundred years. No one from Latin America spoke any Hebrew or Ladino; none show interest in Ladino, but all are enthusiastically learning written and spoken Hebrew.

All but four of the ATH regular attendees are B'nei Anusim. Most come as small family groups or individuals who represent fragments of larger extended families in the Phoenix area. Within large Latino families,

perhaps ten percent or less openly pursue and embrace their Jewish roots, but those who do are passionate and seek a level somewhere between Orthodox and Conservative. Of the more than two hundred who have attended services at ATH since 2005, some have entered mainstream Judaism and now attend established synagogues. Another fifty former attendees have formed their own satellite havurah since Phoenix covers an area of 571 square miles.

ATH celebrated Israel Turns sixty with a special teaching by guest speaker, Rabbi Albert Plotkin, of Scottsdale, Arizona, long time member of the SCJS, champion of the B'nei Anusim, and an active member on the Board of Rabbis for the Association of Crypto Jews of the Americas (ACJA). Rabbi Plotkin was honored to have been at the original ceremonies celebrating the formation of the nation of Israel in 1948 and spoke movingly about his experiences, and the people and events of that time.

Rabbi Garcia, host and web master of the ATH/ACJA web site, is currently working by Internet and telephone with B'nei Anusim individuals and havurah groups in Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Canada, and Germany, and within the USA in the states of California, New Mexico, Texas, and Oregon. The ACJA/ATH website is found at www.cryptojew.org.

Invited Artist

Isabelle Medina Sandoval
Poet of the New Mexico Experience

As a child, I questioned my identity. In researching my family history, I was able to document my family living in New Mexico since 1598. My voice chronicles my ancestors wedged in the 1492 expulsion of Jews in Spain to living today in Santa Fe. This New Mexico journey finds me in the forest of the Sangre de Cristo questioning why the family customs do not parallel accepted New Mexico norms. In the soulful Semitic music of the Penitente in the cactus and pine mountains, I realize that the intricate labyrinth woven by my ancestors allowed me to survive the Iberian and Mexican Inquisitions in the anousi spirit.

Isabelle Medina Sandoval's literary work has been recognized from coast to coast in the United States, and she has won a number of poetry and short story competitions. She has been recognized by Who's Who in America, and she is a recognized national leader in the field of bilingual education.

Her poetry has been published widely including the following sources: Sephardic House Publications, *JUF News*, *Aurora*, *HaLapid*, *Peseifas*, *The New Mexico Jewish Link*, *Another Desert: Jewish Poetry of New Mexico*, *La Herencia*.

Tres Hermanicas

Many desert starry nights ago
As the cloud of Shekhinah hovered
Over her tent Sarah watered and fed
Her white rosebush in a brown earthen jar
Guiding her daughters like an infinite star

Meditating in the Medinat al Yisrael
Three branches of the rosebush
Grew by the magic of the eternal dew
Tres hermanicas eran
Tres hermanicas son

In the middle of promenading pomegranate dawns
In diverse lands two of the branches bloomed
While one of the branches played velvety petal chords
Las dos eran encantadas y la chica cantaba
Las dos eran encantadas y la chica cantaba

A shrouded midnight talavera sky
Shaded the escape of white rose petals bruised
In the Sefarad and world scattering without a cry
Las dos eran perseguidas y la chica callaba
Las dos eran perseguidas y la chica callaba

A white almond flowered sky cushioned
The mother pruning the precious rosebush
As two branches matured and the little one thrived
Las dos eran encantadas y la chica cantaba
Las dos eran encantadas y la chica cantaba

One revealing poignant plum Purim sunset with the
Prudence of Esther the three white masked pensive women
Yielded to the sanctified Sefirot strengthening the female minyan
Tres hermanicas eran
Tres hermanicas son

One pacific golden Rosh Jódesh
The small branch broke scattering
Fragrant international Ladino white roses
Blancas de rosa y ramas de flor
Blancas de rosa y ramas de flor

And in the indigo horizon of Santa María la Blanca
Sara clutched her broken blanca de rosa
Transcended into a thirteen petaled diamond rose
Bridging Ashkenazi Sephardi and Anousi
Bridging Ashkenazi Sephardi and Anousi

Las tres estrellas eran
Las tres estrellas son
Las tres estrellas del sábado eran
Las tres estrellas del sábado son
Tres hermanicas de convivencia son

Tres hermanicas eran
Tres hermanicas son
Somos las hijas de Sara
Somos las hijas de Sara
Tres hermanicas son

Isabelle Medina Sandoval
June 1, 2008
In Memory of Judy Frankel

"Isabelle's poetry is like sampling a fresh New Mexico buñuelo made from an unwritten maternal family recipe originating in Spain. The organic dough is kneaded with converso history and research, and fortified by the secret ingredient of family. With the distinct flavor of an *anousi*, the poetry is shared in a tertulia of old and new friends." -- Museum of New Mexico.

Marginal Threads

On the fringe I wander
Boundary of periphery
Wondering just where I belong

Trailing Tarshish tzitzis translate
Oye Israel El Eterno es Nuestro
Dios El Eterno uno es

On the border I ponder
Bound by jaded Jews judging my
Judaism juggling their own justice

Rachel's reaching rebozo renders
Hear O Israel Hashem is our God
Hashem the One and Only

Inside the tallis I have rights
Outside the rebozo
I have a right to return

On the outside looking in
On the inside looking out
To other Jews my soul is in constant state of doubt

Insidious inside
Let me in
Outrageous outside
Let me out

One the edge I stand
Now knowing why
I do not understand

Isabelle Medina Sandoval

A Tribute to Cary Herz

Mona Hernandez

Portions of this come from the award presentation speech I gave at the 2007 Albuquerque conference when I presented on behalf of the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies an award to Cary Herz for her many contributions in the field of Crypto Judaism. Cary came up to the podium to accept her award, hugged me and then received a standing ovation from the audience. (See *HaLapid* issue 4, vol. XIV, Fall 2007). Cary was scheduled to give a presentation at the 2008 conference in Phoenix but had to decline due to health reasons.

Losing long-time SCJS members Trudi Alexi, Judy Frankel and Cary Herz, all in the same year is just too much to endure. All three were truly remarkable women whose contributions were numerous to the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies and to the Sephardic and Crypto Jewish communities. I personally knew all three women and was saddened to hear of their passing. But the passing of Cary Herz on September 1 is especially challenging because of my association with her via her book published late last year by the University of New Mexico Press, *New Mexico's Crypto-Jews Image and Memory.* I have lost a wonderful friend.

A photographer since the early 1970's, Cary began her career recording the women's liberation movement for *Ms. Magazine.* She later worked as a staff photographer for the Newark *Star-Ledger* and covered news features for them in New York. She specialized in corporate and editorial photography and worked with a variety of editorial clients, including *TIME, PC World, People, Ms., Garden Design, Hispanic Business, the Dallas Morning News* and *the Houston Chronicle's Texas Magazine.* In New Mexico she was a photo correspondent for the *New York Times.* She moved to New Mexico in 1984 and became a member of the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies in 1994. For a time she was SCJS's "official" conference photographer and many of her photographs can be seen in earlier issues of HaLapid.

Cary became interested in Crypto Judaism in 1985 while working on a photo project at a Las Vegas, New Mexico Jewish cemetery when someone mentioned that there were "other" Jews in New Mexico. Although she was aware of the Spanish Inquisition, she did not know there were descendants living as hidden Jews. After seeing slides taken (by my cousin Emilio Coca and his wife Trudy) of grave markers that appear to contain Jewish symbols, she set out to find these grave sites, traveling over 10,000 miles.

She photographed descendants in New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Spain and Belmonte (Portugal). She spent time getting to know the people whose images she captured on camera, gaining their trust and respect. She believed that the descendants of Crypto Jews themselves comprised the most important part of the photo project. Her photographs were published in two *New York Times* articles in 1990 and 1992, in a 2000 issue of *Hadassah* magazine, in a 2003 issue of *La Herencia* as a photo essay titled *Culture and Memory: A Sephardic Photo Journey,* in Stanley Hordes' book *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico* and have been exhibited in San Diego, New York and Mexico.

She was once asked: *What would you most like your photos to achieve?*

Cary responded "I would like to come out with a photographic book on the subject. I would like to have Converso and Crypto-Jewish descendants knocking on my door, wanting to have their pictures taken without fear, but with joy about their family history. Each of us has a fluid story and this is just one piece of it."

In December 2007 her dream of a photographic book came true; *New Mexico's Crypto-Jews Image and Memory* was published by the University of New Mexico Press. In the fall of 2006 I received an email from Cary asking for permission to include in the book, an essay I had written about the statue La Conquistadora and its connection to the history of Crypto Judaism in New Mexico. I was honored and thrilled (as I am certain my ancestors were) and delighted I was asked to contribute my essay to the book. In addition to the essay, my sister Gloria Trujillo and I were photographed by Cary in the Saint Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe; the La Conquistadora statue can be seen in the background. In the Winter 2008 issue of *HaLapid*, Kathleen Teltsch wrote about Cary's photographs in an article titled *Herz Photos Document Presence of Hidden Jews in New Mexico.* Some of the photographs from the book were published with the article. (See *HaLapid* issue 1, vol. XV)

These are Cary's own words taken from *New Mexico's Crypto-Jews Image and Memory:*

I have created a photographic diary of individuals who have a hidden past that they question, embrace, and treasure. This book is about their discoveries. It is my way to tell their stories, to witness their history. My goal is to put a face on the invisible ones, the Anusim, to open a small window into their world, to show their pride and diversity. The crypto-Jews are catching up with their past, a past that has not been erased but is incomplete. By acknowledging their complex history and speaking out, they become a visible tribute to the ordeals and courage of those ancestors who were forced into secrecy

and silence. It is my hope that this book will be supportive to those who are beginning to acknowledge their histories and identities, that it will help them stand up and be seen as those other people who needed to be hidden for so long.

These words are very poignant. As a descendant of Crypto Jews, I am forever grateful to Cary for her compassion and devotion to a people who were nearly lost to Jewish history. Although I am saddened by Cary's passing, I am glad that she was able to finish her book and see it published. My hope is that her commitment to the Crypto Jews is appreciated and that her book will inspire others to preserve and carry on her legacy.

Earlier this year Cary was named a winner in the annual National Federation of Press Women communications contest. She received first place for her book *New Mexico's Crypto-Jews* for best non-fiction book on religion. Her response upon receiving this award was "I am pleased with this award because it acknowledges the descendants of a little known culture, whose people trusted me and allowed me to communicate their stories through photography." Cary's photographs and the accompanying essays honor the people whose ancestors, through families' oral histories and genealogical records, know about their heritage.

The Society for Crypto Judaic Studies recognizes Cary Herz for her contributions and her dedication to the subject of Crypto Judaism; I am proud to present this award to her.

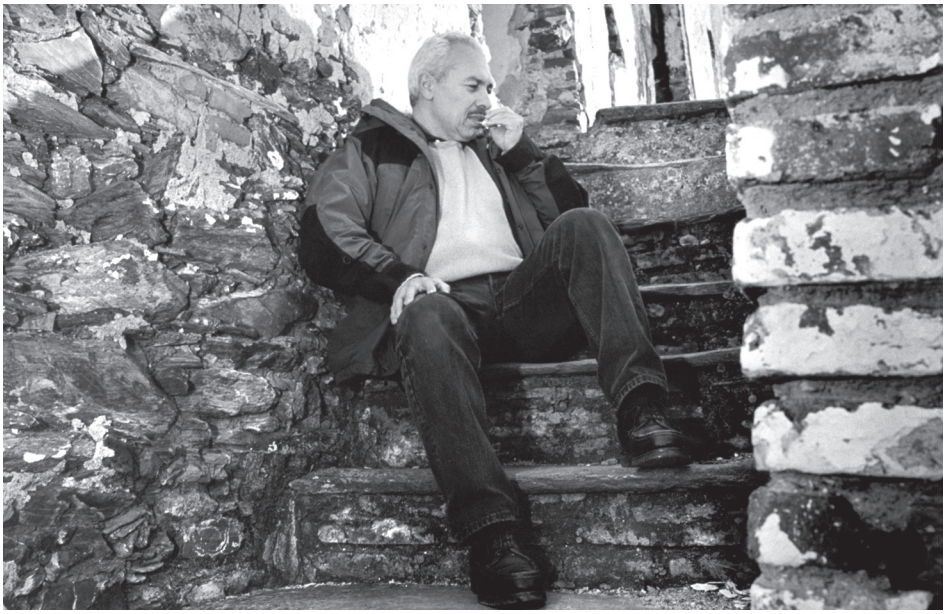
See Ha Lapid's Member Closeup for a *Conversation with Cary Herz* by Randy Baca, issue 4, vol. IX, Fall 2004. A slightly different version of my essay *La Conquistadora: A Crypto Jewish Connection* was published in Ha Lapid, issue 3, vol. IX, Summer 2002.

Herz, Cary *New Mexico's Crypto-Jews Image and Memory*, photographs by Cary Herz, essays by Ori Z. Soltes and Mona Hernandez, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 2007.

To view more of Cary's work, you can visit her website at www.caryherz.com.

Photos from Crypto-Jewish Communities
Cary Herz

Photos from Belmonte, Portugal and the U.S. Southwest with permission to the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies




Time flies when you don't know what you're doing
LUNGS AT WORK NO SMOKING
I've Just Quit Smoking Please Bear With Me
FOLK ART
Shalom
Clinton Gore '92

Articles

Abraham Ben Samuel Zacuto

What happened to a celebrated scholar who refused to convert.
And what happened to his descendants who became Crypto-Jews

Harry A. Ezratty

I was probably nine or ten and sitting in the synagogue when my father called my attention to an elderly gentleman located a few rows in front of us. "Do you see that man over there?" he asked rhetorically. "He's a descendant of Abraham Zacuto, the man who made the maps for Columbus." It was true, Solomon Zacuto, the man sitting in front of us was heir to that and much more.

It was the first time I was to hear the name of this remarkable Sephardic Renaissance man, a native of Salamanca, Spain, born in 1452. Aside from making maps, Zacuto was also an inventor, astronomer, physician, teacher, religious thinker and advisor as to the nature of the universe to royalty, in Spain and Portugal. Despite these impressive credentials he is not as well known as the Polish, Copernicus, the Italian, Galileo or the Dane, Tycho Brahe. The family name Zacuto is derived from the Hebrew word, "health."

Three decades after my introduction to Zacuto, I was in Puerto Rico's famed *Casa De Libros,* (founded by the American bibliophile, Elmer Adler) holding a genuine copy of the legendary "Tables of Zacuto" in my hands. The Tables, or *Ephemerides* as they are also known in Latin, foretold the rising and setting of the sun and the moon and the movement of the stars, including lunar and solar eclipses. They were used by Columbus; the Tables saved his life while shipwrecked in Jamaica during his fourth and last voyage to the New World.

The Tables would have fit neatly into Columbus's desk drawer. Written in Latin, each page is divided into several square blocks with the sun colored yellow. Other heavenly bodies appear in their various movements (on dates Zacuto foretold) located at the top of each box. Eclipses are also shown with their future dates. Columbus's personal copy is in the museum at Seville with marginal annotations made in his own hand.

After graduating from Salamanca, Zacuto taught Mathematics and Astronomy in his native city's famed University, the oldest in Spain. Amongst his scholar-colleagues he was usually referred to as *El Judio Salamantino*. It should be remembered that the terrible anti-Jewish riots of 1391 had eroded the once favorable position of Spain's Jews and Zacuto may have been seen as a marginal citizen, explaining why he was not called by his own name. Or could it have been that his contemporaries were envious of his achievements? Because aside from his teaching position at Salamanca, he enjoyed the admiration and patronage of the Bishop of Salamanca, Gonzalo de Vivero, and Don Juan de Zuniga who was the Grand Master of the Knights of Alcantara. Under their aegis Zacuto wrote many treatises on the solar system. He wrote his famous work on lunar and solar eclipses, *De las eclipses del sol y de la luna* while in Zuniga's service. Before Columbus set sail Zacuto met him. Afterwards he counseled that the enterprise to the Indies was feasible though hazardous.

So certain of Zacuto's academic abilities was the Bishop of Salamanca that his will directed all of Zacuto's Spanish treatises be bound and placed in the cathedral library. The distinction between the scholar's Spanish and other writings seems clear. Zacuto was a religious man who wrote fluently in Hebrew on subjects relating to Judaism. His most important astronomical work, *Ha-Hibbur ha Gadol* (The Great Essay) was written in Hebrew and later translated into, Latin, Portuguese, Castilian, Italian and German.

In 1492 when Jews were expelled from Spain, Zacuto left for Portugal. One of his students at the Portuguese court procured a position for him. The move was a bitter experience for him, one he carried for the rest of his life. Like other exiled Sephardim he lamented being torn from his beloved Spain. He later wrote about his personal feelings on the expulsion:

"On Monday the twenty-fifth of June of the year 1492, I left….at noon never to return, because the King, Don Fernando, and the Queen, Isabella, *annihilated be their names and memory*, banished all the Jews who lived under their rule...." Zacuto experienced his anguish, and those of the rest of his co-religionists, when he stood with many thousands at the port of Palos on that day making determinations as to where they would go. Within five weeks Columbus's three ships would sail from this port into the unknown reaches of the Atlantic to change the face of the world, Zacuto could not go to the New World; his descendants would. Zacuto chose neighboring Portugal.

Zacuto's fortunes rose in his new home. Because of his reputation he was appointed Court Astronomer to King John II and later to King Manuel I. Under their tutelage he made a great contribution to navigation; the astrolabe, the ancient forerunner to the modern sextant, used by mariners to measure

the location of sun, moon and stars in order to determine a ship's position at sea, had been constructed of wood. This important instrument was prone to swelling when it became wet from rainstorms or humidity. In dry weather the astrolabe would shrink. These variations rendered the Astrolabe's accuracy unreliable. Zacuto constructed one of copper, which neither swelled nor shrank. Before he left for his historic voyage to India in 1496, Vasco da Gama consulted with Zacuto packing the astronomer's charts, tables and the newly perfected astrolabe to take with him.

In the year 1503, on his fourth and last voyage to the Americas, Columbus was shipwrecked in Jamaica. He and his crew made their home in the remains of their ship near the beach. At first the natives were impressed by the Europeans and their swords and knives. There were firearms, which they had never seen before, firing shot over many yards. Over time, however they understood that these marooned sailors were vulnerable and refused to co operate with them or provide them with food and water. On one occasion the native Chief confronted Columbus with obvious hostile intent. Armed with Zacuto's Tables, Columbus knew an eclipse was on the way. He told the natives that he would cause the sun to disappear and that it would not return unless they left in peace and continued to provide Columbus and his crew with food. It worked and the hapless seamen were safe for a while.

By 1497 the Jews of Portugal were all forcibly converted to Christianity. Zacuto managed to escape with his son Samuel to North Africa. The rest of his family remained behind. The trials of this scholar began anew. Imprisoned by pirates in North Africa with his son on two occasions, this man who faithfully served both Spain and Portugal in their efforts to make new discoveries was hounded by the Inquisition and forced to subsist as a private tutor of mathematics in Tunis.

Towards the end of his life, Zacuto finished a work he had been writing for some time on Jewish law and genealogy, *Sefer ha-Yuhasin* (The Book of Relations.) He wrote other philosophical religious tracts. Not much is known of his last years. He surfaces in Jerusalem in 1513, where he taught at a Yeshiva. He disappeared thereafter and it is believed he died around 1515 in obscurity.

While Zacuto was able to leave Portugal, others of his family were trapped and forced to lead the lives of crypto-Jews. Two, who were to become influential in Jewish history, were able to leave Portugal and resume their Jewish lives. Both came with their families to Amsterdam. From that city, a haven for Portuguese crypto-Jews there their lives took very different paths.

The Amsterdam Jewish community, which the Zacutos and other early conversos from Spain and Portugal encountered, was a confusing one. There were few rabbis to assist returning Jews. Early rabbis, who were

themselves crypto-Jews, could barely read or speak Hebrew. One Italian rabbi, the Sephardi, Samuel Aboab, characterized the lot of Iberia's crypto-Jews as having lived in "spiritual servitude." Most crypto-Jews mixed their Catholic upbringing with their new introduction to Judaism. In Spain or Portugal they cited the *Shema* beneath their breath as they took communion before a priest. They knew that their salvation lay in the Law of Moses and that the images in the church were against Jewish belief, but were unable to explain the basic principles of Judaism. Many crypto-Jews held back joining the Jewish community until they understood what their responsibilities would be or that it was safe to be counted as a Jew in this new country.

One must understand that in the seventeenth century, Iberian Jews were only two or three generations away from Judaism; it was easier for the rabbis to determine one's Jewish credentials. It is not the same situation that today's crypto-Jews face, because the passage of hundreds of years and the difficulty of preparing a family tree conclusively proving a Jewish maternal line is almost impossible.

What were the commitments a seventeenth century crypto-Jew had to make in Amsterdam in order to join the Community of Israel? Once the rabbis determined there was no need for a formal conversion the newly returned Jew was given Hebrew prayers to memorize. A circumcision was necessary. The newly returned Jew recited the Hebrew prayers, which he memorized and probably didn't understand, before a congregation of fellow Jews after his circumcision healed. He presented himself on that day wrapped in a shawl and *tiffilin* as an expression of his devotion to Judaism. He was expected to live with and practice the rituals of Judaism. There seems to be no equivalent ritual for women. Nevertheless, after a lifetime of expressing one's self through the rites and prayers of the Catholic Church, newcomers often continued to use them as a comfortable and familiar conduit to demonstrate their devotion to Judaism.

It was something the rabbis needed to combat, sometimes with historic and brutal consequences. Uriel da Costa was punished by receiving lashes in the synagogue for his deviations from Orthodox thought. And Benedict Spinoza was banished forever from the Amsterdam Jewish community under a *herem* (a rabbinical excommunication) for ideas that varied from Orthodoxy. No Jew was permitted to trade or have any contact with him. Without making comments on the severity of these punishments or if they were even warranted, we have to understand the delicate position in which the leaders of the Jewish community found themselves at that time.

Jews were newcomers to Holland; they spoke a foreign language and had different cultural and religious practices from the Dutch. They stuck out like a sore thumb. The Dutch had recently seceded as a possession from Catholic Spain. In their rift they enthusiastically embraced a breakaway Protestant theology that looked with favor on the Hebrew bible and the restoration of the Jewish people to Jerusalem. It would not do for the Jews to antagonize their hosts whose religion espoused a great devotion to the Hebrew bible or "Old Testament," its Prophets and heroes. In a world where free speech and the free choice of religion were far from universal and accepted concepts, da Costa and Spinoza were potential sources of friction between the Jewish community and the their new government, because of their radical ideas about God, the bible and man's soul.

No wonder many crypto-Jews stood outside the community. They felt they had to until they were secure enough to join it. Some never made the transition, remaining Christians; others vacillated, returning to Catholicism when it was convenient and then Judaism for the same reasons; a few returned to Iberia preferring the life there to a new one in a strange land. Over time, those who chose not to return were beneficiaries of a benevolent and tolerant Holland that extended them the freedom to worship, while it denied that same right to Catholics. It afforded them citizenship and defended and protected them overseas when they fell into the hands of pirates and anti-Jewish governments. To the world these people may have been Jews. To the Dutch they were valued citizens who deserved and were afforded the same protection other Dutch citizens enjoyed. It was to this society that two Zacuto conversos came in the early seventeenth century. Their presence enriched the Jewish community.

Moses Ben Mordecai Zacuto was born in Portugal in 1620. Despite several generations of his family's removal from formal and organized Judaism, the young man jumped feet first into his Jewish studies when he arrived in Holland. He soon was able to enter a Polish Yeshiva where he became attracted to Kabbalah. One of the legends surrounding him states that as a young man he fasted for forty days in order to purge himself of his knowledge of Latin. When he finished his schooling he moved to Italy where he lived in Venice, Verona and Mantua. His life is marked by a great interest in Kabbalah, his writings, poems and his editing of works of other Hebrew authors. Moses Zacuto is credited with writing the first biblical drama in Hebrew, *Yesod Olam*. He also acted as a rabbi in Venice.

Moses Zacuto is a great example of a crypto-Jew's return to Judaism who helped to enrich his newly acquired religion. Influenced by Dante, he wrote of hell and man's tribulation in that pit of desperation. During his lifetime he

enjoyed the reputation of being the leading Italian Kabbalist. Moses Zacuto died in 1697. During his lifetime he saw the return of the crypto-Jew to freedom in Western Europe and the Americas.

Abraham Zacuto, who would become known to history as Zacutus Lusitanus was born in Lisbon in 1575, almost a century after his famous ancestor left Portugal for North Africa. He was born Manuel Alvares de Tavera and enjoyed a reputation as one of the finest physicians in his native city. By 1625 he moved to Amsterdam. Here his life changed drastically. At age 50 he accepted Judaism, dropped his Portuguese name, assumed the name Abraham Zacuth and submitted to circumcision. He continued practicing medicine and during a time when that discipline was primitive, he was known as a first rate diagnostician who described malignant tumors, diphtheria and other diseases.

Zacutus Lusitanus was a prolific writer on medical topics. After his death his works were complied in France. They include a description of all diseases then known, a survey of internal medicine, a description of rare diseases and the famous *Zacuti Pharmacooea*, a list of drugs which highlighted newly discovered drugs from South America. He died in 1642.

In 1992, American descendants of Abraham Zacuto traveled to Spain to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World, in which their ancestor played an important role. They returned to Spain carrying a banner which read: DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM ZACUTO Salamanca, Spain 1452-1515: Astronomer. Mapmaker. Inventor. Philosopher. Professor. In the year 1992, Abraham Ben Samuel Zacuto had finally come home.

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Rodrigo Cota

Elaine Wertheimer

Rodrigo de Cota, was a fifteenth century poet with a major social identity crisis, one of the desperate *conversos*, who did not have a comfortable place in this world. So often when we are dealing with authors of this period, we suspect that they may have been *conversos*, or we perceive a *converso* influence in their writings and then we have to defend our positions, often against acerbic criticism. In the case of Rodrigo de Cota, however, we have no doubt, neither of his Jewish origin nor of his convert status. [1] In fact, Francisco Cantera Burgos entitled his amply documented book "*El poeta Ruy Sanchez Cota (Rodrigo Cota) y su familia de judios conversos*." [2] (The poet ... and his family of Jewish converts.)

Cota was born in Toledo sometime between 1430 and 1440 and died about 1505. The varied fortunes of his family and the persecutions they suffered over the years led to the anguished social identity, which is reflected in his work.

We know from the investigations of Cantera Burgos, and earlier from those of Emilo Cotarelo, that Cota's family was of high social rank.[3] His father, Alonso Cota was a treasurer who founded an entailed estate, inherited by his oldest son Rodrigo. Other family members were legal experts, scribes, and members of town councils. The importance of the family is proven by these responsible positions as well as by the interest, which Princess Isabela took in the family affairs.[4] We know that Cota was an *escribano* (scribe) and tax collector, and that he invested in land, features which he had in common with other *conversos* wishing to assimilate to their new environment.[5]

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1 Rene Foulche Desbosc said in 1915 "*La filiación conversa de Rodrigo de Cota era entonces, como ahora, conocidísima." Cancionero Castellano del siglo* XV, vol. II, Madrid 1915, p. 588

2 Madrid, 1970

3 Emilio Cotarelo, "*Algunas noticias nuevas acerca de Rodrigo Cota*". BRAE, XIII, Madrid, 1926, pp. 11-17, and "*Adiciones a las noticias nuevas acerca de Rodrigo Cota*", Ibid, pp. 140-3, Cantera Burgos, op. cit.

4 R. Foulché-Delbosc, "*Deux letters inédites d'Isabelle la Catholique concernant la famille de Rodrigo Cota*", RH, I, 1894
Paris, pp. 85-7.One letter orders the release of two prisoners, Sancho Cota and his son Rodrigo., cousins of the author.
We do not know why they were imprisoned. The other letter orders the wife and children of the treasurer Francisco Cota to be sent to Toledo.

5 Eleazar Gutwirth, "On the background to Cota's Epitalamio Burlesco",

However, in spite of the high social position of the family members and the interest of the Princess, the Cota family endured persecution. Cota's father Alonso was a victim of the riot of 1449 when the family home was set on fire. Many years later, several members of the family were accused of Judaizing, with tragic consequences. It is a matter of record that Beatriz Alonso Cota, the author's aunt, was burned at the stake as an heretic in 1495, and that doctor Alonso Cota, legal expert and Rodrigo's brother suffered the same fate in 1496. Other family members who were adjudged "heretics" were reconciled with the Church: Juan Cota in 1486, and Rodrigo Cota el Mozo, the author's nephew in 1496. A list of Judaizers from 1495 and 1497 mentions fourteen Cotas as *condenados*, *habilitados* or *reconciliados*.[6]

In an attempt to disassociate him from the family, Cota changed his name, using at times the names of Ruy Sánchez Cota and of Ruy Sanchez de Toledo. He married a *cristiana vieja* (Old Christian) Isabel de Peralta, and gave his descendants the name of Alarcón, which they kept until the 17th century.[7] Rodrigo Cota himself was also personally involved with the Inquisition but we don't know much of the details.[8] Although there is no evidence that he was a Judiaizer, he was brought before the tribunal and listed as a *condenado* sometime before Sept. 30, 1499. This biographical fact does not appear to be well known. I did not find it in Cotarelo or in Cantera Burgos. However, Gregory Kaplan cites a royal decree listed in the catalogue of Pilar Leon Tello. In this document (#1725 in the Cathedral of Toledo) the *reyes catolicos* (the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella) give permission to an inquisitor in Toledo to dispose of property belonging to Rodrigo Cota who had been *condenado*. [9] We do not know the outcome of Cota's case, nor if he was acquitted before being required to appear in an *auto da fe*. However, the accusation had a definite affect on his family since two of his sons, Martin de Alarcon and Juan de Sandoval omitted the name Cota when referring to their father, whom they designated as Ruy Sanchez de Toledo.[10] Obviously they were trying to avoid the perils of associating themselves with a *condenado*.

RF, 97 Band, Heft 1, l985, pp. 1-14

6 Francisco Cantera Burgos, *Judaizantes del arzobispado de Toledo habilitados por la Inquisicon en 1496 y 1497*. Madrid, Universidad de Madrid, 1969

7 Cotarelo, op. cit., p. 15

8 Eloy Benito Ruano, *Toledo en el siglo XV: Vida politica*, Madrid, CSIC, 1961, p. 35

9 Pilar Leon Tello, *Judios de Toledo*, Madrid, CSIC, 1979, #1725

10 Kaplan, op. cit. p. 94 and note 8.

Cota's total literary production which has come down to us consists of four short works, but one of them, the *Dialogo entre el Amor y un Viejo*,(Dialogue between Love and the Old Man) is of capital importance in the development of the Spanish theater. This work was not published during his lifetime. It appeared anonymously in the *Cancionero General* of Hernando del Castillo in 1511 in Valencia and was reissued in 1569 in Medina del Campo by Francisco del Canto.[11]

The dialogue form, which Cota uses, occurs frequently in medieval Castilian literature. Among the many examples are Juan de Mena's *La razon contra la luxuria*, (reason against licentiousness), the Marques de Santillana's *Bias contra fortuna*, (Bias against fortune), Juan Ruiz' Pelea (Strife) and many anonymous *disputas*, debates and *controversias*, but there is an important difference. The salient features of medieval dialogues, are their moral lessons, their didactic intent. Here there is no moral, as we shall soon see. There is no lesson. Cota's intent is not to provide moral instruction but to protest a hopeless situation.

The work is a mixture of lyric poetry and drama. At that time literary genres were not rigidly delimited. Although clothed in allegoric form, it has an atmosphere of reality for the life force behind it. The clash of two wills in conflict, of two points of view which meet and shoot sparks, make of it a profoundly human work in spite of its allegorical costume.

The argument is simple: an old man retired from the world, lives in a ruined orchard, in a desiccated garden. Amor, the god of Love, approaches and tries to seduce him. At first the old man resists, but soon he is persuaded by the subtle arguments and flattering promises of the god of Love. When at last, he succumbs, Love turns on him, insulting him and mocking him pitilessly.

Although the later editions of the work have stage directions lacking in the original, much of the movement can be deduced from the dialogue itself. For example, when the Viejo expresses his surprise at the approach of Amor to disturb the solitude of his life:

Cerrada estaba mi puerta,
¿A qué vienes? ¿Por do entraste?
Di, ladrón, ¿por qué saltaste
las paredes de mi huerta?[12]

11 The *Sociedad de Bibliófilos españoles* published an edition of the *Cancionero General de Hernando de Castillo segun la edicion de 1511*, in Madrid, 1882. The only modern edition of the work is that of Elisa Aragone, *Dialogo entre el amor y un viejo*, Firenze, Felice le Monnier, 1961.

12 F. Lazaro Carreter, Teatro Medieval, Valencia, 1958, p. 114

(My door was closed.
Why are you coming? How did you get in?
Tell me, Thief, why did you jump over
The gates of my garden?)

Then Amor begins to entice him, the Viejo roughly rejects the proposition, denying the hope of recovered youth, which is being offered and gives his reason for suspicion of Amor's motives:

Pues traydor eres, amor,
de los tuyos enemigo,
y los que viven contigo
son ministros de dolor:
sábete que sé que son
afán, desdén y desseo
.....
tormento y desesperanca,
enganos con ceguedad,
lloros y catiuidad,
congoxa, rauia, mudanca,

(You are a traitor, Love,
an enemy of your own,
and those who live with you
are ministers of grief.
I know that they are
worry, disdain and desire
torment and despair,
deceit with blindness
tears and captivity,
anguish, rage and change,)

The god answers his complaints by speaking to him sweetly and reassuringly until the old man agrees to listen to his reasoning:

Pero dímelos de lejos
el aire no me inficiones.[13]

(But tell me from afar
don't poison my air.)

13 *Ibid*. p. 119

We suppose that Amor has advanced one step. This technique of action implicit in dialogue will be seen later in the Celestina. *Amor* tries to allay the Viejo's suspicions, but the Old Man remains adamant, calling Love "*blanda cara de alacrán*". (soft face of a scorpion). Listen to the music in that line. For the lyricism as well as the dramatic force, Menendez y Pelayo called the *Dialogo* "*joya preciosa de nuestro tesoro poetico del siglo XV*". (a precious gem of our poetic treasure of the fifteenth century) Now why precisely does Cota use the image of the scorpion to describe Amor's blandishments? Elisa Aragone in her critical edition of the *Dialogo*, gives us an answer, quoting Gessner, the naturalist of the sixteenth century that the scorpion was likened to a woman since it has a soft and almost girlish face but a poisonous sting in its tail.[14] This image was common in medieval iconography.

Amor proceeds slowly, tempting the Viejo with promises of happiness, of renewed beauty, of restored masculine vigor. Amor says:

Por ende, si con dulcura
me quieres obedecer,
yo hare reconoscer
en ti muy nueua frescura:
ponert'e en el coracon
este mi biuo alboroco
seras en esta sazon
de la misma condicion
qu'eras quando lindo mozo.

(So, if you will obey me
with sweetness,
I will let you see in yourself
a very new freshness;
I will put in your heart
my own lively joyfulness
you will be at this time
in the same condition
as when you were a handsome young man.)

Amor says to the Viejo: I will make you young again. I will make you handsome again. I will make you potent again. What man could resist? And thus, the two move as in a dance, one step forward, one step back. The figures appear more human than allegorical. It is not a question of good and evil here. There are no heroes and villains. The two are equally

14 Aragone, *op. cit.*p. 73

reprehensible, the Viejo anxious to sin once again and Amor anxious to make a fool of him. At some moments, it seems as if the old man will win. At others, it is Love that is ahead. The *Dialogo* appears to move toward a happy ending when suddenly the action takes a new turn. At the moment when the Viejo is about to achieve his purpose, he suddenly feels that something horrible is happening. His reason warns him to desist, but it is already much too late. When Amor asks him gently:

Hete aquí bien abrazado.
Dime, ¿qué sientes ahora?

(Now you see yourself well embraced.
Tell me, what do you feel now?)

The Viejo responds:

Siento rabia matadora
placer lleno de cuidado
siento un fuego muy crecido
siento mal y no lo veo.[15]

(I feel a murderous rage.
a pleasure full of troubles
I feel a raging fire
I feel the presence of evil but I can't see it.)

He is seized with an ineffable terror. He senses evil all around him but cannot see it to defend himself. The dream of happiness has become a nightmare. Amor not only deceives him but also confronts him with the miseries of his age, taunting him for his gullibility in believing that an ugly old man could possibly evoke passion.

¿Cual error pudo bastar
que te avia de tornar
ruvio tu cabello cano?
Y esos becos tan sumidos,
dientes y muelas podridos,
[creias] que eran dulces de besar?

15 *Ibid*. p. 132

(What error could be enough
to turn blond your white hair?
and those sunken cheeks
rotten teeth and molars,
did you think they were sweet to kiss?

Not only is his desire unsatisfied, but also Amor heaps insults on him, enumerating "*la boca gargajosa, los pies llenos de callos, no escupes mas derecho de cuanto ensuzias la barva*" (your phlegmy mouth, your feet full of calluses, you can't even spit without staining your beard) and calls him "*alma viva en seco palo, biva muerte y muerta vida*" (a living soul in a dry stick, living death and dead life) The Viejo ends up scorned and beaten.

The theme of the miseries of old age was not original with Cota. Other *Cancionero* poets had treated it before. For example, Hernando del Pulgar had described the life of the old: "*comen con pena, purgan con trabajo*."[16] (they eat with difficulty, they purge themselves with effort.)

As Francisco Marquez points out: *El tema de la vejez y el comportameniento del anciano constituye una preocupacion frequente en la poesia de cancioneros, hasta alcanzar su formulacion mas valiosa en el Dialogo de Rodrigo de Cota, que estrema con la mayor ferocidad el aspecto mas repugnante de la decadencia fisica.*[17] (The theme of old age and the behavior of the elderly was a frequent preoccupation in *Cancionero* poetry but it reached its highest level in Cota's *Dialogo* which presents the most repugnant aspect of physical decadence with the greatest ferocity.)

Americo Castro speaks of the "*perversa complacencia de Rodrigo de Cota al incitar al Viejo...a rendirse a la llamada de Amor, para, inmediatemente, confrontar al hombre anciano con las miserias de su edad, con la "desrealidad" de su sueno*."[18] (The perverse complacence of Cota in inciting the Old Man to succumb to Love's call in order to confront him with the miseries of his age, with the unreality of his dream.)

It is perverse all right, but is it really complacence?" I do not think that this was a source of satisfaction for Cota. It seems more a protest wrenched from his heart. How can we explain Cota's apparent perversity? Here is the picture of an old man who still believes himself capable of finding sensual delights and ends up deceived and humiliated. Some may find this comical. Others may find it pathetic, but in no way should it provoke so much ferocity, so much bitterness, so much despair. Nevertheless, if we understand the

16 Cited by Americo Castro, *Espana en su historia*, 2nd ed., Barcelona, 1983, p. 543

17 *Investigaciones sobre Juan Alvarez Gato*, Madrid, 1960, pp. 309-310

18 *Op. cit*, p. 543.

drama in relation to the life of the poet himself we see a possible explanation, for the rhythm of the *Dialogo* responds to the rhythm of Cota's own life. The old man lived apart from the world, in the solitary exclusivity of the Jews of Spain. Love went looking for him, offered him promises of well-being, of a new and gratifying life if he would accept the new law. In spite of the admonitions of his own reason, the old man concedes, enjoys one fleeting moment of happiness and immediately finds himself betrayed.

Perhaps Cota's reference is to the way Christians forced Jews to convert and then subsequently turned on them by rejecting them for their blood impurity. The persistent rejection of *nuevos* once they had surrendered to the blandishments of Christian love would be a betrayal of the *caritas*, which St. Paul placed above other theological virtues. The Viejo thus would represent *la ley vieja, la ley cansada, la ley caducada*. (the old law, the tired law, the worn out law). In fact, the Viejo, initially repudiating Amor, says : "*Dexa mi cansada vida*." (leave my tired life) and he complains to Amor:

Tu mestizas los linages,
tu limpieza no conseruas;
tu doctrinas de malicia,
tu quebrantas lealtad.[19]
(You mix up lineages
you don't conserve purity of blood
you teach malice,
you destroy loyalty.)

Here we have a clear reference to the *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) doctrine, which made it impossible for *cristianos nuevos* to ever assimilate into the Christian community.

The Viejo's complaints against love will remind you of Pleberio's lament over his dead daughter in La Celestina. Pleberio inveighs against Love's treachery. It pursues those who have not succumbed to it, and then brings death to those who do succumb. The Viejo, on the other hand, does not spell out the nature of such perfidy but the scene does all of the communicating. The world of the *Dialogo* is a world in chaos, an event not ruled by a moral Providence. There is deceit everywhere. There is no love, no pity, no tenderness, no sympathy. Love has become Life, which deceives man, tempting him and seducing him only to mock him perversely.

Amor, taunting him, says:

19 *Cancionero general de Hernando del Castillo, Sociedad de Bibliofilos espanoles*, I, Madrid, 1882, p.303

Ahora podrás, don Viejo
conservar tu fama casta
ahora veré si te basta
tu saber y tu consejo. [20]

(Now, Sir Old Man, you can
preserve your chaste reputation
now I'll see if it's enough for you
your knowledge and your advice.)

How do knowledge and advice fit into this? This is a story of a man looking to enjoy a woman. Whatever *saber* and *consejo* have to do with it. However, we must realize that Cota's people had always been recognized for their knowledge and wisdom. Now the Viejo sees that these qualities will no longer avail him. Cota's introduction of these words which seem discrepant reminds me of Sanford Shepherd's remark: "No literature except perhaps works of cabalistic mysticism has ever required so much foreknowledge and depended so little on literal meaning as Spanish literature."[21]

The negation of life in this work approaches complete nihilism. Nevertheless the Viejo has the last word, expressing the little consolation, which still remains to him:

Si la alcurnia del vencido
da la Gloria al vencedor
yo de ti tan combatido
no sere debil, caído
ni tu fuerte, triunfador.[22]

(If the lineage of the defeated
gives Glory to the victor
I, so beaten down by you
will not be weak and fallen
nor will you be strong and triumphant.)

Gregory Kaplan calls this work a *converso* lament, with two parallel *converso* allegories: one referring to the situation of the *conversos* in general,

20 *Ibid*. p. 132
21 *Lost Lexicon Secret Meaning in the Vocabulary of Spanish Literature during the Inquisition*, Miami, FL, 1982 p. 20
22 *Ibid*. p. 136

and the other to the specific situation of Rodrigo Cota. In the first allegory, the ruined orchard signifies the lives of the *conversos* and their inferior status and low public esteem. The second allegory, with the theme of *fuego* (fire), reflects Cota's own experience , the burning at the stake of Dr. Alonso Cota and his own trials with the Inquisition.[23]

Cota's family had enjoyed their moment of happiness after their conversion, but later realized that conversion had done nothing to improve their position in Old Christian society. Their efforts to disassociate themselves from their own people had not prevailed. Their attempts to be good Christians were doomed to fail since their *sangre* (blood) could never be *limpia* (pure). In spite of their high position, in spite of their wealth, in spite of all their efforts, they were still living in a broken down hut in a desiccated garden. They were still miserable Jews. In the end, they saw themselves in the horror of the Inquisitorial procedures and the "*fuego muy crecido*" of the *hoguera*. (the raging fire of the stake). The reaction of the poet to this situation is not a resigned pessimism, but a frenzy of intolerable despair.

Elisa Aragone in her introduction to the *Dialogo* states that the pessimistic concept of love, which was typical in the Middle Ages, is intensified with Biblical violence in the work of the Hispanic Semite.[24] But we do not need typical medieval pessimism or Biblical violence to understand what is happening in Cota's world. The years of anti-*converso* persecution, the impossibility of ever bettering his situation, the tragic deaths of his relatives in the *autos da fe*, and his own involvement with the Inquisition led to the tone of hopelessness and bitterness reflected in the *Dialogo*.

Cota could not openly express the agony in his heart. His situation was too dangerous to permit the luxury of an overt protest so he cleverly hid his complaint in sexual guise. He transmuted into lyricism his pain and suffering, but all of his repressed passion burst forth in this *Dialogo* in a chilling cry of anguish which still resonates, five centuries later.

23 Kaplan, op. cit, pp. 96-105

24 *Dialogo entre el Amor y un Viejo*, Firenze, 1961, p. 25

Book Review

Idelfonso Falcones. 2008. *Cathedral of the Sea*. Translated by Nick Caistor. NY: Dutton.

This book by Idelfonso Falcones and translated by Nick Caistor is both an homage to a church built in Barcelona over several decades in the 14th century and a commentary on the Inquisition and the various wars in which the king engaged his vassals and subjects. It brutally and coldly presents the many lamentable abuses of women and also cries out at the injustice of the truly pitiful living conditions of the serfs. The author can be subtle: he analyzes the relationships between pope and monarchs as well as the Holy Office, and between the guilds and the military. He offers insights into monarchs' pragmatism and constant need for war funds, which effected acceptance of monetary loans, and disregard for papal edicts against interest-bearing loans. However, the writer disregards the saying: "El que mucho abarca poco aprieta." "He who reaches for too much squeezes little." Characters develop in spurts or scantly; some stereotyping of Jews, Moslems and an altruistic devotee of Santa Maria, the patron saint of the church, are disappointing, in contrast to the rich tapestry of medieval Catalonian culture. The hero never develops beyond his childhood adoration of the saint. Although the author denounces the prevalence of ignorance and the church's role in its promotion, he sets fertile ground for superstition and blind reverence.

I found more elegant in their simplicity the thoughts of a Moor, a man of intelligence and sophistication whose social position changes and whose religion he is forced to hide. "Despite the crisis, the city teemed with activity. Barcelona was still open to the sea, defended only by the tasques...The western wall Pedro the Third had ordered built was still under construction, as were the royal shipyards." "...The cathedral, like Santa Maria, or the Pi church, was still under construction, although work on the shrine to the Virgin of the Sea was much further advanced. Santa Clara and Santa Ana were also covered in scaffolding. Guillem paused in front of each church and watched the carpenters and masons hard at work. What about the seawall? And the secure harbor? How strange these Christians were."

Although a slave and a Moslem, he is as far from the misery which the rural serfs experience as any other businessman of Barcelona. But, he knows what the slave ships do when they leave the port after a delivery: the ships need to go back out to sea to empty the cargo, which did not make it to Barcelona alive. He remembers in silence. His social and financial success can not heal his deracinated soul. Another character, who as a boy is orphaned by his fathers' hatred and his mother's despair after being punished for adultery, also faces the

intransigence and hypocrisy of the church as an adult. But he cannot distance himself, he is the church even when he learns that it is too late to regain his joyful energy. His black despair, his abnegation and his arrogance as an agent of the Inquisition combine with his legalistic mind to cause pain to all who love him.

The women suffer from the laws and customs of medieval Spain, but their deepest emotions are never brought forth; they appear and leave at the convenience of the male protagonists. We do learn about the shocking practices regarding adultery, rape and arranged marriages, but not about how women live and try to teach their children to overcome prejudice. As poverty increases in Catalonia and men are sent to war, the serf's lives are ever more desperate, yet these women seem to have little effect on the lives of those around them.

As difficult as is survival for the serfs, the lives of the Jews of Barcelona are more painful as anti-Semitism and bloodthirsty vengeance lead the ignorant citizens to attack the Jewry. It is clear that these sentiments include greed as they violently sack the Jews' homes. Rachel, a young woman who witnesses unbearable savagery against her people, is forced to leave to save her life. Tragically, her gentle spirit is starved by the incomprehensible rejection of her people, the refusal to show them love or kinship. How can this happen? A young person must ask. Barcelona benefits from the excessive taxes levied on the Jews and from their mercantile skills. For the starving serfs, it is clear the their lords' cruelty is selfishly motivated. The lords greedily and vainly benefit from the serfs' misery.

The author condemns the unimaginable cruelty of the Holy Office and of the church. On an intellectual level, he challenges the accusations against the Jews of usury and he defends Judaism against attacks. On an emotional level, the ubiquitous descriptions of the church's architecture glorify the structure. As the organic changes of light enter the church and its veneration by the guilds grows in fervor, the church becomes as a symbol of simplicity and humility. But how, after the burning of innocents and of hateful sentiments, can one feel at ease with this unbending adoration? One searches for confrontation or at least a thoughtful and honest attempt to explain this incongruity. Similarly, one is not certain whether Barcelona's wars are glorified or condemned for their cost and waste when reading both thorough critical historical analysis and dramatic, grandiose war scenes. Facile gender and ethnic stereotyping are also inappropriate, as when a Jew secretly collaborates with a Moor to engage in the slave trade. This fictional story illustrates the actions taken by royalty, church officials and the people of Catalonia, but they serve only as adornment to the hero's glorious pursuits.

-- Ines Diaz Oben