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En. . . España nos hemos movido, incluso en las últimas décadas, entre el desconocimiento (o tal vez olvido más o menos pretendido de esta producción literaria), y la paulatina toma de conciencia de que nos encontramos ante una parte importante del legado cultural hispano, una de las literaturas en lengua no castellana que enriquecen el panorama de nuestro pasado.

Ángel Sáenz-Badillos (“Estudio” 137)

In the context of the scholarly debate on Orientalism, scholars have written extensively about the study of Arabic and Hebrew in European and North American universities.¹ There is comparatively little critical writing on Spanish Orientalism,² and precious little on Spanish Hebraism.³ Apart from an unpublished manuscript by the late Spanish Hebraist David Gonzalo Maeso⁴ and one recent article by Ángel Sáenz-Badillos (“Estudio”), we mainly have the usual homages and bio-bibliographies written by Spanish Orientalists for their own teachers or their teachers’ teachers.⁵

In the context of the post-Civil war intellectual diaspora and within post-Franco Spain, the debate on national languages and literatures has centered on the *convivencia* not of Castro but of Menéndez Pidal: that of the coexistence of the various dialects of Hispano-Romance.⁶ Catalan, Basque, and Galician are in political and ethnic competition with Castilian, rival official languages and engines of regional identity. Medieval Hebrew, a non-vernacular language with virtually no indigenous lobby in Spain after 1492, has no political champions in this tournament, and its fate in the Spanish academy and literary establishment has been determined to large extent by its status as a language of scriptural study.

Américo Castro and his followers have stimulated quite a bit of discussion on how we might reconceive the Muslim and Jewish contributions to what we now think of as Spanish culture. However, they have focused more on essentialist arguments for the Jewish and especially *converso* contribution to Spanish (i.e. Catholic, Castilian) intellectual and cultural life,

¹ See, for example, the studies by Ahmed, Arberry, Behdad, Bosworth, Destremau, Dugat, Gude, Irwin, Kaplan, and Paret.

² Gonzalo Maeso’s essay on Spanish Orientalism (“Orientalismo: su concepto, características, y cohesión”) represents the undeconstructed Orientalist position as critiqued by Edward Said and others. The major studies are those by Monroe, Cirre, Fernández, Soto Pérez, Rivière Gómez, and Jubran.

³ For example, as far back as 1920 Américo Castro notes that Spain’s poverty in Classical studies is offset by her strength in Arabic philology, but does not mention Hebrew. Castro happens to mention Hebraist Mariano Gaspar (U. Complutense), but praises him not for his work on Hispano-Hebrew, but rather for his “estimables trabajos sobre el reino moro de Granada” (“Movimiento” 194).

⁴ I refer here to his “Los estudios hebraicos y bíblicos en España durante los cinco últimos siglos” (Gonzalo Maeso, “Enseñanza” 14n1). The Fondo David Gonzalo Maeso is housed at the Biblioteca de la Escuela de Traductores de Toledo, in the Biblioteca General of the Toledo campus of the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.

⁵ See, for example, García, Pascual Recuero (*Elenco, Antonio María García Blanco*) and *Títulos y trabajos del profesor D. José María Millás Vallicrosa*.

⁶ For example, in a discussion of ultracorrección during the ‘primitive’ era of the development of Castilian, Menéndez Pidal writes of the “convivencia de dos normas” [of pronunciation] in competition (521-22).

rather than the value of Hebrew literature as part of a Spanish national patrimony.⁷ In literary studies this has meant a focus on the question of *converso*-ness as a form of vestigial Jewishness as reflected in authors such as Fray Luis de León, Quevedo, and Góngora. Neither Castro nor any of his followers working in Hispanic studies have argued for the inclusion of Hebrew authors in the canon of Spanish literature.⁸

A review of major histories of Spanish and Castilian literature written since the mid-nineteenth century reveals little discussion of Hebrew literature in Christian Iberia,⁹ although a few do mention the existence of Jews there, and the fact that some of them wrote in Hebrew.¹⁰

While histories of Castilian or Catalan literature routinely include the vernacular works of Jewish authors such as the *Proverbios morales* of Rabbi Shem Tov ben Isaac Arduziel of Carrión, and the *Llibre de paraules e dits de savis e filososfs* of Jafuda Bonsenyor, they are overwhelmingly silent on the subject of the Hebrew literature of the Christian kingdoms of medieval Iberia. More frequent is the inclusion of other non-Castilian literature as part of the national canon. Some editors include sections on the Latin poetry of the Roman province of Hispania, some on the Arabic and Hebrew poetry of al-Andalus or Muslim Iberia,¹¹ but there is virtually no mention of literature written in Hebrew in Christian Iberia, those lands that would retroactively become “Spain.”

It is by now commonly understood as an anachronism to refer to a medieval Iberian author, writing in any language, as ‘Spanish.’¹² Take for example Juan Ruiz, author of the fourteenth-century Castilian work *Libro de buen amor*, or ‘Book of Good Love.’ From where Ruiz stood, there was no nation state known as Spain, and no language known as “Spanish.” He lived in the Kingdom of Castile-León, one kingdom among several on the Iberian Peninsula, each of which had its own vernacular distinct from that of Castile.¹³ This differentiation of Castilian (a regional language) from Spanish (a national and imperial language), however commonsensical it may seem to a contemporary US readership, is relatively recent. From the late fifteenth century until the death of Franco, the linguistic hegemony of Castilian in Spain was

⁷ Castro provides a long list of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century canonical Castilian authors who were *conversos* (*Realidad* 50).

⁸ As recently as 2000, Pozuelo Yvancos and Aradra Sánchez wrote an exhaustively researched book on the problem of literary canon and Spanish literature that altogether sidesteps the question of Castilian hegemony. Even the chapter on medieval literature (189-209) is limited to a discussion of the inclusion of medieval works in literary anthologies and university curricula.

⁹ Millás Vallicrosa’s contribution to the history of Díaz Plaja is alone in providing in-depth coverage of Hebrew literary production in Spain, and Cejador y Frauca dedicates exactly one paragraph to Hebrew authors (120-21).

¹⁰ For example, José Amador de los Ríos writes in 1866 that Spanish Jews were but “meros depositarios del saber del antiguo mundo” (*Historia* 2: 6). He explains that Spanish art is founded on the twin principles of struggle against Islam and excellence in Christian religion (*Historia* 2: 6), neither of which were particularly characteristic of Spanish Jews. In 1899, Antonio Gil y Zárate concedes that Sephardic ‘rabbinic literature’ [he refers to the work of Rabbi Shem Tov ben Isaac Arduziel of Carrión, or ‘Santob de Carrión’) is worth studying, “al menos como uno de los medios es para esclarecer la historia de la nuestra [literatura]” (2: 6).

¹¹ Ángel Valbuena Prat includes a (very) short section on “Literatura Hispano-Arábica y Literatura Hispano-Judía” (19-22) in his *Historia de la Literatura Española*. See also Menocal’s comments on the histories of Amador de los Ríos (63-64) and Díaz Plaja (66-67).

¹² See Menocal (61) and Dagenais (40).

¹³ On the development of the Hispano-Romance dialects see Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Baldinger, and Alvar.

virtually unbroken.¹⁴ Consequently, nineteenth- and twentieth-century histories of “Spanish” literature were typically about Castilian, not Catalan, Galician, or Basque, and certainly not Hebrew.

The idea of a national literature was not spared in the storm of deconstruction that rocked the academy in the 80s and 90s,¹⁵ and the political reality of contemporary Spain also reflects this trend.¹⁶ The explosion of linguistic regionalism following Franco’s death further begged the question of what is meant by ‘Spanish’ language, in a country that lives, and writes to varying degrees in Basque, Galician, Catalan, Valencian, and a variety of other dialects of Hispano-Romance in addition to Castilian. To add to the confusion, recent immigration has introduced speakers of several new languages to the Spanish social matrix, including various dialects of North African Arabic (Pujol 229), Tamazigh (Berber), and a handful of South Asian and indigenous American languages. So now that the modern Spanish state is officially multilingual (see Etxebarria and Siguan), we must reassess our understanding of the languages of the medieval kingdoms of what is now Spain. In doing so, we run the risk of perpetuating the same paradigm of national literature that we supposedly resist. That is, by insisting on admitting Hebrew or any other language into the national canon, we are validating the idea of a national canon.¹⁷ Keeping this caveat in mind, I am interested here in locating Hebrew literary practice in Spanish literary history.

As we have noted, Spanish literary historians writing before World War II were conspicuously silent or at best telegraphic on the subject of the Hebrew literature of the Christian kingdoms of medieval Iberia. One particularly authoritative and dissenting exception was that of Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, whose enormous compendiums of national history and literature were instrumental in constructing a Spanish national identity at the turn of the twentieth

¹⁴ Clare Mar-Molinero has commented that after 1492, “with Castile now dominating the Peninsula from a political and military point of view it was inevitable that the form of speech that had emerged as the dominant one was that of Castilian” (*Politics* 20). She discusses the process of Castilianization in Spain more generally in pages 18-27. See also Mar-Molinero and Smith (73-74).

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, the father of deconstruction himself, addresses this problem in a very obscure yet oft-quoted passage of his 1979 essay, “Living on: Border Lines”: “A politico-institutional problem of the University: it, like all teaching in its traditional form, and perhaps all teaching whatever, has as its ideal, with exhaustive translatability, the effacement of language [la langue]. The deconstruction of a pedagogical institution and all that it implies. What this institution cannot bear, is for anyone to tamper with [toucher à; also ‘touch,’ ‘change,’ ‘concern himself with’ language, meaning both the national language and, paradoxically, an ideal of translatability that neutralizes this national language. Nationalism and universalism. What this institution cannot bear is a transformation that leaves intact neither of these two complementary poles” (94). On the debates over literary canon in North America, see Pozuelo Yvancos and Aradra Sánchez (33-62).

¹⁶ On post-Franco linguistic policy in Spain, see Mar-Molinero (*Politics* 86-96). Mario Santana argues that the recognition of Spain as a multilingual society is closely tied to the internationalization of Spanish as a modern literary language (primarily through the success of the Latin American novel in the 1960s (110). Geraldine Cleary Nichols reminds us that nationalisms both Spanish and regional have prevented Spanish literary history from keeping up with political change (258).

¹⁷ John Dagenais proposes a solution in his contribution to the *Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*: “A much more powerful model for the future would be one which recognizes the sporadic nature of medieval literary traditions and the shifting and often undifferentiated identities of ‘language’ itself in order to focus on the myriad points of intersection among traditions we might today recognize as separate literarily and linguistically. This has the additional advantage of minimizing the sort of tropes which assert one ‘national’ tradition against another” (47).

century.¹⁸ He argued that the Arabic and Hebrew poetry of al-Andalus was an important precedent to Spanish poetry,¹⁹ and even went as far as suggesting that “el primer poeta castellano de nombre conocido es muy probablemente el excelso poeta hebreo Judá Levi” (*Ciencia* 382). Halevi (Yehudah ben Shemuel ha-Levi ha-Qastalli, i.e., ‘the Castilian’, ca. 1085-1141) is regarded in Israel and throughout the Jewish world as one of the fathers of Hebrew literature, and it is curious that a Spaniard, writing in a Spain where there were essentially no Jews,²⁰ would also claim him as a father of Castilian literature, even if in doing so he is referring not to his Hebrew poetry but to the snippets of Hispano-Romance that appear at the end of some of his poems.²¹

In some of his other writings, Menéndez Pelayo anticipates Américo Castro’s arguments for the Jewish contribution to Spanish culture,²² but goes a step further than Castro would in actually naming Judah Halevi as the first known Castilian poet. Unlike Castro, Menéndez Pelayo was not particularly progressive or philosemitic.²³ It seems curious that he would advocate placing a Spanish Jew at the head of the national literary canon, and this move helps to explain the unlikely position of Hebrew in Spanish letters between a scriptural and national literary language. Menéndez Pelayo was a Biblical scholar, who as a good classical Humanist had studied Hebrew along with Latin and Greek at university.²⁴ Like many of his fellow Biblical scholars, Menéndez Pelayo regarded the study of Hebrew and Rabbinic tradition as essential for Catholic scriptural studies.²⁵ What is new about Menéndez Pelayo’s comment is the implication

¹⁸ On the biography and bibliography of Menéndez Pelayo, see the rather sentimental biographical account of Artigas, the more critical intellectual assessment of Sáinz Rodríguez, and the exhaustive critical bibliography of Sánchez Reyes.

¹⁹ According to Millás Vallicrosa, “Menéndez Pelayo nos ofrece un ejemplo admirable de una gran sensibilidad para el papel que la literatura hispanohebraica jugó en el desenvolvimiento de las literaturas romances españolas” (“Menéndez Pelayo” 258).

²⁰ Despite a series of moments of religious liberty in Spain, beginning with the Constitutions of 1868 and 1876 (Callahan 16-17), again during the Second Republic (1931-33) (Callahan 287), and under Franco beginning in 1967 (Brassloff 15; Avni 201-2), Spain did not abandon official Catholicism until the Constitution of 1978. Consequently the numbers of Jews living in Spain were quite low until the 1980s.

²¹ Here I refer to the *kharjāt* (Sp. *Jarchas*, ‘final couplets’) of Hispano-Arabic and Hispano-Hebrew strophic poetry (*muwaššahāt*), on which there is an extensive bibliography. One might begin with the overview of Armistead (“Brief”), which references his many studies on the topic. See also his more recent articles, “Jarchas and Villancicos” and “Problema.” The annotated bibliography of Heijkoop and Zwartjes gives a thorough overview. The Romance *kharjāt* of Halevi have been edited by Stern (309-24).

²² According to David Gonzalo Maeso, Menéndez Pelayo recognized that “el fermento semítico, representado en la Península por dos aportaciones en parte fundamentalmente distintas pero con múltiples y estrechas vinculaciones, la arábigo-musulmana y la hebraica, vino a constituir parte integrante y principalísima de nuestro acervo cultural tan opulento como variado” (“Menéndez Pelayo” 227). Regarding the value of Hebrew literature *per se*, Menéndez Pelayo wrote in his seminal *Orígenes de la novela* that the “amenos narradores hispanohebreos” were precedents to the European novelist (124-25).

²³ To wit, Prado characterizes him as an antisemitic hebreophile (294), a man who exemplifies the paradox of *hebraica veritas*.

²⁴ “El hebreo lo poseía no solamente para poder gustar la Biblia en la lengua santa, sino que incluso podía deleitarse en la lectura de los grandes poetas hebraicoespañoles, de alguna de cuyas producciones nos pudo legar una magnífica traducción, como es el caso de la inspiradísima *Quêdusa* o *Himno de la creación* de Judah ha-Levi” (Millás Vallicrosa, “Menéndez Pelayo” 249). For the translation, see Menéndez y Pelayo (*Ciencia* 41-54).

²⁵ This attitude was not uncommon among Spanish Hebraists, going back to at least the sixteenth century. See “Noticias” (250), and Gonzalo Maeso (“Menéndez Pelayo” 235).

that at least some of the literature of at least some Hispano-Hebrew authors should be read as part of a “Spanish” national literature.

In order to put Menéndez Pelayo’s comments in context, we need to look at the history of Hebraism in Europe, and particularly in Spain. Christian theologians as far back as Augustine have argued that the authority of St. Jerome’s Latin Vulgate depended upon his mastery of the Hebrew original, and that knowledge of Hebrew bible is indispensable for proper Christian exegesis. This is the idea of *Hebraica veritas*, the Church’s official recognition of the authority of Hebrew scripture. For centuries Christian theologians were content to take St. Jerome’s translation at face value, and very few studied Hebrew or Aramaic. It was not until the twelfth century that Franciscans and Dominicans returned to Jewish sources in an attempt to reinvigorate Christian exegesis (Manuel 13-16), and in 1236, the same year that Ferdinand III conquered Córdoba, the Dominicans established a chair of Hebrew in their Paris *stadium* (Cohen 172). French theologians such as Hugh of St. Victor and Nicholas of Lyre consulted with local rabbis and studied the Hebrew commentaries of Rashi in order to deepen their understanding of Scripture.²⁶ In Spain, the allegorical approach of Sephardic Rabbis was more difficult for Christian theologians to assimilate, and those Christians who did study Hebrew were generally polemicists (many of them *conversos* who sought to turn Jewish texts against the Jews).

Formal university study of Hebrew in Spain was established in the thirteenth century. Alfonso X of Castile-León is well known for having employed Jewish scholars in his ambitious project to translate the corpus of Arabic learning into Castilian.²⁷ It is far lesser known that Alfonso was also personally responsible for establishing chairs of Hebrew at the universities of Salamanca in 1252 and at Valladolid in 1260 (Gonzalo Maeso, “Enseñanza” 7). After Alfonso’s reign, however, Christian Hebrew studies in Castile and Aragon, as in Europe generally, foundered (Gonzalo Maeso, “Enseñanza” 5). Nonetheless, in the Jewish world Spain was the most important center of Hebrew linguistic study, and by 1492 it could boast a tradition of Hebrew philology that spanned over half a millennium.²⁸

After the massive conversions following the 1492 edict of expulsion, highly trained *converso* Hebraists flooded the Spanish Church and Academy. Almost overnight, Spain now became the most important center of Hebrew studies in the *Christian* world.²⁹ This change brought with it a human resources conundrum: while there was no shortage of highly trained *converso* Hebraists, increasing pressure from the Inquisition made it more and more difficult to appoint them to university chairs of Hebrew. They were denounced as insincere or false Christians, and sometimes removed from office and jailed, as in the very well known case of Fray Luis de León, whose Castilian translation of the Hebrew *Song of Songs* earned him five

²⁶ See Smalley (102-04), Manuel (16), Cohen (175), and Hailperin (137-246).

²⁷ On Jewish participation in the Alfonsine translation project, see G. Menéndez Pidal, Gil, Romano Ventura, Sáenz-Badillos (“Participación”), and Barroso.

²⁸ See Sáenz-Badillos and Targarona Borrás, and Del Valle Rodríguez (*Escuela*).

²⁹ Among these scholars were Alfonso de Zamora, who was appointed Chair of Hebrew at Alcalá de Henares in 1512 and later at Salamanca; Pablo Coronel, formerly a prominent Rabbi; and Alfonso de Alcalá. In Barcelona no Chair of Hebrew is mentioned until 1596 (Gonzalo Maeso, “Enseñanza” 16). A particularly high profile project that drew on the knowledge of a team of such *conversos* was the *Poliglota Complutense* (Complutense Polyglot Bible) sponsored by Cardinal Francisco de Cisneros in 1517 (Gonzalo Maeso, “Enseñanza” 15). On this period see also Carrete Parrondo and Pinta Llorente.

years in prison during the mid-sixteenth century.³⁰ Another Salamanca *converso* Hebraist, Alonso de Montemayor, was removed from his chair for not knowing enough Latin. Among other things, Montemayor was accused of having converted without having received proper Catechism. That is, he was suspected of being a Jew, or at best something less than a Catholic, who knew Hebrew:

probayeron [sic] e mandaron que no era justo dárselo por quanto el dicho hebrayco no está ynstruido en los prinçipios, e que ignorándolos él, no los sabría enseñar a sus discípulos. Y desta manera dixeron que no se le diese partido por las dichas razones y por carecer de latín.³¹

The Inquisition-fueled discrimination against *crístianos nuevos*, combined with the lack of native talent among the *crístianos viejos*, made it difficult to recruit professors of Hebrew (Carrete Parrondo 7). There was, however, at least one man both competent and *castizo* enough to fit the bill: Antonio de Nebrija, author of the first grammar of Castilian in 1492. Like Menéndez Pelayo, Nebrija was also a Hebraist, author of no fewer than six treatises on Hebrew grammar, and the first Spaniard to write a Grammar of Hebrew in a language other than Hebrew or Arabic (Del Valle Rodríguez, *Corpus* 13). Yet despite his clean pedigree and scholarly renown—and this speaks to the degree to which Hebrew studies in sixteenth-century Spain are considered to have been dominated by converts from Judaism—Domínguez Ortiz has suggested (seemingly due to the simple fact that he was a Hebraist) that Nebrija may have been, after all, a *converso* (173).

In a sense the Hebrew staffing problem of the sixteenth century is emblematic of the Jewish question in Spain. The Jewish legacy is an essential part of Spanish national culture, but an essentially alienated part. Spanish Hebraism approaches modernity struggling with this conundrum: bound to Hebrew in the theological field by the directive of *Hebraica veritas*, and in the social field by the concept of *limpieza de sangre*, the idea persists that Judaism is a sort of stubborn stain upon the national gene pool.

The activities of the Inquisition and the steady backlash against all things Jewish and Hebrew that according to Américo Castro so characterized the culture of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain (*Edad* 169-200) ensured the demise of Spanish Hebraism.³² Chairs of Hebrew were eliminated one by one from Spanish universities, and the field slid into decadence. By 1895, the Hebraist Mariano Viscasillas laments the existence of only 4 chairs in Hebrew in Spain, at the universities of Seville, Madrid, Barcelona, and Salamanca.³³

³⁰ Though Luis de León did not hold a chair in Hebrew, his Hebraist activities were what attracted the attention of the Inquisition. For an excellent account of the interplay between the intellectual and political aspects of the controversies surrounding the Salamanca Hebraists, see Thompson.

³¹ See Archivo de la Universidad de Salamanca (L-C, XXII, fol. 16v), cited in Carrete Parrondo (34). Even into the nineteenth century, certain Spanish Hebraists feel a need to affirm their commitment to Christian theology as a sort of disclaimer. In the introduction to his 1895 *Nueva gramática hebrea*, Mariano Viscasillas y Urriza assures us that he does not intend to “apartarnos en los más mínimo de las enseñanzas de la Iglesia Católica, nuestra madre, á cuya censura y aprobación hemos sujetado esta obra antes de publicarla” (xi).

³² Domínguez Ortiz seconds, commenting that “La existencia de los conversos, más aún que la de los propios judíos, envenenó la vida española durante siglos y constituye uno de los rasgos más significativos de nuestra historia durante toda la Edad Moderna” (13).

³³ There was also one at Havana, which Spain lost in 1898. The Chair at Seville was suppressed shortly thereafter (Gonzalo Maeso “Enseñanza” 20).

This trend was reversed by the Krausist-inspired movement to bring the Spanish University system up to modern European standards. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Spain underwent a period of national soul-searching and identity formation. This period saw the founding of the *Ateneo*, the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, and the *Residencia de estudiantes* in Madrid that collectively served as the cradle for liberal nationalism and as a launching pad for the grand project of the Europeanization of Spain.³⁴ During this period, Ramón Menéndez Pidal adapted French and German models of philology to the resurrection of a Castilian-Spanish national identity.³⁵ In Hispanic studies it is a lesser known fact that Spanish Orientalists were also active in the formation of their modern national identity.

This was achieved in two ways. First, Spanish Orientalists could prove their intellectual mettle by reclaiming Spain’s Hebrew and Arabic literary patrimony from the non-Spaniards who had pioneered (and, arguably, commandeered) its study in modern times. Spanish Arabists such as Julián Ribera and later Emilio García Gómez were Spain’s answer to Reinhard Dozy (Netherlands) and Evariste Lévi-Provençal (France). Working somewhat later, Hebraists such as José María Millás Vallicrosa, Francisco Cantera Burgos, and David Gonzalo Maeso followed on the heels of German Jewish scholars such as Moritz Steinschneider and Haim Brody, who published prodigiously on the Hebrew literary production of Spanish Jews. By imitating and, they hoped, surpassing their European colleagues, Spanish Orientalists would help to put the Spanish academy on the map and reverse several decades of ultrapyrennean intellectual colonization of the Spanish past.³⁶

These scholars found inspiration for their task in the very men they studied, the Spanish Jewish scholars whose mastery of Arabic learning and originality in Hebrew letters served as examples for these modern Spaniards seeking to assert themselves in the European intellectual arena. This idea of “nuestros judíos,” as Francisco Cantera Burgos refers to the Spanish Jewish community in a 1944 essay published in *Sefarad* (239), echoes the assertion of Menéndez Pelayo that the brilliant Judah Halevi was, after all, Castilian.³⁷

Other Spanish Hebraists likewise claim the Hebrew authors of Christian Iberia for Spain, attributing their achievements to the authors’ Hispanicity, or at the very least begin to situate these poets within Romance literary production. José Millás Vallicrosa pointed out that the poetry of Todros Abulafia, a thirteenth-century poet who wrote in Hebrew at the court of Alfonso X, is so intensely secular in nature that he can hardly be counted among traditional

³⁴ On this period of Spain’s intellectual development, see Fox (27-34). Francisco Giner de los Ríos, a key figure in the modernization of the Spanish university system, quite openly lamented the ‘general weakness’ of Spain’s universities when compared with those of the rest of Europe (5).

³⁵ Villanueva documents the influence on the young Menéndez Pidal of prominent French (184) and German (186-87) philologists.

³⁶ Gonzalo Maeso laments that scholars from all over Europe (but not from Spain), have studied “nuestra filosofía judaica” (“Menéndez Pelayo” 239). Likewise, one cannot help but detect a slight bittersweet tone in Millás Vallicrosa’s exuberant necrology for German (and then Israeli) Jewish Hispano-Hebraist Haim Brody, who edited several important works by Hispano-Hebrew authors (“Necrology”).

³⁷ In an introductory footnote to his translation of Halevi’s “Himno de la creación”, Menéndez Pelayo refers to the poet as one of “nuestros hebreos peninsulares” (‘our peninsular Hebrews’), “El toledano Judah Levi” (‘The Toledan Judah Halevi’), and “Abul-Hassan el Castellano” (‘Abu-I Hassan the Castilian’). The latter is a translation of his Arabic patronymic, which traditionally ends in the adjectival form of one’s birthplace. See Menéndez Pelayo (*Ciencia* 41 n 1).

Hebrew poets at all: “La tradición poética de Israel está casi ausente de nuestro poeta” (“Literatura” 192). Similarly, he notes that the fifteenth-century Zaragozaan poet Vidal Benveniste writes Hebrew poetry that bears clear influence of contemporary vernacular poetic styles.³⁸ This point is made more forcefully by Ángel Sáenz-Badillos, who ranks poets such as Shemuel Hanagid and Judah Halevi “a la altura de los mejores poetas del Medioevo” (“Poesía” 405).

This retroactive tendency to claim medieval Jewish poets for Spain would seem to contradict centuries of post-expulsion Inquisition and official anti-semitism. Jews, it would seem, can be Spanish provided they either inhabit the remote medieval past or live outside of Spain’s borders, somewhere in Sephardic diaspora.³⁹ According to this logic, in 1919, when there were but a handful of Jews living in Spain, Rafael Cansinos-Assens (though not a Hebraist) is able to write the following of the Sephardim without any apparent irony:

Son la rosa escogida de Israel. Distínguense de sus hermanos, como si el haber vivido en España, los hubiese marcado con un lucero de nobleza en la frente. Son altivos y valientes y soberbios, como caballeros de Roma y como hidalgos de Toledo. Saben llevar con actitud cesárea, el manto de púrpura de la raza latina (12).⁴⁰

Some twenty years later, Millás Vallicrosa argued that Spanish Jews were responsible for “la parcela más lograda y fecunda de toda la literatura hebraica medieval” (*Literatura* 5). He even went so far as to claim the modern revivification of the Hebrew language for Spain, saying that the Sephardim of Israel, while never forgetting their Spanish, lent to the new language the superior style and pronunciation they had learned in Spain.⁴¹ Federico Pérez Castro takes this idea a step further, explaining that the what made the Sephardim true Spaniards was their colonialist spirit and their tendency to impose Hispanic culture on the communities where they settled:

Tan profundamente calaron en el alma de nuestros judíos las raíces de lo español, que los hispano-hebreos, al salir de España, si bien físicamente la dejaron atrás, se la llevaron consigo dentro de sus corazones, y en lejanas tierras, no sólo siguieron viviendo según nuestros modos, sino que los impusieron allí donde fueron a establecerse; fenómeno espiritual y social éste tan perfectamente español, que

³⁸ “Se guardan en el mismo *Diván* de M. de Piera varias poesías que ya manifiestan cierta influencia de la poesía cristiana; nuestro Don Vidal tenía una gran formación científica y literaria, y a él se deben traducciones del hebreo al latín así como versiones castellanas de *De officiis* y *De amicitia*, de Cicerón” (Millás Vallicrosa, “Literatura” 193).

³⁹ Although it falls beyond the scope of this essay, a thorough discussion of the relationships and political contexts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish Hebraism and *sefardismo* is, I believe, overdue.

⁴⁰ On the Sephardim in the writings of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish intellectuals, see Díaz Mas (151-77).

⁴¹ “Actualmente, gran parte de la antigua población sefardí, de origen hebraicoespañol. . . se encuentra ya instalada en el joven Estado de Israel, y sin olvidar el viejo ladino o sefardí de sus abuelos, aprende y se ejercita en el rejuvenecido hebreo, pronunciado al estilo y modalidad del sefardí que les vino de España” (Millás Vallicrosa, *Literatura* 6).

acaso sea el que más netamente defina su honda indentificación con España.
(Pérez Castro 83-84).

From these brief comments we can begin to trace the ideological trajectory of Hebrew studies in Spain since 1492. The Hebraists of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries were Catholic scriptural scholars who viewed Hebrew as key to a doctrinally correct understanding of Latin scripture. The mid to late nineteenth century saw the increasing influence of German Jewish Hebraists who began to publish scholarly editions and philological studies of Spanish Hebrew poets. During this period Spanish Hebraists strove to imitate the Germans but also to champion medieval Hispano-Hebrew literature as proof of Spain’s intellectual excellence. After World War II, Franco’s university reforms strengthened Spanish Orientalism with the foundation of new chairs and specialized institutes of study. During this time certain Hebraists began to write of the importance of Hispano-Hebrew as a national literature. Today, in the post-Franco era, Spanish Hebraists are a bit more outspoken on the topic, but institutional culture and habit have kept them focused on traditional philological studies and translations of Hispano-Hebrew texts. The study of Hispano-Hebrew literature as Hispanic cultural production has been only suggested by some Spanish Hebraists, and further developed largely by Israeli Hebraists such as Aviva Doron. However, a full assessment and study of the importance of Spanish Hebrew literature as Hispanic cultural production is still unwritten.

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