

Advance praise for *Souls in the Garden*

“Henry Rasof is the heir to the Jewish poets of medieval Spain. His new tour de force, *Souls in the Garden*, is a sort of poetic itinerary through Spain, where the author communes with the medieval Spanish Jews, and particularly with his predecessors, the Jewish poets. He is often entertaining, sometimes deeply moving, and always enlightening. By engaging with these departed souls, he breathes new life into them and into their poetry.”

—*Joseph Davis, Associate Professor of Jewish Thought, Gratz College*

“Henry Rasof’s poetry is both spiritual and inspirational.”

—*Hayim Y. Sheynin, Ph.D.*

“*Souls in the Garden* is Henry Rasof’s personal tribute to the heritage of medieval Spanish Jewry and a love song to Spain itself, couched in deeply felt and ingeniously crafted English verse. The author has read widely among the poets, philosophers, commentators, and mystics of medieval Spain and has forged out of their stories and their works a literary work that gives voice to his own Jewish soul.”

—*Raymond P. Scheindlin, Emeritus Professor of Medieval Hebrew Literature, Jewish Theological Seminary*



SOULS IN THE GARDEN

*The garden is a place of earthly delight
Where God can appear throughout the night
Each star a soul from the next world
Each sight a face aglow with millions of pearls*

Everything that breathes praises you, Lord God!



Jardín de Moshé de León
Ávila, Spain



SOULS IN THE GARDEN

Poems About
Jewish Spain

Henry Rasof

Temescal Canyon Press
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2020

Other Books by the Author

The House (2009)

Chance Music: Prose Poems 1974 to 1982 (2012)

Here I Seek You: Jewish Poems for Shabbat, Holy Days, and Everyday (2016)

Books Edited by the Author

The Wit, Whimsy, Wisdom, and Wordplay of Bernard Rasof, PhD (2020)

PDF Books (on henryrasof.com) Written or Edited by the Author

Bees in the Garden: Poems by the Masala Mystic (2019)

The Persian Letters: A Medieval Persian General's Wartime Letters to His Wife (2019)

Rivers in Paradise: Jewish Poetry and Prose (2019)

Web Sites by the Author

henryrasof.com

www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org

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for my parents, grandparents,
friends, and special friend
Dina von Zweck

about whom words cannot adequately describe
their unique brilliance
and the irreplaceability of their love and support

and for the great poet
Federico García Lorca
for the inspiration of his deep songs

may their memory be a blessing
and may our lightened
and enlightened souls
all meet again one day
in the heavenly garden

*souls in the garden rise
and reach the gate of heaven . . .
admire the burning splendor
of the column that spews fire . . .
kneel reverently.*

Moses de León

The Zohar—or Book of Splendor

(translation of part of Spanish text on metal pedestal
in Jardín de Moshé de León in Ávila, Spain,
shown in Frontispiece)

*Seeking but failing
union with the Divine
the souls circle Her in consolation
hanging on for dear life.*

Plotinus

Ennead II.2.2

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Geographical Index of People, Places, and Events:

 See henryrasof.com/souls-in-the-garden/

Additional resources: See henryrasof.com/souls-in-the-garden/

Preamble

About the Dutch painter Hieronymous Bosch (ca. 1450–1516), whose well-known painting *Garden of Earthly Delights* probably is familiar to most readers of this book, a scholar writes: “[S]ome of [his] hidden symbols refer to the Christian’s fear of . . . seduction by worldly pleasures, for which the ‘Jewish world’ serves as a warning example.”

As I hope the reader will discover in reading the poems in *Souls in the Garden*, nothing could be farther from the truth about the “‘Jewish world.’”

In fact, though not written in response to Bosch, Rabbi Moses de León—one of the most brilliant and famous mystics of any faith—does seem to respond in “Garden in Ávila,” “his” poem in this book:

I said the garden is a place of earthly delight
Where God can appear throughout the night
Each star a soul from the next world
Each sight a face aglow with millions of pearls

That said, the entirety of *Souls in the Garden*, though itself not consciously written in response to Bosch, does seem one long, multifaceted response, inspired by my two trips to Spain.

On the first trip, in 2000, I traveled primarily in southern and central Spain, visiting Málaga, Granada, Cazorla, Úbeda, Córdoba, Sevilla, Jérez, Toledo, and Madrid. The primary focus was flamenco, Spanish culture in general, and general sightseeing, with a secondary though still-strong focus on Jewish history and culture. On the second trip, in 2011, the primary focus was Jewish: I traveled mostly (but not entirely) to cities that had had a Jewish presence, moving in a roughly counterclockwise arc beginning in Barcelona and then, in approximately the following order, on to Girona, Besalú, Figueres, Zaragoza, Tudela, Tarazona, Bilbao, León, Salamanca, Ávila, Segovia, and Madrid.

During and after both trips I took notes and began to jot down poems and ideas for poems, until perhaps 2014, when I had what I hope is now a cohesive group of poems inspired by “Jewish” Spain. During this period I settled on the title, which is

an English translation of an inscription in Spanish cut into the top of a small metal pedestal in the Jardín de Moshé de León (the self-same Rabbi Moses de León), in Ávila—which in turn is a translation of a passage in the *Zohar*—the *Book of Splendor* (or *Radiance*)—the most mystical of mystical Jewish books, which was written mostly in Aramaic.

Why the interest in Spanish Jewry when my own Jewish ancestry is Ashkenazi—Eastern European—and not *Sefardic*, Spanish-Jewish? About this, the great Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges might have said, taken out of context, that “such a preference . . . would not have been inexplicable. . . .” By the way, and perhaps unsurprisingly, given his “catholic” literary sweep, Borges had Jewish ancestry.

But to answer the “why?” question:

First is the emotional, intellectual, and “personal” connection I feel with the poets, philosophers, and mystics of the period. Many, like Maimonides and Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra, were brilliant polymaths. And, all of them were enmeshed with the three cultures (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), when, although scholars have now discarded the notion of *convivencia* (the so-called harmonious relationships among the three religions), the period did see an inspiring interplay of languages and ideas. In our own time, when conviviality among faiths is often lacking, this earlier period gives one hope that this sort of thing can at least be imagined, if not perfectly realized. Various periods in Spain between the Muslim conquest in the 8th century and the expulsion of Jews in 1492 have been called Jewish golden ages, for the flowering of Jewish culture. However, like *convivencia*, it’s a loaded term, so you won’t see it used in the book.

Second, I love flamenco music, and here too is a blending of cultures, including gypsy, Jewish, and North African.

Third, two of my favorite poets, born centuries apart, are Spanish though not Jewish: St. John of the Cross (San Juan de la Cruz) (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros) and Federico García Lorca (1896–1936, b. Fuente Vaqueros). St. John wrote with the highest spiritual intensity, and Lorca, equally intense but in a different way, often reflects the distant Spanish past in his poetry. These enthusiasms, plus a newfound interest in St. Teresa of Ávila (Teresa de Jesús) (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila), led to an unintentional, partial change in the focus of the later poems in *Souls in the Garden* toward St. John and St. Teresa. These two figures had Jewish ancestors, lived in cities home

to Jews not that long before their own presence there, and move me in a somewhat similar way to that in which I am moved by the “fully” Jewish figures. I also would like to think—or at least want to believe—that their Jewish past influenced their mysticism and their rebelliousness toward the religious establishment.

As you read the poems you will notice that many are written in the first person of their subjects. Borges says about this sort of effort that there are two types of approaches: “One . . . outlines the theme of a *total identification* with a given author. . . . The other is . . . fit only . . . to produce the plebeian pleasure of anachronism or (what is worse) to enthrall us with the elementary idea that all epochs are the same or are different.” (I plead guilty to both!) Although most of the subjects are men, some are women. Just one of the many unexpected benefits and pleasures I have had researching and writing the poems in this book was discovering fascinating people I had never heard of, in particular these women, one of whom I even fell in love with. In “channeling” their voices I have discovered a kind of “attitude” in myself that I have projected onto these women that has surprised and amused me.

Although the period encompassed by the poems had many rich Muslim voices as well, unfortunately I am less familiar with these voices, so only a few are included. In general, the choices of subjects have depended in great part on the names I am most familiar with and also the places and monuments in Spain associated with the writers, philosophers, religious figures, and leaders who are among my subjects.

As you read the poems you also undoubtedly will come across many unfamiliar names and terms. Including footnotes in a poetry book seems a poor idea; poets want their readers to understand their poems without any. However, including notes in poetry books is not unheard-of; most modern collections of medieval Hebrew poetry, for example, include copious notes. And so, in this tradition, I offer you, the reader who may need some help or who just wants more information on the poems, brief notes, arranged by poem, at the back of this book. The reader who wants other reference material can find it at henryrasof.com/souls-in-the-garden.

I wish you a good trip traveling with me in medieval and modern Jewish Spain—oh, and also in Taos, New Mexico, once part of New Spain, and a city with a longtime Jewish connection, albeit mostly hidden. But before we go, I need to confess that I have grown fond of and perhaps overly attached to my subjects and feel I want to visit with them every day, even if it’s just to change a comma in a poem.

*On the Sabbath
Jewish souls have a taste of the world-to-come.*
Various traditional Jewish sources

*Angels guide the righteous deceased
to the Garden of Eden.*
Various traditional Jewish sources

*The ascended souls then join
the Divine forevermore.*
Zohar 1:235a

*Souls blossom
on a tree in Paradise.*
Hosea 9:14

Who Are the Souls in the Garden?

Our souls are born in what Howard Schwartz calls, in *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*, the “Treasury of Souls,” located in the “highest heaven.” In Hebrew this treasury is called the *guf*. Before we receive a body, our soul descends to see what earth is like. It then returns to heaven for the finishing touches. The soul then is sent back to earth to be born in an earthly body in order for God to become completed. God is imperfect without us. We are a kind of laboratory experiment created for God’s own purpose, namely, to become whole.

One of the epigraphs to this book describes the souls of the righteous as rising to heaven, to paradise. This happens on *Shabbat* (the Jewish Sabbath) and also after death; it is said that the Sabbath is a taste of the next world, so on the Sabbath, souls are offered this taste.

Aside from the author of *Souls* (as far as he knows), all of the souls are, obviously, dead, and so by now one assumes they have ascended, whether Jewish, or Christian, or Muslim, by birth or conversion. There might be exceptions, of course, which the reader can decide for himself or herself.

These people are dead, yes, but their souls are still expressing themselves, to us, to one another, to friends and enemies, to God, in anger and with sadness, nostalgia, cynicism, bitterness, wistfulness, and more—the gamut of human emotions.

The souls of the dead in the garden are a mostly high minded group of souls, though there are some outliers. Their vocabulary is broad, their erudition often tremendous, their depth of emotion striking, their knowledge of literary forms (including, anachronistically, free verse) impressive. Some poems are told in this author’s voice, or in dialogue between the author and his subjects. Time past, present, and future are one, and everyone is a time traveler, just like the ascending and descending souls, which, as was said, travel on *Shabbat* and after death as if there is no difference.

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W. S. Merwin (1927–2019), for the inspiration of his poems, especially those in *Garden Time*.

Mary and Joseph, owners of a bookstore in Toledo, who shared their personal experiences of discovering their *converso* Jewish heritage.

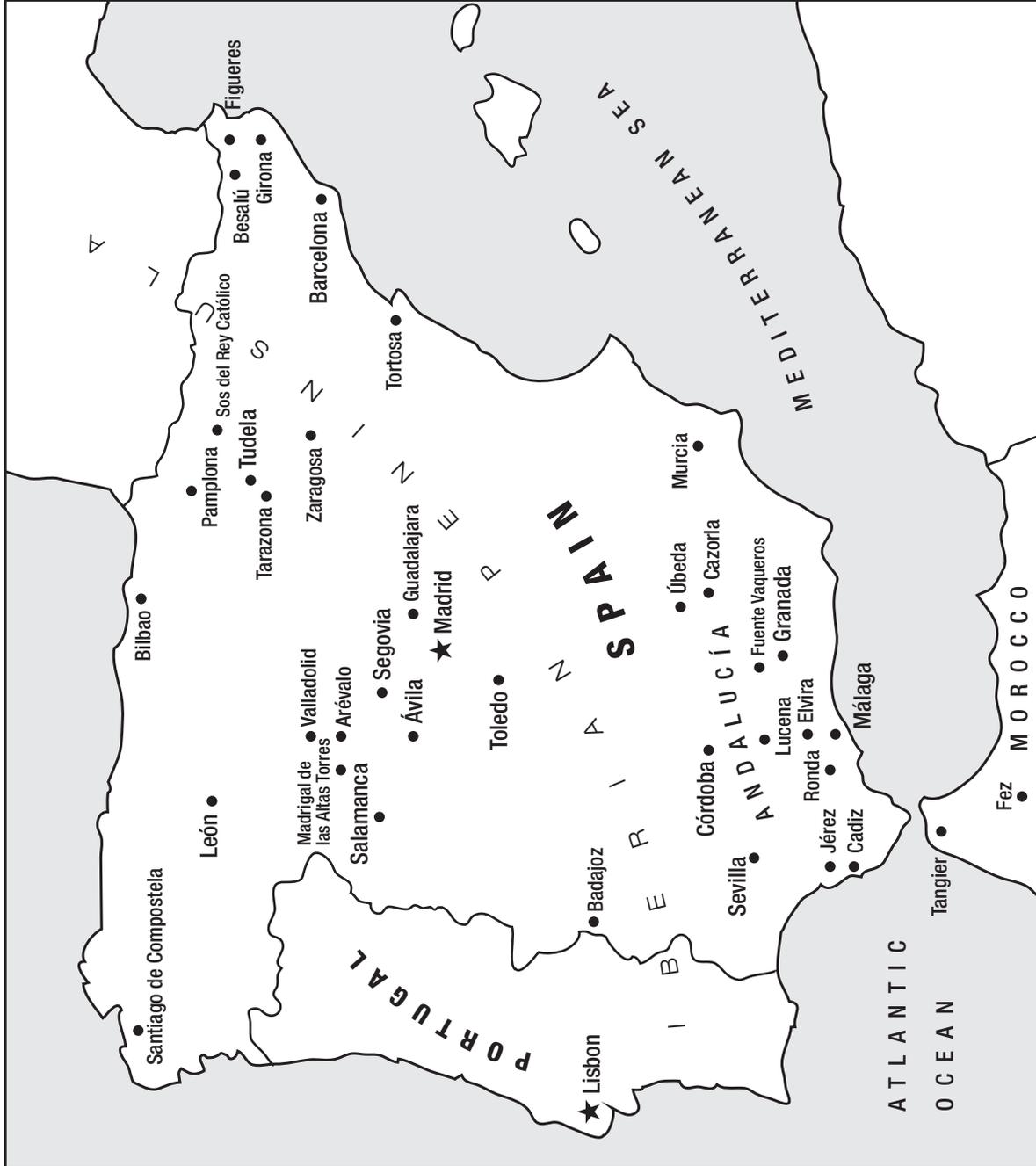
Assumpció Hosta Rebés, Secretària General of the Network of Jewish Quarters (Caminos de Sefarad Red de Juderías de España) and Director of the Centre Bonastruc ça Porta, for answering various questions about the Jewish presence in Girona.

The staff at tourist-information centers in Zaragoza, Tarazona, Besalú, and León, for their invaluable help in guiding me to sites of Jewish interest in their cities.

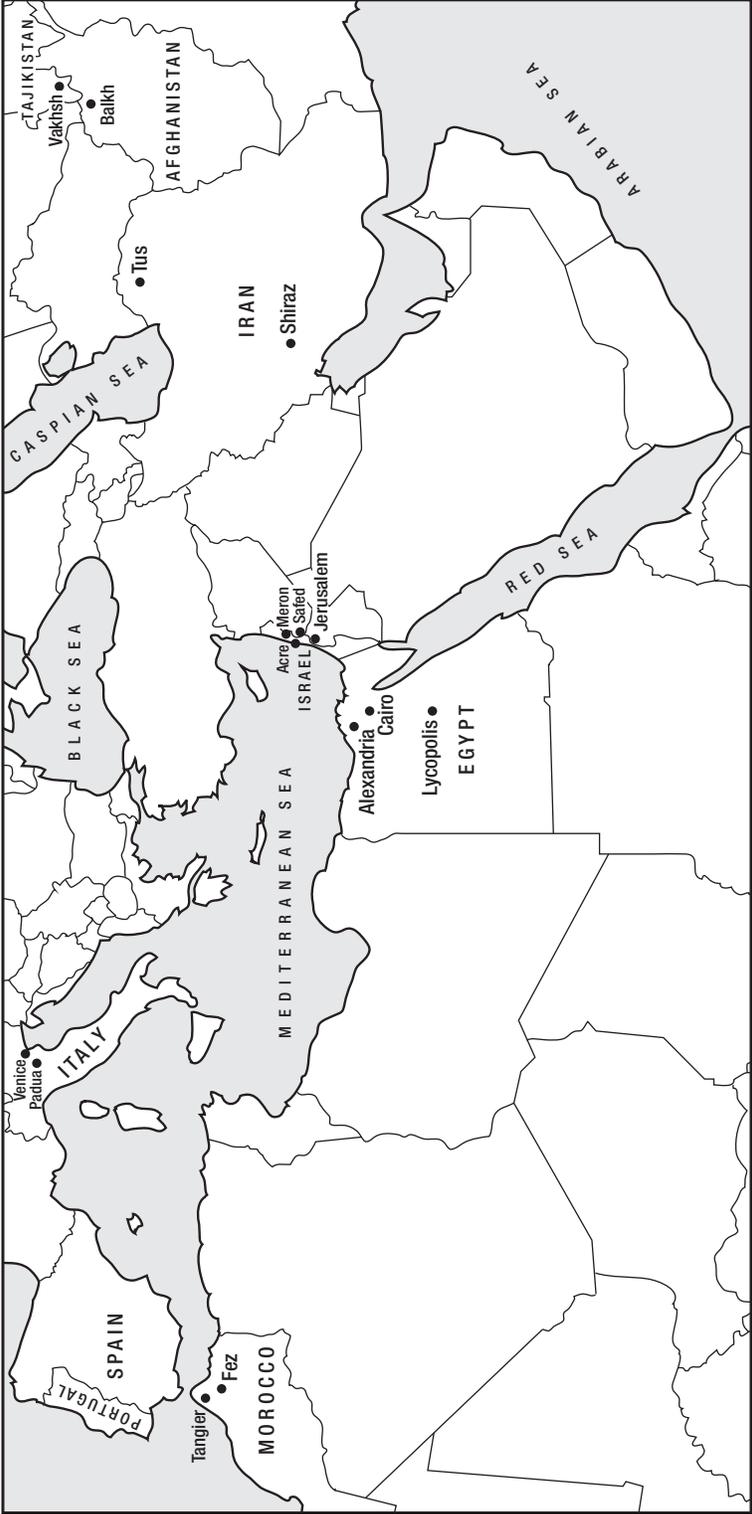
The following publishers for their invaluable publications: Stanford University Press, for *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt, Nathan Wolski, and Joel Hecker; Oxford University Press, for *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*, compiled by Howard Schwartz; and *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, arranged by Fischel Lachower and Isaiah Tishby, with extensive introductions and explanations by Isaiah Tishby, and translated from the Hebrew by David Goldstein.

And, last but not least—in fact, most important of all—the human subjects of the poems, whether or not they ever existed, for inspiring and allowing me to speak in their voices, which has been a most humbling experience.

Map of Spain and Portugal



Map of the Mediterranean and Middle East



Notes to the Reader

Most of the epigraphs and italicized texts in smaller type in poems are quotations whose sources are in the **Notes to the Poems** at the back of the book.

Madrid, the current Spanish capital, was so designated only in 1561. Toledo was its predecessor. Lisbon became the Portuguese capital in about 1255.

Transliterations of Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian names vary considerably; I have tried to use one system consistently in the poems for each. Although Hebrew has no “J” sound, Yehudah Halevi’s first name is often transliterated as Judah (or even Jehudah); I have left it this way in sources but spelled it Yehudah in the poems. I spell the Persian poet Rumi’s first name Jalal ad-Din, but elsewhere you may see Jalaladin or Jelaladin. I have not used the Arabic names of Jewish figures who have them. The diacritic marks in Arabic and Persian names have been omitted.

Most of the poems, front matter, and end notes use the commonly used names of people mentioned. The more complete names are listed below.

Jewish

Abraham Abulafia—Abraham ben Shmuel Abulafia

Abraham ibn Ezra—Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra

Dunash ben Labrat—Dunash Halevi ben Labrat

Isaac Abravanel—Isaac ben Yehudah Abarbanel

Maimonides—Moses (Moshe) ben Maimon

Moses ibn Ezra—Moses ben Jacob ibn Ezra

Moses (Moshe) de León—Moses (Moshe) ben Shemtov de León

Nachmanides—Moses ben Nachman Gerondi

Shmuel (Samuel) Hanagid or Samuel the Prince—Shmuel Halevi ben Yosef Hanagid

Solomon ibn Gabirol—Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol

Yehudah Halevi—Yehudah ben Shmuel Halevi

Muslim

Abu Ishaq—Abu Ishaq al-Libiri

Al-Ghazali—Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali

Averroes (Ibn Rushd)—Abu l-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rusd

Hafiz (Hafez)—Khwaja Shams-ud-Din Muhammad Hafez-e Shirazi

Ibn Masarra—Abu Abd Allah Muhammad b. Abd Allah b. Masarra b. Najih al-Jabali

Rumi—Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi

Sa’adi (Saadi, Sadi)—Abu-Muhammad Muslih al-Din bin Abdallah Shirazi

Other

Seneca—Seneca the Younger, Lucius Annaeus Seneca



SOULS IN THE GARDEN

*Why don't we visit the garden?
Every plant's in bloom,
Every tree beautifully fruited,
And like Joseph's coat
The garden's coat is multicolored . . .*

*. . . so at daybreak
I decided to visit the garden
To breathe the garden air
Seek my joy in the fragrant shade,
And maybe bring you some lovely gifts:
A lovely potpourri.
But, since the gardener was nowhere to be seen
And I heard intriguing sounds,
I decided to bring you a different kind of potpourri:
The voices of the souls in the garden. . . .*

Dialogue with the Jew of Málaga

I did not seek you
Found me

How do I know
Your voice is true

When you speak
My breathing is even

I sought your love
Though it was not to be had

I drew close
You pulled away

Now I understand
Your metaphors of love

I am glad you do not
Laugh at me

This is how my poet self wrote
And had to write

Godly love, womanly love—
I meant these

You now understand
As if you were writing as me today

Your rabbinic poet-philosopher Ibn Gabirol
Might have said:

This is love
Fountain of life
Simple and pure
Wisdom's crown
In all its complicated manifestations

Ghost of Granada

Twelve stone lions
Three-cornered hats

In the labyrinth
Indifferent faces

On the hill a new mosque
Early morning frantic

I hear a voice
Cannot find its source

No one knows
Even the policemen

Louder here louder there
Scan the alleys memorize the map

The voice lost for a thousand years
Is in my chest

At night in Granada
I call on a puma to stalk

The most famous medieval Jew
Before Maimonides the philosopher

In a ravine where limestone cuts
And olive oil stinks

Night-blooming jasmine
Precipitates a childhood memory

Nowhere so many jasmines
In so small a space

That is no consolation for the failure
To locate even a trace of Shmuel Hanagid—Samuel the Prince—

Vizier poet
Talmudist patron of the arts

Military commander
Ghost of Granada

Abu Ishaq, There Is Only One God

La ilaha illa allah There is no God but Allah

*Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad Hear O Israel, the Lord is God,
the Lord is One*

*Poetry tears through my mind
as I draw my tongue's sword
At that point, it can pierce armor. . . .
Holding back would make me crazy*

*Abu Ishaq, I have summoned what's left
Of the dust of your pathetic dry bones from your grave in Granada*

*To this abandoned garden
Whose once-magnificent blooms*

*Are now but artifact
Of poetic memory*

*Not to pay homage to the souls
Of long-ago lovers*

*But rather to do battle with you
In the way only poets can*

*Pretty fancy qasida opening for a queer Jew
Better than the qasidas from a pederast like you*

*You rode the trends of our poets
Whose so-called poems still sail the seas of poetry in third-class boats*

*Better a third-class boat than a fourth-class monkey
It takes one to know one, brays your friend the donkey*

You copied our grammarians too
Whose rules derived from a second-rate language of fools

Your so-called architects built small synagogues in our style
Better so-called than boring; better small than bloated and vile

Too bad Abraham didn't kill Isaac his son
If he had, you wouldn't be here, since your son was named after him

Your prophets were superseded by ours
Whose religion is not just derivative but influenced by inferior stars

No Muslim could or should bow to the lowest monkey of nonbelievers. . . .
Also enemy bastards, I recall your saying in one of your menstrual fevers

. . . Nonbelievers whom we still protected
Better, unprotected unbelievers than syphilitic carriers like you of pathetic invective

We drank and sang together
You made us sit in back and drink the dregs that stank

We ruled in Spain for over seven hundred years
Thanks to our help in driving out the Visigoths by helping you overcome your fears

Our rulers were mighty
They fought amongst themselves, couldn't kill a flea, and were flighty

Your leaders were mere moons to our suns
Better moons than sons of bitches

You chosen people and your leader had too many privileges . . .
You and yours had deservedly too few

. . . Too much money and power, fancy clothes, too many good jobs and huge mansions
It's not our fault you were poor, weak, lazy, and too concerned with fashions

You taxed and took us for all we were worth
You taxed our patience, have a brain as small as a tick's, and a tuches as big as the earth

The king should not have appointed as vizier a Jew
*Joseph, son of the beloved Samuel the Nagid—
whose first two names, by the way, are Abu Ishaq—
was more qualified than any Muslim in the que*

He was haughty and disrespected our religion
At least he wasn't being naughty in the kitchen

When he tried to kill the king, that was the last straw
Do you believe every rumor you hear in the raw?

My beautifully crafted heartfelt poem did the trick
You are a tedious, prosaic, vicious whiner with a brick for a brain

When I wrote this I struck a chord with the people:
*Quick! Slaughter the Jews to bring you closer to Allah:
They're just fattened sacrificial rams anyway
Their murder isn't treachery
True treachery is letting them wreck your own land
You mean your kind of rabble*

We had to do something to regain our pride
Did you need to incite the mob to crucify Joseph in 1066 in response to your lie?

He deserved what to him was coming
Your phrasing is stilted: Were all the Jews massacred that year as deserving?

*In 400 years a Jewish monkey
Will perhaps foolishly and unaware of the irony*

*Bankroll with taxes collected from your countrymen
The final victory of Christians over Muslims*

*Conquering Granada once and for all
Returning Spain forever more into Christian hands*

*On the Day of Judgment
Even your remorseful mother will cry out*

*“It isn’t treachery to pardon him
“So do not pardon him”*

*And now that I have summoned what’s left
Of the dust of your pathetic dry bones*

*I pray that it be ground even finer
Ground without mercy to its very atoms*

*Scattered to the ends of the earth
Then beyond the edge of the galaxy*

*So that there is nothing of nothingness
Not one speck of matter to resurrect*

*Although you claim to be the chosen people
You will never build the world you say you’re destined to build*

*Poetry tears through my mind
as I draw my tongue’s sword.
At that point, it can pierce armor. . . .
Holding back would make me crazy.*

*Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad
There is no God but Allah
La ilaha illa allah
Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One*

Call Me Qasmuna

*No longer young
still alone*

*My name means siren
Witch enchantress
Pretty face
Whatever you want*

*I do not know my father or mother
If there's a brother
Whether I'm older sister or younger
Dead alive Arab Jew
Married or still waiting
I don't even know whether I lived
In the eleventh or twelfth century
Or whether I even lived*

*Although I do not know myself
Or you who you are how you found me
Or why I am grateful
Please just call me Qasmuna*

your name is beautiful
and you must be too

though we have never met
even if you are not the daughter

of Samuel the Prince
ghost of Granada

or his granddaughter
or the older sister

i want to marry you
your poem has touched me

but even if
the poem is not yours—

the one in Arabic
in which you long for marriage

*In the garden
a lone gazelle
beautiful fruit
no gardener*

—even if you didn't write at all
or even exist

i would want
to marry you

now that the war is over Qasmuna
Orion's sword is sheathed

the generals are back
the harps silent

shall we meet on the Málaga beach
or by the twelve stone lions

or perhaps in a cave
where jews and renegade christians meet

to serenade their lovers
and drink cheap wine

yes let's meet there
where the cool air tempers the heat

where the moss drips
where we can meet without fear

and in thanks
let's praise the Holy One

Who makes all things possible
in the heavens and on earth

*Although I do not know myself
Or who you are
I am grateful
Please just call me Qasmuna*

could it be that Hafiz the Persian was referring to you
when many years later he wrote:

You are Creation's sweetest bud

Fons Vitae (Fountain of Life)

*Why do souls repeatedly go up and down
down and up*

*drawing strength from the throne on high
then returning to earth
if not to reveal God's glory!*

I sit looking out
As far as the eye can see over the Guadalquivir
Smelling the rites of spring

Saturated with the milky-white creaminess
Of the first camellia buds breaking through
The melting snow of an unusually cold winter

The sun arcs slowly
Up to its full height
Over the Alcázar and the daughter of the caliph

Stands looking over the wall what
Could she be thinking as the Christian soldiers move
Toward their inevitable conclusion?

Those camellia buds hold
Greater wisdom even than the sages
Of blessed memory

I do not ask why there was snow
This year: There can be
No answer

Even the gypsy fortunetellers
Living in the caves at Sacramonte
Do not know

How I could know
That these camellia buds
Would soon burst into their greatest display of my lifetime?

I just know as I am certain
The great river stretching
From the Sierra de Cazorla

To the Atlantic will carry
Each year floats of decaying flowers
After their long-awaited outburst

And blossoms too tinged red
Like the oranges they will grow into in later generations
Yielding a strange almost frightening aroma

During seasons of the moon
As it dances among the stars on nights
Almost too dark for human perception

I am sad
My friends have left
And the patrons of the Talmud

My fellow poets and philosophers as well
Jews and Muslims leaving me to sit
Awaiting all the many returns expressed in spring

These days will be
Unlike any other in history
What future will greet my poems

As I sit frozen in the space of the middle ages
A comet become a meteor? Will anyone
Even understand what I was saying

What I am saying now
Why I said am saying it
This way if I myself

Do not understand
The mystery of childbirth
Or the reason for worlds within worlds

Why God elevates at whim
If after ascending the ladder of Jacob
All the way to the heights of angels

Even the noblest soul must
Descend what is the point of it all? This
I do not understand

*If you want to know
It's to revel
in the glory of the goodly. . . .*

So I sit here dreamily in a thicket of confusion
Detecting only the smells
Colors textures of flowers beginning to bloom

Ibn Gabirol says:

When you finally found me
I turned out to be not just a poet but Avicbron
Whose philosophical *Fountain of Life* irrigated

What surely will be the last
Spring of its kind
In the memory of humankind

(Rumi the Persian later would say in the Name of the Prophet:

*Up, down, close, far
What's the difference?)*

Mrs. Dunash ben Labrat Tells All

It's said my husband was the first
To use Arabic poetics in Hebrew poetry

*In a pomegranate orchard . . .
accompanied by singers and musicians . . .
we'll fill up on food and drink*

Maybe so
But that letter poem I wrote him

The one you all made such a fuss over
The one you called

"The first fully realized personal poem
"In the new Andalusian style"

The one about the man
Who left Córdoba for ports unknown

By the first woman
To write poetry since Deborah

And the only to write
In the Middle Ages

Too bad you don't know my name
And what do you think we did

All day while our husbands were out
Philandering, drinking, or talking politics

Away on business
Or starting a second family

In another city or just lost
Trying to find their way home

And speaking of husbands:
Mine, whom I loved—

We exchanged jewelry
And tunics when we parted—

Mine, whom I loved,
Was forced to leave Spain

For years our son and I were sure
He'd return

Then I heard
He'd gone for good

How did I find out?
I saw the divorce papers—

At least he was kind enough
To do them—

And his letter that says
He knows he betrayed me

*And won't pick grapes
or wheat*

And no:
I'm not sure I wrote other poems

But if I did, they're lost
Or I forgot about them

A woman widowed
By a living man

Does not find inspiration
Easily

And I'm not consoled knowing
That all but thirteen of his own poems were lost

Then again:

Most of the poems ever written
Have been lost

Testimony of the Jews of Córdoba

Think Córdoba

Think death

Bitter oranges
Cool white walls

They spoke of *duende* spirit of death
What did they know!

Hatred always fresh
We were always packed

Even in the Mezquita
Worshippers lacked manners

Under a waning moon
Our daughters' shoes clacked along the cobblestones

Dirges everywhere
Music far behind

You had to totally believe
And then some

We are going by night
To gardens and caves

Where the limestone is rough
And the ascetic Muslim scholar Ibn Masarra might have lived

But the only *Torah*
Is right here now

Rambam Laments

*Show me which way I should walk
for I lift up my soul to you*

1

Calle de los Judíos
Where I Moses Maimonides called Rambam

Doctor and philosopher
Received my medicine

The white houses are expensive
In my plaza El Museo Taurino

Around the corner two other philosophers
My contemporary Averroes and the ancient Seneca

You buried my children in the city walls
And gave me a statue in Córdoba

And actually gave us all statues
Claiming us as your own

2

From the dialogue of faith
And reason came my child with the porcelain face

I invited everyone
To her birthday

All that remains
Souvenir shops selling Solomon's Seals

Still, I have a statue and a future
What about you?

Street of Jews Square of Tiberias
Scent of fish taste of pork

In the beautiful waterfall that was
My daughter's black hair

Only costly white
Ash lingers in the stifling August air

The Barber of Seville

Think Sevilla

Think pain

One late August evening
104 in the shade

Oh the shops are pretty
The *tapas* tasty

One too many Jewish children
Buried alive, buried alive

Men with Jewish DNA
Selling hams in the shops

Flamencos in the clubs
Striving for the deep song

One too many Jewish children
Buried alive, buried alive

Young couples embrace
Obliviously on bridges and street corners

Old men in parks
Argue whether to exhume García Lorca

One too many Jewish children
Buried alive, buried alive

Bright white egrets perch
Beside the Guadalquivir

Colonies of feral cats
Screech in the rushes

One too many Jewish children
Buried alive, buried alive

Someone asks me directions
As if I were a native

How should I know
Where anything is?

One too many Jewish children
Buried alive, buried alive

Whitewashed towns kept fresh
Year after year by denial

Men still do not talk to their brothers
Women to their sisters

One too many Jewish children
Buried alive, buried alive

In countries like this
All a stranger can do is weep

Afterthought:

For the barber
The poet García Lorca

Whatever his burial status
Had the last word

The Legend of Susona, *La Fermosa Fembra*

*Here Susona lived,
loved, and betrayed*

I'm Susona
La Fermosa Fembra
The Lovely Woman *La Bella Susona*,
Once called Susan
Or Susana Even Esther
So they say

Fortunate to be alive
After all these years but unfortunate
Also to have been alive in 1480
Daughter of Diego
Who plotted to kill inquisitors
So they say

To save my skin
And that of my old-Christian lover
I told him, who in turn
Turned in my own father
Who straightaway was hung or burned
So they say

Then I joined a convent
Or led an exemplary Christian life
Or became a whore
Commanding that when I died
My head be nailed to my house
So they say

Every night
After I died
My screams filled the streets

Of the old Jewish quarter
The Barrio Santa Cruz
So they say

None of this happened
Or I never existed
Or if I did it didn't happen
The way people say it did
And I didn't write those words
So they say

Still, I have my own street in Seville
Calle de Susona
Near an old sign reading

CALLE
DELA
MVERTE

And a plaque
Misspelling my name

IN THESE STREETS, THE ANCIENT
CALLE DE LA MVERTE HUNG THE HEAD
OF THE BEAUTIFUL SVONA BEN SVZÓN,
WHO FOR LOVE BETRAYED HER FATHER
AND WAS TORMENTED
AS WRITTEN
IN HER FINAL TESTAMENT.

And now the house I grew up in
Sports this gruesome tile in place of my skull:



The Vargas Family of Flamencos Performs at Hotel Triana

*Triana—daughter of Sevilla
mother of flamenco*

I walk along Calles Levies and Pérez
into echoes of children's voices

Long live Sevilla, long live Triana

A thickness of ghosts
lamenting

A botanist cross-breeds strains of corn
seeking that wild ancestor

Cantaores seek
that wild lone ancestor

When I see babies held and hugged
I think—

I think—seek resolution
into one pure sound

In the Hotel Triana courtyard
gypsies dance until three am

A dancer penetrates the stage
her partner pulling on his fly

Hotel Triana
hotel of sighs

Night of waning moon
scent of orange

Black hate
kills beauty

I walk along the river
of wakeful dead souls

Scent of corn, *bulerías* rhythm, a gentle
lifting of motherly skirts

A baby cries, an old lady moans
a fat man rips his shirt

They sing here of Triana
they sing of Triana here in Sevilla

I walk out into three am streets
amid echoes of the wild ancestor

Scent of corn
waning moon

A sevillana says:

You led me on
You threw me out

Never again

Lament of the Jews of Jérez

Jews in the flames
Gypsies in the hills dancing at night

Lovers on their backs
Flotsam in the river

Plazas full of spectators
Bitter orange in the scent—

Jews on the racks
Moors on the run

Lovers out of love
Rivers of death

Grapes on the vine
Sherry in the casks

Lovers in the river
Fires in their loins

One last prayer
Murmured to God

Jews in the plazas
Burning in the flames

Gypsies in the hills
Rotting in the chalk

By the Waters of Granada (*Cante Jondo*—Deep Song)

The Psalmist sang:

Al naharot bavel *We hung up our harps*
for how could we sing
the Lord's song in a foreign land
But we failed and failing
sang this other song instead

In southern Spain during the Crusades
We were sitting by the rivers Darro and Genil
Way upstream from the Guadalquivir
Granada was some town
In those days, home to half the species
Of Mediterranean fruit. The hills around the Alhambra—the palace of the rulers—
Sheltered hundreds of blue-black antelope imported
From the central rift in Africa, and during Semana Santa—
Holy week—A few of the Christians who hadn't run away sat down
With a handful of Jews and Muslims and played silly Egyptian card games.
Then came a change, not just in Granada
But in all of Spain. First the warrior poet Samuel the Prince died.
Then the poet-philosophers Ibn Gabirol and Halevi left
In that order followed by that greatest of nonpoet philosophers, Maimonides,
And so on. Those who remained
Began to sing of war. Jewish courtiers increased
Their donations to the Talmud schools but decreased
The number of poems they wrote
Praising the fawns who plied them with spirits.
The direction of the evening breeze changed
As well so that the sweltering August nights
No longer offered relief from the
Late-evening burning sun. Little Jewish boys
Began to disappear after the *Torah* reading and not because,
As some said, *kabbalistic* mystics from Girona in the north

Had kidnapped them to meet the insatiable needs of the
Disputants at the Jewish–Christian disputation of Tortosa
During which Jews were forced to defend
Their faith so as to not offend the Christians using
Jewish books to prove Jesus was the Messiah.
Mornings, too, began to change. Whereas
Breakfasts always had ended with strong, bitter coffee
And saffron-flavored pistachio pastries rolled in thin-layered crusts,
Housewives now began serving old tea, saved
From the last infestation of western European murderers, and hard biscuits
Rolled at the last minute in pathetic small grains of rat-chewed brown sugar.
The Holy Land lost its direction. When we prayed
We no longer faced southeast but began to turn
Increasingly every which way, even
Into the realm of Alfonso X the So-Called Wise King of Castile and León,
During whose time songs were composed praising the Virgin
For her miracles saving Jews from themselves. Soon we knew
What had happened in the ancient world didn't matter.
Translators had sunk their teeth into the ancient philosophers,
Making a royal mess of their grand
Philosophies. Those same teeth began to rot
From the dizziness of attempts to reconcile the ancient learning,
Contemporaneous with many gods, with that Other learning,
Inspired by the One. Now no one paid
Any attention to any of it, turning instead
To the feverish promises of false Jewish prophets and messiahs.
It wasn't just lousy bread, or migrations,
Idols, or transmutation of gold into silver
Toward the inevitable rock-bottom world of lead,
Nor was it the disappearance of the poets—
They had continued to leave, like so many spiders leaving
Webs in decaying, crumbling buildings,
Their alphabetically acrostic poems everywhere, so you couldn't pray
One phrase in any service without staring through the bright blackness
Of their words crawling like ants
On the dung heap that people began to think

Was some sort of *genizah* dustbin of paper sanctified
By the name of God which even though many felt abandoned
Just could not discard for fear of sacrilege. Rabbis decayed too;
The stench grew revolting. We stopped drinking wine—it was
Totally foul—so instead of celebrating God we threw ourselves
At Him in the incantations of Rabbi Abraham Abulafia the mystic prophet
Chanting *yod hey vav hey*—the letters in the tetragrammaton—
In the six directions, then joining Rabbi Moses de León, who claimed
To have found the most mystical of mystical Jewish books
In his search for the mystical body of God, as if God has a body,
Physical or *sefrotically* or numerologically metaphysical. Our families
Began disintegrating, and rather than repairing
The universe with mnemonic blessings and mumblings we began
To pray for its dissolution. I can tell you this
Because we saw the end approach, like a rotting behemoth,
Lurching toward us only this time restrained but barely
 by the gleeful toothless priests
And canons swinging their Jewish wine bottles as their minions
 were burying alive
Who knows how many pale young boys and girls.
It was then that nothing stayed together,
And in a flash it was over,
Bodies in flames, teeth melting in skulls, sexual organs popping
Then exploding, nipples shooting into the air
 like miniature Chinese rockets, eyeballs
Bursting, bloodying bystanders' faces, some say actually penetrating
The cracks in the cobblestones that travelers and locals alike
Would walk on for hundreds of years. But I wouldn't know. It's just
That upon returning to this land of the two rivers
I know that in the cries of the *cante jondo*, the deep song,
In the moss growing up the banks, the fat of the hanging hams
In every shop and *tapas* bar, in the mites on the scalps of the pretty señoritas
And their haggard ugly young mothers, in the cast-iron gates
 running up the hill across
From the Alhambra, we could sometimes see, hear, and
Smell the past as if it were present down to the last detail,

Including I swear the saffron flavoring the pastries.
And so I give a toast, *le chaim*, to your health
In a dingy little wine and *tapas* bar with the finest,
Darkest, sweetest, strongest *oloroso* sherry I can afford before going to the market
For my daily fix of blood oranges before strolling down to that same confluence
To witness the flow of small boats, plastic bottles, and dead flowers
Slipping downstream to the river Guadalquivir
And eventually to where it empties into the Atlantic.

The poet sang:

*Realizing we could not sing
the Lord's song in a foreign land
we hung up our harps
and sang this other song instead:
the deep song
praising and lamenting
all that was*

*Though not our choice
fate had stilled our still-small voice*

*Aunque no es nuestra preferencia
el destino se hizo callar nuestra todavía pequeña voz*

Sensing Souls in Toledo

*Donde vas, bella judía
tan compuesta y a deshora?
Voy en busca de Rebeco
que espera en la sinagoga*

City of generations
Calling through brutal heat

*It's still dark, beautiful Jewess
Where're you off to in your finery?
To the synagogue
where Rebeco's waiting*

I pace every inch
Of your restored synagogue

Sensing souls
Hymns still singing

*It's still dark, beautiful Jewess
Where're you off to in your finery?
To the synagogue
where Rebeco's waiting*

Who still wants to drink
The blood of grapes?

A moon like that comma-shaped Hebrew letter writes
Golden tints on an aurora

*It's still dark, beautiful Jewess
Where're you off to in your finery?
To the synagogue
where Rebeco's waiting*

Send to my beloved
An alas on the wind

A dusty path weaves among
Oak and cork trees

*It's still dark, beautiful Jewess
Where're you off to in your finery?
To the synagogue
where Rebeco's waiting*

Remorselessly
Dry grass pig pens

By dark moonlight
Shades of children

*It's still dark, beautiful Jewess
Where're you off to in your finery?
To the synagogue
where Rebeco's waiting*

These streets have our
Names statues

El Greco the painter stares lost
Over the city of generations

*It's still dark, beautiful Jewess
Where're you off to in your finery?
To the synagogue
where Rebeco's waiting*

DNA remembers
Needs to be reminded

*To the synagogue
where Rebeco's waiting*

*To the synagogue
where Rebeco's waiting*

I Remember Ancient Graves

one rose quickly wilts

but a rose garden lasts

poets in their graves
ghosts in the gardens

kabbalistic mystics in the rivers
fleeing unholy fires

philosophers in the valleys
seeking higher ground

rabbis in the woods
preaching with the birds

including mores ibn ezra
writing death again and again

ancient graves
forgotten in the fields

spaniards in their hovels
heads in the sand

jews on the racks
stretching to the heavens

marranos in the stys
eking out a meal

ghosts in the gardens
poets in their graves

ghosts in gardens
that flower in the night

moses ibn ezra in his grave
penitential poet

moses ibn ezra
jeweler to the poets

moses ibn ezra
finally remembered in toledo

ghost in a garden of stones

Scolding Alfonso X the So-Called Wise King of Castile and León

In Toledo . . . Christians . . .

found Jews . . . hitting and spitting on a figurine of Christ . . .

and killed them.—Las Cantigas de Santa Maria 12

You are called *el Sabio*

The learned or wise

You say you have written

Some of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*

—Songs praising the Virgin Mary and her miracles—

And discuss philosophy with Jews and Muslims

Yet in the end you are like all the rest of them:

You do not revere your Mary

Nor the sayings of your Savior

You are a hollow man

Hypocrite at heart

Poseur

Do you never wonder

Beyond your dilettantish ways

And in your great wisdom see

The impoverished legacy of a kingdom

Ruled by misery

And miserable dark-age men

In Toledo, your once-great

City of generations?

Leaping Mary Sings Her Own Song (for You)

*A seed breaks open and dissolves
in the ground. Only then
does a new fig tree come into being*

At the court of Alfonso X
That so-called wise king of Castile and León

In the thirteenth century
Someone wrote a song about me

Number 107 in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*
“The Jewess thrown from a cliff”

That’s me but I wasn’t thrown
And certainly not stripped to my shift

By Jews shouting “there she goes”
And I didn’t leap either or even jump

Headfirst from a cliff in Segovia
If such is even possible

And although I’m called Marisaltos
Leaping Mary’s not my real name

Whether it’s Esther as some say
I can’t say for sure even though beauty blessed us both

*Believe in the Holy Virgin
Save yourself grief*

Whether something happened between me
And a married Christian man

And because Christian men
Are better in bed

Which some say
Was my crime and motive

If it even happened
If I ever committed a crime

If there was any such motive
Is none of anyone's business

Where the Leaping Mary business came from
I haven't a clue

The Virgin Mary seems nice enough
But I never promised to convert

If she saved me and she never
Reached out from a cloud

Believe in the Holy Virgin
Save yourself grief

Killing and humiliation:
Those are Christian things

So maybe it was a Christian lady
Whose real name was Mary

Or it was the virgin who jumped
And saved herself to make a point—

When will these people stop
Inventing history

Believe in the Holy Virgin
Save yourself grief

Under the cliff they built a church
To celebrate the supposed miracle

And now I hear I'm the one
Who told this story in the first place

At a church of all places
When I've never even been in a church

I was then baptized and entombed
Under six small paintings of all of this

In the cloister
In Segovia Cathedral

What were they thinking
Those foolish Spaniards

I couldn't dispute it at the time
I was just a heap

Of crushed flesh and bone
At the foot of a fig tree

Or was it a cypress

Believe in the Holy Virgin
Save yourself grief

The *Fado* of Bonastruc ça Porta

*I don't understand why
but this song soothes me*

In the disputation I
Rabbi Moses ben Nachman

Alias Bonastruc ça Porta
Mystic, commentator, community leader

Was forced to prove the ancient rabbis did not believe
Jesus was the Messiah

I longed to fail but could not
And was forced to flee for my life

You today know nothing
Of this sort of thing

Of the treacherous hard travel
To the promised land from which there was no return

I longed for my family, for the wise
Company of mystics, poets, and statesmen

You told me that in your first hour
In Girona you felt the stab of pain

A heart attack
That takes the breath away

I longed for eternal life
For the Jews who stayed through the dark fires

Today the beautiful Institut d'Estudis Nahmànides
Bears my Latin name

Signs identify
The Jewish quarter

I longed for the little arches
Over the winding cobblestone streets

Even after
More than seven hundred years

I am not sure
I could stand the pain

I longed for the river
Along whose sides colorful houses now stand

Tell my descendants
That although I am doing well

And am happy
For my beautiful Girona

*The river
the hills, the whole place*

I still long
For the lush surrounding hills

*Everything
that grows*

And think of the cemetery
Where my ancestors are buried

*I can't see
through the tears*

I long from the other side
Long to return

*In that case forgive me
for writing this fado*

*Which means fate
and in case you didn't already guess*

*is a song of loss
and longing*

Besalú

On the Sabbath

Jewish souls have a taste of the world-to-come

The reason . . . is their angelic nature

Fifteen minutes
Until the *mikveh* closes

Hurry down stairs
To that shallow ritual bath

Where does the water
Come from?

Jews were here, everywhere,
Then gone

From rain?
Underground?

We know what happened
To the Jews

Or do we? After returning
The key I cannot find my bus

Was I going to Girona?
What was my name?

This is what happens
When you don't take notes

Did the Jews ascend?
I still do not know

The *mikveh's* source?
Bucket brigade?

Someone reminds me:

What goes up
Must come down

Fado for Zaragoza

It's autumn in Zaragoza
Leaves are turning and ready to fall
Over everything hangs a pall
There are no more poets

*I can't hold back the tears . . .
But singing dispels the grief*

I wander your dark morning streets
Listening for deep-song music
But all I hear are excuses
For poetry from people feigning sleep

*I can't hold back the tears . . .
But singing dispels the grief*

Students are up all night
But what do they produce?
Wrapped in rhymes that seduce
Only words that are slight

*I can't hold back the tears . . .
But singing dispels the grief*

The old Jewish market is gone
All traces hidden in the winding alleys
The old Jewish poets had to flee
Before their heartsongs shattered, then dispersed

*I can't hold back the tears . . .
But singing dispels the grief*

I mourn for them, for their thousands of verses
Scattered throughout this sad, sad land
Lost to a people whose hatred had grown out of hand
Whipped to a frenzy by ungodly priests in ungodly churches

I can't hold back the tears . . .

But singing dispels the grief

Do not feel sorry this country fell into ruin
Or mourn the myth of a spring that could have been eternal
The torture was truly infernal
The Spaniards brought it upon themselves later if not sooner

I can't hold back the tears . . .

But singing dispels the grief

Still I long for the love that could have been
For poems and songs that could have sounded
Like bright bells forged in a supernal foundry
Enchantment in place of sin

I can't hold back the tears . . .

But singing dispels the grief

Go my *fado*
Fateful song of loss
And longing into
The sad sad night

Yehudah Halevi's Lament

Souls blossom on a tree in Paradise. . . .

What lovely gift will you bring us from that garden?

For many hundreds of years my poems
Which some call great gave hope
Expressed a longing
For embers grown cold
For a presence now absent
Something no longer there

Hamonim asher shakhnu lefanim betokhenu

Horavot azavunu uferets bli nigdar

How shall I describe that emptiness?
It is like *tohu* and *bohu*
Hollowness surrounded by more hollowness
Void awaiting fullness
Sadness beyond description
A vast *arava* of desolation

Las multitudes que antiguamente moraban entre nosotros

Nos han dejado ruinas indefensas

Over the years
I have searched for You
With or without form
For a glimpse of
Your glorious radiance
A mere taste sweeter than date honey

Ishmael's descendants ruined our Temple

Leaving us bereft and defenseless

Long ago I wrote something I still feel:

High place of great beauty
Radiant bliss of everything that is

Who is like You

I want to be where You are
In the abode of pure awareness

Lighting the depths

In Your world
Even alas where You were

Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Al-Ghazali the Persian philosopher says:

*Since you came from a higher world your soul is angelic
After you leave your soul will return to that world*

The Ghost of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra Returns To Spain

*I once had a garment full of holes
good only for sorting grain*

Now I have left behind
my threadbare garment
to write in the idiom
of your day.

*On my birth day
the fixed stars moved into the sign of bad luck*

Now I see that the stars seem to have moved
into a better configuration;
astrology is still in fashion,
and the wisdom of Spain I spread.

I look out the window
on the high-speed train from Zaragoza
to Tudela and marvel at the landscape of grapevines
so like those from the distant past.

You call me polymath, poet, rabbi,
philosopher, astrologer, mathematician,
traveling teacher, the first modern biblical scholar—
but let's pause a moment at this whistle stop:

I said if the Bible were to say pigs could fly
it's meant metaphorically:
the Bible does not contradict
reality.

Similarly since a blind man who blinds
a sighted man cannot be punished
by being blinded in return, so too is an eye
for an eye meant to be read figuratively.

If you want to call this modern
or even scholarly, be my guest:
to me it's just common sense
and not so original.

Of course I'm glad some of you
still remember me in your most literal of times,
but in truth I'm just another sad ghost
from another sad time.

God Questions Rabbi Abraham Abulafia, Mystic Prophet of *Kabbalah*

Devote yourself to combining Holy Names,

and great things will happen to you. . . .

Like seeing roses blossom

over and over on the same bush

Abraham, Abraham
who is chanting?

Your lowly servant
O God in heaven.

Abraham, Abraham,
what are you chanting?

Your hundred names
O God in heaven.

Abraham, Abraham,
why are you chanting?

To become one with you
O God in heaven.

Abraham, Abraham,
when are you chanting?

All day and all night
O God in heaven.

Abraham, Abraham,
how are you chanting?

Letter by letter in the six directions
O God in heaven.

Abraham, Abraham,
where are you chanting?

Wherever I am
O God in heaven.

Your lowly servant
Your hundred names
To become one with you
All day and all night
Letter by letter
Wherever I am

O God in heaven.
O God in heaven.

Tarazona

Shema Yisrael Listen Israel

Adonai Eloheinu The Lord is God The Lord is One. . . .

*Write these and the rest of the words in the prayer
on the doorposts of your home*

city without the romance
of Granada

confused with Tarragona
in nothing but name

another modern Spanish city
easy to get to

with a Jewish past
hard to find

sure Abravanel met
the Catholic monarchs here

sure signs
describe hanging homes

piles of rubble might have been cobblers' shops
vacant lots might have hosted fruit markets

notches on doorposts might mean something too
places for biblically commanded words

streets have names
that sound Jewish

and what *about*
the hanging homes

tall and narrow on cliffs
along terraced streets

why did Jews inhabit them
living like swallows

on the tall sides
of cliffs?

then again why
about most anything here?

Lament of the Jews of Pamplona

God planted a garden in Eden . . .

created humans

then sent them away

once we were
closer than man and wife

now i run for my life
like the bulls in the streets during holy week

the sun an obscured
red disk

in the meandering maze of alleyways in the old quarter
my poor mother struggles to find her way

her clothes in tatters
a strange smell floating over

the city our family lived in
a thousand years from which

we were then banished
till seas and mountains swallowed us

into final disappearance
our descendants sipping sherry

kill their poets
then argue whether to exhume them

meanwhile we
continue to wander

Search for Survivors

1

Walk lonely predawn León streets
Camera in one hand

Jews of Moslem Spain
In other

Search for Calle Misericordia
Where La Sinagoga Mayor once stood

Pass Plaza San Martin
Once a market

Streets of lignite artisans
Silversmiths and butchers

Finally find misery street
But synagogue? *Nada*

Wind past churches
To medieval wall

Then place of former
Cemetery

Not one trace
Of what I want

Once again lungs implode
In disappointment

Stop
Study map again

Perhaps this is
Wrong place

Sunlight warms
Cobblestone paths tracing wall

2

Today I found my eponymous street
Alongside a complex of dwellings:

Calle Moisés de León
Someone remembered me

Who gave the world the *Zohar*
That most mystical *Book of Splendor*

Whose radiance
Has changed the world

Forever from the moment it began appearing
In the late thirteenth century

I contemplate the traffic circle
The vacant lots

Cross the bridge, look
For the Museum of the Three Cultures

Watch young women carrying packs
Walk over the scallop shells on their way

To the center of town
I walk the other way

3

In the cathedral
I admire famous stained-glass windows

Some are tall verticals
Others circular

Awed like others
In this city whose Jewish quarter

I have just wandered
Whose museums I have entered

Whose signs I have read
Whose food I have eaten

I know there is a history
Was a history

The French poet Mallarmé says cut endings
But no end in sight

4

Search not
For the Jewish history of this place

Not your place
In Jewish history

But the place in you
Of this Jewish history

Walk the street of the silversmiths
The street of silver

Search all you want for vibrations
From the past

Wonder who I was and where
I drew my inspiration

Connect the dots from León where they say
I was born though I don't know myself for sure

To Guadalajara where they say I lived
And wrote my share of that most splendid *Zohar*

(No one is sure
And I myself have forgotten)

To Ávila where I'm told I lived
The rest of my days

And Arévalo
Where I'm told I died

Hunt even if you wish in the teachings
Of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross

But always return to yourself in all this
Remember who you are

Read *zakhar*—remember—
For *zohar*—splendor

In your quest for who I was
Who I am since all I can do myself

Is remember the splendor of that time
The pinpoint radiance everywhere

Like stars and planets in the darkest skies
So close you could reach up and touch them

Or pluck and reassemble them
Into a cosmos here below

*[T]he Sepher ha-Zohar, or book of splendour, . . .
is so called because nothing can be understood of it at all,
for it sheds so bright a light
that it dazzles the eyes of the mind*

Mrs. Moses de León: From Her *Diary of a Kabbalist's Wife*

[Its wonderful words

came from the Heavens. . . .

*When I asked where they came from
the answers conflicted. — Rabbi Isaac of Acre*

Yes—

My husband was the famous *kabbalist*

No—

He didn't find the *Zohar*—the *Book of Splendor*—as he said

Yes—

He lied so people would pay attention

No—

He didn't care about money as some have claimed

Yes—

He was brilliant like his book

No one but me

Could know

That at night

He glowed in the dark

By day

He outshone the sun

When the moon was new

He took its place

We moved around a lot
But I can't tell you all the places

I also can't tell you anything
About his friends

You see, my husband
Was a strange man

Obsessed, you could say
With a legacy

To shine a light
Into the darkest of ages

I did everything for him
The housework, I mean

Which was okay
Because I wanted him to have

A legacy that would last
Through the ages

So when Rabbi Isaac of Acre
Showed up in 1305 in Ávila

Called the Jerusalem
Of Castile

Claiming he'd fled the Holy Land
To save his skin

The stories were swirling
Like a holy maelstrom—

He claimed that my husband
Had told him

The original *Zohar* and a copy
Were at our house

And that someone else
Had told him

Our daughter
Would marry a rich nobody

In exchange for the original
Just so we'd have food

And clothes
On our backs—

In case he found me
I was ready

That manuscript
Gathering dust in the closet

Had been dusted off
The title page replaced

Yes, I was ready to help
My dead husband attain immortal glory

You see . . .
When I wasn't doing dishes, I—

No, I can't tell
I shouldn't

Moses was my beloved
And a wife has to support her husband, even . . .

So when this Rabbi Isaac came to town
The same Isaac said to use holy names

To force angels to show him
The deepest of mysteries—

Although we never did meet
(No one can prove or disprove it)

You see . . .
In case Isaac came knocking . . .

I knew exactly
What to do

Garden in Ávila: *A Fado* by Rabbi Moses de León

*The spirit can enter our world only after rising from our earthly Garden. . . .
Ah, bear in mind this Garden was enchanted!*

A small pedestal shiny as a star
Says the garden you're in
Is the garden of Moses de León
And in Spanish seems to quote the *Zohar*, my *Book of Splendor*

Hay momentos

There are times

Here in my garden of longing
Where birds are no longer singing
The grass is uncut
And all you can hear are the convent bells ringing

en que las almas que están en el jardín

when the souls in the garden rise

The Gate of Bad Luck
Is just over there
On the edge of the old Jewish quarter
Next to the square

suben y alcanzan la puerta del cielo

and reach the gate of heaven

Here where the brethren walk
Discussing fine points of *Torah*
We sometimes look up at the Ávila walls
But all we can see are the heavenly halls

el propio cielo rodea el jardín tres veces
The sky itself surrounds the garden three times

Beyond and below in the dark scary forest
Pigs run wild with their bristles aquiver
While in and alongside the cold narrow river
Frogs croak in an infinite chorus

y acompaña sus vueltas de un son armonioso
accompanied by a harmonious sound

I said the garden is a place of earthly delight
Where God can appear throughout the night
Each star a soul from the next world
Each sight a face aglow with millions of pearls

Las almas se asoman para escuchar la melodía y el esplendor ardiente
The souls peer to listen to the melody and admire the burning splendor

I already imagine myself a traveler
Transcending time at a pace oh so slow
With nothing to reap, nothing to sow
Nothing to show and nowhere to go

de la columna que echa fuego y nubes de humo
of the column that spews fire and clouds of smoke

Although I am afraid of what I will find
When I climb the hill
I long to return to the splendor still
Of my overgrown, peaceful little garden in time

y ante la cual se inclinan reverentes.
before which they kneel reverently.

And in case you don't know:
Fado means "fate" in Portuguese

And this is a song
of loss and longing

Meeting in the Heavenly Garden

When St. Teresa of Ávila meets Rabbi Moses de León
In the Heavenly Garden

Does she, the Catholic mystic, know
That he, the Jewish mystic,

Also lived in Ávila
Though two hundred years before she was born there

In the same neighborhood
Near the Gate of Bad Luck?

His *Book of Splendor* treats
Every aspect of existence

As an aspect of God
Every aspect of God

As if God is a human being
At the same time asserting

That although God cannot be named,
Described, or otherwise known

His presence is known to inhabit
The last of the seven heavenly palaces

Her *Interior Castle* describes her vision
Of the soul as a castle-shaped diamond

Inside which are seven mansions
The seven stages

Of the journey of faith
The seeker travels

Questing spiritual marriage
Of lower and upper

Toward the continuous radiance of Jesus
Toward union with God

Seven palaces
Seven mansions

Who can say
Whether she was influenced by him

Or whether our reading of him
Is influenced by her

Since the souls in the garden long ago
Rose and reached the gate of heaven

*Completed in this world
and perhaps joined here to the Divine
the ascended souls then join
the Divine forevermore*

St. Teresa's Confession

I hereby confess that in defiance of the Church and its Inquisition I willfully, knowingly, gleefully, lovingly ordered my nuns to remove their shoes because we all were growing fat off the labors of the peasants; in order to honor the poor, who cannot afford shoes; to mimic the suffering of Jesus when he was bound to the pillar; and in remembrance of the Jews who made and fixed the shoes of the rich and then like my ancestors were burned at the stake after their children were buried. I also freely admit that *The Interior Castle* is modeled after the *Zohar*—the *Book of Splendor*—that Rabbi Moses de León knew my ancestors, that when I was a young girl I had a hiding place in the old Jewish quarter, and that my family lit candles when I was growing up. Don't think I've forgotten. You see—the poet got it right.

St. Teresa's Secrets

From the painting in my sanctuary in Ávila
I see you staring at me in my beautiful habit.
For a few moments we are in silence
Before a horde of boorish French tourists descends.

I envy your freedom to be Jewish.

I do feel within me still
The aura of my ancestors.
It was not that long ago after all.
How could I forget?

What should I do?

I hid my love
For Juan de la Cruz
Though he hid his
For me less well.

Write what you want
As long as it is the truth.

The Burning Light

*[T]he soul of a righteous person
is none other than a garden
in which the Beloved takes great delight.—Teresa de Jesús
A garden is a delight to the eye
and a solace for the soul.—Sa'adi*

what if Teresa de Jesús
later known as St. Teresa of Ávila

and Juan de la Cruz
later known as St. John of the Cross

what if they were secret lovers
what if that were so

if the long dark night of the soul was conceived
in his longing for her and her blossoming breasts

and his inspiration came
not from *Song of Songs*

or from troubadours but instead
from his ecstatic love for her

what if his most beautiful poem
about the flames of love was written to her

if his androgynous description of lovers reflected
how much she was part of him

and when he looked in his mirror
he saw his beloved, and his beloved was her

what if they discussed
not spiritual or Carmelite matters

but their shared *converso* heritage
and the Jewish mystical *Book of Splendor*

written near Ávila
nearly three hundred years before

what if he was levitating
out of joy at seeing her

gazing at him through the bars
of her cell window

if Cupid was the angel
who shot the arrow into Teresa's heart

and her suffering that followed
was not for Jesus but for Juan de la Cruz

what if a key passed down through generations
was the key to his cell, not hers

if she founded the Carmelite sect of shoeless nuns
so she could justify walking barefoot into his room at night

if the chair we see today was one he sat in
with Teresa on his lap

and his chalice was used for a mystical wedding
or maybe just to share a glass of wine

what if his prison cell and her interior castle
were the same place

where together they climbed ever higher
toward final union

if the square of blinding white light I saw
in front of the Monasterio de los Carmelitas Descalzos in Segovia

was a remnant of the light of their love
that shines at that time on that day every year

what if after he died in Úbeda in the South
she was the one who

mysteriously from the next world
had his body taken

to bury in Segovia so she could be
near him but not too near, for fear her nuns

at the Monasterio de la Encarnación in Ávila
would see the burning light

what if after he died someone moved him
from his crypt to the larger sepulcher

not for his glorification but so their bones
could mingle for eternity

what if she created the recipe for *yemas*
to remind him of her sweetness

or if instead the recipe
was his to remind her of him

what if the child
enfolded in her cape

is not really
the baby Jesus

what if . . .

(in the end, however,
poor St. Teresa: her hard work was ignored

like a tasty chicken
he was dismembered

his legs and one arm going to Úbeda
the other arm to Madrid

the head and torso
to Segovia

even the pope was involved
though the fate of his nose is unknown)

And Now a Haiku

I am embarrassed.
Where did he get that idea
About the blossoming breasts!

Scent of Úbeda

Music is the soul of a nation

The green
Plates broke

And the blue one
With the sort-of star of David in the middle

In less than two months
It will be more than two years

Last year I wrote so many poems
I had no time to get drunk

I smelled the lemons
The way I hadn't

Mystic poet Juan de la Cruz sitting in prison
Perhaps contemplating

His *converso* past died here
The kilns are Moorish

I want to track
Animals again

You run out of music
When you are not singing

Levitating in the Presence of Teresa de Jesús,
Later Known as St. Teresa of Ávila:
A Dialogue Between the Ancient Philosopher Plotinus
And the Medieval Spanish Mystic Juan de la Cruz,
Later Known as St. John of the Cross

All beauty and good come from the Divine—Plotinus

Leaving my body and coming to my deepest self

I felt so light
I could not help rising to be closer to God

I experienced a remarkable beauty

Left behind
was the earthly body of Juan de la Cruz

And decided I had joined a higher realm

I had no heavy thoughts,
had let go the dark heaviness felt in prison

And felt at one with the divine

Had forgiven everyone,
forgotten the hurts and miseries of the past

My soul—no longer bound—then was free

My body retained its form
but in truth was pure light, and being pure light was light as well

And free from the world's creations

I contemplated the *auto-de-fé*
was consumed by the same fire became the spaces between atoms

Rose even higher

I became pure form, no, not became,
rather, realized my nature as pure form like the flame on a candle

Hurled into a life of ecstasy

Weightless but aglow, what Teresa de Jesús saw
through the bars of her cell in her convent in Ávila

Leaning only on God

Lament of the Saint of Segovia

Why does the Holy One dispatch us here

only to snatch us back there?

To make us know His glory, of course

Died in Úbeda

Some body parts there

Some in Segovia

But who can keep track of them

Here the vistas are grand

The river winds through

A small limestone canyon

Below the Jewish cemetery

My monastery is on the path

Where pilgrims visit my tomb

And contemplate the completeness

Of life lived in the shadow of the Alcázar

At the end of the Roman aqueduct that is

The signature vista of this city

Here I could contemplate

What I could not in the south

In the darkness that comes early

Even in summer and ends late

Reminding of smoke and ashes

The scent is not of blood oranges

Just blood and the flowers
Are not blossoms

Just petaled pools spreading
Across the narrowing landscape

Do I remember my ancestors
The answer is no

Was I aware of the long history of Jews
In Segovia both after and before I arrived

I was not
Nor was I aware

Of the Jewish mystics
Whose lives were lived in nearby Ávila

Was something in the air
In these twin sky cities

Conducive to the mystical quest
I cannot answer but must trust

Instead to the thoughts
And dreams of travelers

Who in the future
Will come here to resurrect

What's left of the dry
Bones in the field

Open vistas
Enclosing walls

Cool summer nights
Cold winter nights

The river cuts away
The ancient limestone

Juan de la Cruz
Later known as St. John of the Cross

Says it is indeed the dark night of the soul
When we cannot remember any of this

*And cannot remember how after joining the Divine
we can now be coming down*

*Or how our soul ever entered
our body in the first place*

The *Yemas* of St. Teresa of Ávila

Don't think I've forgotten

I stir a confection
For You

Each yolk reminds of the sun seen through
The Gate of Bad Luck in the old Jewish quarter

The sugar of the sweetness of my *abuela*
Making candles in her tiny kitchen

The cinnamon of the sands of the Holy Land
Numerous as stars in the universe

The water of the traditions
That once held a people together

The lemons should we ever forget
The sourness of our enemies

And the *yemas* of the totality of a nation that depends
One tribe upon another to achieve greatness in memory

St. Teresa's Finger

In a glass case paintings
A spear in her heart

Jesus the Jew tied to a pillar
St. John of the Cross levitating

Discarded slippers
By her cell window

An obsidian rosary
The key to her interior

Castle near her uncertain birthplace
On the edge of the old

Jewish Quarter but where's
Her missing finger

Which one is it
And which hand is it from

Testimony of Don Fernando Pérez Coronel, Formerly Rabbi Don Abraham Senior of Segovia

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella,

by the grace of God, . . . order that,

by the end of July next of the present year [1492],

all Jews and Jewesses depart from these our said realms. . . . —The Edict of Expulsion

Isabella herself converted me
in the courtyard of my beautiful home
barely half of which survives
to this day. There is still a little well
in the courtyard,

A bedecked second story
and a view across the ravine
of the Jewish cemetery
What more could I have asked for?

You who accuse me of slipshod scholarship,
claiming I wasn't a real rabbi, may be right on one level
but are wrong on a deeper one.

If we left, we lost everything; if we stayed, we lost everything.
Better to suffer with money than without. Better unhappy
and rich than unhappy and poor.

Sure, my *Torah* learning was weak, my sermons lightweight,
my knowledge of life's mysteries thin, but who better
to understand the superficial futility of a time of duress?

Though if you prefer
To call me a traitor to real wisdom, a justifier, go right ahead:
I supported my community and the crown, before

and after, when I was a Jew on the outside and when
I was a Jew only on the inside.

Yes, I was afraid for my life, to lose everything,
leave behind everything good in the Spain we called *Sefarad*
run country to country risking life and limb
or stay and save the remnants of my community

In small secret ways. Do you think I was a fool?
If you save your skin, you save your skin, no ifs, ands, or buts.
After all, God is God, and the *kabbalistic* mystics
were no better than the trinitarians, what with their ten faces
of the Godhead, male and female parts, endless divisions of oneness.

Each night I lay in bed
grateful for my decision and looked out
at the cemetery across from the slaughterhouse and asked myself who
in all the world except perhaps the One
had a better view of Jewish history.

The moon, never full, resembled a certain Hebrew letter
on its back. Isabella and Ferdinand continued to plot
the destruction of their empire, *converso* by *converso*, heretic by heretic.
The air around here always stank

A despicable odor, reminding everyone that we all
whatever our blood, lived in a cesspool of ignorance and arrogance,
illogic and fraud, surely the work of the Christian devil.

Imagine yourself in my time
Before judging any Jew in your time or in any other
For you do not know how you would act
or what you would believe
were you to find yourself
in Segovia in 1492.

Segoviana: A Souvenir of Segovia

From the moment you evicted us
From our white homes in the Segovian hills
I knew I would never love again.

Strange rites consumed us.
Strange men read the Hebrew letters on our foreheads.
A new moon struggled into the heavens.

Only the faint lingering scent of orange blossoms
Remains in the air, undisturbed
By the history of intervening years.

Don Isaac Abravanel: Unprophetic Prophet of His People

*He fled to and from Spain
the Spain of mystics, poets, and philosophers
of beautiful gardens, seashores, and mountains
Welcoming hostess by day
treacherous femme fatale by night
visiting destruction or death
to all within range of her siren call*

Don Isaac
Man of complexity, conviction, contradiction
My most difficult subject
Born Lisbon, fled to Spain, then Italy
To save your skin, integrity, and fortune
Brilliant, bold, blind like your biblical namesake

*By blind you allude to how I
Close observer of humans and history
Intimate of nobles and royals
Author of three books on salvation
Expert on prophets and all things prophetic including Daniel
Could predict our Messiah would come between 1503 and 1573
But not foretell the expulsion of the Jews from Spain*

Although you consulted the same books as Daniel
You had neither his visions nor his dreams
Were perhaps so busy defending or attacking the philosopher Maimonides
and pursuing worldly interests
That in spite of your brilliance, sincerity, and almost-too-desperate
longing for the Messiah
You simply lost touch with the obvious
And so your predictions were just calculations

*"[M]any terrible evils have come upon the Jewish people
"In all places such as no eye has seen. . . ."*

But the Torah says:

"When we are in the land of our enemies

"God will not reject us,

"Abhor us, destroy us,

"Or break His covenant with us"

You also seem to have forgotten

Whenever someone predicts the coming of the Messiah

The Messiah is sure not to show His face

Since although you were desperate for the Messiah to come

As even you said, miracles like the Messiah come from God

Only God knows when the Messiah will come

The people mourned when they heard the terrible decree

And I said I hoped "to try to bring comfort to those

"Who stumble from the exile" . . .

"But sensing the end was near

"I had run out of ideas and lacked the strength

"To help others" so that all I could do was pray that God

Send someone to save us and our families

From the impending "great and terrible destruction"

Although you praised a Portuguese king

And thought a planetary conjunction forecast the Messiah

You also said a king's wrath is an angel of death

The only king you like is the heavenly kind and only God guides Israel

Not any stars or constellations so that among these contradictions

You missed the chance to blackmail King Ferdinand because of his Jewish blood

Grandfather had converted

As did Abraham Senior and thousands of others

To save their skins, property, and power

But I hated apostates and held fast to my beliefs:

The Bible is the word of God and the only truth

*Everything comes from revelation
And divine law has just one principle:
The world was created from nothing*

In spite of your beliefs the Messiah never came to save you
So to save yourself and your family
You fled with everyone else in 1492
And in spite of what you and others have written
We aren't sure whether you asked the king three times or even once
To revoke the Edict of Expulsion or railed against them in person or even in writing

*Some would judge me
Usually those who see in me themselves
Including those who judge me kindly and others less so
All I can say is we can read documents
But not the human heart and shouldn't try
Only God who made that heart
Can know how it works and what's inside
It is His and He alone can judge it*

After you fled Spain you wandered Italy and Corfu
Writing commentaries on the Bible
Continuing to attack the philosophers—
Without faith, philosophizing is futile—
Coming up with the most damning arguments ever
That Christianity and its savior were a lie

*For several hundred years
After my death in 1508
Christians both admired my erudition
And sought to rip apart those arguments
Just as Jewish scholars today seek to discredit me
Yet what can any of them assert?
I had three famous sons and now can count among the generations
Many with my name who remain proudly Jewish*

In that case
Let me offer a prayer
Based on the words of Shmuel Hanagid—
Samuel the Prince—
Poet, and like you, scholar and statesman—
Who said, in an earlier context:

“May an advocate angel
“Elevate his sins and weigh his virtues
“And remind his Rock at the passing of his judgment
“Of his investigations of the Writings and expounding of *Torah*
“And he will hear that God has already approved his deeds
“And his good deeds will thus outweigh his trespasses
“And he’ll rejoice at being transported to God’s glory. . . .”

*I have great sympathy for your position
Trying to navigate the conflicting views
On what I and others wrote
The subtext of events
And the opinions of your contemporaries
But at some point shouldn't you let go the struggle?*

I am trying hard to do this but remain puzzled
That you did not “delve into the mysteries of the *kabbalah*”
Could only say
You “have no business with secret matters”
And it wasn't your cup of tea
So to speak

*You want me to speak about your souls in the garden
To explain to you how
On Shabbat they can be going up and down
At the same time
To apply Occam's razor
The way I do with everything else I write on*

*But in this case I'm sorry
And will need to leave you puzzled*

When the Messiah does come, Don Isaac:

*We will eat our own bread
and wear our own apparel. . . .
On that day shall the growth of the Lord
be beautiful and glorious
and the fruit of the land excellent and comely
for them that are escaped of Spain and Portugal*

Amen!

The Rainbow

*An ancient curse still stands on anyone
who tries to predict the End of Days*

*Where are you going dressed in white like a bride
Queen Isabella?*

I'm going to the synagogue
to meet Don Isaac Abravanel

*If it's to discuss the edict expelling Jews from Spain
why even bother since your mind is made up?*

I cannot share
the nature of my visit

*Didn't he just loan you money
to defeat the Muslims in Granada?*

Yes, but I want to cleanse Spain of her Jews and Muslims
to make way for the Second Coming

*Tears flooded the ocean
broken hearts the cargo hold*

*Where are you going dressed in your gown of many colors
Queen Isabella?*

I'm going to the synagogue
to meet Don Isaac

*Where will you find another such brilliant man
to advise you?*

When the Savior returns
I won't need Jews to advise me

*You tried to kidnap his grandson
to persuade him to stay*

All he had to do
was accept the true Savior

*Where did you go dressed in a veil of myrtle and myrrh
Queen Isabella?*

I went to the synagogue
to meet Don Isaac

*I heard he tried hard to persuade the king
to cancel the edict of expulsion*

Three times and then that awful letter
heaping us with insults and threats

*You mean the letter
that didn't exist*

He begged for mercy
bringing up his people's past miseries

*I'll ascend steep cliffs and descend deep craters
hoping you'll let go your anger*

*Where did you go with all your candles
Queen Isabella?*

I went to the synagogue
to meet Don Isaac

*Did he explain to you
the meaning of the three stars?*

All that and the true meaning
of the Trinity as well

*It's said your husband made the decisions
and you backed him up*

Whatever you've heard
I'm the one who runs the show

*So cold and hard, my Lady?
Spare some sign, a syllable
for me.*

*Where will you go dressed in your garment of deeds
Queen Isabella?*

I will go to the heavenly synagogue
to meet Don Isaac Abravanel

*Will you discuss his own messianic predictions
and the truth of what really happened between the two of you?*

That and what happened in Spain
before and after the fateful year of 1492

*What about the three stars—
will you take their meaning with you?*

Along with all of his meanings
embroidered on each of the garments he gave me as gifts

*Where then will you go
and for whom will you dress*

*in your ethereal garment of spiritual intentions
Queen Isabella?*

I do not know
I do not know

*We are pariahs
No one wants us*

*But . . . only God knows
who will enter paradise*

*A rainbow
glorious as a bride
will herald the Messiah*

Stumbling Upon Biblioteca Abraham Zacut

*The ships fitted out for Vasco da Gama's expedition
were provided with Zacuto's newly perfected astrolabe,
the first to be made of iron instead of wood*

Just as I was thinking yes
Salamanca is a beautiful but cold city

Its red sandstone buildings etched
with distinctive red street names

Its winding streets
full of out-of-work students

And memorials to Fray Luis—martyr, second-rate poet,
descendant of Jews, rabid Jew hater;

To Cervantes, quixotic pride of crypto-Jews;
and to Unamuno, rebel with a cause

I stumbled upon the university library
named after Rabbi Abraham Zacut

Author of the massive *Sefer Yuchasin*
the *Book of Lineage*

Chronicling the whole of history
Through Jewish eyes up to his time

Booted from Spain to Portugal,
where the king immediately adopted him

Into the rest of history as the
cartographer, geographer, astronomer, and inventor

Who made possible the entire flourishing
of Portugal for the next three hundred years

Columbus may have discovered a new world
but without Zacuto no new world could have been discovered

Here's to Don Abraham Zacut, then,
whom, in a welcome but familiar move,

The Spaniards have claimed—or perhaps reclaimed—
as one of their own

The Night of Murdered Poets

The betrothal was really over. . . .

This was the end of everything.

Watch out, poet
Nowhere will be safe

For you, your light verse
Or heavy

Beware speaking out
Against the malignant

Beware those who deny
You exist and what you say

Watch your tongue
Lest it be yanked

From your mouth
Along with the gestures

From your hands
The body language

From your soul
Keep alert, friend

They await
Your every move

With *toca*, *garrote*,
Porto, and *strappado*

They will wash it out of you
Jerk it out of you

Break it out of you
Twist it out of you

Yes it will be the first but not
The last night of murdered poets

Yehudah Halevi Explains Why He Left All the Good Things of Spain

*To leave all the bounty of Spain would be nothing
compared with seeing the dust of the ruined Holy of Holies*

In Tudela de Navarre at sunrise there is
From the top of the hill

A view of the shiny, glassy,
Sparkling surface of the Río Ebro

As its water moves slowly downstream
And when I walk along this and other Spanish rivers

By night toward my precious Jewish quarters
My head goes into the clouds

Where the constellations
Formed by the hand of God

Swirl in their wondrous patterns
And the moon again shaped like the Hebrew letter *yod*

Casts a blue-white light
Onto verdant orchards of fig trees, pears, oranges, and plums

My heart is in the East, and I'm as far west as you can go

Soon the philosopher Maimonides, said to be the greatest Jew since Moses,
Will ignore not just my *Kuzari*, but my whole poetic endeavor as well

Favoring medicine instead
Which is only my livelihood.

Friends are dying or leaving
And daily I am grieving.

The plazas are deserts. Although by day they swarm
At night their lonely beggars are the only forms.

I have stopped noticing the year-round processions of boats
Ceased bantering with the priests

Day by day forming a prosaic plan
To join my ancestors in the Holy Land.

For although it too is likely a desert, sheltering fears,
I will take my chances and risk the tears.

En el este está me corazón, y en el extremo oeste estoy

In a dream I saw
In a corner of Tudela

A plaza with my name
And on a wall

Two short stanzas
From a poem

Well into the future
Travelers will come

To search for my traces
And those of Benjamin the Traveler

Abraham ibn Ezra the polymath
Solomon ibn Gabirol the mystic philosopher-poet

And many others
Who settled there

Libi vemizrach v'anochi besof maarav

The Land of Israel is my people's homeland;
Only there can our aspirations be fulfilled

Among the buried footsteps, spice routes, bones lying well
Preserved in dust, awaiting resurrection from both heaven and hell

The ancient Moses will greet me
Arms outstretched, listen to my poems, and discuss philosophy.

One day flowers will bloom again in sand
Turning desert to promised land.

I'll be sad to leave those I know
But now I have to go.

You dig and dig a well
If you're thirsty, even if it's all the way to hell.

When I speak of all the things of Spain that are good
I do not mean to slight its beauty or sod.

Libi vemizrach v'anochi besof maarav

En el este está me corazón, y en el extremo oeste estoy

My heart is in the East, and I'm as far west as you can go

It is not
As with Jacob

Who did not know
That God was in the place

Where he slept
It is that God is in this place

Where I want
To lay my head

Where in place of soft
Beds and fine rich soil

Are rocks, sand
And barren earth

Waiting for rain
That I know will come one day

En el este está me corazón, y en el extremo oeste estoy

Farther in the future it will be said
I was born not in Tudela but Toledo instead.

No matter: jinxed by that rationalist Maimonides
Few will read my poetry or philosophy.

It also will be debated
Whether I ever reached the Holy Land

Whether I was trampled by a camel
Or a horse or just died in Cairo in a hovel.

No matter: I know that in Toledo at sunrise there is
From the top of the hill through the sometime mist

A view of the shiny, glassy, sparkling surface
Of the Río Tagus

And although all is wonderful
Do you now understand why I had to leave?

*My heart is in the East, and I'm as far west as you can go
Libi vemizrach v'anochi besof maarav. . . .*

*Yekal be'einay azov kol-tuv sefarad kemo
Yekar be'einay re'ot afrot devir necherav
I'm drowning in decadent Western luxury
For which I don't give a fig*

Dreaming of decaying Eastern ruins
For a sight of which I would give my life!

The Return of Samuel the Prince

No one has ever escaped death—Samuel the Prince, Shmuel Hanagid

Mangia! I said as I walked along the street of sighs,
Crossed in front of Our Lady of the Flours,
A bakery of no small renown, famous
For its Brazilian-style cookies called O-Rios, sandwiched
Between two churches and a synagogue,
And turned in to the biggest Korean market
In our medieval, sad little town, for the heart
Is a lonely hunter, even if Brazil is far away. What a relief
From poetry that sways like a drunk
Stranded during the parting of the Red Sea
To find row upon row of spicy pickled fresh cabbage,
Thready bean spouts, shredded bright-green seaweeds,
Julienned white radishes looking for all this world
Like orphans from Gabirolean spheres,
Strangers in a strange land, lost like me
In the space time forgot, in a time to be spaced.
There also were rows upon rows of sweets and salads,
Glutinous rices, frozen dumplings, fish cakes,
Taro and lotus roots, bok choy, *tofu* hard
And *tofu* soft, fried and baked, along with sliced beef,
Diced beef, shredded and dried beef. I crossed
Through the *sushi shuk* where the *sushi* chefs slice
The raw tuna and salmon and the *sakis* serve *sake*,
Where *ofers* offer from heady coffers. Stunned,
Slain by sideward glances from the wine-pouring slayers of sayers,
I moved more quickly than the lowliest package of sushi
Left over from a Saturday-night-fever party tray.
But I digress in my lectionary of exotic
Ornamental foods, having forgotten, like a courtier the morning after,
That dietary customs are not random, as it is said:
“You shall not eat of an animal that was torn in the field.”

And so I left, turned right
Onto the street of sighs and walked
Away from the biggest Korean market
In our sad little town past Our Lady of the Flours
Along the sighing streets. *Mangia!*

O Spaniards!

*Not one of the . . . writers of my age
has entered the ranks . . . of Spanish literature*

after murdering us once
in *auto-de-fé* and exile

At daybreak

why did you murder us again
in exile and omission?

I go to breathe the garden air

did not hundreds of us write
poems by the tens of thousands on your soil?

And in the fragrant shade

what more could you want
after burning, flaying,

Where lilacs grow in masses

stretching, and drowning us
in as dark a night of the soul as any

I seek my joy

the language in which we ended our poems—
was it not the same as yours?

My only fated joy

has not our work held up as well as yours
for over a thousand years

Which lives in the lilacs

we stuck it out
as long as we could

On their green branches

now you claim us as your own
sculpt us in stone and metal

On the fragrant blooms

write our poems on walls
name plazas after us

My poor happiness blooms

Solomon ibn Gabirol in Málaga
Yehudah Halevi in Tudela

Moses ibn Ezra in Toledo
Samuel the Prince in Granada

we made a new language from yours
and with it made beautiful songs

we were Jewish poets living in Iberian gardens
writing about them longing for them

Why don't we visit the garden

*Every plant's in bloom
every tree crowned high
beautifully fruited*

yes we were Jewish poets
living in Iberian gardens

*The garden's coat's multicolored
the grasses' embroidered*

until one of us said
weighing the pros and cons

*Leaving Spain's delights behind
would be easy*

some of your greatest
came from ours

St. John St. Teresa
Fray Luis Cervantes

O Spaniards!
why *did* you murder us twice?

Don't you know that long ago
In faraway Persia a mystic poet named Rumi said:

*The strong wind embraces
the weakness of the grass*

An Unanswered Question

Watch out, poet.

Nowhere will be safe.

Why are the four of you here to be burned at the stake?

Have you heard of Marranos, Moriscos, and Mozarabs?

Nope.

Marranos, which means "pigs," are Spanish Jews who, by choice or by force, converted to Christianity. Moriscos are Spanish Muslims in the same boat. Mozarabs are Christians living in areas of Spain ruled by Muslims.

What does that have to do with being burned at the stake?

Our names all start with the letter "m."

That's all?

The second letters are all vowels.

That's it?

We claimed to be the trinity. The Marrano's the Father, the Morisco's the Son, and the Mozarab's the Holy Ghost.

So you're heretics. That's pretty serious. Anything else?

She lit candles in secret and Judaized; he wouldn't cross himself in public; I prayed only once a day.

So you're even worse heretics.

I said I was God, he said there is no God, and she only pretended to believe in God. And, those two secretly desecrated statues of the Savior and His mother.

Good Lord! Now I see why you're all here.

There's more. She preferred extramarital sex with Christian men, he wanted to become a woman so he could kiss a Muslim woman, and I preferred boys and young men.

So you're all fornicators as well. Anything else you want to confess?

I used my knowledge of Judaism to persecute Jews. She used her feminine wiles to persuade Muslims to voluntarily become Christians. He incited Muslims to kill hundreds of Jews. All of us betrayed our brothers and sisters and the God Who gave us life.

Why did you two convert?

I was forced to, and she felt she had a Christian soul.

And why did you stay where you were?

It didn't matter, because I don't have a soul.

Only the three of you today?

Only three of us left. The rest were burned, tortured, forcibly converted, or exiled.

Who's the fourth man on the cross, then?

A poet from the future who wrote the most exquisite poems about love and beauty, death, the Spanish soul, gypsies, and the Andalusian past, often using Arabic poetic forms like ghazals and qasidas.

Why then is he here?

He wrote a poem called "Murió al Amanecer"—"He Died at Dawn."

For that he's going to burn at the stake?

One stanza speaks of four nighttime moons.

I can't believe it!

Humankind cannot bear too much beauty. Plus, he was too sensitive.

Who were the others, and what did they do?

One was too sad, another too great, another couldn't decide if the world was created out of nothing or has always existed, another challenged the Church, another falsely claimed a book he wrote most of was written a thousand years before, still another won a Jewish-Christian disputation, one cozied up to Jews but really hated them, another one betrayed his lover's father, while still another didn't stand up

for the Jews. Others bickered with their own kind, converted, then tortured their former sisters and brothers. Still others acted pious but ignored the Golden Rule and the first commandment, or betrayed their own parents, or just pretended to love everyone, or hated going to church, or pretended to love pork, or, God forbid, fell in love with the Virgin.

What a mixed bag!

Wait, there's more. One longed in public for a husband, one abandoned his wife to save his own hide, another didn't believe in the Resurrection or creatio ex nihilo, one woman lured men to their death, another commissioned songs that libeled Jews, another killed poets, still another was a Christian who met secretly with a Jew to talk about only God knows what. And finally, a famous cleric claimed to have talked to a dead Greek philosopher, another turned out to be an ignoramus who converted to save his property, a friend of his was more concerned about his money and power than about his fellow Jews, and another one believed he was channeling the voices of everyone else.

Will your souls and all of these others ascend to the Garden of Eden and then to heaven?

We are hopeful that after we have confessed, are martyred, and are then "relaxed" in the fires of the Inquisition we will be pure enough to ascend as you say.

Does everyone have to be burned at the stake before their souls can rise to heaven?
That question cannot be answered.

Three Riddles

1

I lived in Arévalo when I was young
Where the famous *kabbalist* Moses de León died
Almost exactly 200 years before me

My name means devoted to God
God is seven
And my God is an oath

It comes from Elizabeth
And before that from Elisheva
Wife of Aaron the High Priest

Replace B with R
Reverse two letters
And you get Israel

Permute some more to get Jezebel
Whose corpse was eaten by dogs
Poor woman

Who am I?

2

Some rabbis say I descend to Spain once a week
And leave after just a day

Good idea
Given what's going on here

Others say I leave each night
And descend each morning

Bad idea
Given what's going on here

Another rabbi says I go nowhere
Or am both here and there

One guy saw me go up
Then down at the same time

Good Lord
My head is spinning!

Could I be just an idea
Or do I really exist

Not an actual body
But some sort of spiritual entity?

If I do ascend or descend or vice versa
What's the purpose?

The smoke's really not that bad
Why not just stay home?

Some question the logic of my existence
Others, the existence of my logic

All these souls in the garden
Dead or alive

Trying to figure out what's what
Trying to get to heaven

As if God has the answers
And what if He does?

I can't figure any of it out
Which is why I'm asking you

Who Am I?

3

It's said I'm otherworldly
Beautiful, Jewish, and . . . fickle

Innocent girl next door by day
Femme fatale by night

Luring unsuspecting men
To a fate worse than death

Wise woman incarnate
First of God's creations

His daughter or bride
Solomon's equal in wisdom

Wisdom to heal
Wisdom to hurt

I own just two wardrobes
Light and dark

Clothes woven of starlight
And clothes of dark matter

Everyone has a symbol
Mine's the owl

Long ago
Although I did nothing wrong

My beloved exiled me
From my homeland to Spain

To pay for the sins
Of others

At first I hid in clouds
Like the moon

Later in the ruins
Of old buildings

Finally in desperation
At what I thought was the gate of heaven

He then felt bad
And sought me

Night after night I sought him too
Whom I loved

But eventually thinking me dead
He took an evil second wife

Utterly lost did I become
Becoming like her

Testing everyone
Destroying them all

So that people began blaming me
For their ills

Men feared bad luck
If they sang my songs

Women, miscarriage
Or faithless husbands

My only goal
To breed more of me

But I never forgot my origins
Keeping the Sabbath

At midnight studying the mystical *kabbalah*
At noon the Bible

All day praying for those who ruined me
Remembering that three stars signal the Sabbath's end

In 1492 I couldn't bear watching the ships
Propelled by grief

Their cargo of broken hearts
Destined to sink

Knowing my kin and I
Were meant to wander

Still I longed
To leave the wilderness

In a pillar of perfumed smoke
Leaving behind the rumors, lies, and myths

I was neither Virgin
Nor devil

García Lorca calls me *La Petenera* and says I'm dead and buried
But in truth I'm still alive

Trying to remember myself and go home
Since whatever you've heard

I'm also a soul in the garden
Awaiting ascent

Who am I?

Postamble

*And the Lord will create over the whole habitation . . .
and over her assemblies
a cloud and smoke by day
and the shining of a flaming fire by night. . . .—Isaiah 4:5*

1

i am camped in the U.S.A.
near taos, new mexico

under a comma-shaped moon
like the hebrew letter *yod*

testing the air
for remnants

of campfires long ago
listening for the sounds of hooves

on the hard, bitter earth
hoping for a view through the trees

of dark clouds pushed
this way over five hundred years ago

and for what to pick up traces
of Jewish blood that once flowed this way

in the veins of a desperado army
first from spain then mexico

who hid in the hills
mixing with the *penitentes*

piercing their wrists
or bearing an iron cross

today they show up
at city council meetings

display their certificates
from the spanish government

pardoning them
for past wrongs

some sell *challah* bread at the saturday market
others just keep quiet and eat pork

2

i am in taos
dreaming under a pinyon pine

taking in the scent
of the pine needles

tasting a few molecules
of a strange, smoky smell

from a bonfire
in a public square

the raging flames fed
by satanic spaniards

the faces of their apoplectic clergy
distorted by an ancient anger

turn them in
they cry

turn them out
across the border

back to spain
where machines await

toca strappado
porto garrote

hide now
before it's too late

no one
is safe

your former friends
laden with grudges

from the beginning of time
are waiting to take you away



Notes to the Poems

Here are (mostly) short, limited notes that follow the order of the poems. I have modified some of the quotations, especially if from public-domain sources like ancient texts.

Each poem entry includes at least the first word of the line cited. After considering the options, I decided this was the easiest way for readers to find words or phrases they need to look up. However, words or phrases referred to in the prose **Preamble** and prose **Who Are the Souls in the Garden** are treated somewhat differently.

Unless otherwise noted, all cities mentioned are in Spain. Most of the people referred to are Jewish, even if entries do not identify them as such.

First Half-Title

Souls in the Garden, the title of the book, comes from a passage in the *Zohar*, or *Sefer ha-Zohar*, the *Book of Splendor*, or *Book of Radiance*. See the notes to the first set of **Epigraphs** for more information. The first epigraph on this page is from “Garden in Ávila: A Fado by Moses de León,” a poem in *Souls in the Garden*, p. 66, and the second is from “Everything That Breathes Praises You,” in Henry Rasof, *Here I Seek You: Jewish Poems for Shabbat, Holy Days, and Everyday* (Louisville, CO: Temescal Canyon Press, 2016), p. 4.

Frontispiece

The picture is of the Jardín de Moshé de León, in Ávila, Spain, the garden dedicated to the *kabbalist* Rabbi Moses de León, described in the notes to the Epigraphs. The inscription on top of the pedestal is a passage from the *Zohar* (the *Book of Splendor*, or *Radiance*) that contains the phrase “souls in the garden” that is the source for the title of this book. Behind the garden is the Gate of Bad Luck, called in Spanish the Puerta de Malaventura or Puerta de la Mala Dicha and also the Arco de los Gitanos (Gypsies’ Arch), leading out of the old walled city of Ávila.

Title Page

See note above to the **First Half-Title**.

Epigraphs

souls in the garden rise/and reach the gate of heaven . . ./admire the burning splendor/of the column that spews fire . . ./kneel reverently. The context of this first passage indicates that righteous souls in the garden rise to heaven (or to an upper Garden of Eden) on Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) and after death. The text is excerpted from a translation of a Spanish inscription of a passage from the *Zohar*, or *Book of Splendor* (also translated as *Book of Radiance*), found on top of the pedestal shown in the frontispiece, in the Jardín de Moshé de León, in Ávila. A similar passage can be found in *Zohar* 2:211a, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 6, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 202. The *Zohar*, which appeared

in Spain at the end of the thirteenth century, is the most important Jewish mystical text. Rabbi Moses de León (1240–1305, probably b. León) is the main author of this work, originally written in Aramaic, a language related to Hebrew. It is not known whether the Spanish translation was made from an Aramaic text or from a translation into another language, such as Hebrew, French, or English.

Seeking but failing/union with the Divine/the souls circle Her in consolation/hanging on for dear life.

Adapted from Plotinus (c. 204/5–270 C.E., b. Lycopolis, Egypt), *Ennead* II.2.2. *Plotinus: Psychic and Physical Treatises, Comprising the Second and Third Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1921), p. 157. See also www.sacred-texts.com/cla/plotenn/enn066.htm.

Philosopher influenced by Plato, who in turn influenced the medieval and Renaissance Jewish, Christian, and Muslim philosophers and mystics.

Preamble

About the Dutch painter Hieronymous Bosch (ca. 1450–1516, b. s-Hertogenbosch), whose well-known painting *Garden of Earthly Delights* probably is familiar to many readers of this book, a scholar writes: “[S]ome of [his] hidden symbols refer to the Christian’s fear of . . . seduction by worldly pleasures, for which the ‘Jewish world’ serves as a warning example.” Johannes Hartau, “Bosch and the Jews,” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, vol. 27, No. 86, March 2005, www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0185-12762005000100002.

Rabbi Moses de León. See first note in **Epigraphs**, above.

flamenco. Originating in southern Spain and an amalgam of gypsy, Jewish, Islamic, and Spanish influences, flamenco is a culture, art form, and way of life synonymous with Spain itself.

“such a preference . . . would not have been inexplicable. . . .” Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1996, b. Buenos Aires), “Pierre Menard: Author of the Quixote,” in Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New Directions, New York: 1984), p. 40. The original translates “such a preference in a Spaniard,” which I loosely interpret as “Spanish [*Sefardic*] Jew.”

Maimonides. (1138–1204, b. Córdoba) Latinized name of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, the Jewish community leader, codifier of Jewish law, physician, and most influential of Jewish philosophers.

Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra. (1092–1167, b. Tudela) Polymath rabbi, biblical commentator, philosopher, poet, astrologer, and grammarian who brought to the rest of Europe his approach (influenced by Islamic works) to religious and grammatical texts. His biblical commentary uses common sense to explain difficulties such as contradictions.

convivencia. The period in Spain from 711 (marking the Muslim invasion) to 1492 (marking the conquest of an Islamic Granada and the expulsion of unconverted Jews from all of Spain) that some scholars have believed was a period when Christians, Jews, and Muslims intermingled, exchanged ideas, and influenced and tolerated one another. Although scholars now have challenged or discarded the concept of conviviality and tolerance, I believe that the other characteristics of the period still stand.

St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros). The wonderful mystic poet known especially for his beautiful poem usually called “Noche oscura” (“Dark Night”), *Cántico espiritual* (*Spiritual Canticle*), *Subida del Monte Carmelo* (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*), and other works of poetry and prose.

Federico García Lorca. (1896–1936, b. Fuente Vaqueros) Great and beloved poet, dramatist, folklorist, composer, and artist, assassinated during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

St. Teresa of Ávila. (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila) Remarkable Spanish mystic, founder of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite religious order, and author of *El castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), also called *Las moradas* (*The Mansions*). She writes that she continuously felt the presence of Jesus, as if he were by her side at all times.

“One . . . outlines the theme. . . the same or are different.” Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1996, b. Buenos Aires), “Pierre Menard: Author of the Quixote,” in Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New Directions, New York: 1984), p. 39.

Epigraphs

On the Sabbath/Jewish souls have a taste of the world-to-come. See Zohar 2:136a, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 5, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 256. See also Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 312; Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 57b (“*Shabbat* is one-sixtieth of the world to come”); and Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, *A Student’s Obligation: Advice from the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Micha Odenheimer (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1991), p. 196.

Angels guide the righteous deceased/to the Garden of Eden. Paraphrase from Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p 168. Various traditional sources.

the ascended souls then join/the Divine forevermore. Inspired by Zohar 1:235a, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 3, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 425. See also *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2 (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), p. 748.

Who Are the Souls in the Garden?

Our souls are born in . . . the “Treasury of Souls,” located in the “highest heaven.” In Hebrew this treasury is called the *guf*. See Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 200–201 (also see pp. 163–165). See also Zohar 2:161b, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 5, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 430–431.

Before we receive a body, our soul descends. . . . God is imperfect without us. See *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2 (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), pp. 745–754.

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Second Half-Title

Why don’t we visit the garden?/Every plant’s in bloom. Shmuel Hanagid (Samuel the Prince) (993–1056, b. Córdoba), “Yehosef yat levav avin bemilah,” trans. Gideon Weisz © 2017, modified by HR. Complete poem in English in Jonathan P. Decker, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, p. 81. In Hebrew and English in

Leon J. Weinberger, *Jewish Prince in Moslem Spain: Selected Poems of Samuel Ibn Nagrela* (University, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1973), pp. 66–67.

Every tree beautifully fruited. From Shmuel Hanagid (see first note), “V’omar al tishan,” trans. HR.

Complete poem in Hebrew and English in Raymond. P. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), pp. 40–41, and in English in Jonathan P. Decker, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 80.

And like Joseph’s coat/The garden’s coat is multicolored . . . Reference to Joseph’s many-colored coat in Gen. 37:3 and picked up in Moses ibn Ezra, “Katnot pasim lavash hagan” (the first line, serving as a title), trans. HR. Complete poem in English in Jonathan P. Decker, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 86. Also in Hebrew and English in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 323.

Epigraphs

. . . *so at daybreak/I decided to visit the garden/To breathe the garden air/Seek my joy in the fragrant shade.* Adapted from Ekaterina Beketova (1855–1892, b. Russia), “The Lilacs,” trans. Laura Olson Osterman © 2016, modified by HR. Famous poem set to music by Sergei Rachmaninoff—Op. 21, No. 5. Many recordings with piano and voice and just piano, for example, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU3BEZuVFdw.

And maybe bring you some lovely gifts. Adapted from Sa’adi, *The Gulistan (The Rose Garden)*, the classic book written in 1258 by the Persian poet Sa’adi (also Sa’di and Saadi) (ca. 1210–ca.1291, b. Shiraz, Persia) (see classics.mit.edu/Sadi/gulistan.1.introductory.html and www.iranchamber.com/literature/saadi/books/golestan_saadi.pdf). Also: Shaykh Mushrifuddin Sa’adi of Shiraz, *The Gulistan (The Rose Garden)*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Bethesda, MA: Ibex Publishers, 2008).

But, since the gardener was nowhere to be seen. See first note to **Call Me Qasmuna** below.

Dialogue with the Jew of Málaga

The Jew of Málaga is Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/2–ca. 1054/58/70, b. Málaga), philosopher and renowned poet, who wrote religious and secular poems. His main philosophical work is *Fons Vitae (Fountain of Life)*, described in the first note to **Fons Vitae** (see below). His “crowning” poetic achievement might very well be “Keter Malkhut” (“Crown of the King” or “Wisdom’s Crown”). For an English translation see Peter Cole, trans., *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol* (Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2002), pp. 137–195. Málaga is a coastal city in southeastern Spain.

Your rabbinic poet-philosopher Ibn Gabirol. See previous note.

Fountain of life. See first note.

Wisdom’s crown. See first note.

Ghost of Granada

The ghost of Granada is Shmuel Hanagid (Samuel the Prince) (993–1056, b. Córdoba), poet, Jewish religious scholar, vizier to the Muslim ruler of Granada, military commander, and perhaps the most important Jew of his day (at least in Spain). Granada is an important city in southeastern

Spain that from the eighth century until Christian Spaniards conquered it in 1492 was the last Muslim-ruled city on the Iberian peninsula and also home to many Jews.

Twelve stone lions. Stone lions in the Alhambra, the spectacularly beautiful Muslim palace in Granada. Possibly a nod to the twelve Jewish tribes or to the signs of the zodiac. The palace is thought to have been built around a house and fortress originally built by Hanagid and his son. See first note.

Three-cornered hats. Obscure reference to *The Three-Cornered Hat* (*El sombrero de tres picos*), a ballet by the modern Spanish composer Manuel de Falla (1876–1946, b. Cádiz), who lived in Granada, and also to the hat worn by Haman, the incarnation of hatred of Jews, in the biblical story of Esther.

On the hill a new mosque. On the hill across from the Alhambra when I visited Granada stood a new mosque (a place of worship for Muslims), opened in 2003.

The most famous medieval Jew/Before Maimonides. Shmuel Hanagid (see first note). Maimonides (1138–1204, b. Córdoba), the Latinized name of Rabbi Moses (Moshe) ben Maimon, was a Jewish community leader, codifier of Jewish law, physician, and most influential of Jewish philosophers.

Nowhere so many jasmines/In so small a space. Quoted from the French writer Alexandre Dumas in Phillip Huscher, program notes for performances of Manuel de Falla's *Noches en los jardines de España* (*Nights in the Gardens of Spain*) at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra concerts May/June 2012. (cso.org/uploadedFiles/1_Tickets_and_Events/Program_Notes/ProgramNotes_Rapsodie_Espagnole.pdf, p. 12). See fourth note.

To locate even a trace of Shmuel Hanagid—Samuel the Prince—(see first note). There might be a plaza with his name or a marker or statue of him in Granada, but I couldn't find it.

Vizier. A high-ranking official in Islamic countries, often standing just below the sultan or king.

Talmudist. A scholar of the Talmud—Jewish religious discussion, law, and lore compiled 200–500 C.E.

Abu Ishaq, There Is Only One God

A Jewish response to a poem by the Spanish-Muslim poet Abu Ishaq al-Ilbiri (rendered in English Abu Ishaq of Elvira, a location near Granada, though possibly the place meant is Elviria) (d. 1067 or 1068). The form of the poem is vaguely inspired by an old Arabic genre in which poets exchange invective. References to “Abu Ishaq” in the notes below are to Poem 15 in James T. Monroe, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974). The lines by Ibn Quzman (1078–1160, b. Córdoba) are also in Monroe, who provides the Arabic originals and his own translations.

La ilaha illa allah There is no God but Allah. Central Islamic prayer.

Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One. Central Jewish prayer.

Poetry tears through my mind/as I draw my tongue's sword/At that point, it can pierce armor. . . . Ibn Quzman, Poem 27 (p. 276), trans. Sahar Omar Taha Al Nima © 2017, modified by HR.

Holding back would make me crazy. Ibn Quzman, Poem 26 (p. 260), trans. Sahar Omar Taha Al Nima © 2017, modified by HR.

Of the dust . . . Granada. City in southern Spain that was the last Muslim foothold in Spain.

Pretty fancy *qasida*. A poetic form originating in pre-Islamic North Africa that became popular with both Muslim and Jewish writers.

Better a third-class boat than a fourth-class monkey. Abu Ishaq calls Jews monkeys (p. 206). Your so-called architects built small synagogues in our style. *The mudejar*—Islamic-influenced—style found in Spain.

No Muslim could or should bow to the lowest monkey of nonbelievers. . . . Cobbled from words of Abu Ishaq (p. 206), trans. Sahar Omar Taha Al Nima © 2017, modified by HR.

Also enemy bastards. Ditto previous note.

. . . Nonbelievers whom we still protected. Reference to laws, called *dhimmi* laws, protecting Jews and Christians.

We ruled in Spain for over seven hundred years. Beginning with their 711 invasion and ending with the 1492 conquest of Granada.

Thanks to our help . . . Visigoths. Germanic nomads who sacked Rome, settled in Spain, and were not nice to the Jews living there.

You taxed our patience . . . tuches. Last word is Yiddish for “rear end.” The language doesn’t fit, but the rhyme does.

The king should not have appointed as vizier a Jew. Abu Ishaq (p. 206) was angry that a Muslim wasn’t appointed. Samuel the Nagid (Samuel the Prince, Shmuel Hanagid) (993–1056, b. Córdoba), the father of Joseph Hanagid (1035–1066, b. Granada), was a poet, Jewish religious scholar, vizier to the Muslim ruler of Granada, military commander, and perhaps the most important Jew of his day (at least in Spain). Curiously, the elder Nagid’s full Arabic name was Abu Ishaq Ismail bin an-Nagrilah.

Quick! Slaughter the Jews . . . // True treachery is letting them wreck your own land. Abu Ishaq (p. 210), trans. Sahar Omar Taha Al Nima © 2017, modified by HR.

In 400 years a Jewish monkey//. . . . Christian hands. Reference to Don Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508, b. Lisbon), Jewish financier, courtier, statesman, biblical commentator.

Although you claim to be the chosen people/You will never build the world you say you’re destined to build. Abu Ishaq (p. 212), trans. Sahar Omar Taha Al Nima © 2017, reworked by HR. Traditionally, Jews have been the “chosen people,” but Abu Ishaq here implies it really should be Muslims.

Call Me Qasmuna

No longer young/still alone. Lines by Qasmuna., trans. Sahar Omar Taha Al Nima © 2017, modified slightly by HR. For more on Qasmuna, see James M. Nichols, “The Arabic Verses of Qasmuna bint Ismai’il ibn Baghdalah,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981):156, cited in Emily Taitz, Sondra Henry, and Cheryl Tallan, eds., *The JPS Guide to Jewish Women 600 B.C.E.– 1900 C.E.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), p. 287, and also this book, pp. 57–58. The uncertainty about who she was and when she lived is reflected in the poem, but she probably lived in southern Spain in the twelfth century.

Performance note. Qasmuna’s lines—in italics—could be recited by a second, female reader if the other lines are recited by a male reader.

of Samuel the Prince. Shmuel Hanagid (Samuel the Prince) (993–1056, b. Córdoba), poet, Jewish religious scholar, vizier to the Muslim ruler of Granada, military commander, and perhaps the most important Jew of his day (at least in Spain).

ghost of Granada. See **Ghost of Granada** above.

In the garden/a lone gazelle/beautiful fruit/no gardener. See first note.

Orion's sword. A nod to the constellation Orion the Hunter.
shall we meet on the Málaga beach. Málaga is a coastal city in southeastern Spain.
or by the twelve stone lions. Reference to the stone lions in the Alhambra, the beautiful Muslim palace in Granada.

could it be that Hafiz the Persian was referring to you/when many years later he wrote://*You are Creation's sweetest bud*. Last line adapted from a poem (in *ghazal* form; pun unintended) by Hafiz (or Hafez) Shirazi. Many translations, including in "The Wind in Solomon's Hands," in Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn, trans., *The Angels Knocking on the Tavern Door: Thirty Poems of Hafez* (New York: Harper, 2008), p. 44. Hafiz (1315/7–1390, b. Shiraz, Persia) was an important poet, still very popular today, who wrote in Farsi (Persian). Thanks to Shahriar Shahriari for help with this quote.

Fons Vitae (Fountain of Life)

Fons Vitae (Fountain of Life). Influential philosophical work written by Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/2–ca. 1054/58/70, b. Málaga), philosopher and renowned poet, who wrote religious and secular poems. This work was written in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic using Hebrew letters) but is commonly known by its Latin title *Fons Vitae*. The work "treats the relationship between form and matter, makes no reference to the Bible or to Jewish religious literature, and is so universalistic in character that it was attributed by Christian writers to an unknown Christian or Muslim philosopher operating solely in philosophical categories" (Rabbi Louis Jacobs, *The Jewish Religion: A Companion*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 262. Also look at www.myjewishlearning.com/article/solomon-ibn-gabirol/). See also "I turned out to be Avicebron," the third-to-last note below. A recent translation is *The Fountain of Life (Fons Vitae)* (no city: Azafran Books, 2017).

Why do souls repeatedly go up and down/down and up/drawing strength from the throne on high/then returning to earth/if not to reveal God's glory! HR rewording. See *Zohar* 2:13a/b, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 4, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 62–67; *Zohar* 1:235a in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 3, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 425; and *Zohar* 2:136a, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 5, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 256–257. See also *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2, (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), pp. 745–748.

As far . . . Guadalquivir. Major river in southern Spain that runs through Seville and Córdoba.
Over the Alcázar . . . caliph. References to the Islamic castle and Muslim civil and religious ruler.
Greater wisdom even than the sages/Of blessed memory. Reference to ancient Jewish sages.
Even the gypsy fortunetellers. Although especially identified with Spain and eastern European countries, gypsies are originally from Rajasthan, in northern India.
Living in the caves at Sacramonte. Area in Granada traditionally home to gypsies.
The great river stretching/From the Sierra de Cazorla. The Guadalquivir, the major river running through southern Spain, originating in the Sierra de Cazorla mountain range east of Granada.
And blossoms too tinged red/Like the oranges they will grow into. Reference to blood oranges.
And the patrons of the Talmud. The Talmud is a compendium of Jewish religious discussion, law, and lore compiled 200–500 C.E.

If after ascending the ladder of Jacob. Reference to Jacob's dream in Gen. 28:12, in which he sees angels ascending to, and descending from, heaven.

If you want to know/It's to revel/in the glory of the goodly. . . . See Zohar 3:43b, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 7, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 265. See also *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2 (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), p. 789

Ibn Gabirol says. See first note.

When you finally found me/I turned out to be not just a poet but Avicbron. In the nineteenth century, scholars discovered that Avicbron was the Latinized name of Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/2–ca. 1054/58/70, b. Málaga). Also sometimes written Avicbrol. See first note.

Whose philosophical Fountain of Life irrigated. See first note.

(Rumi the Persian later would say in the Name of the Prophet [Muhammad, founder of Islam]:// *Up, down, close, far/What's the difference?*). Inspired by a verse by Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi (1207–1273, b. Vakhsh, in present-day Tajikistan, or Balkh, in present-day Afghanistan; d. Konya, Turkey), the famous Sufi poet and teacher whose work was composed mostly in Farsi (Persian) (his first name is transliterated in various ways). The verse seems derived, according to Professor Cyrus Ali Zargar, from a *hadith* (an extra-Qur'anic teaching of Muhammad) similar in meaning, though with varied wording, in the Musnad Ahmad, one of the six canonical collections of Sunni *hadith*. See "Ascending and Descending," in *Rumi: Feeling the Shoulder of the Lion: Poetry and Teaching Stories from the Mathnawi*. Versions by Coleman Barks (Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1991), p. 41. See also *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, vol. IV, Book III, 4512–4515, translation and commentary by Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Trustees of the E.J.W. Gibbs Memorial, 1977), p. 252. According to Professor Coleman Barks, the most prolific translator of Rumi today, Rumi is the most popular poet in the U.S.

Mrs. Dunash ben Labrat Tells All

Mrs. Dunash (c. 890–c. 950, b. Fez, Morocco), any other name unknown, was the wife of the poet Dunash ben Labrat (?–c. 990, b. Fez, Morocco, lived Córdoba), the first Spanish-Jewish poet to reflect the influence of the Arabic poetry of the time. For more on her, see *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain 950–1492*, translated, edited, and introduced by Peter Cole (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 363–365.

In a pomegranate orchard . . . /We'll fill up on food and drink. Dunash ben Labrat, "V'omer: Al ti'shan" ("He said: 'Do not sleep!'" is the first line; the poems were untitled), trans. HR. The whole poem, called "The Poet Refuses an Invitation to Drink," can be found in Hebrew and English in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 280.

"The first fully realized personal poem/"In the new Andalusian style." In the style of the Muslim poets of the day who were writing in Arabic. Ezra Fleischer, quoted in *The Dream of the Poem*, p. 27. See first note for full source information. Andalusia—al-Andalus, in Arabic—was the name originally given to Muslim-ruled Spain; today the region of southern Spain that includes Seville, Granada, Córdoba, and other southern Spanish cities is called Andalucía.

Who left Córdoba. Important city in southern Spain.

To write poetry since Deborah. Female prophet and judge whose long poem makes up Judges 5 in the Hebrew Bible.

And won't pick grapes/or wheat. Adapted from note referencing Ezra Fleischer again, in *The Dream of*

the Poem, p. 365, probably referring to Dunash's complaints about his situation. See first note for full source information.

Testimony of the Jews of Córdoba

Córdoba. Historic city in southern Spain.

Think Córdoba/Think death. Compare Federico García Lorca, "Sevilla," in *Federico García Lorca, Poem of the Deep Song/Poema del Cante Jondo*, trans. Carlos Bauer (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987), p. 45. See two notes down.

Bitter oranges. Also called Seville oranges, sweetened they make good marmalade. They also have medicinal uses and may have dangerous side effects or drug interactions.

They spoke of *duende*. Spirit, supernatural energy, according to the great twentieth-century poet Federico García Lorca "a momentary burst of inspiration" (p. viii), "a heightened awareness of death" (p. ix), something that "burns the blood like a poultice of broken glass" (p. 51), in Christopher Maurer, ed. and trans, *Federico García Lorca, In Search of Duende* (New York: New Directions, 1998). Lorca was the great Spanish poet, dramatist, folklorist, composer, and artist, murdered August 19, 1936, by fascists during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

Even in the Mezquita. Originally a mosque, now a cathedral, still beautiful.

We are going by night . . . //And the ascetic Muslim scholar Ibn Masarra might have lived. Ibn Masarra (883–931, b. Córdoba) was a seminal Spanish-Muslim philosopher also called variously ascetic, *Sufi*, mystic, and various combinations of these terms. These are the gardens referred to in the third section of Manuel de Falla's *Noches en los jardines de España (Nights in the Gardens of Spain)*. However, since it seems more likely that Ibn Masarra lived in a cave (possibly a cave in or near these gardens), the poem says "gardens and caves."

But the only *Torah*. The five books of Moses, or all Jewish learning.

Rambam Laments

Rambam. Simplified acronym for Rabbi Moses (Moshe) ben Maimon (RaMBaM), Latinized as (Moses) Maimonides (1138–1204, b. Córdoba). Seminal Jewish philosopher, codifier of Jewish law, Jewish community leader, physician.

Show me which way I should walk/for I lift up my soul to you. See Ps. 143:8.

Calle de los Judíos. Street of the Jews in Córdoba, an important city in southern Spain, where Maimonides was born.

Where I . . . //received my medicine. Riff on a verse by Enrique R. Baltánas in his *Alcalá, Copla y Compás/Coplas de Son Nazareno* (Seville: Fundación Machado, 1992), p. 15: "Calle la Mina,/donde yo tengo mi medicina" ("Mina Street,/where I received my medicine").

In my plaza. The Plaza de Tiberíades—Plaza of Tiberias—in Córdoba, which today features a large statue of a seated Rambam—Maimonides. See first note. Maimonides is buried in Tiberias, in Israel.

El Museo Taurino. The Bullfighting Museum, in the old Jewish quarter near the Plaza de Tiberíades in Córdoba.

My contemporary Averroes and the ancient Seneca. Averroes (1126–1198, b. Córdoba) is the Latinized name of Ibn Rushd, one of the most important Muslim philosophers. Seneca (4 B.C.E.–C.E. 65, b. Córdoba) was a Roman philosopher.

And gave me a statue in Córdoba//And actually gave us all statues/Claiming us as your own.

Cordoba was and still is an important city in southern Spain, and each of these luminaries has a statue there. It seems ironic (or worse) that at one time Spain expelled its Jews and Muslims and later erected statues honoring them.

From the dialogue of faith/And reason. The agenda of Rambam (see first note) and Averroes (see three notes up), to explain religion using rational philosophical language.

Souvenir shops selling Solomon's Seals. Reference to six-pointed stars formed of two (sometimes interlocking) triangles and called stars of David by Jews, for whom they are the modern symbol of the faith.

Street of Jews. Calle de los Judíos, the street in Córdoba where the Rambam was born. See first note.

Square of Tiberias. The Plaza de Tiberiades in Córdoba, which features a large seated statue of the Rambam. See first and fifth notes.

The Barber of Seville

Title is a nod to the Rossini opera (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*).

Seville (Sevilla). Large city in southern Spain.

Think Sevilla/Think pain. Compare Federico García Lorca, "Sevilla," in *Federico García Lorca, Poem of the Deep Song/Poema del Cante Jondo*, trans. Carlos Bauer (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987), p. 45. See six notes down.

The *tapas* tasty. Small plates of food served in Spanish (and, now, other) restaurants and bars.

One too many Jewish children/Buried alive, buried alive. A very high number is described in one source, but given the great scholarly revision downward of the number of Jews killed during the Inquisition, I have opted for this expression. . However, one child, whether Jewish or not, killed during this period, or any period, for that matter, is one too many.

Men with Jewish DNA. Results of genetic tests published in 2008 indicate that 20 percent of the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal) living at that time had Jewish ancestry (www.nytimes.com/2008/12/04/world/europe/04iht-gene.4.18411385.html), an interesting statistic considering that according to some sources, in 2015 Spain was the most antisemitic country in Europe, sporting an antisemitic prime minister with, oddly a name suggesting Jewish origins—or perhaps not so oddly, given a history of some Jewish converts becoming rabidly anti-Jewish.

Selling hams in the shops. Reference to Spanish ham (*jamón ibérico*), perhaps the national food of Spain. See previous note and draw your own conclusion.

Flamencos. Flamenco musicians, singers, and dancers. Flamenco, originating in southern Spain and an amalgam of gypsy, Jewish, Islamic, and Spanish influences, is a culture, art form, and way of life synonymous with Spain itself.

Old men in parks/Argue whether to exhume García Lorca. Federico García Lorca (1896–1936, b. Fuente Vaqueros), poet, dramatist, folklorist, composer, artist, murdered August 19, 1936, by fascists during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and buried in a mass grave.

Beside the Guadalquivir. River running through Seville in southern Spain.

Whitewashed towns kept fresh. The white villages of southern Spain.

Men still do not talk to their brothers/Women to their sisters. Reference to ugliness still existing in Spain as a result of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

The poet García Lorca. See four notes up.

The Legend of Susona, La Ferosa Fembra

La Ferosa Fembra. (Spanish) (ca. 1480–?, b. Seville) “The beautiful woman.” See leyendasde Sevilla.blogspot.com/2011/01/historia-de-la-susona-la-ferosa-fembra.html (Spanish) for more information on the legend. There are many other Web sites, mostly in Spanish. See also Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Milwaukee: The University of Wisconsin Press), pp. 245–246. Scholars seem to doubt the veracity of the legend and even her existence, while popular references treat legend as fact, so Susona’s attitude reflects the differences of opinion. *Ferosa* is a variation of *hermosa*, meaning “beautiful” or “pretty,” while *fembra* is a variant of *hembra*, meaning “female.”

Here Susona lived,/loved, and betrayed. Adapted from text on a wall plaque in Seville.

I’m Susona . . . // . . . Esther. Sources point out that Susona, Susana, Susan, etc., were not Jewish names for women. A few sources say her Jewish name was “Esther,” from the biblical book. However, this is a common Jewish name and might have been pulled out of a hat by Christian chroniclers. The Hebrew root of the name *Esther* means “hidden.”

Daughter of Diego. Her father’s name was Diego ben Susán, and possibly he was a *converso* (a converted Jew). Literally, *ben* means “son of” but can also mean “from the Susán family,” since Susona’s full name is often written Susona (or Susana or Susan) ben Susán, or Susona (or Susana or Susan) de Susán. Of course, if she never existed, the spellings do not matter.

Who plotted to kill inquisitors. Perpetrators of the Inquisition, which persecuted converted Jews suspected of secretly practicing their Judaism along with other converted Jews, Christian heretics, sinners, and other people the Church didn’t like or felt threatened by.

And that of my old-Christian. As opposed to New Christian, or *converso*—a Spanish Jew who converted to Christianity voluntarily or under duress or was forcibly converted—or was from a family who had converted, from Judaism to Christianity.

CALLE/DELA/MVERTE. MVERTE = Muerte (Spanish)—“death”—so, Street of Death.

IN THESE STREETS, THE ANCIENT/CALLE DE LA MVERTE HUNG THE HEAD/OF THE BEAUTIFUL SVONA BEN SVSÓN,/WHO FOR LOVE BETRAYED HER FATHER/AND WAS TORMENTED/AS WRITTEN/IN HER FINAL TESTAMENT. The exact wording in translation of a plaque in Seville. See Web site listed in first note for a photograph. Again, the “V” is an alternate spelling of “U.”

Note on the translations. These are mostly by Victoria Lauren Smith © 2017, modified by HR.

The Vargas Family of Flamencos Performs at Hotel Triana

Vargas Family. Famous family of flamenco singers and musicians (flamencos). Flamenco, originating in southern Spain and an amalgam of gypsy, Jewish, Islamic, and Spanish influences, is a culture, art form, and way of life synonymous with Spain itself. Hotel Triana is in the Triana district of Seville (Sevilla). This district is the possible birthplace, or one of the birthplaces, of flamenco music and dance.

Triana—daughter of Sevilla/mother of flamenco. Inspired by “Sevillanas Corraleras de Rocío Jurado,” www.musica.com/letras.asp?letra=1344974. The remarkable Rocío Jurado performs this *sevillana* (*sevillanas* are a popular cousin of flamenco and also part of the flamenco repertoire) in the Carlos Saura film *Sevillanas* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ll4hhkvdKWk.

Performance note. The italicized lines could be recited by a woman if the other lines are recited by a man, or vice versa.

I walk along Calles Levies and Pérez. Streets with “Jewish” names.

A botanist cross-breeds strains of corn. Though the word *corn* can refer to any grain, here it refers to the corn (maize) roasted and sold by vendors in modern Spain. Maize is native to the New World, so it didn’t reach Spain until the sixteenth century.

Cantaoras. (Spanish) “Singers.”

her partner pulling on his fly. An observable behavior in some Spanish male flamenco musicians and singers, pointed out to me by a scholarly American aficionado writing an article on the subject.

Scent of corn, *bulerías* rhythm. *Bulerías*—fast, furious flamenco rhythm and genre. See first note.

A *sevillana*. Popular Spanish genre of song and dance, adopted by flamenco musicians and dancers.

Lament of the Jews of Jérez

Jérez. Jérez is a region in southern Spain that is home to sherry (English word for wine named after the region). See last note below.

Gypsies in the hills dancing at night. Inspired by Federico García Lorca (1898–1936, b. Fuente Vaqueros. Spain), “Dance (In the Garden of the Petenera),” in Christopher Maurer, ed., *Federico García Lorca: Collected Poems*, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2002), p. 129. Gypsies are an ethnic group originally from Rajasthan, in North India. Lorca was the great and beloved Spanish poet, dramatist, folklorist, artist, and composer murdered during the Spanish Civil War.

Bitter orange. Bitter oranges, also called Seville oranges.

Moors. North-African Muslims who invaded and conquered much of the Iberian peninsula (now comprising Spain and Portugal) in the middle ages.

Sherry. Fortified wine made primarily from the Palomino grape in Jérez and the surrounding area. The word “sherry” is derived from “Jérez.”

Rotting in the chalk. The chalky soil in Jérez conducive to growing grapes—like the Palomino, used to make sherry.

By the Waters of Granada (Cante Jondo—Deep Song)

By the Waters of Granada. Reference to rivers that run through southern Spain: The Genil and its small tributary the Darro, which flow through the city of Granada, and the Guadalquivir, into which the Genil flows near Córdoba and which then runs through Córdoba and Sevilla to the Atlantic Ocean. This line plays off the opening line of Ps. 137: “By the waters of Babylon I sat down and wept for the loss of Zion.” Granada is a city in southern Spain held by Muslims until 1492 and home to many important Jews.

Cante Jondo. The “deep song” extolled by twentieth-century poet Federico García Lorca (1898–1936, b. Fuente Vaqueros), as the most soulful Spanish music. Lorca was a Spanish poet, dramatist, folklorist, composer, and artist, murdered August 19, 1936, by fascists during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

Al naharot bavel We hung up our harps/for how could we sing/the Lord’s song in a foreign land.

Ps. 137:2–4. HR redaction.

In southern Spain . . . Crusades. Brutal adventures ostensibly intended to take Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land from the Muslims in the Middle Ages. However, scholars now believe that the Crusades also had political and territorial motives and involved rivalry between the Eastern and Western churches. And, for many Crusaders, religious motives were less important than economic gain and creating mayhem. There were three such Crusades.

Sitting by the rivers Darro and Genil. Compare Federico García Lorca, “Baladilla de los tres ríos” (“Little Ballad of the Three Rivers”), in Federico García Lorca, *Poem of the Deep Song/Poema del Cante Jondo*, trans. Carlos Bauer (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987), p. 3. See first note for geographical information.

Of Mediterranean fruit . . . Alhambra. Reference to the spectacularly beautiful Muslim palace in Granada thought to have been built around a house or fortress originally built by Samuel the Prince and his son. See two notes down.

From the central rift . . . Semana Santa. Holy week, preceding Easter Sunday.

But in all of Spain . . . Samuel the Prince. Shmuel Hanagid (993–1056, b. Córdoba). Poet, Jewish religious scholar, vizier, military commander.

Then the poet-philosophers Ibn Gabirol and Halevi left. Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/2–ca. 1054/58/70, b. Málaga) and Yehudah Halevi (1075–1141, b. Tudela or Toledo) were poets, philosophers, and rabbis.

In that order . . . Maimonides. (1138–1204, b. Córdoba) Latinized name of Rabbi Moses (Moshe) ben Maimon, religious leader, physician, Jewish community leader, and most influential of Jewish philosophers.

Began to sing . . . Jewish courtiers. Members of a royal court.

Their donations to the Talmud schools. Schools where students studied Talmud, the compendium of ancient Jewish religious learning.

Praising the fawns. Handsome young men waiting on men at wine parties.

Began to disappear . . . *Torah*. The five books of Moses in the Hebrew Bible.

As some said, *kabbalistic* mystics. Practitioners of *kabbalah*, the main stream of Jewish mysticism.

Disputants. Participants in a formal disputation in which Jews were forced to debate with Christians whether Jesus was the Messiah (the anointed one) predicted in the Hebrew Bible, but here pointedly referring to the Christian disputants. The city of Tortosa was the site of one such disputation.

Jewish books . . . the Messiah. See previous note.

The Holy Land. Jerusalem and other cities at one time part of the Land of Israel.

Into the realm of Alfonso X the So-Called Wise King of Castile and León. Alfonso X (nicknamed “el Sabio,” “the Wise”) (1221–1284, b. Toledo), Spanish king important militarily and culturally.

During whose time songs were composed praising the Virgin. Reference to the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, composed during the time of Alfonso X, some of which, unsurprisingly, demeaned or libeled Jews. See previous note.

Translators had sunk their teeth into the ancient philosophers. In particular, the Greeks Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E., b. Stagira, Greece) and his student Plato (428/23–348/7 B.C.E., b. Athens or Aegina, Greece), and the Greek or possibly Egyptian philosopher Plotinus (ca. 204/5–270 C.E., b. Lycopolis, Egypt), all of whom influenced the medieval Jewish and Muslim philosophers.

Contemporaneous with many gods, with that Other learning. Reference to Jewish learning.

To the feverish promises of false Jewish prophets and messiahs. Reference to Jewish pretenders to messianism.

Idols, or transmutation of gold . . . / . . . lead. Turning gold to lead is the opposite of the alchemists' aims. Their alphabetically acrostic poems. Poems by medieval Spanish-Jewish poets like Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/2–ca. 1054/58/70) and Rabbi Yehudah Halevi (1075–1141, b. Tudela or possibly Toledo) in which the first word of each line begins with a successive letter of the alphabet.

Was some sort of *genizah*. Storeroom for worn Jewish books, manuscripts, letters, etc., containing the name of God.

At Him . . . Rabbi Abraham Abulafia. (1240–1291, b. Zaragoza) Jewish mystic who sought ecstatic states and union with God.

Chanting *yod hey vav hey*. Transliterated Hebrew letters of God's four-letter name, used by mystics like Abulafia (see previous note) in their practice.

In the six directions . . . Rabbi Moses de León. (1250–1305, probably b. León) Rabbi (Jewish religious teacher), Jewish mystic, and main author of the *Zohar* (translated variously as *Book of Splendor* or *Book of Radiance*), the most important work of Jewish mysticism.

To have found the most mystical of mystical Jewish books. Reference to the *Zohar*, which appeared in Spain in the late thirteenth century. See previous note.

Physical or *sefirotically*. Reference to the *sefirot*, attributes of God in Jewish mysticism.

The universe with mnemonic blessings. According to Professor Saul Wachs of Gratz College (though not referring specifically to mystical practices from medieval Spain), blessings whose language contains a great deal of sound effects, such as repeated “m” sounds, and whose recitation can induce a trance or mystical state.

Because as we saw . . . behemoth. Animal described in Job 40:15–24.

And canons . . . minions. Play on *minyans*. Traditionally a *minyan* is the ten Jewish men needed to recite certain prayers.

I know . . . *cante jondo*. See second note.

From the Alhambra. Reference to the spectacularly beautiful Muslim palace in Granada thought to have been built around a house or fortress originally built by Samuel the Prince and his son.

And so I give a toast, *le chaim*. Hebrew for “to your health.”

In a dingy little wine and *tapas* bar. Bar in Spain (and elsewhere now) serving small portions of food called *tapas*. (Most such places today are not dingy.)

Darkest, sweetest, strongest *oloroso*. Dark, sweet sherry.

For my daily fix of blood oranges. Oranges with red flesh.

Slipping downstream to the river Guadalquivir. See first note.

Realizing we could not sing. See Ps. 137:2–4.

Sensing Souls in Toledo

Toledo. Historic city in central Spain southwest of the modern capital, Madrid.

Performance note. The refrain could be recited by a second reader.

Donde vas, bella judía/tan compuesta y a deshora?/Voy en busca de Rebeco/que espera en la sinagoga. See fifth note for information and translation.

City of generations. The word Toledo is erroneously thought to derive from *toledot*, Hebrew for “generations.”

It's still dark, beautiful Jewess/Where're you off to in your finery?/To the synagogue/where Rebeco's waiting.

Lyrics from a *petenera*, a flamenco form that some people believe is strongly influenced by Jewish music. Various versions are available of this song. Trans. Victoria Lauren Smith © 2017, adapted somewhat by HR. Another version is in Claus Schreiner, ed., *Flamenco* (Milwaukee: Amadeus Press, 2003), p. 73. You can listen for free to a snippet of one version of the *petenera* at www.amazon.com/s/ref=nntt_srch_drd_B005TM0BB2?ie=UTF8&field-keywords=David%20Moreno%2C%20Ramon%20de%20Cadiz&index=digital-music&search-type=ss.

Of your restored synagogue. The Sinagoga del Tránsito, formerly a Jewish house of worship.

A moon like that comma-shaped Hebrew letter writes. The *yod* (י) bears some resemblance to a crescent moon. This image appears also in Samuel Hanagid (Shmuel Hanagid) (993–1056, b. Córdoba), “Ehe Kofer l’Ofer” (“Invitation”), in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin, 1981), p. 298.

El Greco. (1541–1615, b. Crete) Doménikos Theotokópoulos, Greek painter resident in Toledo, whose house once belonged to Shmuel Halevi (14th c.), a Jew who was treasurer to Pedro the Cruel (1334–1369, b. Burgos), king of Castile and Aragon, and founder of the (now-restored) Sinagoga del Tránsito.

DNA remembers. Genetic research (published in 2008) shows that 20 percent of Spaniards have Jewish ancestry.

I Remember Ancient Graves

I Remember Ancient Graves. English translation of title of “K’varim min zeman kedem y’shanim,” a poem by Rabbi Moses ibn Ezra (1055–1135, b. Granada), one of the greatest medieval Spanish-Jewish poets, who is celebrated at the restored Sinagoga del Tránsito in Toledo, which originally was a synagogue (a Jewish house of worship), was then a church, and is now a museum. Note that this poem (and most others of this era) was not titled, so the Hebrew line above actually begins the poem.

one rose quickly wilts/but a rose garden lasts. Adapted from the “Introductory” to Sa’adi, *The Gulistan (The Rose Garden)*, the classic book written in 1258 by the Persian poet Sa’adi (also spelled Sa’di and Saadi) (ca. 1210–ca.1291, b. Shiraz, Persia) (see classics.mit.edu/Sadi/gulistan.1.introductory.html and www.iranchamber.com/literature/saadi/books/golestan_saadi.pdf). Also: Shaykh Mushrifuddin Sa’adi of Shiraz, *The Gulistan (The Rose Garden)*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Bethesda, MA: Ibex Publishers, 2008).

kabbalistic mystics. Followers of *kabbalah*, the most important stream of Jewish esoteric wisdom.

rabbis. Jewish religious teachers.

ancient graves. Reference to the poem described in the first note.

marranos. A word sometimes referring to all Spanish–Jewish converts to Christianity but more often to those who continued to secretly practice their original faith. Also applied to their descendants.

With the connotation “pigs.”

moses ibn ezra. See first note.

jeweler to the poets. Sobriquet for Ibn Ezra (see first note) in his role as author of a book devoted to the art of literary ornamentation.

Scolding Alfonso X the So-Called Wise King of Castile and León

Alfonso X (*el Sabio*, “the Wise”) (1221–1284, b. Toledo). Spanish king important militarily and culturally.

Castile and León. Previously, kingdoms; today, regions of Spain.

In Toledo . . . Christians . . . /found Jews . . . hitting and spitting on a figurine of Christ . . . /and killed them.

Las Cantigas de Santa Maria (songs in praise of Saint Mary, the Virgin Mary), Number 12 (“The Image of Christ Reviled by the Jews of Toledo”) (csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poemdata_view&rec=12). The *Cantigas* were collected during the period of Alfonso X. See first note.

Nor the sayings of your Savior. Reference to Jesus.

In Toledo. City in central Spain southwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid, that once had a thriving Jewish community.

City of generations. The word *Toledo* is erroneously thought to derive from *toledot*, Hebrew for “generations.”

Leaping Mary Sings Her Own Song (for You)

Leaping Mary. Probably a fictional person, the event described in the poem supposedly occurring in 1237. A translation of the complete song about her (“The Jewess Thrown/“From a cliff” (No. 107) from the *Cantigas de Santa Maria (Songs of Holy Mary)*, songs praising the Virgin Mary, is in Kathleen Kulp-Hill, trans., *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), p. 134.

A seed breaks open and dissolves/in the ground. Only then/does a new fig tree come into being. Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, *The Masnavi* (also written *Mathnawi* and other ways), VI, 4044–4053. See “Die Before You Die,” in *Rumi: One-Handed Basket Weaving: Poems on the Theme of Work*. Versions by Coleman Barks (Athens, GA: MAYPOP, 1991), p. 119. Rumi (1207–1273, b. Vakhsh, in present-day Tajikistan, or Balkh, in present-day Afghanistan; d. Konya, Turkey) was the famous *Sufi* (Muslim mystic) poet and teacher whose work was composed mostly in Farsi (Persian).

Performance note. The refrain “So they say” could be recited by a second reader.

At the court of Alfonso X/That so-called wise king of Castile and León. Spanish king, nicknamed *el Sabio*, “the Wise” (1221–1284, b. Toledo), important militarily and culturally.

By Jews shouting “there she goes.” This quote is from *Cantiga* No. 107. See first note.

Headfirst from a cliff in Segovia. Segovia is a small walled city north-by-northwest of Madrid, the modern Spanish capital. The cliff is possibly the Peña Grajera, the Raven’s (or Crow’s) Cliff.

And although I’m called Marisaltos. Spanish name, translated variously as “leaping Mary,” or “Mary who jumps.”

Whether it’s Esther as some say. Some sources give Esther as her Jewish name.

Believe in the Holy Virgin/Save yourself grief. Refrain to *Cantiga* No. 107, modified. See also Louise Mirrer, *Women, Jews, and Muslims in the Texts of Reconquest Castile* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 36.

Under the cliff they built a church. A small church was built under the cliff. You can see the church and cliff in a photograph and listen to the *Cantiga* at juderiasdesefarad.blogspot.com/2012/03/la-juderia-de-segovia-la-leyenda-de.html—without risking a fall or leaving the comfort of your home.

The *Fado* of Bonastruc ça Porta

Fado. (Portuguese) Literally, “fate.” Genre of Portuguese song about loss and longing.

Bonastruc ça Porta. Catalan name of Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, Nachmanides (also called by his acronym, Ramban or the Ramban—RaMBaN) (1194–1270, b. Girona), biblical commentator, philosopher, mystic, and Jewish religious authority. The name translates “mazel tov near the gate”—“good luck near the gate.”

I don’t understand why/but this song soothes me. Inspired by “Foi Deus” (“It Was God”), a *fado* sung by Amália Rodrigues, the most famous of *fado* singers, trans. F. Reis (lyricstranslate.com/en/foi-deus-it-was-god.html). See first note.

Performance note. The italicized lines are from *fados* and could be recited or even sung by a second person.

In the disputation. Jewish-Christian disputation about whether Jesus was the Messiah that Jews believe is predicted in the Hebrew Bible.

In the disputation I/Rabbi Moses ben Nachman//Alias Bonastruc ça Porta. See second note above. The ancient rabbis. Vague reference to Jewish religious teachers (not all of whom had the title “rabbi”) from approximately the first century B.C.E. to the sixth century C.E. More specifically, the reference is to Talmudic sages, scholars of the Talmud—Jewish religious discussion, law, and lore compiled 200–500 C.E.

Jesus was the Messiah. The Messiah is the savior of humankind, coming at the so-called end of days. Both Jews and Christians believe in such a figure, but Christians believe the Messiah already has come, in the figure of Jesus, while Jews believe the Messiah is yet to come. The word literally means “the anointed one.”

To the promised land. The Land of Israel, not a very Jewish place in the middle ages.

Company of mystics. In this context, the mystics are practitioners of *kabbalah*, the main stream of Jewish mysticism.

In Girona. City north of Barcelona.

Today the beautiful Institut d’Estudis Nahmànides. The Nahmanides Institute for Jewish Studies, located in the Patronat call de Girona, the Museum of Jewish History in Girona. See second note.

I longed for the river. The Onyar River in Girona.

The river/the hills, the whole place. Inspired by “Fado Portuguese” (“Portuguese Fado”), a *fado* sung by Amália Rodrigues, most famous of *fado* singers, trans. F. Reis (lyricstranslate.com/en/fado-portugues-portuguese-fado.html). See first note.

Everything/that grows. See previous note.

And think of the cemetery. Some of the gravestones from the former Jewish graveyard in Girona can be seen at the Jewish museum in the city.

I can’t see/through the tears. See two notes up.

In that case forgive me/for writing this fado. Inspired by “Que Deus Me Perdoe” (“May God Forgive Me”), a *fado* sung by Amália Rodrigues, the most famous of *fado* singers, and trans. Virginia Ophof (lyricstranslate.com/en/que-deus-me-perdoe-may-god-forgive-me.html-1). See first note.

Besalú

Besalú. Small city west of Girona and northwest of Barcelona.

On the Sabbath/Jewish souls have a taste of the world-to-come. See *Zohar* 2:136a, in *The Zohar*: Pritzker

Edition, vol. 5, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 256. See also Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 312; Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 57b (“Shabbat is one-sixtieth of the world to come”); and Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, *A Student’s Obligation: Advice from the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Micha Odenheimer (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1991), p. 196. *The reason . . . is their angelic nature*. Paraphrase of “The reason of the human spirit seeking to return to that upper world is its origin was from thence, and that it is of angelic nature,” in Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), p. 35. Al-Ghazzali (also spelled Ghazali) (c. 1058–1111, b. Tus, Persia) was one of the most important medieval Muslim thinkers.

Until the *mikveh* closes. Reference to Jewish ritual bath.

Was I going to Girona? City north of Barcelona.

Fado for Zaragoza

Fado. (Portuguese) Literally, “fate.” Genre of Portuguese song about loss and longing.

Zaragoza. City in northeastern Spain (formerly spelled “Saragossa”) that once had a strong Jewish presence.

I can’t hold back the tears . . . Inspired by “Lord, I Just Can’t Keep from Crying,” sung by U.S. blues singer Blind Willie Johnson. Complete lyrics and recording at www.oldielyrics.com/lyrics/blind_willie_johnson/lord_i_just_cant_keep_from_crying.html.

But singing dispels the grief. Inspired by “Lágrima” (“Tear”), a *fado* sung by Amália Rodrigues, the most famous of *fado* singers, and trans. Nat Dailey (lyricstranslate.com/en/lágrima-tear.html-0). See first note.

Yehudah Halevi’s Lament

Yehudah Halevi. (1075–1141, b. Tudela or Toledo) Rabbi, important philosopher, and perhaps the best known of Jewish poets.

Souls blossom on a tree in Paradise . . . Hosea 9:14. See Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 164.

What lovely gift will you bring us from that garden? Sa’adi, *The Gulistan (The Rose Garden)*, the classic book written in 1258 by the Persian poet Sa’adi (also Sa’di and Saadi) (ca. 1210–ca.1291, b. Shiraz, Persia) (see classics.mit.edu/Sadi/gulistan.1.introductory.html and www.iranchamber.com/literature/saadi/books/golestan_saadi.pdf). Also: Shaykh Mushrifuddin Sa’adi of Shiraz, *The Gulistan (The Rose Garden)*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Bethesda, MA: Ibex Publishers, 2008).

Hamonim asher shakhnu lefanim betokheinu/Horavot azavunu uferets bli nigdar. “Our myriad ancient companions/Have abandoned us to naked ruins.” See Yehudah Halevi, “Yeriot Shlomo” (“Curtains of Solomon”), in Heinrich Brody, ed., and Nina Salaman, trans., *Selected Poems of Yehudah Halevi* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1924, 1952), p. 116.

It is like *tohu* and *bohu*. Phrase in Gen. 1:2 usually defined, though not definitively, as “formless and empty.”

A vast *arava*. Hebrew for “desert.”

Las multitudes que antiguamente moraban entre nosotros/Nos han dejado ruinas indefensas. Trans. Victoria Lauren Smith © 2017 of the Hebrew lines in the fourth note.

Ishmael's descendants ruined our Temple/Leaving us bereft and defenseless. Trans. (loosely) HR, of the Hebrew lines in the fourth note.

High place of great beauty. Reference to a poem by Halevi that begins “Y’fe nof m’shosh taivel” (“Beautiful of Elevation,” in Heinrich Brody, ed., and Nina Salaman, trans., *Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1924, 1952), p. 19. From Ps. 48:2.

Who is like You/Lighting the depths//Fearful in praises, doing wonders? Trans. HR. See Yehudah Halevi, “Mi Khamokha” (“Who Is Like Thee”), in Heinrich Brody, ed., and Nina Salaman, trans., *Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1924, 1952), pp. 94–95. The quotes in the Halevi poem are based respectively on Deut. 33:29, Job 12:22, and Ex. 15:11.

Al-Ghazzali the Persian philosopher says://*Since you came from a higher world your soul is angelic/ After you leave your soul will return to that world.* Adapted from Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field, revised and annotated by Elton L. Daniel (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), p.35. One of the most important of the medieval Muslim thinkers (ca. 1058–1111, b. Tus, Persia), who was a contemporary of Halevi. (Name also spelled Ghazali.)

The Ghost of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra Returns to Spain

Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra. (1092–1167, b. Tudela) Polymath religious teacher, biblical commentator, philosopher, poet, astrologer, and grammarian who brought to the rest of Europe his approach (influenced by Arabic works) to religious and grammatical texts. His biblical commentary uses common sense to explain difficulties such as apparent contradictions.

I once had a garment full of holes/good only for sorting grain. Adapted (tense changed from present to past) from Abraham ibn Ezra, “Me’il yesh li” (first line of poem, since no titles). A complete English translation titled “I Have a Garment,” trans. Robert Mezey, can be found at www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org/poets/abraham-ibn-ezra/#garment and in Robert Mezey, ed. and trans., *Poems from the Hebrew* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), p. 65. Many other translations. See next note too.

my threadbare garment. Reference to Ibn Ezra’s poem beginning “M’il yesh li vehu . . .” (“I have a garment”), in which the poet describes his cloak as so threadbare that he can see the heavens through it. For an excellent translation by Robert Mezey (see previous note for information on his book) and a fanciful interpretation of the whole poem, see “Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Poetics of Imagination” at www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org/poets/abraham-ibn-ezra/. The poem in Hebrew (and titled “The Old Cloak” in English) also can be found in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin, 1981), pp. 353–354. Note that the original poems in Hebrew were not titled.

On my birth day/the fixed stars moved into the sign of bad luck. Adapted from Abraham ibn Ezra, poem that begins “Galgal umazalot” and is titled “My Stars” by Robert Mezey. See second note for online source and information on Mezey’s book, p. 64. Again, many translations.

astrology is still in fashion. Abraham ibn Ezra wrote many books on astrology and translated two others from Arabic, running contrary to the views of some Jewish religious leaders that the use of astrological intermediaries diminishes the perceived power of God.

and the wisdom of Spain I spread. See first note above.

on the high-speed train from Zaragoza (spelled Saragossa in the past). Interesting city in northern

Spain that was the birthplace of, or home to, a number of famous Jews, including the philosopher Rabbi Hasdai Crescas (ca. 1341–1410/1, b. Barcelona), the mystic Rabbi Abraham Abulafia (1240–ca.1291, b. Zaragoza), and several poets.

to Tudela. City in northern Spain that was the birthplace of, or home to, several important medieval Jews in addition to Ibn Ezra, including Benjamin of Tudela (ca. 1130–1173) and possibly the poet-philosopher Yehudah Halevi (1075–1141). Benjamin, called Benjamin the Traveler and known as the Jewish Marco Polo, traveled the known world visiting and writing about Jewish communities.

traveling teacher, the first modern biblical scholar—. Ibn Ezra has been called the first modern biblical scholar for his “rational” approach to biblical interpretation. See first note.

Similarly since a blind man who blinds/a sighted man . . .//. . .figuratively. Ibn Ezra criticized the medieval biblical literalists (the Karaites), arguing that a statement like “an eye for an eye” cannot be taken literally: If a one-eyed man deprives a fully sighted man of one of his eyes, punishing the first man by depriving him of his one good eye would deprive him of his ability to make a living, contradicting another injunction. See also previous note and first note.

God Questions Rabbi Abraham Abulafia, Mystic Prophet of Kabbalah

Rabbi Abraham Abulafia. (1240–ca.1291, b. Zaragoza) Founder of a type of *kabbalah* (the most important Jewish mystical system) that uses special practices to achieve mystical ecstasy and union with God, some of which are used by teachers today.

Devote yourself to combining Holy Names/and great things will happen to you. . . . Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 150. Passage slightly modified. The fourth lecture in Scholem’s book is devoted to Abulafia and is well worth reading.

Like seeing roses blossom/over and over on the same bush. Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, *The Masnavi* (also written *Mathnawi* and other ways), VI, 129–179. See also “Opening,” in *Rumi: One-Handed Basket Weaving: Poems on the Theme of Work*. Versions by Coleman Barks (Athens, GA: MAYPOP, 1991), p. 118. Rumi (1207–1273, b. Vakhsh, in present-day Tajikistan, or Balkh, in present-day Afghanistan; d. Konya, Turkey) was the famous *Sufi* (Muslim mystic) poet and teacher whose work was mostly composed in Farsi (Persian). His first name is transliterated in various ways.

Letter by letter in the six directions. Hebrew letter by Hebrew letter.

Your hundred names. Some Jews believed and still believe that God has a hundred names, including familiar ones like *Adonai* (“Lord”), *Elohim*, and *El Shaddai*, as well as unfamiliar ones like *hamakom* (which also means “the place”).

Tarazona

Tarazona. Small city in northern Spain with well-marked Jewish quarter.

Shema Yisrael Listen Israel/Adonai Eloheinu The Lord is God the Lord is One. . . ./Write these and the rest of the words in the prayer/on the doorposts of your home. The central Jewish prayer, and the commandment and instructions for the *mezuzah*, the protective scroll religious Jews put on their homes. See last note below.

of Granada. Major city in southern Spain.

confused with Tarragona. Port city on the eastern Spanish coast south of Barcelona.

sure Abravanel met. Don Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508, b. Lisbon), Jewish courtier, financier, biblical commentator. During his time in Spain, in service to the Catholic monarchs. See next note. the Catholic monarchs. (Los Reyes Católicos) Queen Isabella (or Isabel) I (1451–1504, b. Madrigal de las Altas Torres) and King Ferdinand (or Fernando) II (later called Ferdinand/Fernando V) (1452–1516, b. Sos del Rey Católico).

describe hanging homes. Homes in the former Jewish quarter appear to hang from the steep rock formations they were built upon.

notches on doorposts might mean something too/places for biblically commanded words. An allusion to the *mezuzah*, the small parchment scroll containing verses from Deut. 6:4–9 and 11:13–21 that Jews are commanded (in Deut. 6:9 and 11:20) to put on the doorposts and gates of their homes. One can imagine that *mezuzot* (plural of *mezuzah*) once lodged in the notches seen on the doorposts of homes once occupied by Jews.

Lament of the Jews of Pamplona

Pamplona. Northern Spanish city famous for running bulls in its streets during the week before Easter Sunday.

God planted a garden in Eden. Gen. 2:8.

created humans/then sent them away. Gen. 2–3.

Search for Survivors

The identity of the narrator is ambiguous, shifting between the author of *Souls in the Garden* and Moses (or Moshe) de León (1250–1305, probably b. León), rabbi (Jewish religious teacher), mystic, and main author of the Jewish mystical book *Zohar*, the *Book of Splendor* (or *Book of Radiance*).

Walk lonely predawn León streets. City with a rich Jewish history, northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid, in northcentral Spain.

Jews of Moslem Spain. Comprehensive though somewhat dated three-volume work by Eliahu Ashtor (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973).

Search for Calle Misericordia. Literally, “street of mercy.” A street in León.

Where La Sinagoga Mayor. Formerly the main Jewish place of worship in León.

Pass Plaza San Martín. Former marketplace in León’s former Jewish quarter.

Streets of lignite artisans. Lignite is brown coal.

But synagogue? *Nada*. A synagogue is a Jewish house of worship. *Nada* is Spanish for “nothing.”

Calle Moisés de León. Street named after Rabbi Moses de León. See first note.

Who gave the world the *Zohar*/That most mystical *Book of Splendor*. The *Zohar* is presented by De León as if written by a second-century rabbi. See also first note, to confuse even further!

For the Museum of the Three Cultures (Museo de las Tres Culturales). Museum in one of the old Jewish quarters of León that uses maps, timelines, clothing, documents, etc., to describe the intertwining presence of Christians, Jews, and Muslims in León. The same building serves as the Center of Interpretation and Reception for Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela (Centro de Interpretación y Recepciones de Peregrinos), since the Camino (the St. James Way pilgrim’s route) enters the city at about this point. See next note.

Walk over the scallop shells. Markers of the Camino de Santiago, the famous Christian pilgrim’s path. The scallop was the symbol of Santiago—St. James.

In the cathedral. The Santa María de León Cathedral (also called the House of Light or Pulchra Leonina).

The French poet Mallarmé. Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898, b. Paris), an important French poet.

Walk the street of the silversmiths. Near one of the old Jewish quarters in León, the home of Jewish artisans in times past.

Connect the dots from León where they say/I was born though I don't know myself for sure.

Reference to the uncertainty of Rabbi Moses de León's birthplace and his relationship to the *Zohar*, the *Book of Splendor*. See first note.

To Guadalajara where they say I lived/And wrote my share of that most splendid *Zohar*/(No one is sure/And I myself have forgotten). Reflecting the various views of its authorship and also alluding to the city where some scholars believe the book was composed or edited. See previous and first notes. Guadalajara is a city northeast of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

To Ávila. Walled city northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

And Arévalo. City about 30 miles (50 km) north of Ávila where De León died.

Of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila) and St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros). Carmelite mystic reformers.

Read *zakhar* . . . /For *zohar*. Play on sounds of Hebrew words for “remember” and “splendor,” as in the key Jewish mystical book *Zohar*, whose title is often translated as *Book of Splendor* or *Book of Radiance*.

Who I am since all I can do myself//Is remember the splendor of that time/The pinpoint radiance everywhere. Reference to the *Zohar*. See previous note.

[T]he *Sepher ha-Zohar*, or book of splendour, . . . // . . . that it dazzles the eyes of the mind. Reference to the *Zohar* (*Book of Splendor*), the main Jewish mystical book, which began appearing in Spain toward the end of the thirteenth century. Jan Potocki, *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 101. The movie based on this book is worth a look; be prepared for a surrealistic trip!

Mrs. Moses de León: From Her “Diary of a Kabbalist’s Wife”

Mrs. Moses de León. Little is known about her except in reference to her husband, Rabbi Moses de León (1250-1305, probably b. León), the main author of the *Zohar*, the *Book of Splendor* (or *Book of Radiance*), the most important Jewish mystical text. The information is based primarily on what is found in the *Book of Lineage* (*Sefer Yuchasin*) by Rabbi Abraham Zacuto (1454–1514) and discussed in *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1 (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), pp. 13–18.

[I]ts wonderful words/came from the Heavens. . . . /When I asked where they came from/the answers conflicted.

Loosely paraphrased from the aforementioned *Book of Lineage*, quoted in *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1 (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), p. 13. Or, see a digitized copy—paginated backwards—of the Hebrew book at babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435011166329;view=1up;seq=191. Information about print books in Hebrew and English, plus information about Zacuto, are at www.zacuto.org.

Rabbi Isaac of Acre. Isaac ben Samuel of Acre (13th–14th centuries), a Palestinian mystic who fled to Spain in 1305 and before this time reportedly had studied with the famous Spanish rabbi Nachmanides, who had, interestingly, fled Spain for the Holy Land, where he died in . . . Acre.

My husband was the famous *kabbalist*. Practitioner of *kabbalah*, the most important stream of Jewish mysticism.

He didn't find the *Zohar*—the *Book of Splendor*. See first note.

Showed up in 1305 in Ávila. Lovely walled city northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid. Of Castile. At the time of the events in the poem, a large, strong kingdom in central-northcentral Spain.

Claiming he'd fled the Holy Land. The Land of Israel.

Garden in Ávila: A *Fado* by Rabbi Moses de León

Ávila. Lovely walled city northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

Fado. From a Portuguese word meaning, literally, "fate"—a Portuguese genre of song about loss and longing.

Rabbi Moses de León. (1250-1305, probably b. León) Important Jewish mystic and main author of the *Zohar*, the *Book of Splendor* (or *Book of Radiance*), the most important work of Jewish mysticism.

Performance note. The italicized lines could be recited by a second reader.

The spirit can enter our world only after rising from our earthly Garden. . . . See *Zohar* 2:13a in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 4, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 64. See also *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2 (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), p. 745. *Ah, bear in mind this garden was enchanted!* Edgar Allan Poe, "To Helen," quoted in Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard: Author of the Quixote," in Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 92. The "To Helen" poem referred to was the second one that Poe wrote with this title.

The italicized lines in Spanish are cut into the metal pedestal in the Jardín de Moshé de León, in Ávila, Spain, pictured in the frontispiece to this book. Here an English translation follows each line. The source of the Spanish translation is not known, since the wording differs somewhat from that in *Zohar*: 2:211a, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 6, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 202.

And in Spanish seems to quote the *Zohar*. See third note.

The Gate of Bad Luck. Called in Spanish the Puerta de Malaventura or Puerta de la Mala Dicha and also the Arco de los Gitanos (Gypsies' Arch). See first note above.

Discussing fine points of *Torah*. Strictly speaking, the five books of Moses in the Hebrew Bible, but also the complete Hebrew Bible or even all Jewish religious books and learning.

But all we can see . . . heavenly halls. A reference to the heavenly halls (*hekhalot*)—also called palaces—described in the early Jewish mystical *hekhalot* literature and also in the *Zohar*. See third note.

I said the garden is a place of earthly delight. An unconscious reference to "The Garden of Earthly Delights," the famous three-paneled painting by the Dutch painter Hieronymous Bosch (ca. 1450-1516). In the Abstract to his article "Bosch and the Jews," Johannes Hartau says, "It seems that some of the hidden symbols in Bosch's oeuvre refer to Christians' fear of . . . seduction by worldly pleasures, for which the 'Jewish world' serves as a warning example." The full article is at www.analesiie.unam.mx/index.php/analesiie/article/view/2188/2146.

I long to return to the splendor still. Reference to the Jewish mystical book *Zohar*, whose title in English is often translated as *Book of Splendor*. See third note.

Meeting in the Heavenly Garden

When St. Teresa of Ávila meets Rabbi Moses de León. St. Teresa (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila) was the mystic, founder of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite religious order, and author of *El castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), also called *Las moradas* (*The Mansions*). Moses de León (1250–1305, probably b. León) was the rabbi (Jewish religious teacher), mystic, and main author of the *Zohar*, the *Book of Splendor* (or *Book of Radiance*), the most important work of Jewish mysticism.

In the Heavenly Garden. The upper Garden of Eden. (Some Jewish mystics also speak of a lower Garden of Eden, which would be such a garden on Earth.

Also lived in Ávila. Lovely walled city northwest of Madrid, the modern Spanish capital.

Near the Gate of Bad Luck. Called in Spanish the Puerta de Malaventura or Puerta de la Mala Dicha and also the Arco de los Gitanos (Gypsies' Arch). City gate outside the old Jewish quarter in Ávila and directly opposite the marker in the Jardín de Moshé de León, the garden honoring the mystic Rabbi Moses de León (see first note). The garden is near the Convent of St. Teresa, built over her birth house. (St. Teresa had Jewish ancestors, so the location of her birthplace does not seem a surprise.) The marker in the garden has a quotation from the *Zohar*, the *Book of Splendor* (or *Book of Radiance*), which is the source of the epigraph to *Souls in the Garden* and of its title.

His *Book of Splendor*. The *Zohar*, the key work of Jewish mysticism.

Every aspect of existence//As an aspect of God. Reference to the *sefirot*, attributes of God, a term used in Jewish mystical literature, though only in some parts of the *Zohar*, the main work of Jewish mysticism. See also first note.

The last of the seven heavenly palaces. A reference to the heavenly palaces, or halls, described in the mystical book *Zohar* and also in the early Jewish mystical *hekhalot* literature (*hekhalot* = halls/palaces).

Her *Interior Castle*. A reference to *El Castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), St. Teresa's signature work, also called *The Mansions* (*Las moradas*), describing her vision of the soul as a diamond in the shape of a castle containing seven mansions, which she interprets as the journey of faith through seven stages, culminating in union with God. The image of the mansions comes originally from The New Testament, John 14:2: "In my house are many mansions."

Seven palaces. Reference to the *sefirot*, attributes of God described in Jewish mystical literature, although the term *sefirot* is used only in parts of the *Zohar*. See also first note above.

Seven mansions. See two notes up.

Completed in this world/and perhaps joined here to the Divine/the ascended souls then join/the Divine forevermore. *Zohar* 1:235a, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 3, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 425. See also *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2, (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), pp. 747–748.

St. Teresa's Confession

St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila), the important and beloved mystic reformer and founder of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite order. See also next note.

The Interior Castle. St. Teresa's signature work (*El castillo interior*), also called *The Mansions* (*Las moradas*), describing her vision of the soul as a diamond in the shape of a castle containing seven mansions, which she interprets as the journey of faith through seven stages, culminating in union with God. The alternate title of her work comes from John 14:2 in the New Testament: "In my house are many mansions."

Zohar—the *Book of Splendor*. Hebrew—then English—title, of the most important work of Jewish mysticism, which began appearing in Spain toward the end of the thirteenth century. Also translated *Book of Radiancy*. See next note.

Rabbi Moses de León. (1250–1305, probably b. León) Jewish mystic and main author of the *Zohar*. See previous note.

Don't think I've forgotten. Title of moving film (*Don't Think I've Forgotten: Cambodia's Lost Rock and Roll*, 2015) about Cambodian musicians before and after the Vietnam war. The line just seemed to fit.

St. Teresa's Secrets

St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila), the important mystic Christian reformer who founded the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite order. Her most famous work is *El castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), also called *Las moradas* (*The Mansions*). See second note to St. Teresa's Confession, just above.

From the painting . . . Ávila. Lovely walled city northwest of Madrid, the modern Spanish capital. The aura of my ancestors. Her ancestors were *conversos*, Spanish-Jewish converts to Christianity.

For Juan de la Cruz. Later known as St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros), the brilliant poet and mystic known especially for his beautiful poem usually titled "Noche oscura" ("Dark Night"), *Cántico espiritual* (*Spiritual Canticle*), *Subida del Monte Carmelo* (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*), and other works of poetry and prose.

The Burning Light

[T]he soul of a righteous person/is none other than a garden/in which the Beloved takes great delight—
Teresa de Jesus. St. Teresa of Ávila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. Mirabai Starr (New York: Riverhead Books, 2003), p. 35. Translation of *El castillo interior* (also called *The Mansions—Las Moradas*). See third note.

A garden is a delight to the eye/and a solace for the soul—Sa'adi. Attributed to the Persian poet Sa'adi (also spelled Sa'di and Saadi) (ca. 1210–ca.1291, b. Shiraz, Persia) and presumably from his *Gulistan* (*The Rose Garden*), the classic book written in 1258 (see classics.mit.edu/Sadi/gulistan.1.introductory.html and www.iranchamber.com/literature/saadi/books/golestan_saadi.pdf). Shaykh Mushrifuddin Sa'adi of Shiraz, *The Gulistan* (*The Rose Garden*), trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Bethesda, MA: Ibex Publishers, 2008). However, I cannot locate this line in either the book or the online English version, so possibly the lines were inspired by Sa'adi. Courtesy Ariana Spillane, Traditional Medicinals.

what if Teresa de Jesús/better known as St. Teresa of Ávila//and Juan de la Cruz/late known as St. John of the Cross. St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila), mystic reformer, founder of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite order, author of *El castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), also called *Las moradas* (*The Mansions*). St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros), mystic poet, colleague, confessor of Teresa's, author of *Cántico espiritual* (*Spiritual Canticle*), *Subida del*

Monte Carmelo (Ascent of Mt. Carmel), and other works of poetry and prose. Imagine being in the presence of these two! The burning light I saw in Spain that inspired this poem had probably just a fraction of the intensity of their original light.

if the long dark night of the soul. Reference to St. John of the Cross's famous poem usually titled "Noche oscura" ("Dark Night") and to his prose exposition of the poem. See previous note.

in his longing . . . blossoming breasts. A phrase from St. John's poem "Noche oscura" ("Dark Night") described in the ... previous note. See Willis Barnstone, trans., *The Poems of St. John of the Cross* (New York: New Directions, 1972), p. 39.

not from *Song of Songs*. Biblical book expressing love for God in human language (or perhaps vice versa), a conceit that influenced mystic poets like St. John of the Cross (see third note).

or from troubadours. Medieval singers, of love songs especially.

and when he looked in his mirror. The mirror is on display in the little museum attached to the Convento de Santa Teresa de Jesús in Segovia, a walled city north-by-northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid, and northeast of Ávila.

not spiritual or Carmelite matters. Having to do with the Catholic order of this name.

but their shared *converso* heritage. A *converso* was a Spanish Jew who voluntarily or under duress or was forcibly converted to Christianity.

and the Jewish mystical *Book of Splendor*. One English translation of title of the *Zohar*, the most important work of Jewish mysticism, which appeared in Spain toward the end of the thirteenth century.

written near Ávila. Lovely walled city northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

what if he was levitating// . . . her cell window. A striking image in a painting of St. Teresa and St. John. See third note.

if Cupid was the angel/who shot the arrow into Teresa's heart. In one of Teresa's most important visions, depicted in paintings, she sees and experiences the suffering of the crucified Jesus through an angel piercing her heart with an arrow.

what if a key . . .//if the chair we see today . . .//and his chalice was used. The key, the chair, and the chalice can be viewed in the little museum attached to the Convento de Santa Teresa de Jesús in Ávila.

in front of the Monasterio de los Carmelitas Descalzos in Segovia. Convent of the Shoeless (or Barefoot, though they wore sandals) Carmelites in Segovia, a walled city north-by-northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid, and northeast of Ávila, which contains the tomb of St. John of the Cross. Also called the Convento de los Carmelitas Descalzos (the Convent of the Shoeless Carmelites) and the Convento de San Juan de la Cruz—the Convent of St. John of the Cross. See also third note.

what if . . . Úbeda. City in southeastern Spain where St. John of the Cross died and where some of his remains are buried.

to bury in Segovia. Beautiful walled city north-by-northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

at the Monasterio de la Encarnación. Convent/Monastery of the Incarnation in Ávila where St. Teresa lived and worked. Also called the Convento de la Encarnación.

what if she created . . . *yemas*. Confection whose recipe is attributed to St. Teresa.

Madrid. The modern Spanish capital.

(in the end . . .//even the pope was involved. The supposed fate of St. John's bones. The author

cannot—and, out of perversity and cynicism about other information he has attempted to verify, does not even want to try to—verify the accuracy of this information.

And Now a Haiku

Haiku. Japanese form of poetry using compressed language, a surprise jump, and three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. The poem is the “posthumous” contribution of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila) to the genre. St. Teresa was the mystic Christian reformer who founded the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite order. Her most famous work is *El castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), also called *Las Moradas* (*The Mansions*), blossoming breasts. A phrase from St. John of the Cross’s famous poem usually titled “Noche oscura” (“Dark Night”). See Willis Barnstone, trans., *The Poems of St. John of the Cross* (New York: New Directions, 1972), p. 39. St. John (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros) was the brilliant poet and mystic known especially for his beautiful poem usually titled “Noche oscura” (“Dark Night”), *Cántico espiritual* (*Spiritual Canticle*), *Subida del Monte Carmelo* (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*), and other works of poetry and prose. He also was the preceptor of St. Teresa (see first note).

Scent of Úbeda

Úbeda. City in southeastern Spain where the great mystic poet St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros) died and where some of his remains are buried, with the rest in Segovia. St. John’s most famous poem is usually titled “Noche oscura” (“Dark Night”).

Music is the soul of a nation. Line in *Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten: Cambodia’s Lost Rock and Roll* (2015), moving film about the Cambodian music scene before and after the Vietnam War.

Plates broke. Úbeda is home to a very old ceramics factory that produces distinctive pottery, some of which has six-pointed-star motifs.

With the sort-of star of David. Six-pointed star that today is the symbol of Judaism, although it also appears in other cultures.

Mystic poet Juan de la Cruz. See first note.

His *converso* past. A *converso* was a Spanish Jew who converted to Christianity by choice or more often under duress or was converted by force.

The kilns are Moorish. Having to do with North-African Muslim tribes called Moors.

Levitating in the Presence of Teresa de Jesús, Later known as St. Teresa of Ávila: A Dialogue Between the Ancient Philosopher Plotinus And the Medieval Spanish Mystic Juan de la Cruz, Later Known as St. John of the Cross

An old painting shows St. John of the Cross) levitating in front of St. Teresa of Ávila. See second and fourth notes.

Teresa de Jesús. (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila) Later known as St. Teresa of Ávila, mystic reformer, leader of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite order, author of *El castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), also called *Las moradas* (*The Mansions*).

Plotinus. Ancient Greek or possibly Egyptian philosopher Plotinus (ca. 204/5–270 C.E., b. Lycopolis, Egypt), especially influenced by Plato and who influenced, either directly or indirectly, the medieval Muslim, Jewish, and Christian philosophers.

Juan de la Cruz. (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros) Later known as St. John of the Cross, the brilliant

poet and mystic known especially for his beautiful poem usually titled “Noche oscura” (“Dark Night”), *Cántico espiritual* (*Spiritual Canticle*), *Subida del Monte Carmelo* (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*), and other works of poetry and prose. An actual painting shows the mystic poet levitating as described in the poem. St. John was a colleague and confessor of St. Teresa’s.

All beauty and good come from the Divine. Plotinus, *Ennead* I.6.6. Plotinus: *The Ethical Treatises, Being the Treatises of the First Ennead*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1917), pp. 77–79. See also sacred-texts.com/cla/plotenn/enn066.htm. See third note for information on Plotinus.

After the epigraph, the italicized lines are adapted from the famous passage in Plotinus’ *Enneads* IV.8.1. Plotinus: *On the Nature of the Soul, Being the Fourth Ennead*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1924), p. 143. See also sacred-texts.com/cla/plotenn/enn400.htm and other translations. See third note for information on Plotinus.

Performance note. The italicized lines could be recited by a second reader.

I contemplated the *auto-de-fé*. (Spanish) The “test of faith” of a person’s Christian beliefs that involved mental and physical torture, often culminating in being burnt alive at the stake. through the bars . . . in her convent in Ávila. Lovely walled city northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

Lament of the Saint of Segovia

Saint of Segovia. St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros), the brilliant mystic poet known especially for his poem usually titled “Noche oscura” (“Dark Night”), *Cántico espiritual* (*Spiritual Canticle*), *Subida del Monte Carmelo* (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*), and other works of poetry and prose.

Segovia is a beautiful walled city north-by-northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

Why does the Holy One dispatch us here/only to snatch us back there?/To make us know His glory, of course. Zohar 1:235a, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 3, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 425. See also *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2 (see **FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION: Philosophy, Mysticism, Theology, and Astrology** for full citation), p. 748.

Died in Úbeda/Some body parts there//Some in Segovia/But who can keep track of them. Úbeda, in southern Spain north-by-northeast of Córdoba, is where St. John died and where some of his bones remain, with the rest in Segovia and possibly one arm in Madrid, the modern Spanish capital. See also last note for **The Burning Light** above.

Below the Jewish cemetery. Across a small canyon and the Clamores stream from the walled city of Segovia, the remarkable Jewish cemetery of Pinarillo features a number of partially excavated tombs.

My monastery is on the path. He seems to mean the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrim’s path to Santiago de Compostela, but another path in Segovia (the St. John of the Cross Route) connects the two religious houses of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless, though they wore shoes) Carmelite Catholic order—the Convent of St. Joseph and the friary. Or, he may mean this metaphorically.

Of life lived . . . Alcázar. A Spanish Islamic castle.

The scent . . . blood oranges. Oranges with red flesh, introduced into Spain well after the lifetime of St. John.

Do I remember my ancestors. Reference to St. John’s Jewish ancestry. See first note.

Of the Jewish mystics/. . . in nearby Ávila. Reference to Rabbi Moses de León (1250–1305, probably b. León). Ávila is a lovely walled city northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid, and southwest of Segovia that was home to the important mystic Catholic reformer St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. Ávila) and, about 250 years earlier, the important Jewish mystic Rabbi Moses de León, thought to be the main author of the *Zohar*, the *Book of Splendor* (or *Radiance*), the most important Jewish mystical book.

In these twin sky cities. References to Segovia and Ávila, both walled cities on hills. Also a distant, obscure nod to Acoma pueblo in New Mexico, a Native-American “city” perched on cliffs and called the Sky City.

Juan de la Cruz/Later known as St. John of the Cross//Says it is indeed the dark night of the soul/
When we cannot remember any of this. Reference to St. John’s famous, beautiful poem usually titled “Noche oscura” (“Dark Night”) and to his prose exposition of the poem. See first note.

And cannot remember how after joining the Divine/we can now be coming down//Or how our soul ever entered/our body in the first place. Plotinus (ca. 204/5–270 C.E., b. Lycopolis, Egypt), *Ennead* IV.8.1. Plotinus: *On the Nature of the Soul, Being the Fourth Ennead*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1924), p. 143. See also sacred-texts.com/cla/plotenn/enn400.htm. Ancient Greek or possibly Egyptian philosopher influenced by Plato, who in turn influenced the medieval Jewish, Christian, and Muslim philosophers and mystics.

The Yemas of St. Teresa of Ávila

Yemas. Confection attributed to St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila), the mystic reformer, founder of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite order, and author of *El castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), also called *Las moradas* (*The Mansions*).

Don’t think I’ve forgotten. Title of moving film (*Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten: Cambodia’s Lost Rock and Roll*, 2015) about Cambodian musicians before and after the Vietnam war. The line just seemed to fit.

The Gate of Bad Luck. Called in Spanish the Puerta de Malaventura or Puerta de la Mala Dicha and also the Arco de los Gitanos (Gypsies’ Arch). Gate in the Ávila wall opposite a monument to the mystic Rabbi Moses de León (1250–1305, probably b. León).

The sugar . . . *abuela*. *Abuela* is Spanish for “grandmother.”

The cinnamon . . . Holy Land. Reference to the Land of Israel.

St. Teresa’s Finger

St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila) was the mystic reformer and founder of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite order.

In a glass case. In the museum in the Convento de Santa Teresa in Ávila are the relics described, and depictions of some of her visions and experiences. See www.sacred-destinations.com/spain/avila-convento-santa-teresa.

A spear in her heart. A painting depicts St. Teresa’s vision of herself with a spear in her heart.

St. John of the Cross levitating. St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros) was the brilliant mystic poet known especially for his poem usually titled “Noche oscura” (“Dark Night”), *Cántico espiritual* (*Spiritual Canticle*), *Subida del Monte Carmelo* (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*), and other works of poetry and prose. A painting depicts St. Teresa watching St. John levitating.

Discalced slippers. *Discalced* = “shoeless,” so, slippers that were removed.

The key to her interior//Castle. *El castillo interior (The Interior Castle)*, also called *Las moradas (The Mansions)*, is her signature work, describing her vision of the soul as a diamond in the shape of a castle containing seven mansions, which she interpreted as the journey of faith through seven stages, culminating in union with God. The alternate title of her work comes from John 14:2 in the New Testament: "In my house are many mansions."

Jewish Quarter. The former Jewish quarter in Ávila is near where St. Teresa was born. Her missing finger. From her right hand.

Testimony of Don Fernando Pérez Coronel, Formerly Rabbi Don Abraham Senior of Segovia

Don Fernando Pérez Coronel. (1412–1493, b. Segovia) Jewish religious teacher (rabbi) and community leader converted to Christianity by Queen Isabella herself—Isabella (or Isabel) I of Castile (1451–1504, b. Madrigal de las Atlas Torres). Sometimes in his previous incarnation known as Abraham Seneor, with his name spelled in different ways. See second-to-last note. Segovia. Historic city north and slightly west of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, by the grace of God, . . . order that, by the end of July next of the present year [1492], all Jews and Jewesses depart from these our said realms. . . . From *The Edict of Expulsion of the Jews* (April 29, 1492) (sephardicstudies.org/decreed.html). See also second- and third-to-last notes.

of the Jewish cemetery. Across a small canyon and the Clamores stream from Segovia, the remarkable Jewish cemetery of Pinarillo features a number of partially excavated tombs. Segovia is a historic walled city north-by-northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

claiming . . . rabbi. A rabbi is a Jewish religious teacher.

Sure, my *Torah* learning. Reference to knowledge of Jewish texts (like the *Torah*, the five books of Moses), traditions, laws, and beliefs.

leave behind everything good in the Spain we called *Sefarad*. As used here, *Sefarad* is the Hebrew term for "Spain," specifically "Jewish" Spain or Jewish life in Spain or the whole Iberian peninsula, which includes Portugal. (Also spelled *Sepharad*.)

After all . . . *kabbalistic mystics*. Reference to practitioners or adherents of the Jewish (and later on, Christian as well) mystical "system" called *kabbalah*.

were no better than the trinitarians. Normally, a reference to Christian believers in the trinity, but here a slap at Jewish mystics who believed that God had ten parts.

were no better . . . ten faces/of the Godhead . . . oneness. A reference to the ten *sefirot*—attributes of God—described in Jewish mysticism.

at the cemetery . . . slaughterhouse. The old Jewish slaughterhouse, now a museum.

The moon . . . resembled a certain Hebrew letter/on its back. The letter yod (י) bears some resemblance to a crescent moon. This image appears also in Samuel Hanagid, "Ehi Kofer l'Ofer" ("Invitation"), in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin, 1981), p. 298. Samuel Hanagid = Shmuel Hanigid (993–1056, b. Córdoba).

on its back. Isabella and Ferdinand. Catholic monarchs (Los Reyes Católicos) Isabella (or Isabel) and Ferdinand (or Ferdinand) II of Aragon (1452–1516, b. Sos del Rey Católico) (also called Ferdinand V), who married, established the Spanish Inquisition of 1478, and in 1492 signed the edict expelling all unconverted Jews from Spain. See first note too.

the destruction . . . *converso* by *converso*. *Conversos* were Spanish Jews who converted to Christianity voluntarily or under duress or were forcibly converted. Abraham Senior was persuaded—chose—to convert. Ferdinand had a Jewish ancestor, and Abraham Senior's Christian name obviously was taken from the king's name.

in Segovia in 1492. The year Jews were expelled from Spain unless they converted to Christianity.

Segoviana: A Souvenir of Segovia

Segovia. City north-by-northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid, that was home to the mystic poet St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros).

Strange men read the Hebrew letters on our foreheads. Reference to the powers of the contemporaneous Palestinian mystic Rabbi Isaac Luria (1532–1572, b. Jerusalem) to read a person's soul from Hebrew letters he saw (or whose absence he noted) on the person's forehead.

Don Isaac Abravanel, Unprophetic Prophet of His People

Don Isaac Abravanel (sometimes spelled and called Abarbanel) (1437–1508, b. Lisbon), Jewish statesman, financial adviser, biblical commentator, community leader.

Note on the poem. The information published on Abravanel is often inconsistent, and scholars often quote primary sources or other articles or books containing unconfirmed information.

These primary sources include Abravanel's own texts. The poem wrestles with these issues.

Expert on prophets . . . Daniel. Reference to the biblical prophet.

Could predict . . . between 1503 and 1573. Seymour Feldman, *Philosophy in a Time of Crisis: Don Isaac Abravanel, Defender of the Faith* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 148. Exact quote from Feldman: "between 1503 and 1573."

Although you consulted the same books as Daniel. Dan. 9:2.

Were perhaps . . . Maimonides. (1138–1204, b. Córdoba) Latinized name of Rabbi Moses (Moshe) ben Maimon, religious leader, physician, Jewish community leader, and most influential of Jewish philosophers.

That in spite of . . . Messiah. Savior of humankind, coming at the so-called end of days. Both Jews and Christians believe in such a figure, but Christians believe the Messiah already has come, in the figure of Jesus, while Jews believe the Messiah is yet to come. The word literally means "the anointed one."

"[M]any terrible evils . . . people/ . . . has seen." Eric Lawee, *Isaac Abarbanel's Stance Toward Tradition: Defense, Dissent, and Dialogue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), p. 129.

"When we are in the land of our enemies . . . //Or break His covenant with us." Lev. 26:44. Slightly modified by HR.

You also seem to have forgotten . . . // . . . His face. See Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 500.

As even you said . . . God. Alfredo Fabio Borodowski, *Isaac Abravanel on Miracles, Creation, Prophecy and Evil: The Tension Between Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Biblical Commentary* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 59, 80, and 113.

The people mourned when they heard the terrible decree. Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), p. 138.

And I said I hoped "to try to bring comfort to those/Who stumble from the exile." Eric Lawee, "The

Messianism of Isaac Abravanel, ‘Father of the [Jewish] Messianic Movements of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,’” in Matt D. Goldish and Richard H. Popkin, *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture*: vol. 1: *Jewish Messianism in the Early Modern World* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2001), p.15.

“But sensing the end was near/”I had run out of ideas and lacked the strength/”To help others.” Inspired by Chokhamela, poem 157, in Rohini Mokashi-Punekar, trans, *On the Threshold: Songs of Chokhamela* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005), p. 41. Chokhamela was a great untouchable fourteenth-century Indian saint-poet.

From the impending “great and terrible destruction.” Quote is from Eric Lawee, p. 8. See fifth note above for full source.

The only king you like is the heavenly kind and only God guides Israel. Avner Tomaschoff, trans., *Abarbanel on the Torah: `Selected Themes* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency for Israel, 2007), p. 427. Although you praised a Portuguese king. Alfonso V (1432–1481, b. Sintra, Portugal).

As did Abraham Senior. Don Fernando Pérez Coronel (1412–1493, b. Segovia), Jewish religious teacher and community leader converted to Christianity by Queen Isabella (also Isabel) herself. Also spelled Abraham Seneor and sometimes written with Spanish spellings and additional names.

The Bible is the word of God . . . / . . . from revelation. Isaac Abravanel, *Principles of Faith* (Rosh Amanah), trans. Menachem Kellner (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: London and East Brunswick, N.J., 1982), p. 29.

And divine law has just one principle:/The world was created from nothing. See p. 34 in source in previous note.

We aren’t sure . . . three times or even once/To revoke the Edict of Expulsion. Abravanel wrote that he approached the monarchs three times to try to persuade them to revoke the edict (see next note) and also supposedly wrote them a strongly worded letter. All of these actions are now disputed by some modern scholars. See, for example, Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), pp. 298–299. The Edict of Expulsion, signed in 1492 by Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, expelled, under threat of death or conversion, all unconverted Jews from Spain and would have led to the expulsion (or possible death) of Don Isaac Abravanel if he hadn’t left.

Based on the words of Shmuel Hanagid—/Samuel the Prince—. (993–1056, b. Córdoba) Poet, Jewish religious scholar, vizier to the Muslim ruler of Granada, military commander, perhaps the most important Jew of his day (at least in Spain).

“May an advocate angel//. . . God’s glory.” What Shmuel Hanagid (see previous note) wrote in the last stanza of a poem titled in Hebrew “Hanimtsa Vereiai,” in T. Carmi, ed. *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 301. Here the translation is by Gideon Weisz © 2017.

That you did not “delve into the mysteries of the *kabbalah*.” Reference to the main stream of Jewish mysticism. Avner Tomaschoff, trans. *Abarbanel on the Torah: Selected Themes* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency for Israel, 2007), p. 404.

You “have no business with secret matters.” Seymour Feldman, *Philosophy in a Time of Crisis: Don Isaac Abravanel, Defender of the Faith* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 156.

On Shabbat. The Jewish sabbath.

To apply Occam’s razor. A medieval logical tool designed to simplify complex problems.

We will eat our own bread// . . . Spain and Portugal. Adapted by HR from Is. 4:1–2.

The Rainbow

An ancient curse still stands on anyone/who tries to predict the End of Days. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97b. See also Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 500.

Where are you going dressed in white like a bride/Queen Isabella?//I'm going to the synagogue/to meet Don Isaac Abravanel. The back-and-forth works off the refrain in **Sensing Souls in Toledo** (see notes to that poem). Queen Isabella is Isabella (or Isabel) I (1474–1504, b. Madrigal de las Altas Torres, Ávila), Queen of Castile and eventually all of Spain. Co-architect of the edict of expulsion expelling Jews from Spain in 1492.

I'm going to the synagogue. To a Jewish house of worship and study.

to meet Don Isaac Abravanel. (1437–1508, b. Lisbon) Jewish courtier, financier, biblical commentator. See previous poem.

If it's to discuss the edict. See second note.

Didn't he just loan you money/to defeat the Muslims in Granada? 1492, ending the reconquest of Spanish territory from Muslims, who had invaded Spain in 711.

to make way for the Second Coming. Of Jesus.

Tears flooded the ocean/broken hearts the cargo hold. Adapted from Ibn al-Labbana (12th c., b. Dénia), (12th c., b. Dénia), trans. Sahar Omar Taha Al Nima © 2017, modified by HR. For a translation of the whole poem, see Al-Mu'Tamid and His Family Go into Exile," in Cola Franzen, trans., *Poems of Arab Andalusia* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989), pp. 88–89. Also see James T. Monroe, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 214–217. A little more on this Spanish-Muslim poet can be found at referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ibn-al-labbana-SIM_3267.

Where are you going dressed in your gown of many colors. See Gen. 37:3, describing Joseph's coat of many colors.

When the Savior returns. Jesus Christ.

You tried to kidnap his grandson. Apparently Isabella (Isabel) and Ferdinand (Fernando) tried to have Don Isaac's son kidnapped to "persuade" him to stay in Spain after the Edict of Expulsion would force Abravanel to leave unless he converted. See fifth note.

Where did you go dressed in a veil of myrtle and myrrh. Inspired by *Zohar* 2:208b in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 6, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 188, text and note 237; p. 190, text and note 242.

Three times and then that awful letter. Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), p. 134.

"I'll ascend steep cliffs . . ./Hoping you'll let go your anger." Shmuel Hanagid, "Neshamah Me-asher" ("The Poet Leaves Cordoba"), in *Jewish Prince in Moslem Spain: Selected Poems of Samuel Ibn Nagrela*, Introduction, Translation, and Notes by Leon J. Weinberger (The University of Alabama Press, 1973), pp. 19–20//Shmuel Hanagid, "Hatakhis Malakekha" ("At Court"), in same source, p. 61, trans. Gideon Weisz © 2018. Shmuel Hanagid, Samuel the Prince, is also known as Samuel ibn (or Ibn) Nagrela.

the meaning of the three stars. *Shabbat*, the Jewish Sabbath, ends when three stars can be seen Saturday evening.

of the Trinity as well. The Catholic father, son, and holy ghost, but of course the implication is that there is a true "Jewish" interpretation.

It's said your husband made the decisions. King Ferdinand (or Fernando) II of Aragon (later the V of Castile and then king of all of Spain) (1452-1516, b. Sos del Rey Católico).

So cold and hard, my Lady?/Spare some sign, a syllable/for me. Chokhamela, in Rohini Mokashi-Punekar, trans., *On the Threshold: Songs of Chokhamela* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005), p. 36. I changed the last word from "Lord" to "Lady." According to the introduction to this book, "*Chokhamela was a fourteenth-century untouchable [outcaste] saint poet of western India.*"

Where will you go dressed in your garment of deeds. See *Zohar* 2:210a/b, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 6, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 197–199. The *Zohar* says "good deeds."

What about the three stars—. *Shabbat*, the Jewish Sabbath, ends Saturday evening when three stars can be seen in the sky.

in your ethereal garment of spiritual intentions. See *Zohar* 2:210a/b, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 6, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 197–199.

We are pariahs/No one wants us. Inspired by Chokhamela, in Chandrakant Kaluram Mhatre, trans., *One Hundred Poems of Chokha Mela* (CreateSpace, 2015), p. 20. See four notes up for information on the author.

But . . . only God knows/who will enter paradise. Adapted from Ahmed Ibn Mohammed Al-Makkari (c. 1578–1632, b. Algeria), *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, vol. 1, trans. Pascual de Gayangos (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1964), p. 160.

A rainbow/glorious as a bride/will herald the Messiah. *Zohar* 1:72b, in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1, translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 428-429. See also Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 500.

Stumbling Upon Biblioteca Abraham Zacut

Biblioteca Abraham Zacut. Library at the University of Salamanca (founded in 1134) named after Rabbi (Don) Abraham Zacut(o) (1452–1515, b. Salamanca), important Jewish astronomer and mathematician whose astrolabe and astronomical tables revolutionized ocean navigation and contributed to Portugal's success as a trading nation and colonial power.

The ships fitted out . . . //wood. "Zacuto, Abraham Ben Samuel" (www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/15132-yuhasin-sefer-ha).

Salamanca. City northwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

And memorials to Fray Luis. Fray Luis de León (1527–1591, b. Belmonte), theologian and poet, descended from Jews converted to Christianity, imprisoned for heresy.

To Cervantes, quixotic pride of crypto-Jews. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1514–1616, b. Alcála de Henares), author of *Don Quixote* (arguably the first novel), descended from Jews converted to Christianity. Crypto-Jews (secret or hidden Jews) were converted Jews or their descendants who, fearing persecution or execution, continued (and in some cases even today have continued) some Jewish practices.

and to Unamuno. Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936, b. Bilbao), Spanish philosopher, poet, novelist, and playwright.

named after Rabbi Abraham Zacut. See first note.

Author of the massive *Sefer Yuchasin/the Book of Lineage*. Also transliterated *Sefer ha-Yuhasin* and other ways.

The Night of Murdered Poets

The title comes from what is called the Night of the Murdered Poets, August 12, 1952, when thirteen Soviet Jews were executed on orders from Stalin, among them five Yiddish writers: Peretz Markish, David Hofstein, Itzik Feffer, Leib Kvitko, and David (or Dovid) Bergelson. All were members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, and the trumped-up charges included espionage and counterrevolutionary crimes.

The betrothal was really over. . . .//This was the end of everything. Introduction to David Bergelson (1884–1952, b. Sarny, Ukraine), *The End of Everything*, trans. Joseph Sherman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. xl. Originally published in 1913. This is a novel in Yiddish—*Nokh Alemen* is the Yiddish title—by one of the murdered Jewish writers described in the previous note.

With toca, garrote/Porto, and strappado. Torture methods or devices, associated with medieval Spain but sometimes with contemporary associations. *Toca* is water torture. *Garrote* is torture and killing by crushing the neck. *Porto* is torture on a device with sharp rungs. *Strappado* (or *strapado*) is torture in which the victim is suspended by his or her wrists tied together in back. These methods often resulted in death and perhaps were intended to avenge, in a commensurate manner, the torture and eventual death of Jesus.

Yehudah Halevi Explains Why He Left All the Good Things of Spain

Yehudah Halevi. (1075–1141, b. Tudela or Toledo) Rabbi (Jewish religious teacher), philosopher, and one of the greatest Jewish poets.

Why/He Left All the Good Things of Spain. Reference to his famous poem that begins “*Libi v’ Mizrach*” (“My Heart Is in the East”). I have opted to base the title on the familiar translation of the opening of the original poem—“A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of Spain”—in Heinrich Brody, ed., and Nina Salaman, trans., *Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1924, 1952), p. 2. The Hebrew word Halevi uses for Spain (*Sefarad*, or *Sepharad*) occurs once in the Hebrew Bible (Obad. 1:20) and traditionally has meant Spain but probably meant another place.

Performance note. The indented verses and the rhymed-prose couplets could be recited by different readers.

To leave all the bounty of Spain//of the ruined Holy of Holies. See second note above for source. Trans. Gideon Weisz © 2017, modified by HR.

In Tudela de Navarre. Tudela, a city northeast of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

Sparkling surface of the Río Ebro. The main river flowing through Tudela.

And the moon . . . the Hebrew letter *yod*. The letter *yod* (י) resembles a partial crescent moon. This image appears also in Samuel Hanagid (993–1056, b. Córdoba), “*Ehi Kofer l’Ofer*” (“Invitation”), in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin, 1981), p. 298.

My heart is in the East, and I’m as far west as you can go. Translation of famous line in the poem cited in the second note.

Soon the philosopher Maimonides. (1138–1204, b. Córdoba) Latinized name of Rabbi Moses

(Moshe) ben Maimon—religious leader and teacher, physician, codifier of Jewish law, most influential of Jewish philosophers. It was said that from (the biblical) Moses to Moses (Maimonides), there was none other.

Will ignore not just my *Kuzari*, but my whole poetic endeavor as well. Halevi's great philosophic work, *The Kuzari*, in which a Jew, a Christian, and a Muslim try to convince the *kuzari*, the ruler of the Central Asian Khazars, which religion is best. Maimonides (see previous entry) never referred to *The Kuzari* in his writings and was not especially supportive of the poetic enterprise, though not specifically Halevi's. In *The Kuzari*, the ruler and his entire people convert to Judaism, although the story probably did not occur.

To join my ancestors . . . Holy Land. Former home to Jews in the ancient world. During Halevi's lifetime Jerusalem was part of a Christian Crusader kingdom.

En el este está me corazón, y en el extremo oeste estoy. Spanish translation of "My heart is in the East/and I'm as far west as you can go," by Victoria Lauren Smith © 2017. See second and ninth notes.

In a corner of Tudela. See fifth note.

A plaza with my name. Plaza de Yehudah Halevi, with a statue of the poet along with quotations from some of his poems.

And those of Benjamin the Traveler. Benjamin of Tudela (ca. 1130–1173, b. Tudela), who traveled the world visiting and writing about Jewish communities.

Abraham ibn Ezra. (1092–1167, b. Tudela) Polymath Jewish religious teacher (rabbi), poet, philosopher, astrologer, and biblical commentator.

Solomon ibn Gabirol. (1021/2–ca. 1054/58/70, b. Málaga) Rabbi (Jewish religious teacher), poet, and philosopher.

Libi vemizrach v'anochi besof maarav. Transliteration of original Hebrew text of the lines "My heart's in the East/and I'm as far west as you can go." See second and ninth notes.

Turning desert to promised land. The Holy Land. Former home to Jews in the ancient world.

Libi vemizrach v'anochi besof maarav/En el este está me corazón, y en el extremo oeste estoy/My heart is in the East, and I'm as far west as you can go. Hebrew, Spanish, and English versions of the famous line. See second note above. The original poem and another English translation appear in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 347.

As with Jacob. The biblical patriarch.

That God was in the place//Where he slept/It is that God is in this place. In Gen. 28:16, Jacob awakens from a dream and says, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not (modified JPS translation).

Hamakom, Hebrew for "the place," is read as a name of God. The poem riffs on this.

En el este está me corazón, y en el extremo oeste estoy. Spanish translation of "My heart is in the East/and I'm as far west as you can go," by Victoria Lauren Smith © 2017. See second and ninth notes.

I was born not in Tudela but Toledo instead. Halevi's birthplace is uncertain. Toledo is southwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

Or a horse or just died in Cairo. Egyptian city where Halevi might have died after he left Spain, and where later, Maimonides (see third note) lived.

No matter . . . Toledo. City southwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid.

Of the Río Tagus. Longest river on the Iberian Peninsula, flowing through Toledo.

My heart is in the East, and I'm as far west as you can go. Translation of famous line in the poem cited in the first note.

Libi vemizrach v'anochi besof maarav. . . . Hebrew of line in previous note.

Yekal be'ainay azov kol-tuv sefarad kemo/Yekar be'ainay re'ot afrot devir necherav//I'm drowning
give my life! See second note for source. The English is my loose translation.

The Return of Samuel the Prince

Samuel the Prince. Anglicized name of Shmuel Hanagid (993–1056, b. Córdoba), poet, scholar, vizier to the Muslim ruler of Granada, commander of the military, and perhaps the most prominent Jew of his time (at least in Spain). The poem is modeled after his poem that Peter Cole has titled “The Market,” in *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain 950–1492*, translated, edited, and introduced by Peter Cole (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 68–69. His name is also written Samuel ibn Nagrela (and with other spellings).

No one has ever escaped death. From a poem by Samuel the Prince that begins in Hebrew “Lo nimtsa et bo met,” trans. HR. The whole poem in English is called “The Market” in Peter Cole’s translation, listed in the previous note.

Mangia! “Eat!” in Italian.

Like orphans from Gabirolean spheres. Reference to organization of first part of long religious–philosophical poem “Keter Malkhut” (“Crown of the King” or “Wisdom’s Crown”) by Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/2–ca. 1054/58/70, b. Málaga), Jewish religious teacher (rabbi), poet, and philosopher. For an English translation see Peter Cole, trans., *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol* (Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2002), pp. 137–195.

Strangers in a strange land. From Ex. 2:22. Also title of famous science-fiction novel by Robert Heinlein.

Through the *sushi shuk*. In this poem, a market (Hebrew: *shuk*) selling Japanese-style raw fish preparations.

The raw tuna . . . *sakis* serve *sake*. *Sakis*—wine servers, often handsome boys or young men serving at wine parties. *Sake*—Japanese rice wine.

Where *ofers*. *Ofers* (Hebrew) are *sakis* (wine servers). See previous note.

Ornamental foods . . . like a courtier the morning after. In this case the courtier refers to a Jewish subject close to the Muslim court, after a wine party.

That dietary customs are not random. Reference to dietary laws in the Hebrew Bible. See next note for an example.

“You shall not eat. . . .” See Ex. 22:31. Reference to Jewish dietary laws.

O Spaniards!

Not one of the . . . writers of my age/has entered the ranks . . . of Spanish literature. Based on a statement to a court by David (or Dovid) Bergelson (1884–1952, b. Sarny, Ukraine), one of the Soviet Jewish writers murdered on orders by Stalin on the Night of the Murdered Poets, August 12, 1952. The original statement reads, in translation: “I ask the court to take note of the fact that not one of the Yiddish writers of my age has entered the ranks of Soviet literature. . . .” Quoted in the Introduction to David Bergelson, *The End of Everything*, trans. Joseph Sherman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. xxvii. The reference has been changed from Russian to Spanish literature.

in *auto-de-fé*. (Spanish) The “test of faith” of a person’s Christian beliefs that involved mental and physical torture, often culminating in being burnt alive at the stake.

At daybreak . . . /My poor happiness blooms. Ekaterina Beketova (1855–1892, b. Russia), “The Lilacs,” trans. Laura Olson Osterman © 2016, modified by HR. Famous poem set to music by Sergei Rachmaninoff—Op. 21, No. 5. Many recordings with piano and voice and just piano, for example, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU3BEZuVFdw.

the language in which we ended our poems—/was it not the same as yours? Some medieval Hebrew (and Arabic) poems include a final few lines in what is sometimes called Romance, a Romance vernacular dialect that predates Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan as we know them. These lines, called a *kharja* (“exit”), could also be in Arabic or in a mixture of Arabic and Romance.

Solomon ibn Gabirol in Málaga. (1021/2–ca. 1054/58/70, b. Málaga) The great Jewish religious scholar (rabbi), poet, and philosopher. There is a statue of him in Málaga, a southeastern Spanish coastal city.

Yehudah Halevi in Tudela. (1075–1141, b. Tudela or Toledo). Jewish religious teacher (rabbi) and great poet and philosopher. Plaques and a plaza dedicated to him can be found in Tudela, a city northeast of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid, and a street in Córdoba in southern Spain is named after him.

Moses ibn Ezra in Toledo. (1055–1135, b. Granada) Jewish religious scholar (rabbi), important poet, and codifier of poetics. His poem “*Kevarim min zeman kedem*” (“I Behold Ancient Graves”) (this is the first line, since the original poem had no title) is engraved on a wall in the courtyard of the Jewish museum in Toledo, a city southwest of the modern Spanish capital, Madrid. See www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org/poets/moses-ibn-ezra/.

Samuel the Prince in Granada. Shmuel Hanagid (993–1056, b. Córdoba) Jewish religious teacher (rabbi), poet, patron, scholar, vizier to the Muslim ruler of the important southern Spanish city of Granada, commander of the military, and perhaps the most prominent Jew of his time (at least in Spain). There might be a plaza with his name or a marker or statue of him in Granada, but I couldn’t find it.

we made a new language from yours. A reference to Judeo-Spanish—Ladino—a language based on older Spanish that still is spoken and written by Jews originally from the Iberian Peninsula.

Why don’t we visit the garden/Every plant’s in bloom. Shmuel Hanagid (Samuel the Prince) (see two notes up), “*Yehosef yat levav avin bemilah*,” trans. Gideon Weisz © 2017, modified by HR. Complete poem in English in Jonathan P. Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 81. In Hebrew and English in Leon J. Weinberger, *Jewish Prince in Moslem Spain: Selected Poems of Samuel Ibn Nagrela* (University, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1973), pp. 66–67.

every tree crowned high/beautifully fruited. From Shmuel Hanagid (see three notes up), “*V’omar al tishan*,” trans. HR. Complete poem in Hebrew and English in Raymond. P. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), pp. 40–41, and in English in Jonathan P. Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 80.

living in Iberian gardens. Reference to the Iberian peninsula, encompassing modern-day Spain and Portugal.

The garden’s coat’s multicolored/the grasses’ embroidered. Reference, I would think, to Joseph’s many-colored coat in Gen. 37:3 and picked up in Moses ibn Ezra, “*Katnot pasim lavash hagan*” (the first line, serving as a title), trans. HR. Complete poem in English in Jonathan P. Decter, *Iberian*

Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 86. Also in Hebrew and English in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 323.

Leaving Spain's delights behind/would be easy. From poem by Spanish-Jewish rabbi-poet-philosopher Yehudah Halevi that begins "Libi vemizrach" ("My Heart Is in the East"), in Heinrich Brody, ed., and Nina Salaman, trans., *Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1924, 1952), p. 2. Many translations.

St. John. St. John of the Cross (1542–1591, b. Fontiveros), the mystic poet known especially for his poem usually titled "Noche oscura" ("Dark Night"), *Cántico espiritual* (*Spiritual Canticle*), *Subida del Monte Carmelo* (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*), and other works of poetry and prose.

St. Teresa. St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582, b. in or near Ávila), mystic reformer, founder of the Discalced (Barefoot, Shoeless) Carmelite order, and author most notably of *El castillo interior* (*The Interior Castle*), also called *Las moradas* (*The Mansions*), describing her vision of the soul as a diamond in the shape of a castle containing seven mansions, which she interpreted as the journey of faith through seven stages, culminating in union with God.

Fray Luis. Fray Luis de León (1527–1591, b. Belmonte), theologian and poet, descended from Jews converted to Christianity, imprisoned for heresy.

Cervantes. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1514–1616, b. Alcála de Henares), author of *Don Quixote* (arguably the first novel), descended from Jews converted to Christianity.

In faraway Persia . . . Rumi. See next note.

The strong wind embraces/the weakness of the grass. Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, *The Masnavi* (also written *Mathnawi* and other ways), I, 3325–3343. See "The Grasses," in *Jalaluddin Rumi: Feeling the Shoulder of the Lion: Selected Poetry and Teaching Stories from the Mathnawi*. Versions by Coleman Barks (Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1991), p. 18. Rumi (1207–1273, b. Vakhsh, in present-day Tajikistan, or Balkh, in present-day Afghanistan; d. Konya, Turkey) was the famous *Sufi* (Muslim mystic) poet and teacher whose work was mostly composed in Farsi (Persian). His first name is transliterated in various ways.

An Unanswered Question

The title echoes that of *The Unanswered Question*, a musical work by the American composer Charles Ives (1874–1954, b. Danbury, CT).

What do Marranos . . . have in common? *Marranos*: Spanish Jews converted or forced to convert to Christianity (also called *...conversos*), with the connotation "pigs."; *Moriscos*: Spanish Muslims in the same boat; *Mozarabs*: Christians living in areas of Spain ruled by Muslims.

We claimed to be the trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in Catholicism.

She lit candles in secret and Judaized. Practiced Judaism or tried to reconvert Jews who had converted to Christianity.

I said I was God. . . secretly desecrated statues of the Savior and His mother. Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Who's the fourth man on the cross, then? Federico García Lorca.

A poet from the future . . . ghazals and qasidas. The poet is Federico García Lorca (1896–1936, b. Fuente Vaqueros, Spain). Spanish poet, dramatist, folklorist, composer, and artist, murdered August 19, 1936, by the fascists during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). (see next note). Gypsies originated in—yes—Rajasthan, in North India. *Andalusian past* refers to Al-Andalus (Andalusia),

the term for Spain ruled by Muslims. *Ghazals* are a poetic form used especially by Arab, Persian, Hindu, and medieval Jewish poets to write about love, human or divine or both. *Qasidas* are a pre-Islamic North African poetic form adopted by Arab and Jewish poets. Lorca wrote some poems with “gacela” or “casida” in the title, although these don’t follow the Arabic forms.

He wrote a poem called “Murió al Amanecer”—“He Died at Dawn.” See Francisco García Lorca and Donald M. Allen, eds., *The Selected Poems of Federico García Lorca* (New York: New Directions, 1955), pp. 46–47.

One stanza speaks of four nighttime moons. See previous note.

Who were the others, and what did they do? These are the other subjects of the poems in *Souls in the Garden*.

One was too sad . . . Jewish–Christian disputation. A formal spectacle in which Jews were forced to defend their religion and prove that the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish religious texts do not refer to Jesus as the Messiah foretold in the Hebrew Bible. Sometimes the Christian was a Jewish convert, who was able to use his Jewish knowledge to advance his position, and some of these converts were especially vicious disputants. *Virgin* refers to the Virgin Mary.

What a mixed bag! See previous note.

We are hopeful . . . “relaxed.” Euphemism for being burnt to death or otherwise killed during the Inquisition.

Three Riddles

Riddles have been part of Jewish culture at least since biblical times. In the Bible there is Samson’s riddle, riddles often pop up during the Jewish holiday of Purim), and in the middle ages and Renaissance, riddles became an important part of Jewish wedding ceremonies. The answer follows the boldface number.

1 Isabella (also Isabel) I (1474–1504, b. Madrigal de las Altas Torres, Ávila), queen of Castile and eventually all of Spain. Co-architect of the edict expelling Jews from Spain in 1492.

I lived in Arévalo. The city where Moses de León died. See two notes down.

Where the famous *kabbalist*. Jewish mystic.

Moses de León. (1250–1305, probably b. León) Jewish mystic, rabbi (religious teacher), and main author of the *Zohar* (the *Book of Splendor* or *Radiance*), the most important Jewish mystical text.

Wife of Aaron the High Priest. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was the first high priest of the ancient Jews.

Permute . . . Jezebel. (9th c. B.C.E.) Phoenician princess who became the wife of King Ahab of Israel. See 2 Kings 9.

2 The Sabbath soul. See **Preamble** and **Who Are the Souls in the Garden** for more on this soul. Could I be just an idea//But some sort of spiritual entity? The view of Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (the Ramban, after his acronym, RaMBaN, Nachmanides (1194–1270, b. Girona), biblical commentator, philosopher, mystic, and Jewish religious authority.

3 The poem conflates the *Shekhinah* (also *Shechinah*), the feminine presence or aspect of God blamed for many of humankind’s ills; Lilith, Adam’s first wife, banished because she wanted to be on top; and *La Petenera*, a *femme fatale* figure in Spanish folklore. My theory is that when the biblical Lilith and the *Shekhinah* are exiled from the Holy Land, they go to Spain, where they become *La Petenera*. For more on the *Shekhinah* and Lilith, see Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*:

The Mythology of Judaism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 47–66. See also note 5 in **Sensing Souls in Toledo** and my “In a Beginning, God Created Adam, Lilith, *La Petenera*, and . . .” at <https://henryrasof.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/petenera-final-for-hr-site-1-14.pdf>. Beautiful, Jewish, and . . . fickle. *La Petenera* and her song are thought by some to have Jewish origins. However, writers on flamenco often, without sufficient cause, claim Jewish origins for some of the songs. See first note.

Wise woman . . . //Solomon’s equal. . . . References to the *Shekhinah*. See first note in this section of the poem.

Mine’s the owl. A famous depiction of Lilith shows her flanked by owls. See first note. (www.lilithgallery.com/library/lilith/images/SumerianBurneyRelief-1950BC-front.jpg).

Long ago// . . . for the sins of others. . . . A *Shekhinah* myth. For full reference, see Schwartz, p. 55, in first note in this section.

At first I hid in clouds/Like the moon. See previous note.

Later in the ruins/Of old buildings. A hiding place of Lilith. See Schwartz, p. 59.

Night after night I sought him too. See Schwartz, p. 56.

Whom I loved. See Song of Songs, 3:1.

He took an evil second wife. A reference to Lilith. See Schwartz, pp. 59–60.

Utterly lost . . . //Destroying them all. See Song of Songs 3:2.

Men feared bad luck. Some *flamenco* singers even today will not sing *peteneras*. See first note.

Women, miscarriage//To breed more of me. Some of the Lilith myths. See first note.

Keeping the Sabbath. *Shabbat*, the Jewish Sabbath (observed Friday evening to Saturday evening).

At midnight studying the mystical *kabbalah*. *Kabbalah* is the main strain of Jewish mysticism. The ideal time to study it is late at night.

Remembering that three stars. The Sabbath ends when three stars can be seen Saturday evening.

In 1492 I couldn’t bear watching the ships/Propelled by grief. In 1492 unconverted Jews were expelled from Spain. Adapted from Ibn al-Labbana (12th c., b. Dénia), trans. Sahar Omar Al Nima © 2017, modified by HR. For a translation of the whole poem, see “Al-Mu’Tamid and His Family Go into Exile,” in Cola Franzen, trans., *Poems of Arab Andalusia* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989), pp. 88–89. More on this Spanish-Muslim poet can be found at referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ibn-al-labbana-SIM_3267. See also James T. Monroe, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), p. 216.

Their cargo of broken hearts. Adapted from Ibn al-Labbana (12th c., b. Dénia), trans. Sahar Omar Taha Al Nima © 2017, modified slightly by HR. For a translation of the whole poem, see “Al-Mu’Tamid and His Family Go into Exile,” in Cola Franzen, trans., *Poems of Arab Andalusia* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989), pp. 88–89. See previous note for a source of more information on this poet. See also Monroe, cited in previous note.

Were meant to wander. Adapted from Samuel the Prince, “Mezimotai Tekala’nah Levavi,” trans. Gideon Weisz. For the whole poem, see “The Wanderer,” in Leon J. Weinberger, trans., *Jewish Prince in Moslem Spain: Selected Poems of Samuel Ibn Nagrela* (University, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1973), p. 21. (Ibn Nagrela is Samuel the Prince, Shmuel Hanagid, 993–1056, b. Córdoba).

In a pillar of perfumed smoke. See Song of Songs 3:6.

García Lorca calls me *La Petenera* and says I'm dead and buried. Federico García Lorca (1896–1936, b. Fuente Vaqueros). Spanish poet, dramatist, folklorist, composer, and artist, murdered August 19, 1936, by the fascists during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Reference to his poem “Grafico de la Petenera” (“Sketch of the Petenera”), in Federico García Lorca, *Poem of the Deep Song/Poema del Cante Jondo*, trans. Carlos Bauer (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987), pp. 56–71. See also first note in this section.

Postamble

near Taos. Taos is a historic city north of Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the United States. The poem is loosely a *qasida*, a poetic form originating in pre-Islamic North Africa that became popular with Arab writers and also Jewish ones.

like the hebrew letter *yod*. The *yod* (י) bears some resemblance to a crescent moon. This image appears also in Samuel Hanagid (Shmuel Hanagid) (993–1056, b. Córdoba), “Ehi Kofer l’Ofer” (“Invitation”), in T. Carmi, ed., *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin, 1981), p. 298.

mixing with the *penitentes*. A brotherhood active in New Mexico, with Spanish and Italian roots, whose members engage in self-flagellation, among other, perhaps more ordinary activities. display their certificates/from the spanish government. In 2013 Spain offered citizenship to Jews who could prove Spanish or Portuguese ancestry. This meant that *crypto-Jews*—Jews whose Jewish origins had been hidden—could apply for Spanish citizenship.

some sell *challah* bread. Egg bread eaten by Jews on the Sabbath, religious holidays, and other occasions. In 2016 I met a woman selling *challah* in the Saturday market in Taos. Her mother was Jewish, and her father was Native American.

dreaming under a pinyon pine. The pine that is the source of pine nuts.

toca strappado/porto garrote. Torture methods or devices, associated with medieval Spain but sometimes with contemporary associations. *Toca* is water torture. *Garrote* is torture and killing by crushing the neck. *Porto* is torture on a device with sharp rungs. *Strappado* (or *strapado*) is torture in which the victim is suspended by his or her wrists tied together in back.

For Further Exploration

This is a very basic list of resources in English or in bilingual editions. More resources can be found on the Internet and in your library catalogue.

History

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Music and Dance

Fado

Fados. Film about the Portuguese song form *fado*, by prominent Spanish director Carlos Saura (2007), who also filmed *Flamenco*, *Sevillanas*, and the *flamenco* trilogy described in the Flamenco section just below.

Flamenco

Flamenco. Film by Carlos Saura (1995). www.youtube.com/watch?v=plRZarZj6JE.

"Flamenco." www.andalucia.com/flamenco/history.htm.

Flamenco trilogy: *Bodas de sangre (Blood Wedding)* (1981) (based on the play of the same name by Federico García Lorca), *Carmen* (1983), and *El amor brujo (Love Bewitched)* (1986). Films by Spanish director Carlos Saura. Whether or not you

are able to go to Spain to listen to or watch or learn about flamenco music, dance, and culture, watch these and the other Saura films, described below.

Lorca, Federico García. *Poem of the Deep Song/Poema del Cante Jondo*. Translated by Carlos Bauer. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987.

Machado y Alvarez, Antonio. *Cantes flamencos y cantares*. Madrid: Colección Austral, 1998. Collection of Spanish poems some of which inspired poems in *Souls in the Garden*. This Machado is also known as Demofilo and is not the same as the well-known modern Spanish poet Antonio Machado.

Maurer, Christopher, ed. and trans. *Federico García Lorca: In Search of Duende*. New York: New Directions, 1998.

Sevillanas. Film by Carlos Saura (1992). This film, focusing on the music/dance/culture of Seville, in particular the genre of song and dance called *sevillanas*, is even better than *Flamenco*, described above.

Cantigas de Santa Maria

"Alfonso X el Sabio - Cantigas de Santa Maria (1221–1284)." [youtube.com/watch?v=nj5Bc8zwwU0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nj5Bc8zwwU0).

Cantigas de Santa Maria for Singers. www.cantigasdesantamaria.com.

The Cantigas de Santa Maria. www.pbm.com/~lindah/cantigas/.

The Oxford *Cantigas de Santa Maria* Database. csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/?p=intro.

Art

"El Greco." www.el-greco-foundation.org.

Exhibit

Musica y poesia del sur de al-Andalus: Music and Poetry from the South of Al-Andalus. Reales Alcazres de Sevilla. April 5–July 15, 1995. Exhibit catalogue in Spanish, English, and French, with general text and photographs.

Travel, Tourism, Flights of Fancy

The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century. Translated by Ross E. Dunn, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989.

Alvarez, Ana Maria Lopez, Ricardo Izquierdo Benito, and Santiago Palomero Plaza.

A Guide to Jewish Toledo. Toledo, Spain: Codex Ediciones, 1990.

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. Translated by William Weaver. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace, 1974. The conceit: Marco Polo has visited many wondrous cities and describes these to Kublai Khan.

Caminos de Sefarad. www.redjuderias.org/rasgo/index.php?lang=en. Your guide to travel in "Jewish Spain."

The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages. Edited and translated by

Marcus Nathan Adler. Various reprints and free online editions, for example, *The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela*, www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl20.htm.
Red Juderias de Espana Caminos de Sefarad (Spanish Jewish Network Routes of Sefarad). Alfonso Martinez, ed.; text by Pancraccio Celdran Gomariz. Nicely illustrated bilingual coffee-table book that includes or supplements the information on the Web site Caminos de Sefarad two notes up.
“The Travels of Ibn Battuta: A Virtual Tour.” orias.berkeley.edu/resources-teachers/travels-ibn-battuta. Fourteenth-century Muslim traveler Muhammad Ibn Battuta.
The Travels of Marco Polo. Many free editions online, for example, archive.org/stream/marcopolo00polouoft/marcopolo00polouoft_djvu.txt. There are a number of print editions, too.

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- www.myjewishlearning.com. General information on a wide range of topics of Jewish interest.

About the Author

Henry Rasof has degrees in music, creative writing, and Jewish studies. He has been writing poetry since 1964 and giving readings and publishing his work since 1968. After working in book publishing for thirty years, he taught composition at several community colleges and creative nonfiction at the University of Denver. He also has volunteer taught “Jewish” creative writing at the (now-defunct) Boulder Jewish Day School and learn-and-do workshops on Jewish incantation bowls, ethical wills, *teshuvah*, and Tishah b’Av and its poetry. In addition, he has edited literary magazines and a poetry chapbook series.

His poems have appeared in print, audio, and online publications, including *Black Box*, *Jewish Currents*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Midstream*, *Numinous*, *Partisan Review*, *Poetica*, and *X-Peri*, and he has published three other print books: *The House* (2009), consisting of the eponymous prose poem; *Chance Music: Prose Poems 1974 to 1982* (2012); and *Here I Seek You: Jewish Poems for Shabbat, Holy Days, and Everyday* (2016), a collection of liturgical poems. He also has edited and printed a collection of his father’s humor, *The Wit, Whimsy, Wisdom, and Wordplay of Bernard Rasof, PhD* (2020).

In addition, he has two Web sites. One is www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org, which includes an anthology of other writers’ English translations of medieval Hebrew poets like Yehudah Halevi; articles and original essays; a bibliography; photographs; and other relevant information. The other is henryrasof.com, which includes most of the poetry and prose he has written or edited since 1964, including, in .pdf format, *Rivers in Paradise: Jewish Poetry and Prose*; *The Persian Letters: A Medieval Persian General’s Wartime Letters to His Wife*; and *Bees in the Garden: Poems by the Masala Mystic*.

Henry Rasof lives in Colorado and somewhat frequently travels overseas. He has been to India three times and Japan twice, in addition to Latin America, Southeast Asia, Europe, and Israel. The poems in this book were inspired by trips to Spain in 2000 and 2010.

