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En el Ultimo Azul: Memory's Future and the History of the Spanish Jews

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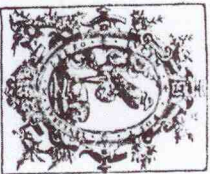


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Models In Medieval Iberian Literature
and Their Modern Reflections:
Convivencia as Structural,
Cultural and Sexual Ideal

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En el último azul by Carme Riera: Memory's future and the history of the Spanish Jews

REYES COLL-TELLECHEA

For Shiuri Schechnman Nereim and Ignacio Coll Tellechea

[The] past (...) does not pull back but presses forward, and it is, contrary to what one would expect, the future which drives us back into the past.

—HANNAH ARENDT.

JANUARY 1, 1986. SPAIN, the first nation-state to emerge in Europe, is officially admitted into the heart of the modern community of European countries: the European Community. Centuries of isolation, rancor, and mutual misunderstanding at last come to an end. For the first time in centuries, there is a bright future for Spain, which was before—in a remote past nearly incomprehensible to the Spaniards of 1986—Hispania, Al-Andalus, Sepharad.

Many contemporary Spanish novelists have gone diving into the muddled waters of the Spanish past.¹ These fictional stories about Spain's historical past reach many more readers than the history books published either within the country or without. This is not an unusual phenomenon or one limited to Spain. Novels based on historical events are very popular nowadays. Yet, some readers do not trust history anymore.² Thus the problem becomes, *how does one read a*

¹ In addition to Riera's *En el último azul* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1996), see among many others: José María Merino, *Las crónicas mestizas* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1992), and Miguel Delibes, *El hereje* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1998).

² For a sample of different versions of the history of Spain see, among others: J. Vicens Vives, *Approaches to the History of Spain*, translated and edited by Joan Connelly Ullman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, *Orígenes de la nación española* (Madrid: Sape, 1985), originally published between 1972 and 1975 by the Centro de Estudios Asturianos, Vols. I-III; J. A. Maravall,

historical novel if one lacks previous knowledge of the historical events on which the novel is based?

With the dismantling of nationalism, brought on by the unrestrained global capitalism of our times, the historicizing narratives which sustained the various nationalisms seem to be crumbling. Something is happening in front of the astounded eyes of readers and writers of both history and fiction. Beneath the foundations of nationalist history, a multiplicity of new and old historical versions of our past are coming to light. And with these come many important questions, for instance, *if we are not who we thought we were, then who are we? And who are we going to become? What are we going to remember?*

Young Spanish citizens (those born after the death of our last dictator, General Francisco Franco, in 1975) will not remember the time when Spaniards were not officially Europeans. Yet, older generations clearly remember having to make enormous social, political, and economic sacrifices to survive the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the Franco Regime (1939-74), and the transition to a democratic—European—system (1975-1986?). It should come as no surprise that older generations of Spaniards have experienced, written, and read different histories of Spain during their lifetime: Communist versions, Fascist versions, Liberal versions, progressive versions, pro-European and anti-European versions. It is not easy to accept any more historical versions of the nation, unless these are fictional.

I have chosen Carme Riera's fictional version of history, *En el último azul* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1996) because it brings the reader face to face with questions of national history. In her hands literature fulfills its traditional function as a symbolic representation of concrete social problems. In this case the issue is the truths, the lies, and the silences of Spanish national history regarding *Sepharad*. The growth of nationalism in Iberia did not begin in the eighteenth or the nineteenth century but well before, in the Middle Ages, with the defeat of *Al-Andalus* (Muslim Iberia), the destruction of *Sepharad* (Jewish Iberia), and the rise of Spain (the Catholic nation).³

For her fictional account, Riera has carefully studied all kinds of historical sources about *Sepharad*. She has then invented situations, characters, and a plot.

Estado moderno y mentalidad social (Siglos XV a XVII) (Madrid: Revista de Occidente 1972). F. García de Cortázar and J. M. González Vesga, *Breve historia de España* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1994).

³ On this issue, I agree with B. Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 997. See also, J.A. Maravall, *El concepto de España en la Edad Media* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos), 1954.

Her book, however, inevitably directs the reader towards a historical account that does not yet exist. The result, is an excellent novel that makes the reader wonder about Spain's past and the manner in which it has (and has not) been remembered.

Albeit *En el último azul* is set in the last decades of the seventeenth century, its historical roots—which the reader needs to know to understand Riera's intent—date back to the Middle Ages.

HISTORY

I. Seville, March 15, 1391, Ash Wednesday. With his anti-Jewish oratory, Ferrán Martínez ignites the spirits of the Christians of Seville. This is nothing new. In spite of the warnings of the King, the Archbishop, and even the Pope, this archdeacon has done nothing else since 1378. Nonetheless it is today that, following his sermon, anti-Semitic violence explodes in the city. On June 6 comes the sacking of the Jewish quarter of Seville. From that day on, robberies and massacres will spread like wildfire through the Jewish neighborhoods of Córdoba, Toledo, Burgos, and more. Thus begins the most tragic chapter in the history of the Spanish Jews.⁴

Until the end of the fourteenth century, the *Sephardim* (Hebrew word for Iberian Jews) had managed to live in their motherland alongside the Christians. The price had been high: confinement in ghettos, limitations upon the occupations permitted to them, payment of extremely high taxes, compulsory identification through prescribed clothing, prohibition of mixed marriages, etc.

⁴ My principal source for the history of the Spanish Jews and the Spanish Inquisition is Cecil Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1937, Reissued in 1964 and 1996). Other important sources include: H. C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, vol. I-IV (New York: The Macmillan Company 1906-1907); Y. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, Vols. I-III, translated from Hebrew by Louis Schoffman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961-1966); B. Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain: from the Late Fourteenth Century to the Early Sixteenth Century. According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources. 3rd Edition Updated and Expanded* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); M. Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1956), vol. I-II; A. Castro, *España en su historia: cristianos, moros y judíos* (Barcelona: Grigalbo Mondadori, 1983, published originally in 1948); and, Nicolau Eimerich y Francisco Peña, *Manual de los Inquisidores*, Edición de Luis Sala-Molins (Barcelona: Muchnik, 1983), and J. Amador de los Ríos, *Historia política, social y religiosa de los judíos de España y Portugal* (Madrid: Imprenta de T. Fortanet, 1875-76), 3 vols.

Only the acceptance of such humiliating conditions had kept the Judeo-Spanish community from suffering the fate of those in England and France, expelled from their countries in 1290 and 1306. Until the closing years of the fourteenth century, the *Sephardim* had managed not only to remain in their territory but to retain their faith.

After the events of 1391, a fragmentation of the Sephardic community began. To avoid death, dispossession, or deportation, the *Sephardim* began to convert to Christianity *en masse*. These were, of course, conversions only in name. Thus appeared a new social phenomenon, which was doubly designated: the *Anusim* (a Hebrew word denoting Jews converted to Christianity under duress) and *Marranos* (a Spanish word used to refer to Jews only nominally converted to Christianity; that is, Jews in all but name). The *Anusim* became victims and criminals, Jewish martyrs and Christian heretics. This impossible dual identity would be their affliction from then on.

For the *Anusim*, the immediate result of their forced conversion to Christianity was their full integration into the society for the first time, that is to say, the lifting of all those social prohibitions and limitations under which they had lived as Jews. With the elimination of those restrictions, these new Christians procured, in a short time, numerous social and economic gains before the envious eyes of their neighbors. Violence was again unleashed, now against the *Cristianos Nuevos* (New Christians) accused of having adopted Christianity for the sole purpose of prospering in society. In 1468 came a massacre in Toledo, and another in Segovia in 1473. In 1478 the Pope authorized the creation of the Spanish Inquisition. Like the Papal Inquisition, which had appeared in the thirteenth century, the Spanish Inquisition had as its mission the protection of the Catholic Church and the Christians from heretics and apostates of all sorts.⁵

The Inquisition as a Catholic Institution could not shed blood. Therefore its victims, after sentencing, had to be turned over to secular justice. The reading of charges and carrying out of sentences—abhorrent spectacles called *autos de Fe* (Acts of Faith)—were held mostly in public, with both civil and religious authorities in attendance. The first *Auto de Fe* was held in 1481, in Seville. Hundreds of *conversos* (converts) were accused of practicing the heresy of secret Judaism; they burned, dead or alive, in the bonfires of the Inquisition.

⁵ Along with the Sephardim, the list of victims of the Spanish Inquisition included Protestants, *Moriscos* (Spanish Muslims), 'witches', visionaries, and others. See, Cecil Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition*, Chapters VII-XI.

In 1492, the Edict of Expulsion was promulgated. It accused the Sephardim of infecting Christians through proselytization.⁶ Iberia had officially become Spain, a Christian nation. The few Sephardic Jews who still maintained their religion, as well as the many *conversos*, now had to decide between two options: convert wholly to Christianity or abandon Sephardic, their land. Approximately 200,000 Sephardim left their country in order to preserve their faith. A greater number decided to stay.⁷ Among the *Sephardim* who decided to stay in their land, some continued to practice their religion in secret while observing the imposed one in public; others embraced Christianity. All changed their names, their residences, their occupations, and with the passage of generations they went on losing and forgetting their customs. After 1492, all *conversos* and their descendants would see the social benefits of conversion wither away. Discrimination against them was legal.

By the mid-sixteenth century, the native population of *Sephardim* had nearly disappeared from Spain under the weight of the Inquisition, loss of memory, and fear. Passage of time, terror, and shame had broken their will. The descendants of the *Anusim* were now wholly Christian (like, for example, Teresa de Jesús, Luis de León, and Miguel de Cervantes, of remote Jewish descent).

Only one small group of *Sephardim* had managed to protect their identity and historical memory at all costs through these centuries of persecution: the *Chuetas* (Majorcan word for Jews), descendants of Majorcan *Anusim*. This is their history.⁸

⁶ The text of the edict is published in Olivia Rennie Constable, *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997), pp. 325-356. See also, José Amador de Los Ríos, *Historia de los Judíos en España y Portugal*, vol. III, pp. 603-607, and Fernando Díaz-Plaja, *Historia de España en sus documentos: Siglo XV* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1984), pp. 303-304.

⁷ There is no agreement between historians on this point. I follow, as before, Cecil Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition*. The reader will find other approaches to the issue in Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition. A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1998) and in B. Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain* (New York: Random House, 1995).

⁸ For the history of the Majorcan Jews, see Francisco Garau, *La Fee Triunfante en quatro autos celebrados en Mallorca por el Santo Oficio de la Inquisición, en que an salido ochenta I ocho reos. I de reñina I siete relatados solo uvo tres pertinaces, expressada por Francisco Garau* (Palma de Mallorca: Emprenta de la Vinda Guasp, 1691); Leonard Muntaner I Mariano, Editor, *Relación de los subenitos que se an puesto y renovado este año de 1755* (Mallorca: Miquel Font Editor, Edición Fascimil, 1993); Baruch Braunsstein, *The Chuetas of Mallorca: conversos and the Inquisition of Mallorca* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1972); Angela Selke, *Los Chuetas y la*

II. Majorca, August 2, 1391. The Jewish quarter of Palma de Majorca was brutally leveled by a Christian mob. Then, in 1435, the Jewish community, rooted in the island since Roman times, was accused of having perpetrated a ritual crime. Immediately, hundreds of Jews were forced to convert to Christianity. Thereafter, officially, no Jew remained on the island.

The first Tribunal of the Inquisition in Majorca was constituted in 1488. On August 18, 1488, the Majorcan Inquisition began persecution of all Judaizers (those who conformed to the spirit of Judaism), with the first *Edicto de Gracia* (Edict of Grace: a call to all Christians to confess their own heretic practices and to denounce—under pain of excommunication—all other persons whom they knew or believe were also guilty of heresy). A year later, in 1489, came the island's first *Auto de Fe*.

Nearly two centuries later, in 1678, more than two hundred descendants of the Majorcan *conversos*, all of them Christians baptized at birth, were convicted of Judaisation in an *Auto de Fe*. All pleaded guilty, and their goods were confiscated by the Inquisition.

In 1691 several more *Autos de Fe* were held on the island, with dozens of Majorcans convicted as Judaizers. Three of them, the unrepentant ones, were burned alive. They were the last Majorcans publicly faithful to Jewish Law, albeit they had only a limited knowledge of it. Their names: Raphael Valls, Raphael Benito Taronji, and his sister Catalina Benito Taronji.

Thus, between 1488 and 1771, four hundred sixty *Chuetas* were *reconciliados* (reconciled) by the Majorcan Inquisition. That is to say, they were convicted, professed repentance, and were—then—re-accepted into the Catholic Church. Five hundred ninety-four were *relajados* (relaxed), turned over to the civil authorities for punishment. Of these five hundred and ninety-four Spaniards, one hundred sixteen were first garroted, and their dead bodies then burned in public. Four unrepentant persons were burned alive.

Although Spanish historiography scarcely has room for Sephard, the Spanish Jews, and their descendants, in Majorca's collective memory there is room for the *Chuetas*. There is a caveat. The memory of the *Chuetas* was kept alive because of the persistent interest of those who exterminated them to insure that future generations of Majorcans would stay away from heresy. In Majorca documents of the Inquisition, doctrinal pamphlets, unreliable studies, folklore, and tradition all served to keep the descendants of the *Chuetas* openly marginal-

Inquisición: vida y muerte en el ghetto de Mallorca (Madrid: Taurus, 1972); Gabriel Cortés Cortés, *Historia de los judíos mallorquines y de sus descendientes cristianos* (Palma de Mallorca: La Rodella, 1985); Baltasar Porcel, *Los chuetas mallorquines: quince siglos de racismo* (Palma de Mallorca: M. Font, 1986).

ized, stigmatized, and reviled well into the twentieth century. Forced to sit apart in Church, excluded from public office, and buried in a special section of the cemetery, the descendant of the *Chuetas* were still being shamed until very recently.⁹ The epicenter of this disgrace is a book published in 1691 by a Jesuit father, the infamous Padre Garau, entitled *La Fee Triunfante*. The book describes that year's *Autos de Fe* in morbid detail and with despicable hatred. Names are reported in full for the shame of future generations and as a warning to them.¹⁰

III. Kingdom of Spain, European Community, 1994. Three hundred years after the events of 1691, also from Majorca, comes a fictional version of the end of the *Chuetas*. Carne Riera's latest novel, *En el último azul* (*Dins el darrer blau*: Barcelona, 1994), was originally written in Majorcan and then translated by Riera herself into Castilian Spanish. The Spanish version was published in Madrid in 1996 and received that year's National Literature Prize, the highest official distinction awarded to Spanish fictional works. Riera's is the first (and, so far, the only) Majorcan-written novel to achieve such a distinction.

FICTION

En el último azul is a fictional version of the events that occurred in Majorca in 1691.¹¹ The three-part narrative begins four years earlier, in 1687, with the arrival in Palma of a Portuguese sailor named João Pêres and a betrayal by a *malisin* (a *converso* who, besides having abandoned Judaism, betrays his community by informing on the secret practitioners). This traitor, nicknamed "Costura," is a silversmith convinced of the superiority of his new religion and of the benefits it will allow him to obtain. More specifically, his confessor, the Jesuit Padre Ferrando, has promised to get him a commission to craft a valuable

⁹ See previous note. Also José Taronji, *Algo sobre el estado religioso y social de la isla de Mallorca. Polemica contra las preocupaciones de clase. Capítulos para la historia del pueblo Balear* (Palma de Mallorca: Imprenta de P. J. Gelabert, 1877).

¹⁰ See note 9. Garau's book was reprinted in Palma de Mallorca: Imprenta Colmar, in 1931.

¹¹ Riera's fictional account draws much information from the following historical sources: Angela Selke, *Los Chuetas y la Inquisición: vida y muerte en el ghetto de Mallorca* (Madrid: Taurus, 1972); Francisco Garau, *La Fee Triunfante* (Palma de Mallorca: Empronta de la Vinda Guasp, 1691); and Baruch Branstien, *The Chuetas of Majorca: conversos and the Inquisition of Majorca* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1972).

reliquary for the Church. With this achievement, the traitor thinks he will win lasting fame.

Manipulated by Padre Ferrando, Costura writes a denunciation of his cousin, "Cap de Trons," as a Judaiser. Costura is deeply hurt by the fact that Cap de Trons not only practices Judaism in private, but also has reproached him. Costura, for having married a Christian outside the Jewish law. Rejected by his family as neither fish nor fowl, Costura seeks support among the Christians. For his part, Padre Ferrando needs a written denunciation to further his mediocre career. New betrayals, denunciations, interrogations, confiscations, *Autos de Fe*—Ferrando thinks—will yield copious benefits to the Inquisition, to the Church, and, of course, to him. Just as had occurred the last time, ten years ago.

The reader unfamiliar with the history of Spain, however, doesn't understand the implication of the reference to what happened ten years ago. At that time all the *Chuetas*, although baptized at birth, were forced to publicly renounce their secret heretic practices, lost almost all their goods to the Inquisition, and publicly promised to be good and loyal Christians. That is, in the terminology of the Inquisition, Costura, Cap de Trons, and the rest had been *reconciliados* (reconciled) in 1678. If they are now denounced yet again and revealed to be still practicing Judaism, they will be considered heretics, apostates, *relapsos* (relapsers; those who, after partial recovery, fell back into heresy) and so condemned to death. If, when they confess, they fail to repent and accept Christianity for a third time, they will be burned alive. If they repent and return to the bosom of the Church, they will be strangled on the garrote and their corpses will be consigned to the fire. In either case, they will be tortured, all their goods will be confiscated, and their living and future descendants will suffer generations of shame.

The characters understand this fate quite well, because the novelist has done her homework. However, the uninformed reader—the reader who doesn't know Spanish history or who knows only the official version, which is silence—does not understand that Riera's characters are living their fictional lives between two dates of great historical importance for the Majorcan *Chuetas*: 1678 and 1691. Riera's fictional version of these particular historical events moves toward the future (from 1687 to 1691), and barely alludes to the characters' immediate past (the four *Autos de Fe* held in Majorca in 1678 in which, given the veiled references, Costura, Cap de Trons, and the other *Chuetas* in the novel must have been involved).

What the reader does learn partly is that the community of *conversos* of Majorca is headed by a merchant named Gabriel Valls, nicknamed "Rabi." He serves as both their spiritual and their practical guide. The members of the

community meet in his garden to exchange information, talk, and pray. The reader also knows that a group of *Chuetas*, who have learned about the denunciation written by Costura, has decided to flee from Majorca by ship. As their preparations get underway, Riera draws the profiles of the major characters of her story: corrupt nobles, ambitious Inquisitors, envious Jesuits, and fearful *Chuetas*.

Once familiarized with the characters and their corresponding social functions and interests, as well as with the tense atmosphere of Palma, the reader knows the *present* of the characters and their various plans: to flee the island, to win fame, to be raised to the post of Rector, to swell the coffers of the Church with more confiscations, to write a book which will serve as warning to present and future generations, etc. Nonetheless, a reader who does not know the historical *past* of the story will have trouble understanding. Were there Spanish Jews in late seventeenth-century Spain? The confusion is not due to a literary mistake or miscalculation on Riera's part. It is, more properly, the reader's lack of historical consciousness. Here such a reader might answer the question with a simple "It's just fiction."¹²

Part Two of the novel begins with the attempted flight of a group of *Chuetas*. Bad weather prevents the ship's departure, and they have to return to their homes, but before they can get there, the screams of a madwoman lead to their being *discovered*. They are apprehended by the authorities, and from this moment on are prisoners not only of the Inquisition but of the complex workings of Majorca's political machinery.

During the prisoners' long stay in the Inquisition's jail, the narrative explores the labyrinths of the human condition and the concrete function in the *Chuetas'* tragedy of self-interest, friendship, loyalty, betrayal, cowardice, honesty, fear, love, hate, arrogance, shame, and more.

The new arrests give rise to escalating tensions between religious and civil authorities. Cap de Trons dies, and so does Costura. (Later the reader learns that the traitor was poisoned by the *Chuetas* in a desperate attempt to ward off catastrophe.) The Viceroy and his nephew try to free the prisoners, on whose mercantile activity they depend. The Viceroy travels to Madrid to seek the aid of the Queen, but she allies herself with the Inquisition. The bishop pays a group of peasants to foment riots against the Viceroy and the *Chuetas* by accusing them of inflating the price of grain. The Viceroy is abruptly removed from his

¹² In case the reader decides to consult the most popular abbreviated edition of the *History of Spain* in search of information s/he will find the issue discussed in just one page: F. García de Cortázar y J. M. González Vesga, *Breve Historia de España* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1994), p. 244.

post. Two rival Jesuits, Padre Ferrando and Padre Amengual, compete to extract more confessions and repentance from the prisoners, all in the service of advancing their careers and gaining one of them the Rector's post. Amengual begins to write a book about the events. Ferrando demands the central role in the trials. Meanwhile the prisoners wait, think, go mad, die, grow sick, and despair. All this continues for nearly four years, from 1687 to 1691.

The reader has more than enough time to take in the contours of the political map drawn by the narrator, a map of the territory both inside and outside this fictional version of the *Chuetas* community. The reader learns the identities of the powerful and what their interests are. There is no speak of honor nor of kindness in Inquisitors, clergy, nobles, peasants, chroniclers, judges, or bailiffs. Riera is implacable, and the narrator as well. Among the prisoners, fear carves a swath through their beliefs, willpower, and loyalties. Under the weight of death and scorn, the *Chuetas* community breaks up before the reader's eyes. The narrative becomes bifurcated: victimizers and victimized. With the death of the *malisín* Costura, the only bridge linking the two categories is gone. The stage for the novel's climax is set.

Part Three takes place in both Livorno and Majorca. From Livorno, three characters (Blanca Pires, Pere Onofre and João Pires) begin to devise a plan to free their Majorcan brothers and sisters.

On the island, the prisoners are interrogated and tortured. Some, overcome by pain, repent. Others, sincerely Christian, don't abandon hope of salvation. Gabriel Valls and Isabel Tarongí insist on defending their faith. All are convicted. Some are freed after suffering public ridicule. Others die on the garrote, and their corpses, later, are burned in an *Auto de Fe*. The unrepentant ones—the Rabi Gabriel Valls and Isabel Tarongí—are burned alive. The novel ends with the smell that their corpses emanate as they burn, and with Padre Amengual mentally composing the end of his book, which he will call *El triunfo de la fe, en tres autos* (The Triumph of faith, in three acts). It is a direct reference to the historical figure of Father Garau, and to his infamous contribution to Majorcan collective memory. This is the real book entitled *La Fee Triunfante* (Triumphal Faith), written and published in Majorca, in 1691. The uninformed reader might not realize that Riera's fiction ends at the beginning of Majorcan (Christian) official history, which is Father Garau's account of the end of the Majorcan Jews. For centuries, Father Francisco Garau's book was *the* history. In a skillful maneuver Riera's fiction returns that historical account to where it belongs, in the realm of the ill-conceived versions of our past.

Riera's novel is over, but not her book. Where the narrator's fictional account ends, Riera's first-person *Afterword* begins. History and fiction confront each other face to face as the writer declares that she has based her novel on historical sources regarding the events that took place in Majorca between March 7, 1687, and July 2, 1691. Riera then identifies several historical figures who appear in the novel, albeit under different names: Father Garau (Amengual), Raphael Valls (Gabriel Valls), Raphael Cortés de Alfonso ("Costura"), Pere Onofre Cortés de Guillermo ("Cap de Trons"), and Father Sabater (Father Ferrando). Moreover, according to the writer, the events on which the novel is based still occupy an important place in Majorca's collective memory. It is, partly, to confront this lasting and painful memory that she wrote her book. Riera also declares that her novel was not written with polemical intent, that she did not aim to "open old wounds." But, she wrote it because, in her own words, "I believe we, Majorcans of good will, ought to ask them [the so-called *Chuetas*, the Majorcan Jews, *convertos*, and their descendants] for forgiveness." *En el último azul* ends here, and the reader is left facing memory, past and future, alone.

MEMORY

IV. Boston, March 8, 2000. Ash Wednesday. More than seven hundred years have passed since Ferrán Martínez unleashed the hate which gradually would destroy Sephard. On finishing my reading of *En el último azul*, I wonder about the future of Spanish memory. At the dawning of the twenty-first century, all Spaniards—and many Europeans—share a common worry. In our apparently inevitable communitarian future, what will happen to our separate and respective pasts? Will the countries joined in the European Community lose their pasts (glorious and shameful) in the same way they will lose their currencies, borders, and particular laws? What will become of the old nations, the old languages, the old sources of pride and of shame? Which, among the multiple versions of our nations' histories at large in the world, will become the official one?

At the end of the twentieth century Europe has again become a battleground where past and future versions of history live and die, every day, in Kosovo, San Sebastián, Ulster, El Ejido, Moscow, Sarajevo... I want to remember the words of historian Eric Hobsbawm:¹³

¹³ Eric Hobsbawm, "Identity history is not enough," in *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997), p. 270.

[...] all human beings, collectives and institutions need a past, but it is only occasionally the past uncovered by historical research. The standard example of an identity culture which anchors itself in the past by means of myth dressed up as history is nationalism [...] for nations are historically novel entities pretending to have existed for a very long time. Inevitably the nationalist version of their history consists of anachronism, omission, decontextualization and, in extreme cases, lies.

It should come as no surprise that, despite the historical research done by Carne Riera to construct her fictional version with maximum care, uninformed readers of *En el último azul* (readers who know only the official-nationalist version of the nation's history) will get lost. Inevitably, Riera's fiction leads them toward a type of history that does not yet exist. I want to remember the words of historian Jacques Le Goff:¹⁴

[...] collective memory has been an important issue in the struggle for power among social forces. To make themselves the master of memory and forgetfulness is one of the great preoccupations of the classes; groups and individuals who have dominated and continue to dominate historical societies. The things forgotten or not mentioned by history reveal these mechanisms for the manipulation of collective memory.

Maybe that history of the "things forgotten or not mentioned by history" will never come to exist. That will depend on what historians, artists, readers, politicians and teachers decide to do with the future of memory. What are we going to remember? *It is the future which drives us back into the past.*

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Translated by Dick Cluster

¹⁴ Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 54.

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