WHISPERED TRADITION

New Mexico crypto-Jewish Memory, Origins to 2007

ABSTRACT

In her 2007 book, *New Mexico's crypto-Jews: Image and Memory*, Cary Herz documents photos and testimonies of the contemporary Southwestern community. The individuals represented in her book detail the secrecy of their religious lives, telling stories of hidden cellar rooms used for worship and "somos judíos" ("we are Jews") whispered from one generation to the next. Judaism, in its more complete or more diluted forms, could not and did not flourish amongst hidden Jews in the New World from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries. But crypto-Jewish life, passed covertly and sometimes unconsciously across generations, could be filled with cultural nostalgia, filtered preservation, and intent belief in a shared Jewish past. Attempting to establish domicile in exile, these hidden Jews created an identity reliant on and based in memory.

Through explorations of documents and mythologies from the past five centuries, Rachel Kaufman's (TC '19) senior essay asserts that New Mexico and Mexico crypto-Jews remember the past as a series of connected events, adopting the histories of distant Jewish communities to place their identities within a more extensive framework of ancestry and origin. This borrowing of collective memory is valuable, enriching rather than detracting from cultural identity formation within a larger ethnic and religious landscape. For New Mexico crypto-Jews, visions of historical memory overlap with and are contained within the continuities of personal memory, collapsing history into the individual and the community.

ON THE NEXT PAGE

A gravestone in a Jewish cemetery
on the outskirts of Segovia, Spain.
By Rachel Kaufman [1]

by **Rachel Kaufman, TC '19**
Written for **"The Senior Essay"**
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INTRODUCTION

IN 2017, the New Mexico History Museum mounted an exhibition entitled, *Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, the Inquisition, and New World Identities*. The "first of its kind," this exhibition "[connected] Spain's Jewish culture to New Mexico's colonial and contemporary history," exploring Spanish Sephardic identity prior to 1391 through late twentieth-century crypto-Jewish identity in New Mexico.[1] The collection presented the history of Sephardic and *converso* Jews as a continuous procession and displayed historical and cultural objects that verify Iberian Jews' diaspora from Spain to Mexico to New Mexico. Written in both English and Spanish, the catalogue to the exhibition demonstrates the curators' interest in identity construction and perception, asking "who is a Spanish Jew and who is not?" and "how has the Jewish community responded to crypto-Jews?" The curators, like crypto-Jews themselves—as this paper will explore—looked to the distant past to find their answers. Ultimately, the exhibition demonstrated the hybridity and fragmented nature of New Mexico crypto-Jewish history and identity.

Though it is important to relay the history of crypto-Jewish presence in the New World, this paper primarily engages with the memory practices of crypto-Jews. Historian David Gitlitz and social anthropologist Seth Kunin argue that crypto-Jewish religion and identity are memory-based.[2] This paper not only examines crypto-Jews' reliance on memory, but how crypto-Jews remember. I will argue that New Mexico crypto-Jewish identity relies on remembering the past as a continuous and coherent line. Crypto-Jewish voices adopt the histories of distant Jewish communities to place their identity within a more extensive framework of ancestry and origin. This borrowing of collective memory is valuable and, I will contend, enriches rather than detracts from cultural identity formation within a larger ethnic and religious landscape.

Crypto-Jewish identity begins with the creation of *Sepharad*, a geographic entity of the ninth century that served as a site of Jewish cultural identity formation. First mentioned in the Bible in the book of Obadiah, *Sepharad* became synonymous with Spain by the Middle Ages and was a site of cultural and religious harmony and violence between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Though some forced conversions of Jews took place in the late sixth and early seventh centuries on the Iberian Peninsula, a wave of violence post-1391 resulted in the widespread emergence of crypto-Judaism.[3] In 1391, a year of pogroms led to the murder or conversion of the majority of the Spanish Jewish population and crypto-Judaism—secret religious practice and a "new social group ... called *conversos* [converts], or New Christians"—emerged.[4] In the fifteenth century, the enmity of many old Christians toward Jews shifted into distrust of *conversos*, supposed fake Christians with impure racial lineages, culminating in the Spanish Inquisition around 1478. The Decree of Alhambra, proclaimed by the Catholic Monarchy in 1492, ordered all Jews not already converted to convert, or if they refused baptism, to be expelled.

Although most expelled Jews went to the Ottoman Empire, some *conversos* went to the New World.[5] *Converso* conquistadores fled to the new land, including Luis de Carvajal, the governor who was granted the region of Nuevo León in 1571 and brought over many family members, some of them actively practicing crypto-Jews. Most of his family was later killed in the Mexican Inquisition, a branch of the Spanish Inquisition established in Mexico City in 1571. Christopher Columbus brought many *conversos* to the New World—

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1 L. R. Martìnez-Dávila, J. Diaz, & R. D. Hart, *Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, the Inquisition, and New World Identities*, (Albuquerque, NM: Fresco Books/SF Design, 2016), 12.

2 Seth D. Kunin, "Fluid Identities: New Mexican Crypto-Jews in the Late Twentieth Century" in *Fractured Faiths*, 87-97.

3 Jane S. Gerber, "Communal Integrity and Sephardic Identity: Jewish Life in Spain Prior to 1391" in *Fractured Faiths*, 33-41.

4 Juan Ignacio Pulido Serrano, "Assault and Fragmentation: Emergent Identities from 1391 to 1492," in *Fractured Faiths*, 43-50.

5 While "conversos" refers to immediate generations of converted Jews, who may or may not have chosen to continue their Jewish practice, "crypto-Jews" refers to later descendants of conversos who choose to maintain aspects of Jewish identity and tradition. The term "crypto-Jew" seems to have originated in the twentieth century.

possibly as many as eighty-six.[6] *Conversos* also accompanied Hernán Cortés during his 1519 expedition and conquest of Mexico. The majority of Inquisition trials, or *autos-de-fé* (acts of faith), which occurred in the New World, took place during the 1580s-90s and the 1640s. These trials of public penance demanded that *conversos* reconcile with the Church and give up their properties. The trials enumerated the decrees of the Inquisition, emphasizing the statute of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood). Increased Inquisitional presence in Mexico and colonial opportunity pushed *conversos* north, into the region which would become New Mexico.[7]

Scholars disagree over whether crypto-Jewish presence has existed continuously in the Southwest since their sixteenth-century arrival. There is little evidence of crypto-Jewish practice or punishment following Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821.[8] However, in his "Fractured Faiths" paper, Stanley Hordes, the historian who initiated research on New Mexico crypto-Jewry in the late twentieth century, discusses a mid-nineteenth century sermon that listed the open practice of Judaism as a sin.[9] For Hordes, this textual evidence proves there was open, and therefore also secret, practice of Jewish traditions at the time. Hordes also argues that crypto-Jewish presence in New Mexico in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be ve-

rified by tracing Inquisition last names and traditions of circumcision through family trees, and by examining gravestones with menorahs or Hebrew inscriptions placed alongside doves and crucifixes.

Anthropologist Seth Kunin's *Fractured Faiths* exhibition paper follows in Hordes' footsteps, arguing for the authenticity of crypto-Jewish identity by asserting that cultural authenticity falls upon those who claim it.[10,][11] Kunin highlights the intersectionality and fluidity of crypto-Jewish practices, writing about the process of bricolage in which "new cultural practices [are] created utilizing elements from all of the available cultures surrounding crypto-Jews."[12] Kunin argues that more important than these elements are the meanings and uses extracted from them.[13] Not included in the museum exhibition were scholars such as Judith Neulander, who claims that customs observed amongst families in New Mexico are actually remnants of a branch of Protestantism.[14] According to a 2015 survey conducted by the Jewish Federation of New Mexico, about 24,000 Jews live in the state—twice the expected number—and four percent of these Jews identity as crypto-Jews.[15]

In support of Hordes and his colleagues, this paper presents a newspaper entitled *El Sabado Secreto*, published in 1889 in Mexico City, which illustrates a community of crypto-Jews attempting to revitalize and

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6   Alicia Gojman Goldberg de Backal, "Diaspora: New Identities, New Opportunities, and Renewed Persecutions from 1492 to 1649" in *Fractured Faiths*, 51-60.
7   Few individuals were brought from New Mexico to Mexico to be tried for heresy or Judaizing. See Frances Levine's "Two Women and the Long Arm of the Inquisition" for more information on trials originating in New Mexico. Levine interestingly notes that trials of women in Spain and New Spain are sometimes the only records we have of female voices from the period and regions.
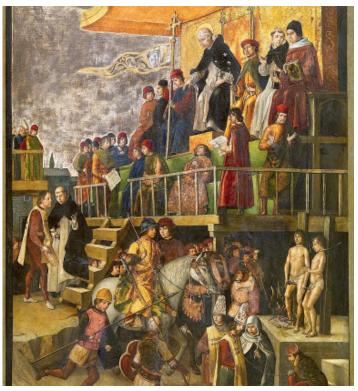**8**   Auto-de-fé transcriptions serve as the primary record of crypto-Jewish practice in the Spanish Empire, and following independence, trials no longer took place.
9   The exact date and place of the sermon are unclear.
10   Seth D. Kunin, *Juggling Identities: Identity and Authenticity Among the Crypto-Jews*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009).
11   Historical origin has been substantiated since Kunin was writing in 2009 and 2016 through genetic testing, demonstrating, though perhaps in an essentialist way, the scientific "authenticity" of New Mexico crypto-Jews' claims.
12   Miriam Bodian's 1994 article, "'Men of the Nation': The Shaping of Converso Identity in Modern Europe" makes a similar claim, asserting that the converso community of north-western Europe in the Early Modern period had a fluid and "changing cultural construction," adaptive to social and historical circumstances.
13   Kunin, *Juggling Identities*, 90.
14   In a 2000 Atlantic article, "Mistaken Identity? The Case of New Mexico's 'Hidden Jews,'" authors Barbara Ferry and Debbie Nathan argued against Hordes' theory, claiming that the customs he observed were actually remnants of Protestantism, passed down from a proselytizing religious group called the Church of God (Seventh Day). The article, I think, is unconvincing and relies on subtly racist and colonial ideologies. The article cites single scholar, Neulander, as the voice of dissent against Hordes and his colleagues.
15   Bruce Krasnow, "New survey finds robust Jewish community in New Mexico," Santa Fe New Mexican, Nov. 2015, https://www.santafenewmexican.com/life/features/new-survey-finds-robust-jewish-community-in-new-mexico/articl e_7213ba2b-14e8-5758-a49f-5b208f603a93.html.

make public their history and traditions. This document substantiates Hordes's claim of continuous crypto-Jewish presence in the region. Because the borders of Mexico and New Mexico changed frequently during the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries, this paper will view the geographies as deeply connected and intertwined; *El Sabado Secreto* can therefore stand next to evidence from farther north or west.

More recently, genetic testing has served to substantiate Hordes's claims.[16] Genes most often linked to European Jewry, even markers of the Cohanim gene, have been revealed amongst Hispano-Catholic families in the Southwest.[17] A 2018 genetic study has solidified the presence of crypto-Jewish descendants in the New World: "*The Atlantic* published a takedown of [Southwest crypto-Jewish identity] attributing the Jewish-seeming customs of 'hidden Jews' in New Mexico to folk beliefs and the Church of God Seventh-Day. DNA has borne out the fact that the conversos were ancestors to people in Latin American and the American Southwest today."[18] Though this paper dwells more on the internal cultural identities of New Mexico crypto-Jews, genetic research serves as a valuable piece of evidence supporting the lineage which many individuals, through memory, claim.

Like crypto-Jewish identity, "Sephardic identity [is] ever dependent on both ancestral pride and religious and cultural flexibility."[19] According to scholar Jonathan Ray, both identity groups "display….the hallmarks of modern diasporas….[including] issues of dispersion, mobility, cultural hybridity, and a continued and complex relationship with their Iberian homeland."[20] Crypto-Jews experienced a similar diaspora to many Sephardic Jews but received and transmitted a different understanding of Jewish identity, leading to the creation of a dynamic collective knowledge that often contained elements of other cultures and religions.[21] Their diaspora, like the

Saint Dominic presiding over an auto-de-fé in the late fifteenth century. By Pedro Berruguete [2]

diasporas of many other modern communities, "is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity, diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite difference….constantly producing and reproducing [itself] anew, through transformation" and hybridity.[22] For New Mexico crypto-Jews, the "secondary homeland," a term which Ray defines as the diasporic homeland for which sub-ethnic Jewish groups long, becomes the primary homeland. Iberia, mythologized and imagined, serves as crypto-Jews' primary object of longing. Yosef Yerushalmi claims that diasporic Jews can often create domicile in exile, but his projection falls short for crypto-Jews who, unable to create a Jewish home in exile, must instead turn

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16   David Kelly, "DNA Clears the Fog Over Latino Links to Judaism in New Mexico," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 2004, http://articles.latimes.com/2004/dec/05/nation/na-heritage5.

17   Jeff Wheelwright, "The 'Secret Jews' of San Luis Valley," *Smithsonian Magazine*, Oct. 2008, www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-secret-jews-of-san-luis-valley-11765512/.

18   Sarah Zhang, "The Genetic Legacy of the Spanish Inquisition," *The Atlantic*, Dec. 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/12/dna-reveals-the-hidden-jewish-ancestry-of-latin-americans/578509/.

19   Gerber, 41.

20   Jonathan Ray, "New Approaches to the Jewish Diaspora: The Sephardim as a Sub-Ethnic Group," *Jewish Social Studies*, 15.1 (2008): 10-31.

21   Again are echoes of Miriam Bodian's article, "'Men of the Nation…'"

22   Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Padmini Mongia (London, 1996), 119 quoted in Ray, 20-21.

to past domicile in a mythic and ancestral homeland. To reach this homeland, New Mexico crypto-Jews claim an identity grounded in continuous and coherent memory.

The idea that individuals rely on memory is not unique to this paper. Students and scholars of the Medieval period learned through visual memory, crafting mnemonic devices as a means to knowledge and language transmission.[23] In 1989, historian Pierre Nora located memory within the "memory-individual," who must bear her identity as a result of her memories.[24] In 1992, philosopher Maurice Halbwachs situated the individual's memory within a societal, collective framework: "the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society."[25] Collective cultural and ethnic identities are visibly grounded in memory; families and institutions pass down customs, oral histories, stories—all of which form the basis of a new generation's identity. Memory attempts to be truthful; usually, one does not try to remember the past incorrectly, though nations and communities have certainly manipulated memory to produce false or selective histories. Philosopher Paul Riceour wrote in 2010, "to memory is tied an ambition, a claim—that of being faithful to the past."[26] Crypto-Jewish identity not only practices but relies on memory.

In her study of Holocaust memory, Barbara Zelizer emphasizes the importance of photography and language as forms of material testimony. These testimonials physicalize and stabilize memories of a traumatic past for a new generation. Zelizer defines this collective memory as a "means of coping with distance."[27] For New Mexico crypto-Jews, memory formation is a means of coping with absence of all sorts—spatial, temporal, generational, communal. The first chapter of this work will explore the ways in which New Mexico and Mexico crypto-Jews string events of the past together in memory, though not in history, to claim an inheritance of Jewish ancestry. The chapter begins with the 1889 newspaper, *El Sabado Secreto*, and ends with contemporary crypto-Jewish voices. The second chapter explores notions of nostalgia and homeland by examining the myth of *la llave* (key) in both a crypto-Jewish and Spanish context. The third

chapter investigates continuities between the Inquisition and Holocaust preserved within crypto-Jewish memory, and the final chapter interrogates non-crypto-Jewish voices, tracing colonial and empathetic perspectives of the twentieth century.

While researching and writing this paper, I also wrote a collection of historical poetry. The poems draw from my research, renewing and transforming archival language and rhetoric and exploring themes of mythology, translation, and memory. In powerful historical poetry, history is enlivened and renewed; in turn, the creative form is enriched by (and weighted with) the task of truthfully carrying the past into the present. Poetry can serve as a means to empathy, preserving archival voices and words while bringing them into the present to mingle, wander, and adapt. Following the conclusion of this paper is a short appendix of poetry in which each poem corresponds to a chapter. These poems can be read alongside their respective chapters or as a second conclusion to the larger work. The poetic line, intimate and revelatory, seems to bring the past a bit closer.

CHAPTER ONE

How New Mexico and Mexico crypto-Jews remember Continuity and Coherence

O N FEBRUARY 9, 1889, a group of *conversos* in Mexico began to publish a newspaper called *El Sabado Secreto* (The Secret Sabbath). Sixty-seven years after the Mexican War of Independence, a war that removed the Spanish Crown from New Spain, comes evidence of crypto-Jews in the New World reclaiming their identity and, at least covertly, sharing it with one another. Though Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, ending the

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23   Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

24   Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Le Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, (University of California Press, 1989), 16.

25   Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Lewis A. Coser, tr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 51.

26   Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

27   Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 86-201.

reign of the Inquisition, Catholicism remained the official religion of the region. Some German Jews immigrated to Mexico during the early nineteenth century, but the Jewish community remained small. Benito Juárez secularized Mexico in 1867, and after waves of immigration, Mexico established its first congregation in 1885.[28] The *converso* newspaper is subtitled, "periodico judaizante" and "Organo de los Sefardis de América" ("Organ of the Sephardim of America").[29] The creators of the magazine, led by editor-in-chief Francisco Rivas Puigcerver, identified with "judaizantes," connecting the paper back to the language of the Inquisition, and "Sephardis," connecting the diasporic Jews back to their Iberian roots. The transliterated words of the Shema, one of the Jewish people's most sacred prayers, serve as the paper's heading.

Francisco Rivas Puigcerver and *El Sabado Secreto*

Rabbi Martin Zielonka, a Texas rabbi born in Berlin in 1877 and an acquaintance of Puigcerver, wrote a study of the editor which was published posthumously in 1939. He wrote: "Puigcerver [edited and published] a Spanish Jewish periodical at a time when there was no Jewish congregation, no Jewish association of any kind, nor any form of Jewish group activity."[30] Zielonka claims that Puigcerver wanted the newspaper to be "distributed to Ladino speaking Jews of eastern Europe and parts of Asia [to encourage migration to Mexico]—though no hint of such an objective is to be found in its pages." Puigcerver, according to an article included in the newspaper's first publication entitled "Los Jovhelim," was born in Campeche in 1850 and was a descendant of Spanish monotheists who worshipped Jehovah Elohim, "creator of the universe."[31] Puigcerver wrote that this religion was separate from the "laws or cult" of Judaism in Sepharad (Spain), though his family kept Shabbat and traced their origins to Adam and Eve. Yohelim only relied on the Book of Creation. Puigcerver wrote that the Yohelim were treated as Jews during the Inquisition, killed or exiled, and that in America, the Yohelim "treat the Sephardim as brothers, because both of us adore the Sole Creator of the Universe and because the one as well as the other were Spaniards."[32]

Puigcerver's unity with Sephardic Jews in America stems from both religious and nationalistic sympathies. In a letter from Puigcerver to Zielonka in 1908, Puigcerver begrudgingly clarifies his biography by describing the origins of his many names, tracing linguistic lines from Hebrew to Arabized Hebrew to English, and recalling ancestors going back to 1170.[33] Through the symbolic meanings of names, Puigcerver demonstrates the inseparable tie between lineage and modern identity for crypto-Jews (or crypto-Yohelim) living in America in the nineteenth century. His writings are filled with Hebrew phrases, demonstrating his retention of the biblical language. In his biographical letter, Puigcerver remembers his ancestral past as a series of dangers and escapes, crafting a continuous and coherent line of religious identity.[34]

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28 "Mexico Virtual Jewish History Tour," *Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of Aice*, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/mexico-virtual-jewish-history-tour.
29 *El Sabado Secreto. Periodico judaizante. Organo de los Sefardis de America.* Mexico, 1889. New Haven, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.
30 Rabbi Zielonka, "FRANCISCO RIVAS," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 35, 1939, 219-225. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/43058477.
31 Zielonka, 2019.
32 Zielonka, 221.
33 One particularly striking linguistic lineage he traces is of his fifth name (Gurario) "which was a source of great pride to my saintly mother, [and] is derived from the two grandsons of Judah, a brother of Jeshua ben Joseph, who escaped from the clutches of the Emperor Domiciano and fled to Sefarad, the ancient name of Spain. Gurario in Syrian is 'Cub of a lion'...later changed to Payan (Paganus) because of fear of the fire of the Inquisition." (Zielonka, 222)
34 In line with much of the twentieth-century fascination with Columbus's questionable Jewish heritage, Puigcerver writes in his letter to Zielonka: "Luis de Torres, the Jewish interpretor, who accompanied Columbus, is the man who gave the name (Guanahani) to the first land discovered in the New World. When you were here I told you that the ancestors of the Admiral were Greci in Italian and, in order to change it to Columbi, they made use of the Hebrew tongue, by changing the vowels [Hebrew—Yivanim] into [Hebrew—Yonim]." Puigcerver, in an article entitled 'The Jews

Worshippers gathered inside the synagogue of Venta Prieta, Mexico, 1940. By Ida Cowen [3]

Puigcerver taught in the National Normal School and at the University of Mexico and, according to Zielonka, was "fond of saying: '[h]alf of Mexico was taught by a Jew and they don't know it.'"[35] His self-proclaimed Yohelim identity melts into his self-identification as a Jew. In 1905, he was elected President of a Sephardic Jewish congregation in Mexico City, "but there was no gathering after the first [meeting], because some doubted whether he really was a Jew."[36] According to these accounts, Puigcerver hid his Jewish identity from the Mexican public while leading an undercover Jewish magazine and communing amongst other Mexico Jews, though his identity was not always accepted by the latter. Zielonka describes him as "the last romantic survivor of secret Jews who gloried in a tradition that dated back to the twelfth century."[37] The Jewish Telegraphic Agency published a daily bulletin on November 7, 1924, with an affectionate article about Puigcerver entitled, "Mexico Loses its Leading Jew."

Puigcerver's Jewish identity unsettled twentieth-century Jews just as it unsettles twenty-first century scholars. He identified with Sephardic Jewry and claimed to be able to trace his ancestry to pre-Inquisition Jews, and at least some Jews and Jewish organizations around Puigcerver celebrated his Jewish identity. But Puigcerver practiced a highly Christianized, diluted version of Judaism, perhaps even a Judaized version of Christianity. His heritage reveals the multi-dimensionality of religious identity, but unlike contemporary New Mexico crypto-Jews, he fails to openly recognize the multi-religious and multicultural aspects of his Judaism. His attachment to the distant past as a means of creating identity, however, revealed in his autobiographical accounts as well as in his news-

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and the New World' writes about Columbus's expedition as a deeply Jewish affair, the words 'Land! Land!' shouted in Hebrew by a 'converted sailor' followed by multilingual echoes from the Jews, Moors, and Christians on board. (Zielonka, 223)

35   Zielonka, 225.
36   Ibid.
37   Ibid.

paper, closely mirrors contemporary New Mexico crypto-Jews' memory practices.

El Sabado Secreto, Puigcerver's biweekly newspaper, values the same traditions glorified in the editor's personal communications with Zielonka. The first publication begins with a historical account of the 1492 expulsion and the arrival of many different races of people in the New World: "[the conquistadores converted] en morisco al moro, en judaizante al judío, en indio al indígena, y á todos ellos en cristianos nuevos: ¿cómo no comprendió el clero que de la fusion de pueblos orientales con occidentales había de nacer una raza neomundana que más tarde emancipara la tierra conquistada y proclamara en religion y en política la independencia y libertad perdidas?"[38] The newspaper aims to reclaim distant history—to revitalize lost religious and political identities—in order to avenge a line of past injustices: "[we aim] á luchar por la causa de nuestros padres y abuelos."[39] Each publication includes a section of transcribed autos-de-fé which took place in Spain (all lineage is traced back to Spain, even though the same history could be demonstrated with Mexico City auto-de-fé records) and linguistic articles which trace the origins of Spanish words to their Arabic or Hebraic roots. Some publications include a historical section entitled "Reminiscencias," and the final recorded publication traces *marrano* (a derogatory term for crypto-Jews, loosely translating to "pig") peoples back to Spanish ancestors by examining the last names of auto-de-fé victims. The short, four-page newspapers are dedicated almost exclusively to the past, alternating between theories about the fifteenth-century expulsion and explorations of ancient or biblical times. *El Sabado Secreto* reveals a community of nineteenth century Mexico crypto-Jews dedicated to preserving and publicizing their ties to American Sephardim and Sepharad. A text of recollection, the newspaper rewrites and revives rather than creates.

New Mexico crypto-Jews' Memory Methods

In a similar vein to the methods of the memory-minded *El Sabado Secreto*, New Mexico crypto-Jewish identity relies on remembering history as a series of connected and continuous events. Perhaps because there is much empty space to fill (there is little documentation of New Mexico crypto-Jewish life in the eighteenth to late-nineteenth centuries, though *El Sabado Secreto* disrupts this void), contemporary New Mexico crypto-Jews must craft their identities out of memory, personal and familial, but they must also string these memories together in order to create a continuous and whole Jewish identity. By threading together disparate events onto one string of identity, New Mexico crypto-Jews are not distorting the historical truth of each event; they are instead crafting new relationships between events. Crucially, this narrative does not exist in history, but in perception, in memory.

Crypto-Jews who have been reclaiming their Jewish identities during the past thirty years emerge from *El Sabado Secreto*'s demonstration of identity-rooted-in-memory. For generations, crypto-Jews across Spanish territories were forced to encode Judaism into their familial lives while publicly displaying Christianity. In his 1997 essay, "Exile and Expulsion in Jewish History," Yosef Yerushalmi wrote of exile as both home and hell, domicile and alienation. He argued that it was possible for Sepharad Jews to "simultaneously ... be ideologically in exile and existentially at home."[40] But Yerushalmi claimed that this feeling of domicile in exile stemmed from the "Judaization of exile" and Jews' "ability to study."[41] *El Sabado Secreto*, a post-Inquisition newspaper for "judaizantes," attempted this judaization of exile. But for New Mexico crypto-Jews and Mexico *marranos* living during the Spanish Empire's reign, the Judaization of the home or the study of Jewish texts was risky and often fatal.[42] Does Yerushalmi's assertion of domicile

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38   My translation: "they converted the Muslims into Moriscos, the Jews into Judaizantes, the Natives into Indians, and then all into New Christians: how did the clergy not understand that fusing together oriental and occidental peoples would give rise to a New World race, a race which would later emancipate the conquered land and reclaim religious and political independence and freedom?" (El Sabado Secreto)

39   We aim to fight for the causes of our father and grandfathers. (El Sabado Secreto)

40   Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Exile and Expulsion in Jewish History," *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*, 1391-1648, ed. B. R. Gampel (New York, 1997), 11.

41   Yerushalmi, 14-15.

42   We do have evidence of select cases of New Christians' Jewish observance in the New World. Most notable

in exile, then, not hold true for hidden Jews? Unable to create a Jewish home in a new land, crypto-Jews return and returned to the stories and histories of ancestral Jewish homes in order to create domicile in memory.

In her 2007 book, *New Mexico's Crypto-Jews: Image and Memory*, Cary Herz documented photos and testimonies of crypto-Jews from across New Mexico. She was careful to preface her collection with a disclaimer: "[I am] not writing a history of the descendants of the crypto-Jews" but rather a photographic diary of the people and their stories.[43] The crypto-Jewish individuals represented in her book detail the secrecy of their religious lives, telling stories of hidden cellar rooms used for worship, "*somos judíos*" ("we are Jews") whispered from one generation to the next, religious objects used quietly by family members on holidays. Judaism, in its more complete or more diluted forms, could not and did not flourish amongst hidden Jews in their new environment: synagogues were not built, Hebrew schools were not attended, and a breadth of religious customs and textual study was not, for the most part, transmitted. The present day of *marranos* and New Mexico crypto-Jews living in Spanish colonies from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries could not be filled with Jewish ritual. But life could be filled with generational nostalgia, filtered preservation, and intent belief in a shared Jewish past. Attempting to establish domicile in exile, these hidden Jews created an identity reliant on and based in memory.

Jo Roybal Izay, a New Mexico voice included in Herz's book, recounts her grandfather's burial ceremony on January 13, 1947, intertwining mythologies and images from the Inquisition and the Holocaust. She is interested in the continuities of antisemitism across history, but her assertions are rooted in personal memory and images catalogued side-by-side in her mind, rather than archival or documental interest and evidence. She writes:

> *In prayer, minutes after his last breath, preparations to purify the body with hot water began immediately and all mirrors were turned to the wall. His daughters shaved and bathed him. They recited prayers as they proceeded to dress him in his best suit. They took the body to the room where traditionally the wakes were held. They placed him on an already prepared table, wrapped him in white linen, and lowered him onto the floor. The Kaddish (un sudario) was recited; everyone left the room. // Early that evening the Penitentes, who led all Christian ceremonies, arrived and began praying and chanting. Sometime in the first hour, the white linen was removed and the body was lifted onto the table. El Hermano Mayor, the leader, placed a yellow collar around my Padrecito's shoulders. This item is called a sambenito [sanbenito]. // History tells us that in Sepharad (Spain) the heretics (Jews) had to wear a hooded yellow sambenito signifying they were heretics. This was the Badge of Shame! The Jews walked past the crowded streets where the pious Catholics cheered and jeered. Slowly, the Jews made their way to the stakes and into the burning fire.[44]*

Izay paints her family's traditions as continuous with traditional Judaism: the mirrors turned toward the wall, the recitation of the Kaddish, the wrapping of the body in white linen. But this preservation is interrupted by penitentes, a word which refers to members of the Penitente Brotherhood, a confraternity of Catholics in New Mexico, but which also has Inquisitional connotations.[45] The yellow collar placed around Jo's grandfather's shoulders recalls for Jo the yellow sanbenitos of the past, and perhaps also, the yellow Star of David placed on

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is the Carvajal family whose Jewish lives are well-documented in published Mexico City Inquisition trials. Luis de Carvajal el Mozo (nephew of Luis de Carvajal the Governor) is a profound example of an actively practicing Jew during the Inquisition's reign. He celebrated the holidays with his female relatives and, after being arrested, wrote theological verses in his prison cell. In a 1946 review of Alfonso Toro's book, *La Familia Carvajal*, J. Lloyd Mecham wrote that the Carvajal family, excluding the governor, had left Nuevo Leon for Mexico City "where, with great temerity, they carried on their Jewish ritualistic practices. In factfact, their home became a veritable synagogue and Luis el mozo a rabbi. Little wonder then that they fell into the clutches of the Inquisition." ("La familia Carvajal by Alfonso Toro," The Hispanic American Historical Review, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Nov, 1946), pp. 510-513)

43 Cary Herz, *New Mexico's Crypto-Jews: Image and Memory*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007,) x.

44 Herz, 46.

45 Inquisition trials relied on processes of penitence and confession—the language emerges in auto-de-fé transcriptions.

Jews' lapels during the Nazi Regime (her grandfather's death was in 1947). Jo cites history, but the details and dates of history are usurped by imagistic and symbolic continuities evoked by the yellow collar.

Time collapses in Jo's personal memory to include only that which is emotionally resonant to her family and present moment. For example, she quickly jumps from the "Badge of Shame" to the burning of Jews in the Inquisition. She is not occupied with the careful recounting of historical information—the exact parallels between symbols or the progression of historical time. Instead, she utilizes history as an emotional lever to demonstrate the injustice and extremity of her family's recent encounter with antisemitism. History does not come forward in Jo's testimony, but rather the language and imagery of history: Penitentes, the Kaddish, shame, stakes, and fire. Jo sees the crypto-Jews' hardships as directly in line with Sepharad, and the yellow symbols of oppression prove this continuity. For Jo, Jews in 1947 in Llano, New Mexico faced (at least some of) the same persecutions as Jews in Spain centuries earlier, and perhaps, as the yellow-star-wearing Jews in 1940s Germany.

New Mexico crypto-Jews represented in Herz's book remember history as continuous by looking through a lens of personal, ancestral memory. Because families must reckon with a complex cultural landscape and transmitted traditions from several faiths and ethnicities, history filters into and embeds itself within the ancestral memories of each family unit. History, and contested histories, are visible in the architecture of the Santa Fe plaza (made out of adobe to imitate Native American pueblo architecture), the signage on the roads (billboards read "Christ will always love you" and street names read "Indian School Road"), and family genealogies. Especially in the past decades, or even past few years, individuals are becoming more acutely aware of and interested in their entangled genealogies, enabled by new technologies such as genealogy detector 23andme. Along with an interest in genealogy comes an interest in history, but a history seen through the prism of family lineage and cultural heritage.

While stringing memories together to create a remembered narrative does not create falsity, stringing events together through a historical lens can lead to distortion or misrepresentation. Benzion Netanyahu's 1995 book, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, draws a relatively straight line from the Inquisition to the Holocaust, or as some critics have noted, a line backwards from the Holocaust to the Inquisition. The book traces "Jew hatred" to ancient Egypt, pre-Christianity. Not entirely superfluous—it is true that the Inquisition was a racialized affair, persecuting Jews not only for their religious acts or appearances, but also for their lack of *limpieza de sangre* (pure blood)—the book looks "at long-ago cases of antisemitism through the rearview mirror of the Holocaust."[46] Drawing a direct line between events in history, as Netanyahu does, distorts temporal ideological boundaries, layering modern views onto events which preceded those philosophies or perspectives.

In contrast with Netanyahu's distortive historical lineage are Jo Izay's recounting of the past and Emma Moya's eclectic and sensorial tracings of memory. Emma Moya, a crypto-Jew in New Mexico, spent decades collecting aspects of Jewish history and culture. Interested in Jewish language, liturgy, imagery, symbols, objects, music, and customs, Moya's collection is an eclectic mix of feverish research—notes scribbled on the backs of papers, clipped newspaper articles, genealogies sketched on napkins. Moya's collection attempts to preserve all aspects of Judaism, presumably for posterity. She writes a short history of the Spanish Inquisition which ends: "The entire community [of Salonika] was destroyed by Nazis."[47] She traces connections between historical moments, but her collection does not serve as a historical investigation. Rather, it is a project of cultural documentation. Moya seeks origin through disparate moments in history, snapshots of encounters, words, images; her research values sensorial connections rather than historical trends. In his 2009 book, *Juggling Identities: Identity and Authenticity Among the Crypto-Jews*, Kunin writes of the importance to "take seriously the internal understanding and interpretations of members of a group…I [Kunin] regard culture as being closely interrelated with

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46   D. Martin, "Benzion Netanyahu, Hawkish Scholar, Dies at 102," The New York Times (April 30, 2012). Retrieved from https://nyti.ms/2vqiQo8.
47   Emma Moya. Emma Moya Collection on the History of Old Town Albuquerque and Related Communities, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

A sketch of an individual prosecuted by the Spanish Inquisition. The figure in the artwork dons a tunic known as the "sanbenito," which includes the reasons for a person's condemnation. By Francisco Goya [4]

self-understanding."[48] According to Kunin, crypto-Jewish identity stems from cultural rather than historical "authenticity." Emma Moya's methodology of cultural construction, according to Kunin's definitions, is a crucial part of identity formation.

History cannot be connected with pieces of string pulled taut, but memory can be. New Mexico crypto-Jews demonstrate that not only can historical memory be viewed in continuity, but it must be in order to create a seamless lineage able to be preserved. Crypto-Jews do not interrogate the past in a historical manner; they are neither searching for physical or psychological connections between Hitler and the Spanish Crown nor for documental continuities in the languages of racial purity and *limpieza de sangre*. Instead, New Mexico and Mexico crypto-Jews, including Puigcerver, Moya, and Izay, remember the past as an emotionally and imaginistically continuous phenomenon. Visions of historical memory overlap with and are contained within the continuities of personal, thematic memory, collapsing history into the individual, and the community.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Myth of La Llave: Nostalgia and Homeland

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THROUGH THE MYTH of *la llave*, as it is preserved by New Mexico crypto-Jews, history collapses, merging together the distant past, recent past, and present.[49] In a 1996 museum exhibition entitled "Llave: A Key to the Secret," curated by Andrea K. Nasrallah at Sage Junior College of Albany's Rathbone Gallery, New Mexico voices celebrated Sephardic Judaism's presence in the New World by means of the homeland myth. The exhibition explained to viewers that the show partially stemmed from Flory Jagoda's 1993 song, "La llave de España," which expressed the anguish of exiled Sephardim. The song was originally written in Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish language passed down to Jagoda by her grandmother. The exhibition explains that the song refers to the keys Sephardic Jews took with them in "the hope that they might some day return to their homes in beloved Sepharad. As time went by…many Sephardim gave up hopes of returning and the heavy iron keys are now but nostalgic reminders that to this day are handed down in some Sephardic families" across generations. [50] The keys have become nostalgic reminders, but to say they are "now but reminders" belittles the still-loud resonances of the symbol. The keys perhaps no longer contain the hope of actual return, but they serve as symbols of the "imagined homeland" and emblems of continued Jewish and Sephardic identity.

Scholar Svetlana Boym defined nostalgia as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed … a romance with one's own fantasy."[51] Nostalgia selectively reconstructs places and times, creating an ideal version of the past. During this process of nostalgic rewriting, objects, like the key, become crucial tools, triggering memories and helping individuals reconstruct history through a personal lens. In comparison with Boym, Daphne Berdahl defines nostalgia as a means of distorting memory: nostalgia is "hostile to history" and longs for a pure, utopian past.[52] Both scholars emphasize the romantic nature of memory and the role of the tactile; amongst exiles who can only imagine their homelands, nostalgia must rely on the sensual: "on materiality of place, sensual perceptions, smells and sounds." These material and physical sensations, latent in objects like *la llave*, transport an immigrant to an imagined homeland. An image of the past must be able to travel into the present and so must often rely on a romanticized version of a homeland or the fictitious creation of a collective past, carried to the present through personal objects and memorabilia.[53]

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48   Kunin, *Juggling Identities*, 21.

49   The myth has also been propagated by Spanish voices and officials, as the chapter will later discuss.

50   Emma Moya Collection, Box 10, Folder 13.

51   Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 1.

52   Daphne Berdahl, "'(N)Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things," *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany*, (ed. Matti Bunzl, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 55.

53   Boym, 258.

Boym and Berdahl agree that nostalgia is a reconstructive tool able to rewrite history through a present, personal lens. Boym's definition extends to a homeland that "never existed," while Berdahl stays closer to the true historical past but writes of nostalgia as a destructive rather than creative power. This destruction, however, can be politically valuable if it corrects an unfair or one-sided view of history. Both of their philosophies resound true in the context of crypto-Judaism. Jonathan Ray writes that "cultural affiliation to a given homeland" weakens across generations, but that few have studied the changing role of the Iberian homeland across Sephardic generations and eras.[54] An adaptive nostalgia, formed by the presence and absence of memory across generations of hidden transmission, shapes crypto-Jewish memory of the Iberian homeland.

The key, a symbol of ancestral Jewish identity and Sephardic heritage, revisions and contains this abstractly imagined homeland. The key's sensuality allows crypto-Jews to nostalgically preserve an intergenerational, continuous heritage, just as the physicality of hidden traditions (lighting Shabbat candles, covering the mirrors) allowed and allows crypto-Jews to connect to the past. In Cary Herz's book, crypto-Jew Gloria Trujillo says about her Jewish identity: "The thing was that all along I had the key. I knew inside of me all my life, but I hadn't put it all together. The more I learned about my Jewish heritage, the more it all fits into place."[55] The key not only transports diasporic Trujillo back to her geographic homeland (or homelands), but it also holds her innate tie to Judaism.

The *llave* enables a process of cultural learning both traditional and creative. The key unlocks the past for Trujillo and reveals to her a lost identity, but it also enables new knowledge construction. New Mexico crypto-Jewish identity formation is a simultaneous act of restoration and invention. Like Moya, Trujillo learns about her Jewish heritage in order to construct a religious life with old and new elements. The multi-religious aspects of crypto-Judaism perhaps best demonstrate this duality. Many of the gravestones depicted in Herz's book have both crosses and Jewish stars or Hebrew letters. In the twentieth century, the term "genizaro" referred to both the community of the Pueblo of Isleta, a Tanoan pueblo in New Mexico, and hidden Jews.[56] When discussing the customs of Passover, Moya relates Jewish traditions to those of the Laguna Pueblo. In a 1998 article, Moya wrote about crypto-Jews' preservation of prayers brought over from al-Andalus, specifically the prayer The Twelve Truths, or Las Doce Verdades. She writes: "incredible as it seems, I have learned [both the Christian and Jewish versions], and found no conflict between them… Integration of prayers seems to reflect a historical joining of two similar systems of belief."[57] Because crypto-Jews were forced to live for centuries as Catholics, the external demonstration of religion often seeped inwards, and Catholic traditions mingled with Jewish customs.[58] Contemporary crypto-Jews must contend with, or celebrate (as Moya does), their multi-religious inheritance.

The Myth in Poetry

The mythology of the key restores individuals' Jewish pasts through memory. The "Llave: A Key to the Secret" exhibition included a 1995 poem written by Dr. Isabelle Medina Sandoval, a New Mexico crypto-Jew, entitled "Trancas Abiertas" or "Opened Locks."[59] Sandoval's family came to New Mexico in 1598, and her ancestors came from Toledo through Mexico to New Mexico.[60] Each stanza of the poem ends with a line about la llave, relating the object to escape, community, and homeland. Below are excerpts from Sandoval's poem:

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54   Ray, 61.
55   Herz.
56   Emma Moya Collection, Box 1, Folder 1.
57   Emma Moya Collection, Box 2, Folder 1.
58   Neulander would argue that Judaism mingled with Christian customs. Though I find the voices of the crypto-Jews and the historical work of Hordes and colleagues convincing, I add Neulander's voice again to remind the reader that this history has been contested.
59   Emma Moya Collection, Box 10, Folder 13.
60   *Fractured Faiths*, 218.

Las llaves de las puertas están en la cocina
para esconder secretos profundos de las cuartos
cerca del trastero que no compró tío Raquel
en una casa donde santos no miran por paredes
Raitos de luz escapan de la casita

Nos separamos y veinte años pasaron en
estados diferentes y juntamos y por la primera
vez hablando del sentido judío que tenemos
en el privado de nuestro entendimiento y ser
Llaves de pensamientos abren nuestra plâtica

Pilas de puertas de pino y pinta pesadas
y puertos de ciudades y lugares ancianos de
costumbres comidas y familias brillan como
la piedra con la menora del terreno de nuestro tío
la pidra con la menora del terreno de nuestras almas

Los sefarditos de España se escaparon
con llave escondida
y sé dentro de mis huesos que ésta misma
llave fue perdida
y que ya hemos encontrado la llave en
la neshama dormida[61]

For Sandoval, the key represents hidden and lost identity, but in its journey to the present, the motif absorbs registers of renewal and hope. The keys in the kitchen hide markings of Jewish identity, but when "saints" (presumably Catholic neighbors, religious leaders, or Inquisitors) are not around, the light of Judaism escapes from hidden corners to the world outside. The key serves to hide but also preserve Jewish custom. As Medieval scholar Mary Carruthers writes about the pearl-image in Middle English poem, *Pearl*, images can mutate, collecting symbolic meanings as time, or poetic time, progresses.[62] The keys in "Opened Locks" begin confined in a home's interior but they soon unlock the past and create room for identity reclamation—the keys "of thoughts" open up space for Jewish discussion. The key serves as the threshold between the private and the public, the secretive and the learned, the stagnant and progressive. The image's mutations perhaps mirror the mutations of crypto-Jewish identity—the gradual unfolding of secrecy to transparency, containment to release. The last line of the poem opens up the image to the spiritual world, the world of the Neshama, meaning "soul," and the reader feels the movement from closed kitchen doors to present-day liberation.

The poem also mentions another Jewish symbol, the menorah, with stones that open up the soul to traditions of the past.[63] Tactile materials house memory, and thus identity, in Sandoval's poem. She remembers history narrowly, within the realm of ancestral history (old relatives and traced lineages), as well as grandly and romantically (the gates of cities and the Sephardim of Spain). The image of sensorial and romanticized Al-Andalus, with its shining families and thriving traditions, seamlessly transports into the diasporic minds of long-removed immigrants. Nostalgic sensuality and sentimental symbols enable New Mexico crypto-Jews to remember the past as a continuous and continuing thread; nostalgia creates hope.

The 1996 exhibition also included a poem written by curator Nasrallah, entitled "Crypto-Jew," that focuses on the discomforts of crypto-Jewish identity and the process of looking for absence. Nasrallah wrote: "I'm staring. / And, though I am entitled, / I feel like I'm prying. // I'm looking through a keyhole… / crouched in awe of wisdom, / expectant and hesitant. // I'm listening / like a child who is eavesdropping, / lapping up the pearls of wisdom / that knowingly roll

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61   Sandoval's translation: The keys of the doors are in the kitchen // to hide the profound secrets of the rooms // near the cupboard that // Uncle Raquel bought for us // in a house where saints do not look through walls // Rays of light escape from the house // We separated and twenty years passed // different states and we united for the first time // talking about the Jewish feeling we have // in the privateness of our understanding and being // Keys of thoughts open up our conversation // Piles of doors of pine and heavy paints // and ports of cities and ancient places of // customs foods and families shine like // the rock with the menorah on our uncle's land // Fires of light and keys illuminate our souls // The Sephardim of Spain escaped with a hidden Key // and I know deep in my bones that this same key was // and that now we have found the key to the // sleeping Neshama

62   Mary Carruthers, "Invention, Mnemonics, and Stylistic Ornament in Psychomachia and Pearl." In M. T. Tavormina and R F. Yeager, eds. *The Endless Knot: Essays on Old and Middle English in Honour of Marie Borroff*, pp. 201-13. Cambridge: D. Brewer, 1995.

63   To read about the multi-religious, multinational history of the menorah, see The *Menorah* by Steven Fine (2016).

down the grain of wood, / as I squat, uncomfortable, / before the door to antiquity."[64] The speaker can and cannot access Jewish knowledge, within earshot but forbidden; the key to the past is missing, and the gaping keyhole creates distance between past and present. Not represented as sensorially vivid, like in Sandoval's poem, the past is undefined and indistinct, described through a single word: "antiquity." Nasrallah wrote elsewhere in the exhibition that her mother and friends used to sing a song she assumed referred to the keys brought from Spain: "Donde esta la llave, matarilerilerile, donde esta la llave, matarilerileron. En el fondo del mar…"[65] The lyrics belong to a Spanish children's song with a longer narrative, but Nasrallah's assumption still seems plausible. The remembered excerpt emphasizes absence: "where is the key, gone forever at the bottom of the sea." Without a cultural key to the past, and perhaps without the myth of *la llave*, identity disintegrates.

The myth of *la llave* connects crypto-Jews to a romanticized vision of their ancestral land. But the myth also aggrandizes faith and religiosity. In a 1992 article, "El leñador y los enanitos: A Crypto-Jewish version of a Spanish Folktale," Roger Parks discusses the evolving adaptations of a specific legend. He quotes Reginetta Haboucha, a collector of Judeo-Spanish tales in Israel:

> *Many of the judeo-spanish oral narratives contain, and therefore transmit, images of comfort and consolation. They give the assurance of divine justice, expressing complete confidence in the ultimate equity of the Almighty… In spite of the dismal image of misery which is repeatedly depicted in these stories, the mood is generally optimistic and shows faith and hope in the face of adversity. The tales seem thus to have had an enormous social impact, providing the tellers with the necessary strength to endure a life of hardship with fortitude and resignation.[66]*

Crypto-Jewish poems and songs recognize the dismalness of centuries of secrecy and oppression but ultimately present optimism and hope. The mythology of the *llave* translates to desire for faith and divine justice: "ya hemos encontrado la llave en la neshama dormida."

Even Nasrallah's pessimistic poem contains an element of awe ("crouched in awe of wisdom, / expectant"). Absence, too, contains the seeds of hope.

The *llave* exhibition demonstrates crypto-Jewish memory practices. The catalogue contains a section on "Cryptic Practices," gathered from sources including Hordes' *The Sephardic Legacy in the Southwest: The Crypto-Jews of New Mexico*, Trudy Alexy's *The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot*, and a 1993 *Jerusalem Report* article by Edward R. Silverman. The curators drew from these sources to craft a master list of secret, preserved practices: "grandfathers who wore shawls to pray," "elderly relatives who spoke Ladino," "slaughter of meat according to the laws of kashrut," "[educating] the oldest son as a priest, continuing a tradition that began during the 15th century of conveying Jewish learning secretly through Catholic men of God," and "the creation of St. Esther - the queen in the Purim story, honored because she too kept her Jewishness a secret for a time."[67] These traditions extend into the past and bring old customs into the present without rupture: the sons are educated as priests to continue a medieval pattern, a new mixed image of Esther demonstrates the ways in which the present mirrors the past and connects Jews-now to Jews-then—both obliged to hide their religious identities. The section also includes a list of traits Catholics were supposed to look for in order to recognize Jews during the Inquisition. By aligning traits-then with traits-now, the exhibition itself ties together the past and the present, illustrating the curator's desire to remember history as continuous in order to solidify crypto-Jewish identity. Nostalgia, contained within the symbol of the key, serves as an enabling string between past and present.

New Mexico crypto-Jews exhibiting work in *La Llave* engage with history—they are not ignorant or evasive of their past. But their interest in history, and their means to preservation, reside within the private, familial world. Boym writes that "the nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology."[68] Nostalgia does serve as a means to collective mythology and identity for New Mexico crypto-Jews, but because their nostalgia exists only in the

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64   Emma Moya Collection, Box 10, Folder 13.
65   Ibid.
66   Emma Moya Collection, Box 10, Folder 14.
67 Emma Moya Collection, Box 10, Folder 13.
68   Boym, XV.

A gravestone in a Catholic cemetery that includes five of the Ten Commandments in Hebrew letters. The cemetery is located in the middle of the Rio Grande Valley. By Cary Herz [5]

WHISPERED TRADITION

private world of memory, it does not obliterate, or even alter, history. Boym distinguishes between restorative nostalgia, a "return home" by means of reconstruction of the homeland and monuments of the past, and reflective nostalgia, a "longing" which delays the return home by dwelling in the act of remembering and longing. New Mexico crypto-Jews practice reflective nostalgia. They do attempt to patch up gaps in memory between New Mexico and Sepharad, but their work ultimately functions as a means of dwelling in of itself. Identity exists in and through the process of remembering. El Sabado Secreto is not a newspaper of history but of the processes of memory. The myth of la llave connects crypto-Jews back to their ancestral and geographical past, but it also exists as such—as the process of dwelling within remembrance and nostalgia.

The Myth in Spain

The Spanish government has also promoted *la llave* as a symbol of nostalgia and reconciliation. In 2015, the Spanish government passed a law proposed by the Popular Party, a right-wing, Christian democratic party, stating that those who can prove Sephardic ancestry can gain Spanish citizenship. A 2012 law proposed a similar phenomenon but with more restrictions. Spain's justice minister Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón said about the bill: "it is about addressing a historic aberration….the expulsion was one of Spain's most important historical errors. Now they [Jewish people] have an open door to become once again what they should have never stopped being — citizens of Spain." Ruiz-Gallardón does not align himself with the guilty Spain of the past—the Jews "should have never stopped being" citizens. Agency falls grammatically on the Jews rather than the monarchy. Part of the citizenship application requires a person to show their special connection to Spain. One of the possible "special connections" is "evidence or knowledge of Ladino or 'Haketia' languages," languages almost extinct in the twenty-first century.[69]

The mythology of the imagined homeland becomes a key actor, no pun intended, in policy-making. In a 1992 article published in the Albuquerque journal, "Sephardic Jews Today: Arriving Against the Odds," a rabbi quotes the section of the Spanish declaration that emphasizes the house keys taken by fleeing families in 1492. He told his congregation that some were worried Spain was bribing the Jews, encouraging tourism and preventing protests that would disturb the Barcelona Olympics, but according to the article, this rabbi did accept the country's symbolically outstretched hand.[70]

In her book, *Jewish Spain: A Mediterranean Memory*, Tabea Linhard argues that "writers and witnesses narrate instances of Jewish life in Spain's turbulent twentieth century by invoking the remote past."[71] In the 1940s, Spaniards saved a small number of Jews, the majority of whom were descendants of Sephardim, attempting to flee Hitler's territories. A 1943 press release about Jews fleeing from France emphasized that certain Jews were accepted into Spain because of their archaic Spanish: "[The Spanish people] were amused by the ways in which they spoke that old Castilian…. it is possible to have general conversations between the Spaniards who speak the Castilian of the twentieth century and those that return with the speech used in the fifteenth century, when they left Spain."[72] The Jews' preservation of old Castilian allowed the Spaniards to sympathize with the refugees; it allowed literal and figurative conversations. These Jews were "returning" to Spain, not just entering, and they had supposedly maintained for centuries their Spanish identity.

Ángel Sanz-Briz, a Spanish diplomat during the Franco regime who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews, repeated this rhetoric of return. Memorialized in countless books as a savior of the Jews, his story is used as a substitute for examining Spanish action more generally.[73] In 1949, Sanz-Briz reflected on the Jewish refugees he encountered: "[Sephardim] hold on to many keepsakes of Spanish culture. Some even still own the keys to the homes that their great-great-grandfathers had to abandon 450 years ago."[74] Sanz-Briz projects onto Sephardic

69   Alistair, Dawber, "Spain: Up to 3.5 Million Jews Could Have the Right to Citizenship," *Time* (March 30, 2015), http://time.com/3763381/spain-sephardic-jews-citizenship/.
70   Emma Moya Collection, Box 2.
71   Tabea A. Linhard, *Jewish Spain: A Mediterranean Memory*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 4.
72   Linhard, 103.
73   See Jacobo Israel Garzón's "El Archivo Judaico del Franquismo" (1997) to read about the Jewish Archive, a list of 6,000 Jews living in Spain created by the Franco regime and handed over to Nazi authorities in 1941.
74   Linhard, 112.

Jews a nostalgia for their lost country, even though, as demonstrated in the first section of this chapter, crypto-Jews long for the Judaism which flourished within their families in Sepharad rather than Spain itself. In his 1973 book, *España y los judíos en la segunda guerra mundial (Spain and the Jews in the Second World War)*, commissioned by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federico Ysart presented Spain's humanitarian efforts during World War II. He wrote about the *llave*: ""There was not a family that did not know its exact lineage in the kingdom of Sepharad. Many kept in their crammed storage spaces the keys to a distant home that would die with their memories..."[75] Both Ysart and Sanz-Briz crafted a nostalgic vision of the past for the Jews; neither cited the nostalgic voices of any Jewish individuals.[76]

Spanish officials and citizens, like New Mexico crypto-Jews, collapse time through the myth of *la llave*. But Spain's intentions, both during the Holocaust and in recent decades, are different from those of crypto-Jews; the latter dwells in mythology as a means to identity-creation and preservation of Jewish ancestry, while the former utilizes the myth to absolve themselves of historical blame and promote forgiveness and memory distortion. In comparison to disillusioned or crafty figures like Sanz-Briz and Ysart, respectively, New Mexico crypto-Jews like Trujillo and Sandoval are historical innocents.[77] Sanz-Briz and Ysart, and the copious press releases and government-issued decrees in Spain over the past seventy years, manipulate nostalgia and memory in order to rewrite history as a means to absolution. For Sandoval, like the Sephardim Haboucha described, the nostalgic symbol of the *llave* serves as a means of comfort—consolation for time that has been forcibly lost and hope that new generations will regather and revitalize lost traditions.

N EW MEXICO CRYPTO-JEWS, and some Sephardic Jews, identify with the history of other Jewish communities, drawing lines in personal memory between the Inquisition and the Holocaust. In her 2008 book, *Five Hundred Years to Auschwitz: A Family Odyssey from the Inquisition to the Present*, Sephardic Jew Irene Lawford-Hinrichsen traces her family tree from the Inquisition to the Holocaust to the present. The story threads together the violence of five hundred years through one family narrative. In *The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot*, Alexy's memoir about her period of exile in Spain and her conversion from Judaism to Catholicism, she writes: "Just as my family sought to escape Nazi persecution by pretending to be Catholic, so centuries before, the *marranos* had hoped to escape the Inquisition's savagery by submitting to baptism. For them, being found out meant torture on the rack and death by fire. For us and others like us, getting caught meant the horrors of concentration camps and death in gas chambers."[78] Alexy's comparisons preserve the "savagery" of the Inquisition while acknowledging the horrors of Nazi persecution. Images of violence link the past and present together, and Alexy, an Ashkenazi Jew, empathizes with the sufferings of Inquisition marranos by means of her own family's suffering during the Holocaust.[79]

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75   Linhard, 106.
76   In a 1943 press release referring to Jews coming from Greece, the Spaniards' sentiment that the Jews are returning to a homeland recurs yet again. The release states: "Today ancient horizons return. And as proof that they never stopped being Spanish, and that the eternal Iberia traveled with them to all corners of the world and accompanied them in all their suffering, they bring back to the land they left five centuries ago the keys to the homes they left and to which they have, without a doubt, the right to return." (Linhard, 103) The romanticization idealization of the Jews' return is extreme: not only is their bodily return equated to the return of "ancient horizons," suggesting a naturalness to the cycle of expulsion and return, but it is suggested that their Spanish-ness has remained an integral part of their beings throughout their centuries away. The "eternal Iberia" seems to be some sort of consolatory, comforting essence, traveling with them throughout their centuries of suffering.
77   Innocence not as in naivete, but harmlessness—they are not distorting history.
78   Linhard, 68.
79   Interestingly, some Sephardic Jews do not want to trace their history back to Spain. Or at least, they want

Two Sephardic Jews who moved to Mexico City from Bulgaria after World War II. By Myriam Moscona [6]

Empathy goes in the other direction, too. Just as the key becomes a myth of personal ancestry for crypto-Jews, so too does the historical event of the Holocaust morph into a personal memory for members of the community. As stated earlier in this paper, and reinforced in the comparison between Spain's and crypto-Jew's memory-work, crypto-Jewish memory is not an interrogation of the past but rather an imagistic and nostalgic exploration of history by way of memory. Their rewriting of the past is a realigning, and this reali-gning resides within familial rather than global history, situating the modifications within ancestral memory.[80] This memory-work is not distortive, but productive. In fact, I would like to name crypto-Jews' adoption of the Holocaust as a part of their ancestral pasts—empathy. More specifically, empathetic memory.

In his book, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Michael Rothberg defines "multidirectional memory" as the intercultural interaction of historical memories in

to sever the ties between their Judeo-Spanish and the Iberian Peninsula. Elena Romero, an academic and specialist in Semitic languages, argued that Judeo-Spanish should be written for a Spanish-speaking audience. Moshe Shaul, editor of the largest Judeo-Spanish journal, *Aki Yerushalayim*, entirely opposes writing Judeo-Spanish in Latin letters, arguing: "we do not live in Spain nor do we hold the same views." Eliezer Papo, Rabbi and Serbian author of Ladino novel, *La meguilá de Saray*, agreed with Shaul, arguing: "Spanish academics are the last people who should tell us how to write our language. If they had really wanted us to write like they do, they shouldn't have kicked us out of Spain in the fifteenth century. When they say that Ladino is a Spanish language, they should also recognize that it is a Balkan language." Unlike crypto-Jews, estranged from their Sephardic heritage by layers of loss, these Judeo-Spanish speaking and writing Sephardic Jews want nothing to do with their distant homeland. (See Myriam Moscona's Tela de Sevoya, or Onioncloth, 2017)

80   I am not suggesting that familial memories do not impact greater communities' visions of history. Individuals' renunciation of the Holocaust or families' refusal to acknowledge their ancestors' roles in slavery seep into national culture and national understandings of the past. I also do not mean to say that crypto-Jews' memory-work is futile or insignificant. I am instead differentiating between the memory-work done by these individuals and families and the harmful memory-work done by, for instance, the Spanish government which aims to formally and broadly rewrite history.

order to create a united rather than competitive memory landscape. Individuals who practice multidirectional memory work through the past by connecting disparate histories and communities.[81] Rothberg's idea unites rememberers, emphasizing that different communities should not compete over past victimizations but bring their distinct memories of trauma together into a "heterogeneous and changing post-World War II present."[82] In order to create a communal memory landscape, in which commonality and productivity are the goals of remembering, individuals must become "memory-individuals," to use Nora's term. Crypto-Jews, as well as Alexy and Lawford-Hinrichsen, create their identities through memory production and then align this memory-identity with the memory-identities of nearby communities (Ashkenazi to Sephardic and crypto-Jewish, crypto-Jewish to Sephardic and Ashkenazi). Figures like Sandoval, Trujillo, Nasrallah, and Herz, amongst many others, are practitioners of multidirectional memory, as they attempt to create an inclusive and noncompetitive memory landscape, linking traumas together. Their memory-work transcends multidirectional memory and enters into a new realm: empathetic memory. They not only view history as a communal landscape, but they personally adopt another community's traumas, embodying and internalizing heterogeneous sufferings.

By remembering the Holocaust, even if it occurred outside of their families or community, as an event related to the Inquisition, crypto-Jews in New Mexico define their Jewish identities as continuous with a broader Jewish history, but they also draw a horizontal line between their suffering and the suffering of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. The adoption of Holocaust memory is a creation of collective memory, or borrowed collective memory. In his seminal text, Halbwachs posited that communities who share place craft a communal vision of their history and identity—a "collective memory." Crypto-Jews expand their collective memory beyond their own place and into the broader Jewish community, hence the revised terms, "borrowed collective memory," or "empathetic

memory." New Mexico crypto-Jews trace their history through time and across geography and community. Both acts enable crypto-Jewish identity to flourish, connecting a less stable identity to more stable roots. Not only is their empathetic memory essential to cultural creation and preservation but it serves to lessen the distance between disparate communities, creating a more generous memory landscape.

This empathetic memory began prior to recent decades. As scholar Cecil Roth described, marranos of the sixteenth century empathized with the story of Esther. One of the daughters of Francisco Rodríguez Mattos, "dogmatist and Rabbi of the Jewish sect" who was burned in effigy in Mexico in 1592 and was the father of Luis de Carvajal the Governor, could recite the prayer ascribed to Esther in the Apocrypha backwards.[83, 84] Because Judaization of exile was not possible for Mexico and New Mexico crypto-Jews—until, possibly, the last thirty years—their Jewish identities were displaced into the past, a coping mechanism for their inability to practice openly and securely in the present. The story of Esther reappears in Emma Moya's boxes and in La Llave Exhibition.

Post-Holocaust, many New Mexico crypto-Jews have incorporated Holocaust memory into their own memories of trauma and identity. Recorded in Herz's book, crypto-Jew Maria Apodaca says, "Memory is my soul. Night by Eli Wiesel is the hardest book I ever read." Her memory is tied to the most personal, and spiritual, part of herself—her soul. Understanding and empathizing with the horrors of the Holocaust, vis-a-vis Wiesel's Holocaust memoir, become a crucial part of her Jewish self-understanding. Moya's collection, assembled after the Holocaust, includes every Jewish trace imaginable, and the archived boxes are both explicitly and implicitly tied to an anxiety for Jewish preservation. Connections between crypto-Jewish identity and the Holocaust also encouraged a different kind of anxiety—fear. Paul Aviles-Silva, a crypto-Jew represented in Herz's book, said "I have discovered that having Jewish roots is very scary for most people.

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81   Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 4.
82   Ibid.
83   Roth, 186.
84   It is noteworthy that the daughter's exposure to Esther's story was through the Apocrypha, an early Christian text. Her relationship to Judaism was filtered through a Christian, non-heretical lens.

WHISPERED TRADITION

They know how dangerous it is to be a Jew. People grow up hating Jews, blaming them for the ills of the world, and then find out that they are one of them!"[85] Aviles-Silva's fear of Jewish identity stems from the dangers of being a Jew in a post-Holocaust world and possibly incorporates his own internalized antisemitism. Another crypto-Jew, Richard Fernandez, said there are "psychological and cultural obstacles to embracing this reality [of being Jewish]."[86]

Cary Herz, though not a crypto-Jew herself, writes about the connection between the Holocaust and the Inquisition in the introduction to her book—both histories feel personal to her. The dedication of the book reads: "To my great aunts / Augusta, Lina, and Sophie Herz, who perished in Auschwitz. / And to those we remember / who have died because of / religious and ethnic cleansing." Trauma begins at the familial and zooms out to the global. After recounting Inquisition history, Herz ends the introduction by describing her personal stakes in the history, namely that her parents were Holocaust refugees. The two histories are again aligned within a personal context. Congregation B'nai Israel, founded in Albuquerque in 1965, has in its siddur the poem, "The ethical courage to be a Jew," written by Leo Baeck, a theologian and rabbi of concentration camp, Theresienstadt. The poem resonates in the context of the Holocaust, but it also seems relevant to descendants of the Inquisition and contemporary crypto-Jews living in New Mexico.

Joachim Prinz, a rabbi expelled from Nazi Germany in 1937, wrote in his 1973 book, The Secret Jews:

> *We do not know how many Jews became Marranos, of a sort, under the Hitler regime. There must have been thousands who resorted to all kinds of tricks to hide their Jewishness…Many of them returned to Judaism only after they had been declared Jewish by the Gestapo; many of them died as Jews in the concentration camps. But others became enthusiastic believing members of the Jewish faith, emigrating to Palestine and other countries where they could openly return to the religion of their forefathers.[87]*

Prinz writes about the pattern of Jewish oppression and survival in a way similar to Netanyahu. Tracing the patterns allows Prinz to connect the Inquisition, specifically crypto-Judaism, and the Holocaust. His language, however, is less open-minded, less empathetic, than that of New Mexico crypto-Jews writing about the same patterns. For Prinz, *marranos* shamefully and deceitfully "resort" to "tricks" to hide their identities. Prinz does, however, celebrate those who reclaim their Jewish identities, so perhaps he would have approved of contemporary New Mexico crypto-Jewish identity after all.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Outsider Voices: Forgetting, Converation, and Colonization

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T HROUGHOUT the twentieth century, those outside the New Mexico crypto-Jewish and Mexico *marrano* communities have interacted with and written about these peoples and their history. Scholars generally view New World crypto-Judaism as distortive and mythical rather than productive or empathetic, though many oddly intertwine critical and sentimental depictions of the community. Some authors claim crypto-Jewish identity to be solely rooted in memory, while others acknowledge remembered and historical roots of the community. This paper's final chapter will interrogate outsiders' views on crypto-Judaism in the New World, identifying patterns of colonialism and empathy in texts normally accepted as objective and modern historical accounts.

Ross and Roth: Seeing Identity in Memory and History

In his 1982 book, Acts of Faith: *A Journey to the Fringes of Jewish Identity*, Dan Ross wrote about the admirable unity created by 'Indian Jews in Mexico' who

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85   Herz, 59.
86   Herz.
87   Joachim Prinz, *The Secret Jews*, first edition, (New York: Random House, 1973), 10-12. New York, American Jewish Historical Society.

preserved Judaism across generations.[88] The book relies on the work of Raphael Patai, a mid-twentieth century anthropologist, who visited the Venta Prieta Jews in Mexico City and declared they were recent converts from a branch of Protestantism, Iglesia de Dios, that had many Jewish-like customs and claimed to be the spiritual heir of ancient Israel.[89] This argument mirrors that of contemporary scholar, Neulander. Despite Patai's belief that the Venta Prieta Jews were not ancestral Jews, he remained impressed with their "deep, sentimental, and sincere attachment" to Judaism.[90] Patai's foreword to Ross's book asserts that all communities discussed in the book—"fringe Jews" including the Indian Jews in Mexico, the Chuetas of Majorca, and the Moslem Marranos of Mashhad—share a "persistent historical memory that in the past they were Jewish and that therefore, they are different from their neighbors."[91] For Patai and Ross, the Venta Prieta Jews are Jewish because of their memories, not because of their history. Patai's anthropological and colonial positionality, however, taints this claim. Patai asserts that the group's Jewish claims rely wholly on memory, which he categorizes as an emotional and fictitious phenomenon, partially because he views the Indian Jews as incapable of mapping an accurate history of their community. Ross and Patai define the Venta Prieta Jews through difference from their neighbors rather than collective internal sameness—the Jews are attached to their religion not through communal insistence but through mere differentiation from external groups. Ross wrote as the concluding sentence to his book: "To be a Jew, above all, is still an act of faith—if no longer in God, then in another phenomenon whose existence cannot be objectively proven: the Jewish people."[92] Although coated in the language of colonialism and superiority, Ross's book presents Judaism as a choice, "an act of faith," rather than an inheritance, broadening Jewish identity to include those who believe.

Cecil Roth, a British historian of the mid-twentieth century, believed that both history and memory played a role in the *marrano* Jewish community. Roth wrote about the *marranos'* history as though it were a romance, a story of intrigue and tragedy; the language of excess and exoticism fills his book. In *A History of the Marranos* (1931), he wrote of "the submerged life" of the Marranos "which blossomed out at intervals into such exotic flowers; the unique devotion which could transmit the ancestral ideals unsullied from generation to generation, despite the Inquisition and its horrors….[combine] to make a story unparalleled in history for sheer dramatic appeal."[93] Roth's retelling of history overflows with mythological and hyperbolic language, but he simultaneously asserts the continuous validity of *marranos'* history. Unlike Ross and Patai, Roth does not assert that *marrano* identity relies solely on memory production. His book includes many chapters which trace the *marranos'* history back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including one entitled "antecedents of Crypto-Judaism."

But Roth also emphasizes the role of memory in *marrano* identity formation. He is amazed by the community's continuity, the passing down of secret Judaism from one generation to the next, and he recognizes the importance of memory and re-memory in this process.[94] In his chapter, "Religion of the Marranos," Roth presents the community's affinity with the story and fast of Esther, as has been mentioned. The Marranos, Roth wrote, forget the holiday itself but hold on to Esther, whose case of "telling not her race nor her birth" yet remaining "faithful to the religion of her fathers in an alien environment [was] almost identical with [the Marranos'] own [case]."[95] *Marrano* religion, according to Roth, relies on the transmission of distant memories that are neither personal nor ancestral, but borrowed. Unlike many other scholars, he recognizes and admires the community's empathetic memory practices, though he does not use this language.

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88   Ross's text disputes Seymour Liebman's 1962 *Jewish Spectator* article, "A Dying Branch," which aimed to "debunk the myth of 'Jewish Indians'" and told philanthropic Americans to go elsewhere to help Judaism flourish.

89   Dan Ross, *Acts of faith: A journey to the fringes of Jewish identity* (1st ed.), (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982). New York, American Jewish Historical Society.

90   Ross.

91   Ross, foreword.

92   Ross, 213.

93   Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1931). New York, American Jewish Historical Society.

94   Roth, 4.

95   Roth, 186.

Roth invites *marrano* Jews into the broader community of Jews, describing the *marrano* Diaspora as "without exaggeration, the first modern Jew." They adapted to a modern, secular New World while maintaining Jewish traditions; "they set the example for abandoning the traditional Jewish costume and…hybrid Jewish dialect. In synagogal worship, they first adopted secular standards of decorum and harmony."[96] The *marranos'* transmission of memories of their factually true (according to Roth) historical past alongside their mythical and spiritual past (for example, their preservation of the story of Esther), enabled their religious identity to flourish and allowed Roth to write of their history as a miraculous story of survival. Roth's text emphasizes the continuous historical presence of the *marranos* while detailing their reliance on the distant past.

Yet Roth also views *marranos'* Judaism as incomplete and even worthless: "Judaism is based upon understanding: and it is obviously impossible for an integral Judaism of any worth to flourish under conditions of stealth, uninstructed and isolated, cut off from the outside world and minutely divided even within itself."[97] Roth's argument relies on the logical flipside to Yerushalmi's argument that the Judaization of exile allows for domicile in diaspora. But Roth uses slightly different criteria. The *marranos* fail to create domicile in exile because they are internally divided and "uninstructed and isolated" from the external Jewish world. Roth's criteria are intertwined more acutely than Yerushalmi's with a colonial perspective—these inferior Jews cannot possibly have internally, and in isolation, created a cohesive community representative of true Judaism. Colonial ideology blends into Roth's romanticization and admiration of the identity group.

Prinz, Leibman, and the Mexican Marranos

Joachim Prinz's book, *The Secret Jews* (1973), maintains Roth's sentimental tone while viewing *marrano* history directly through the lens of the Holocaust. His perspective mirrors the memory practices of New Mexico crypto-Jews, but he ultimately falls into a colonial perspective similar to Roth's and Ross's. Prinz was a Berlin rabbi and one of the first Jewish leaders to speak out against Nazism and encourage mass migration to Israel. Expelled from Germany in 1937, Prinz celebrates the resiliency of Marranism, which he argues is an integral aspect of the 'Jewish condition': "hidden Jews….are a phenomenon as singular as the Jews themselves….They can be said to constitute a prototype of the uniqueness of Jewish existence."[98] As the previous chapter of this paper noted, Prinz draws a historical line between the Jews of the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust: "We do not know how many Jews became Marranos, of a sort, under the Hitler regime….They forged passports and identity cards; they changed their names, dyed their hair and pretended to be Aryans." Prinz establishes another historical continuity, as well: "A different species of hidden Jew emerged during the early days of Hitler. Families which had been living as Christians for generations suddenly came forward to return to their people."[99] Prinz recognizes that many of these converts arrived at Judaism through force, but he also relishes that some "became enthusiastic believing members of the Jewish faith….openly [returning] to the religion of their forefathers."[100] The continuous presence of *marranos* throughout Jewish history demonstrates the race's ability to survive; the preservation of Jewish memory from one generation to the next, despite persecution, signifies hope for expelled Prinz, just as it does for New Mexico crypto-Jews.

Though his historical account is in many ways anachronistic (he draws historical lines similar to those of Netanyahu), he is conscious of the shortcomings of his method: "Parallels are dangerous tools of history; they are at best illustrations."[101] Prinz concludes that it is remarkable that marranos all over the world have transmitted the same variations of old Jewish themes, even if their new practices are reductive: "[there is] always a question about the depth of the Jewish iden-

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96   Roth, 235.
97   Seymour B. Liebman, *The Jews in New Spain : Faith, Flame, and the Inquisition*, (Florida: University of Miami, 1970), American Jewish Historical Society, 303.
98   Prinz, 9, 192.
99   Prinz, 10-12.
100   Ibid.
101   Prinz.

tity of the contemporary Marrano…500 years without teaching, without any kind of authentic interpretation, without a living, creative community, without history, is eternity. All that is really left is a faint memory, however sacred."[102] Prinz recognizes marranos' memory-based identity, but views their history and religious identity as ultimately insufficient.

In his 1970 book, *The Jews in New Spain*, Seymour B. Liebman both glorifies and insults the marranos. His dedication reads: "to the thousands of Jews in the colonial era whose blood and bones hallow the ground of Mexico. Their graves are unmarked…They opted for Judaism at the risk of their lives." Liebman mourns the colonial martyrs of the Mexican Inquisition and wishes that modern Mexico Jews would remember "those who preceded them to the shores of New Spain."[103] He laments that some Jewish tragedies are deeply remembered, perhaps in reaction to the saturation of Holocaust memory in America in the 1970s, while other persecutions are forgotten. But while he praises and memorializes the Jews of the colonial era, he entirely writes off the "Mexican Indian Jews" of the twentieth century, offhandedly retorting that they are "neither Indians nor Jews." He traces crypto-Jewish identity only to 1821, arguing that converso faith became mere superstition following Mexican independence. Chief Sephardic Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Dr. Solomon Gaon, agreed in 1965, commenting on Sephardim as a whole: "The tragic quality of independence and disunity among sephardic Jews resulted in not only the weakening of Sephardic influence on world Jewry, but also the gradual and consistent decline of spiritual and religious standards."[104]

Liebman, perhaps fairly, recognizes all that was lost during the centuries of suppressed and "schizophrenic" Jewish life in Mexico. But his colonial worldview, evident in his reference to the "pseudo-exoticism fostered by myth, legend, and historical ignorance" of contemporary marranos and his admiration for Jews and Christians who "colonized the New World…. as rugged Spaniards who did not fear man or God,"

taints his argument.[105] Liebman ultimately cites Rabbi Harry Halpern on forgetfulness—"The letters of the Hebrew word meaning 'to forget,' if rearranged slightly, spell the word meaning 'to darken.' Forgetfulness means plunging a past experience into darkness while memory means to see it in a clear light"—and claims that history is forgotten because Mexico *marranos* have forgotten their past. Liebman's assertion that *marranos* have forgotten history is also a claim that they have failed to remember. This paper has demonstrated the falsity of Liebman's claim.

Perhaps most emblematic of the empathy-condescension dichotomy of external voices is a 1944 anthropological research summary entitled, *Indian Jews in Mexico: A Brief Sketch of The History and The Survival of the Mexican Marranos*, in which an anonymous man reports on his findings after visiting the Mexico community. The pamphlet was published by The American Friends of the Mexican Indian Jews. Written in 1944, as news of the Holocaust traveled across the Atlantic Sea, the brochure exalts the presence of the hidden Jews as a means to Jewish survival while preserving a colonial tone. The pamphlet states its purpose is "to acquaint American Jewry with a branch of the House of Israel that has spent more than three centuries in the land of Anahuac in hiding….[and] in constant danger of disintegration."[106] These people, the pamphlet declares, are "carrying out their keen longing [to live according to the Torah and observe Jewish traditions] which comes from 'The Call of the Blood' which is deep-seated in their souls." Finally, the introduction page declares, the Marrano Jews demonstrate the "miraculous power of Jewish survival." As in the texts of Roth, Ross, Prinz, and Liebman, the language of primitivism sits alongside admiration of the survival and perseverance of *marranos*. The visitor sees the crude benches and earthen floor of their chapel but attempts to find traces of an "orthodox order," symbols of civilized Judaism amongst these "uncivilized" people. Empathy, demonstrated through the man's shedding of a tear and his "thrill" when the congregation begins to sign a Zionist hymn

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102   Prinz, 187.
103   Liebman.
104   Liebman, 287.
105   Liebman, 18 and 124.
106   American Friends of the Mexican Indian Jews, *Indian Jews in Mexico: a Brief Sketch of the History and the Survival of the Mexican Marranos*, 1944. American Jewish Historical Society.

Mexican Jews of Polish descent dining in Mexico City, 1961. By Marrovi [7]

with "ardor" and "musical talent," mixes with his sense of superiority.

The pamphlet only directly references the Holocaust once, in a puzzling moment at the end of the narrator's recounting: "I also photographed the oldest member of the congregation….and her great-grandson, Israel, a five year old lad with lovely blue eyes, blonde hair and a pure white skin—a typical Nordic. I wished Hitler could have seen him…." Is the visitor suggesting that universalism exists, contrary to Hitler's beliefs, while still propelling his own colonialist agenda? He wishes Hitler could see that even in Mexico, amongst Native peoples, there is a boy who looks perfectly white and Aryan? He has found an "ideal" specimen, according to Hitler's racial laws, even amongst these "unusual" people.

With the destruction of Ashkenazim occur-

ring across the ocean, American Ashkenazim could no longer look longingly toward their (secondary) homeland and exile—Western, or perhaps nineteenth-century Eastern, Europe. A turn toward a diasporic community with shared customs, rituals, and history—the "Indian Jews"—seems to serve as a means of connection to a Jewish past; the Indian Jews are an emblem of survival in the New World. They were a people able to create domicile in exile through memory, but to modern, "civilized" Jews, they were also an emblem of memory itself, a living embodiment of an archaic world. Looking at the "old tumble-down shack, almost invisible for the flowers and vines" and listening to the congregation's impassioned Zionist hymn, the pamphlet's narrator is able to return to an older Judaism, distilled and distorted, but emblematic of a lost homeland.[107] In times of crisis, looking toward history,

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107 In the pamphlet, Licenciado Ramirez defends his community's traditionality: "We observe strictly the Sabbath and all the Jewish Religious Holidays. We also practice *B'rith Milah, the Chuppah* ceremony and the Jewish burial rites. We teach our children Hebrew so that they may be able to read the Bible and their prayers in the sacred tongue of their

or a "historic" people, perhaps relieves the pressures of the present. History has already sorted itself out and can thus become part of the imagined world, the mythological world painted by Roth and Prinz, relieving the burden of examining the present.

Acknowledging the fracturedness, though admirable persistence, of Jewish identity amongst crypto-Jews in New Mexico, Rabbi Marc D. Angel of Shearith Israel said in an interview in 1990: "What concerns me is that because of their dramatic story… there will be an eagerness to receive them into Judaism and forget there is a formal procedure for re-entry after separation that requires instruction, patience, and sincerity. There are no short-cuts."[108] The question of conversion graces contemporary debates about New Mexico crypto-Jewish identity and authenticity. According to halakhic law, crypto-Jews are a far cry from an ordained Jew and must be converted to return to the faith. In the same article, Rabbi Celnik of Congregation B'nai Israel in Albuquerque said that crypto-Jews hesitantly, in the years leading up to 1992, began to approach him, and that he thought 1992 may be the "opportune moment for Crypto-Jews to embrace their heritage openly." Oddly, Celnik seems to view crypto-Jewish identity as historical, rather than cultural or religious, and so a historical landmark is the perfect opportunity for individuals to embrace their heritage.[109] To a contemporary American Jew, New Mexico crypto-Jewish practices are strikingly distilled—many rituals have vanished or merged with Catholic or Protestant traditions. Formal conversion appears to be a reasonable request.

But New Mexico crypto-Jews bear a striking resemblance to Western Sephardim of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Eastern Sephardim left the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 (or perhaps earlier, following the pogroms of 1391) and took with them rabbinic Judaism, oral law and ritual, not yet forcibly lost. But *conversos* who left the peninsula a couple centuries later took with them an already distilled version of Judaism. For example, Uriel da Costa left Portugal in 1618 and fled to Holland. His parents were conversos, and he formally and independently converted to Judaism in his youth. A Karaite Jew, da Costa believed in the Mosaic Law but not rabbinic law, including the Talmud and Mishnah.[110] Diasporic *conversos*, or Catholics, or Jews—I am not suggesting the nomenclature is simple—like da Costa's family left the Iberian Peninsula only one hundred years after the Inquisition began and already they brought with them a "reformed" Judaism, stripped of most rabbinic ritual. New Mexico crypto-Jews also practice a "reformed" Judaism, mostly void of oral texts and rabbinic law. Their observance, in fact, resembles that of the diasporic Western Sephardim of four centuries earlier. Perhaps rabbinic law was primarily lost during the Inquisition's reign on the peninsula during the sixteenth century, and crypto-Jews in New Mexico have somewhat astoundingly preserved these original remains.[111]

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antepasados, the American association sees primitivity rather than complexity."

108   Kathleen Teltsch, "Scholars and Descendants Uncover Hidden Legacy of Jews in Southwest," *The New York Times*, November 11, 1990.

109   This viewpoint stands in opposition to Kunin's assertion that identity is primarily a cultural phenomenon.

110   One might say he went beyond his identity as a Karaite Jew, as in his essay, "My Double Life and Excommunication," he questions the authorship of even Mosaic Law.

111   It would be interesting to trace and compare the memory and religious practices of the descendants of Western Sephardim to those of contemporary New Mexico crypto-Jews. Are both communities' descendants of the same religious and ethnic materials, and so are left with the same fragmentary, often multi-religious and multicultural, remains? Or, and this seems more probable, did the different contexts of each community influence their memory practices and inheritance patterns, creating more difference than sameness despite their similar starting points? To argue that twentieth and twenty-first century New Mexico crypto-Jews practice a Judaism strikingly similar to that of sixteenth and seventeenth century Western Sephardim is to defend the authenticity of the formers' religious practices; if their hybridity of religion and culture mirrors that of a community centuries closer to the thriving Judaism of Sepharad, then their hybridity gains purity and historical continuity grounded in history as well as memory. Archival research of the generational transmissions of Western Sephardim across diaspora and geography is needed to support the original comparison, but the questions and implications of the comparison highlight the multidirectional and empathetic abilities of comparative history and memory studies. To read more about Western Sephardim, see Yosef Kaplan's, "The Intellectual Ferment in the Spanish-Portuguese Community of Seventeenth Century Amsterdam," Miriam Bodian's "Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: The Ambiguous Boundaries of Self-Definition," and primary document, "My Double Life and Excommunication" by Uriel da Costa.

CONCLUSION

N EW MEXICO CRYPTO-JEWS, from the nineteenth century to the present moment, have crafted an identity-in-memory, remembering the past as a seamless and far-reaching continuum in order to claim ancestral inheritance. Creating identity through memory-work has enabled crypto-Jews to establish a universalist and multicultural community that extends, in memory, to nearby and distant peoples, homelands, and histories. Empathetic rather than distortive, New Mexico and Mexico crypto-Jewish memory practices demonstrate the importance of oral history and mythology in religious identity. Like crypto-Jewish customs, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish rituals stem from intergenerational traditions, grounded in ancient law but layered beneath familial mythologies and textual rewritings.

New Mexico crypto-Jews are Jewish in their *form* and *process* of Jewish identity formation. In his seminal text, *The Sabbath* (1951), Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote:

> *Jewish ritual may be characterized as the art of significant forms in time, as architecture in time…It is, for example, the evening, morning, or afternoon that brings with it the call to prayer. The main themes of faith lie in the realm of time. We remember the day of the exodus from Egypt, the day when Israel stood at Sinai; and our Messianic hope is the expectation of a day, of the end of days.[112]*

According to Heschel, Jewish ritual exists as "architecture in time," each custom tied to an hour or season.[113] Jewish memory—the origin site of faith, intrinsically bound to the structure of time—also ties itself to mythological and historical temporal moments. Memory and ritual interact in two directions: Jewish ritual organizes time and remembering time creates ritual. Perhaps Jews also create an architecture *of* time, structuring the past into origin points, seeds of ritual. New Mexico crypto-Jews remember in and through time, building an architectured past by attaching themselves to secular and religious temporal moments—the expulsion from Spain, Esther's fast. Their religious and cultural identity grounds itself in eternal constructions of time: "monuments of stone are destined to disappear; days of spirits never pass away." Time, not space, is everlasting, "beyond the division in past, present and future."[114] New Mexico crypto-Jews' practice of extending spiritual identity—religious and cultural inheritance—across temporal boundaries without hesitance embodies, though unconsciously, Heschel's proclamation of time's insistence.

New Mexico crypto-Jews' empathetic memory also mirrors Jewish practices, as defined by Heschel. He continues:

> *[From the Book of Exodus] 'In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, on this day they came into the wilderness of Sinai' (19:1). Here was an expression that puzzled the ancient rabbis: on this day? It should have been said: on that day. This can only mean that the day of giving the Torah can never become past; that day is this day, every day. The Torah, whenever we study it, must be to us 'as if it were given us today.' The same applies to the day of the exodus from Egypt: 'In every age man must see himself as if he himself went out of Egypt.[115]*

Preserving and renewing the past as a constant present—"the day of giving the Torah can never become past"—is an essential aspect of Judaism. The practice of repeated renewal bestows upon the present day a timelessness and lessens the distance between Jews and their textual and historical pasts. Intertwined with this collapse of time is empathetic memory: "In every age man must see himself as if he himself went out of Egypt.'" Not only must the exodus be remembered, but it must be entered and embodied as if it were one's own experience. New Mexico crypto-Jews' empathetic practice of seeing across time and community fits within the religious and historical frameworks inherent to Judaism. The historical continuity of New Mexico and Mexico crypto-Jews dissolves into debates of authenticity, conversion, and ethnicity. But the memory practices of these communities illustrate the ways in which memory transcends time, creating empathy across geography and community and crafting a productive and generous architecture of time. ◆

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112   Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 8.
113   Heschel was influenced by H. N. Bialik's essay, "Halakha ve-Agadah" and perhaps also Bialik's speech, "on Ohel Shem and Oneg Sabbath," given at a ceremony in Tel-Aviv in 1928.
114   Heschel, 97-98.
115   Heschel, 98.

POEMS

Poem to Chapter One
Carvajal's Records

The worshipful Inquisitors
are inquiring at the door:

how is your meat, how is it dripping;
how are your hands, how are they clean?

For observing these laws, they say,
your house will be swept, then taken.

We will live in your house
and this door over which we inquire will be ours.

We come not by hatred nor by enmity,
but look, the door is horizontal, the wood is broken,

the red paint muddy and chipped,
and the wife is confessing between tears

in front of her children,
and in front of her spouse.

The nephew of the fire
has a house raining down

on his new bendito self,
a generation of non-believers who believe

more strongly because there are knocks,
trials, family flames—

barren mothers who can recall children's births,
ashes are falling in the plaza on bare heads.

Poem to Chapter Two
The Myth of La Llave

Don't you see the swallows
wilting in the sky

their wings fast asleep
on their backs.
The sparrow is fleeing
but the swallow is returning
golden key held
between beak and neck.
The old Spanish roads wind
through graveyards and mountains
following train tracks
as far as they will go.
They do not mind disruption
under their arching bells
light traveling through
patted and patched ground.
The swallows are buried underneath
their wings tied to their bellies with string;
the sparrows saw and hitched
their babies to their backs.
They are almost across the sea
but a yellow shadow in the water
mirrors their path
and they are distracted,
homesick for red earth and pink clouds.
The light arcs back
to the buried towns and resting birds
who sit beneath the tracks.
Except for a few, the sparrows cease fleeing,
cling to shadow, and turn.
The swallows sigh and try
to fold the earth
more heavily over their heads.

Poem to Chapter Three
Prophetess

I saw the oldest woman in the world
die today in Florida

in a pool of blue glass
ice cold, she said.

Her browned skin layered
in perfect circles

like the rings of a lake
expanding after interruption.

She walked like a swan
toes out, nose up

and it could be Egypt,
the desert, a Mexican plaza

lined with gold that held
her small feet

as she shuffled along.
The fish, dead, roll beneath

in water thin and clear,
washed up from bathhouses

and purity cellars
doorways inked

with secret symbols
and pigs' blood

soaking through the floor.

Poem to Chapter Four
Observant Marranos

The call of the blood, you say,

and I nod my head,
the fall of the blood,

but no, you say,
the call of the blood,

and I nod my head and say,
yes, I hear, the flowing of blood,

and you scream to me,
the call of blood,

and I call to you,
the mud! it is falling,

blood is failing, all is crawling,
and you run off

and leave me with this language.

The call of mud,
the suds we use

to wipe clean
this blood of the past, or

this blood of desire
for either we wish

for clean blood, purity
of hand to foot to race,

or we remember
the weaving of desire with

kind, the desire for a kind,
for boxes filled

with a kind,
two kinds, at most.

The Marranos feel
the call of blood

back to their people, but
aren't they Jews

from the start?
Yes, the pamphlet

says and no,
the author inside

and with
out, a friend

and afraid, a cautious
touch to those

who sing
the same songs.

Lord of us all,
or brown skin,

he wonders to himself
as he writes

to kings and queens
for purses of gold.

Poem to Bibliography
Manuscript

Extended palm
inscribed
flower, cross
in oval frame

extend this
skin to find
ground, minerals
beet and barley

fleshed like
fables that craft
and crawl along
slopes, scripts

hand writing scrawls—
one came, one
leapt before
the sun grew tall

(of those who've written
these this
renewal, ink
and line, is

barely pressed
under different
stamp) flapping
her wings the dove

begins to wail,
can I catch
her song as
she falls

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY
Empathetic Memory

TWO SUMMERS AGO, I lived in Madrid, officially working in an art museum but unofficially researching and writing a collection of historical poetry. The collection was an experiment, intertwining research on memory of the Jews in Spain, my Zede's escape from Nazi Germany, and my personal experiences living in a foreign city. Each day after work, I would visit Jewish cultural and historical sites, notebook in hand. I spent my last nights arranging pages of poems on the red tiles of my apartment floor.

I found memory of the Jews everywhere: tucked neatly into cobblestones, behind glass in museums, inside Goya's paintings of the Inquisition. The Jews had fled too long ago to memorialize themselves, and so the duty fell to painters, writers, curators, city officials. For a few weeks, I was convinced Goya was a Jew. He painted scenes of Jewish trauma with empathy and compassion. In his painting "For Being of Jewish Ancestry," condemned men in corozas file out from a prison and pass between an officer of the Inquisition and a priest.[1] Their heads are bowed in shame. I found no evidence that Goya was a crypto-Jew during my time abroad, his lineage buried under baptisms, and so I gave up, but I remained fascinated by the Spanish painter's depiction of Medieval Jewish life.

I have no Sephardic ancestry, and so I sometimes felt strange tracing the history and suffering of Jews with a story unlike my own. I found myself drawing lines between the Inquisition and the Holocaust, noticing imagistic and linguistic similarities between the Catholic Monarch, Franco's regime, and Nazism. These threads proved to be a powerful tool in my poetry—I could trace patterns across centuries, communities, and identities with transformed language and syntax. In the back of my mind was

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1   In a note about the painting, the British Museum will only say the word, "Jew," in quotations when they cite the title.

Michael Rothberg's book, Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization. Rothberg defines "multidirectional memory" as the intercultural interaction of historical memories in order to create a heterogeneous, shifting memory landscape rather than a competitive one.[2] Instinctually, I admire Rothberg's proposal that minority groups should collaborate in their collective memories. In contemporary politics, it is often crucial that minority groups separate and cohere to themselves to preserve distinct cultures. Different minority groups receive different treatment in twenty-first century America and to blend identities together would distort this political, racial, and ethnic truth. But it seems less dangerous, and yet potentially very powerful, to bring groups' collective identities in memory closer together.

I spent this past summer doing archival thesis research in New Mexico and New York City. As I read more and more, it became clear that New Mexico crypto-Jews were practicing multidirectional memory; in fact, they seemed to be practicing a form of memory-work even more radical—what I call empathetic memory. New Mexico crypto-Jews craft their identities out of memory, personal and familial, but they also string these memories together in order to create a continuous and preserved Jewish identity. The community thus creates a collective memory that not only merges past and present, but that merges communities across diaspora, homelands across centuries. My thesis is about the memory-work that creates crypto-Jewish identity, but at its core is the idea of remembering across boundaries, both temporal and spatial, in order to craft fluid and empathetic memory landscapes.

I settled on my thesis topic because I wanted to study Spanish Jewry in America, and I noticed a surge in scholarship and exhibition related specifically to New Mexico crypto-Jews over the past few decades. I conducted research at the American Jewish Historical Society in Manhattan and the Southwest Center at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. I began by examining original and translated Mexican Inquisition documents and soon discovered the Carvajals, a famous family tried by the Mexico City tribunal office. Although these texts are not emphasized in my thesis, they served as a necessary foundation for my twentieth-century studies—to study memory distortion and preservation, it was necessary to know an original narrative.

I read twentieth-century retellings of trauma such as La Familia Carvajal, a fantastical 1944 novel by Alfonso Toro about the dramatic history of the tortured family. Though somewhat ahistorical, Toro's novel was valuable in its underlying assertion that myth-making is crucial to religious and cultural preservation. A review of Toro's book in 1946 critiqued the novel for evading historical reality and not dwelling in the "important triumphs" of Luis de Carvajal's colonial expeditions. I used this latter source, along with others, for a separate paper entitled, "Luis de Carvajal, the Governor: A Revised and Revisited History." Many of the colonial documents that I found during my summer substantiated and explored the intertwined crypto-Jewish identities of conqueror and victim. My paper on Carvajal relied on the decolonization frameworks of Native scholars Linda Smith and Amy Lonetree.

To detail every archival source I read this summer would take too long—I ended up with about three hundred pages of primary source notes. But I will dwell on the themes to which these sources guided me. I spent some time thinking about publication editions and the ways contemporary history influences the revised lives of a book—Cecil Roth's A History of the Marranos was published seven times across the twentieth century (before and after the Holocaust), and its foreword continuously changed. I grandly considered writing a thesis of case studies: how have Spain, America, and Mexico memorialized American crypto-Judaism? This idea proved to be too large but is perhaps a project for a later date. I considered writing about the mythology of Columbus as crypto-Jew, or the centuries-long myth that certain Native American tribes are the long-lost Tribe of Israel—the AJHS had many documents written by priests and journalists on the subject. I considered writing an entire thesis about the relationship between crypto-Jews and Queen Esther; I also thought about the origins and consequences of Jewish exclusivity and inclusivity, tracing patterns of ethnic open-mindedness and close-mindedness

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2   Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

across time. Indian Jews in Mexico: A Brief Sketch of The History and The Survival of the MEXICAN MARRANOS written by The American Friends of the Mexican Indian Jews in 1944 epitomized this dichotomy. More abstractly, I thought about positing a new theory of memory and trauma, namely that the problem with Spanish memory of the Jews and American amnesia of the Mexican Inquisition is that memory of trauma is viewed stagnantly. I planned to argue that trauma necessitates dynamic and fluid memory; traumatic histories must be examined through the lens of the ever-changing present.

For a long time, especially after learning that my car rental associate in New Mexico and a man who ran a gallery in Santa Fe had both recently done full genealogies of their family history, I lingered on the rise of genealogical fascination in the twenty-first century and the complex cultural and ethnic inheritances of New Mexico peoples. The latter curiosity has persisted, and I spend time in my thesis examining the multiculturalism and universalism of New Mexico crypto-Jews, who perhaps emblemize the broader population's interest in ancestry. Emma Moya, an avid collector of Judaica in New Mexico, filled boxes in the UNM archive with photos, descriptions, clippings, and poems, all of which highlight the multiculturalism of crypto-Jewish identity. Many of these ideas are hidden beneath the surface of the thesis I chose to write; my fascination with mythology, memory, identity formation, national memorialization, exclusivity, and trauma finally cohered into a single argument in late October. Most influential to my final argument are the voices of New Mexico crypto-Jews. Testimonies in Cary Herz's book and poetry from a La Llave exhibition in Albany proved to be more inspirational than the fascinatingly-toned colonial texts from New York scholars. The words of the latter are still integral to understanding the place of crypto-Judaism in the American memory landscape, but I chose to center my thesis around crypto-Jewish memories and words.

It is difficult to write a paper about contested history. Because my thesis focuses on memory rather than history, it was tempting to sidestep historical debates and instead relay exclusively crypto-Jewish self-identity. But this method seemed evasive, and so I decided to analyze historical debates as part of my argument—why has crypto-Jewish identity been deemed inauthentic at different moments in time? Who wishes to challenge this community's history and why? What is the relationship between historical evidence and cultural identity?

I carefully avoided writing an anthropological paper. I admire Seth Kunin's work on New Mexico crypto-Jews, but his arguments are missing historical inquiry; he evades discussion of the interplay between historical evidence and collective identity formation. I aimed to write a paper that acknowledged history while valuing religious and ethnic memory. In an interesting turn of events, as I was writing, a large genealogical study was published that substantiated scholar Stanley Hordes's claims that crypto-Judaism has existed continuously in the New World from the 1500s to the present.[3] I had always been inclined to take the side of Hordes and Kunin; the opposing side, led by Judith Neulander, argues against continuous crypto-Jewish presence in the Southwest but seems to ground its historical opinions in colonial ideology. The objective genealogical data solidified my opinion but only barely altered the body of my thesis, a work interested in the ways mythology and history intertwine rather than with pure historical 'authenticity.'

I think it is more illuminating, and more exciting, to view history as an element within the collective's consciousness, rather than as a definitive source of truth. I utilized intimate sources, including oral histories and poetry, as a means into studying the past, relishing the color language adds to history. Memory Studies emphasizes the individual as distinct from and yet crucial to the making of history. My thesis purposefully, though with difficulty, dwells in the creases between memory and history, the individual and the collective, mythology and identity. Michael Rothberg defines memory as "the past made present" and as "a form of work, working through, labor, or action."[4] I intend for my project to be a form of working through, a process of labor which illuminates the past in a way that is helpful to the present.

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3   Sarah Zhang, "The Genetic Legacy of the Spanish Inquisition," *The Atlantic*, Dec. 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/12/dna-reveals-the-hidden-jewish-ancestry-of-latin-americans/578509/.
4   Rothberg, 4.

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Crypto-Jewish cemetary in Sandoval County, New Mexico, 2008. By Herz [8]