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Heine and *convivencia*: Coexistence in Muslim Spain

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*'Convivencia' refers to the coexistence of Muslims, Christians and Jews during the period of Muslim rule in Spain (711–1492). Like the historian Isaak Markus Jost (1793–1860), Heine formed an idealized image of Muslim Spain in support of his own cultural ambitions. Heine's identification with Marranos is well documented (Veit). This article considers the depiction of 'convivencia' in two texts by Heine, the drama *Almansor* and the poem 'Jehuda ben Halevy'. In accordance with Heine's sources, the chorus of *Almansor* presents Muslim Spain as a centre of cultural and religious tolerance for modern Europeans to emulate. Three decades later, Heine's poem 'Jehuda ben Halevy' presents a more troubled picture, as two of the three Sephardi poets are murdered. Crucially, though, in Cordoba the murderer is punished. In this way, the poem asserts that the rule of law prevailed in Muslim Spain.*

Keywords:

Heine, *Convivencia*, Coexistence, Tolerance, *Almansor*, Jehuda ben Halevy, Spain, Muslim, Marrano, Sephardi, Isaak Markus Jost

Introduction

Heine never denied the Jewish aspects of his identity, although he was always more interested in Jewish culture, history and folk traditions than in the religion itself.¹ One particular chapter in Jewish history had special significance for him. This was the history of al-Andalus, Muslim Iberia.² Why was this so important to Heine? For one thing, Jews and Christians enjoyed considerable religious freedom in Muslim lands, underpinned by the Quran, which states: ‘Let there be no compulsion in religion.’³ But there were more personal reasons, too. Philipp F. Veit has argued that a central part of the poet’s self-fashioning was his ‘Marrano pose’, i.e. his claim to Sephardic origin: Heine liked to imply that he was descended from Marranos (Iberian Jewish converts to Christianity) on his mother’s side (the van Geldern family).⁴ According to Veit, this fiction proved highly productive for Heine’s self-image, for it allowed him to see himself as belonging to a Jewish cultural élite which had enjoyed centuries of emancipation. Heine was not alone in his wishful identification with the Sephardim. Given the anti-Jewish Hep Hep riots in the German Confederation in the summer of 1819, many German Jews turned to Muslim Spain as a counter-example where Jews had, apparently, flourished. Veit thinks that the young emancipated German Jews of the 1820s identified with the predicament of Spanish Jews under the Inquisition: although their lives

¹ I would like to thank Ritchie Robertson for his helpful comments on a previous version of this article.

² The standard work on this topic is still Mounir Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth. Heinrich Heine und der islamische Orient* (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe, 1980), especially pp. 15–93.

³ *The Quran*, Chapter 2, Verse 256, trans. by Yusuf Ali.

<http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=2&verse=256> (consulted on 17 October 2017)

⁴ Philipp F. Veit, ‘Heine: The Marrano Pose’, *Monatshefte*, 66 (1974), 145–56. To give just one example: on 30 March 1824, Heine signs a letter to his sister as ‘deinen portugiesischen Bruder’. See Heine, *Werke-Briefe-Lebenszeugnisse*, 27 vols, Säkularausgabe (Berlin: Akademie; Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1970-84), xx, 155.

were not immediately threatened, baptism was required as the price for many careers, since legislation forbade unbaptized Jews to become civil servants.⁵ Heine's 'Marrano style' is the focus of a *Festschrift* for Klaus Briegleb.⁶

Heine's identification with the Marranos was, however, part of a wider trend in German-Jewish memory culture. The early nineteenth century saw the birth of modern Jewish historiography, which presented an idealized projection of Muslim Spain as a blueprint for a revitalization of modern Judaism.⁷ John M. Efron argues that this celebration of Sephardic Jewry was 'a constitutive element of German-Jewish self-perception'.⁸ Although German Jews tended to exaggerate the level of security enjoyed by Jews in Muslim Spain, Jews were more integrated into Islamic society than they were in medieval Christian lands. Efron's study shows how Muslim Iberia became a powerful *Wunschbild* for German-Jewish liberals, who invoked the medieval Sephardis in support of their own cultural ambitions. Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), the founder of Reform Judaism, is a prime example. Geiger was awarded his doctorate in 1834 for his study of the prophet

⁵ Veit, 'Heine: The Marrano Pose', p. 147.

⁶ Stephan Braese and Werner Irro (eds.), *Konterbande und Camouflage: Szenen aus der Vor- und Nachgeschichte von Heinrich Heines marranischer Schreibweise* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2002). On Marranos and modernity, see Yirmiyahu Yovel, *The Other Within The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁷ Carsten Schapkow, *Vorbild und Gegenbild. Das iberische Judentum in der deutsch-jüdischen Erinnerungskultur 1779–1939* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011).

⁸ John M. Efron, *German Jewry and the Allure of the Sephardic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 1. Efron (p. 2) points out that description of Muslim Spain as a 'Golden Age' for Jewish culture was coined by the Lutheran theologian Franz Delitsch (1813–1890).

Muhammad's knowledge of Judaism; forty years later in 1872 Geiger declared that Judaism 'developed its own fullest potential in closest union with Arab civilization'.⁹

Heine witnessed the foundation of this modern school of Jewish historiography: on 4 August 1822 he became a member of the *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* in Berlin, whose members included the historian Isaak Markus Jost (1793–1860).¹⁰ At this time, Jost was already engaged in writing his nine-volume history of Judaism (published 1820 and 1828). Volume VI, Book XX of Jost's history sets the pattern for the idealized view of Muslim Spain, acclaiming the 'Blüthe der Jüdischen Poesie und Philosophie' between 1000–1240 AD.¹¹ For Jost, the Jewish scholars of this period 'bemühten sich, [...] dem Volke [...] reine Betrachtungen der Natur zur Erbauung zu geben'; in consequence, he claimed, Iberian Jews at this time were 'ohne Zweifel sittlicher als alle andere Juden der Welt'.¹² Laudations of this kind also feature in the work of Jost's successors, Geiger and Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891). In his *Geschichte der Juden* (11 vols, 1853–1875) Graetz contrasts the sufferings of the Ashkenazim with the emancipation enjoyed by the Sephardim: 'Hier [in Arabien und Spanien] wurden sie [die Juden] nicht von den Bahnen der Ehre und staatlicher Gleichberechtigung zurückgewiesen, sondern durften unter einer freien, frischen, begabten Bevölkerung ihre Kräfte frei entfalten'.¹³ The vocabulary recalls Friedrich Ludwig Jahn's

⁹ Cited in Efron, *German Jewry*, p. 198. Cf. Ludwig Geiger (ed.), *Abraham Geiger's Nachgelassene Schriften*, 5 vols (Berlin: Gerschel, 1875–1878), II, p. 40.

¹⁰ Surprisingly, Efron's monograph contains no mention of I. M. Jost's pioneering contribution to Jewish historiography, focusing instead on Abraham Geiger, Heinrich Graetz and Ignaz Goldziher. See Efron, *German Jewry*, pp. 190–229.

¹¹ J. M. Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf unsre Tage*, 9 vols (Berlin: Schlesinger, 1820–28), VI, 121.

¹² Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, VI, 124.

¹³ Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden. Von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, 11 vols, 3rd edition, (Leipzig: Leiner, 1888–1897) V, 65.

slogan ‘Frisch, fromm, fröhlich, frei’, perhaps implying that German liberals could learn about tolerance from medieval Muslims. In this way, Jost, Geiger and Graetz were involved in the construction of a cultural myth, one which endured well into the twentieth century.¹⁴ These historians invoked the Sephardim as a ‘cultural nobility’ and simultaneously as ‘the measure against which German Jews assessed their own, Ashkenazic self-worth.’¹⁵

This article builds on the insights of Veit and Efron in order to shed light on Heine’s enduring fascination with the history of Muslim Spain, starting with *Almansor* in the early 1820s and continuing at least as late as the publication of *Romanzero* in 1851. That history provided Heine and his colleagues in the *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* with a model for the liberal reform of German-Jewish culture, because this historical period appeared to exemplify the (relatively) peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Christians and Jews. The Spanish term is *convivencia* (coexistence), coined by the historian Américo Castro (1885–1972).¹⁶ *Convivencia* applies primarily to the eight centuries of Muslim rule in Spain, from the Muslim conquest of Hispania in 711 until the defeat of the last Muslim king of Granada, Boabdil (Muhammad XII) in 1492.¹⁷ Efron has shown how nineteenth-century German-Jewish historians ‘were among the most energetic promoters of an image of *convivencia*’ as a model for Germans and Jews to emulate.¹⁸ In doing so, they hoped that German tolerance, combined with Jewish cultural reform, would ‘lead to the creation of a

¹⁴ Adolph L. Wismar, *A Study in Tolerance as Practiced by Muhammad and his Immediate Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927).

¹⁵ Efron, *German Jewry*, p. 3. As will be discussed later on, ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ can be read in a similar way as Heine’s attempt to measure himself against the Sephardi poet.

¹⁶ See Américo Castro, *The Spaniards: An Introduction to their History* [1948], trans. by Willard F. King and Selma Margaretten (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

¹⁷ Sometimes the term also refers to the period between 1492 and the expulsion of the Moriscos (Moorish Christian converts) between 1609 and 1614.

¹⁸ Efron, *German Jewry*, p. 16.

German version of the *convivencia*, a harmonious *Volksgemeinschaft*, with Germans and Jews united in mutual respect, admiration and service to the Fatherland.¹⁹ At the same time, in contrast to the British and French orientalism discussed by Edward Said, this German-Jewish orientalism entailed an unequivocally ‘positive valorization of the Muslim Other’.²⁰ Heine’s enduring admiration for this school of German-Jewish historiography is documented: Theodor Creizenach reports that in early 1846 he found the poet reading Jost’s history of the Jews, and Heine said to him: ‘Hätte ich die Gewißheit, noch zehn Jahre zu leben, so würde auch ich jüdische Geschichte schreiben.’²¹ Heine’s interests in Jewish history and orientalism were not motivated by antiquarian interest, but by his belief that the history of Muslim Spain could offer modern Europeans much-needed lessons in cultural and religious tolerance. In this way, *convivencia* had profound resonance as a cultural myth for Heine, as it did for other German Jewish intellectuals of his generation.

This article traces Heine’s references to *convivencia*, moving from the early drama, *Almansor* (written 1820–1821, published 1823), in which he subscribes more or less wholeheartedly to this idealized projection of Muslim Spain, to the more differentiated view presented in the poem ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ in the ‘Hebräische Melodien’ of *Romanzero* (1851). Before turning to the literary works, however, we shall begin with a brief discussion of *convivencia* itself and the debates around it.

Convivencia

¹⁹ Efron, *German Jewry*, p. 231.

²⁰ Efron, *German Jewry*, p. 15.

²¹ Heinrich Heine, *Dichter über ihre Dichtungen*, ed. by Norbert Altenhofer, 3 vols (Munich: Heimeran, 1971), III, p. 65.

There is a steadily growing body of research on *convivencia*; María Rosa Menocal calls it the ‘ornament of the world’.²² In 1992, it was the subject of an exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York.²³ More recently, Terence Lovat and Robert Crotty have proposed *convivencia* as a model for intercultural understanding in the twenty-first century.²⁴ The historian Mark R. Cohen concedes that the historiography of Muslim Spain is fraught with difficulties. On the one hand, there is the ‘myth of an inter-faith utopia’ in the Arab world invoked by nineteenth-century German-Jewish historians (Jost, Geiger, Graetz) in order to challenge liberal Europe to deliver its promises of Jewish emancipation.²⁵ On the other hand, there is what Cohen calls a ‘countermyth of Islamic persecution of Jews’ which emerged in the mid-twentieth century, a ‘lachrymose conception of Jewish-Arab history.’²⁶ One exponent of this version is Bat Ye’or (Gisèle Littman, born 1933), who was forced to flee Egypt after the Suez Crisis of 1956. She emphasizes that, while Muslim law treats Jews and Christians as *dhimmī* (protected persons), their legal status remains subsidiary. She also observes that *dhimmī* have periodically been persecuted, particularly during the Almohad persecutions of 1130–1212 which put an end to the Christian population in North Africa, and forced many Jews to convert.²⁷ Ye’or’s account marshals a considerable amount of evidence for the prosecution. It

²² María Rosa Menocal, *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Little Brown, 2002).

²³ Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick and Jerrilynn D. Dodds (eds.), *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: George Braziller, 1992).

²⁴ Terence Lovat and Robert Crotty, *Reconciling Islam, Christianity and Judaism: Islam’s Special Role in Restoring Convivencia* (Cham: Springer, 2015).

²⁵ Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 4.

²⁶ Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 9–11.

²⁷ Bat Ye’or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, trans. by David Maisel, Paul Fenton and David Littman (Rutherford, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1985), p. 61. The year 1160 seems to have been a particularly bad one for the *dhimmī*.

is undeniably the case that *dhimmī* were not allowed to marry Muslim women, and subject to dress restrictions, and their evidence was given secondary legal status.²⁸ However, Cohen argues that because *dhimmī* law resided in the *sharia* (Islamic holy law), it was consistent and stable, thus assuring Jews ‘a considerable degree of security.’²⁹ Cohen also points out Islam was favourably disposed towards profit-seeking from the outset, and, in consequence, the figure of ‘the despised Jewish moneylender’ does not exist in the Islamic tradition; indeed, the Jews of Islam were ‘well integrated into the economic life of society at large’.³⁰ Cohen’s appraisal of Jews under Islam concludes:

Compared to the devastation experienced by European Jewry [...] Islamic persecutions were fewer in number. [...] The Jews under Islam transmitted no real collective memory of Jewish persecution — nothing comparable to the Ashkenazic collective memory of persecution in the Christian Middle Ages. The relative absence of literary commemoration [...] of [...] persecutions of the Jews under Islam [...] is telling. [...] Though not an interfaith utopia, lands under the crescent were a considerably more tolerant environment than were lands under the cross.³¹

Although *convivencia* was far from being a utopia, then, it compares favourably to the regularity of persecutions suffered by the Ashkenazim. It is hardly surprising that German

²⁸ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 2nd edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2013), p. 47.

²⁹ Mark R. Cohen, ‘The Origins of Sephardic Jewry in the Medieval Arab World’, in *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times*, ed. by Zion Zohar (New York: New York University Press, 2005), pp. 23–39 (p. 29).

³⁰ Cohen, ‘The Origins of Sephardic Jewry’, p. 29. See also Benedikt Koehler, *Early Islam and the Birth of Capitalism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

³¹ Cohen, ‘The Origins of Sephardic Jewry’, pp. 31–32.

Jews cast envious glances at Muslim Spain, where legal protection for Jews was enshrined within holy law. After the Christian *Reconquista* of Spain in 1492, *convivencia* became much more problematic. Both Jews and Moors were obliged to convert, becoming Marranos and Moriscos respectively. Despite conversion, they continued to be regarded as culturally distinct groups, and were suspected of secretly practising their former religions. With reference to the post-Muslim settlement in Spain, Brian Catlos has suggested that ‘conveniencia’ might be a better way to describe such co-existence.³² The historiography of Muslim Spain is still subject to controversy, and Maribel Fierro insists that there is always a need to take into account ‘the historical contexts in which the myth of al-Andalus evolved.’³³ Indeed, the historiography of this period has political consequences, not only for contemporary Spanish identity but also in terms of how we envisage religious pluralism in twenty-first century Europe.³⁴ Our specific concern, however, relates to Heine’s view of *convivencia*. For him it was not the historical record of Muslim Iberia which was at stake, but its importance for modern Europe as a paradigm of cultural and religious tolerance.

Almanson

³² Brian Catlos, ‘Contexto y conveniencia en la Corona de Aragón: Propuesto de un modelo de interacción entre grupos etno-religiosos minoritarios y mayoritarios’, *Revista d’Historia Medieval*, 21 (2001–2002), 259–68; cited in Maribel Fierro, ‘Heresy and Political Legitimacy in Al-Andalus’, in *Heresy and the Making of European Culture: Medieval and Modern Perspectives*, ed. by Andrew P. Roach and James R. Simpson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 51–76 (p. 52).

³³ Fierro, ‘Heresy and Political Legitimacy in Al-Andalus’, p. 52.

³⁴ Cf. Manuela Marín, ‘Al-Andalus et le pluralisme religieux: un enjeu politique?’, in *Pluralisme religieux: quelle âme pour l’Europe? colloque organisé dans le cadre du CRITIC avec la collaboration de l’Institut catholique de Toulouse par M-Th. Urvoy et G. Gobillot*, *Studia arabica* 5 (Versailles: Editions de Paris, 2005), pp. 29–47.

Heine researched the history of Muslim Spain in 1820–1821 while working on his drama *Almansor* (1823). Nigel Reeves thinks that this research had a lasting influence on him: specifically, Heine’s understanding of the Christian *Reconquista* as a tragedy anticipates his later distinction between Nazarenes and Hellenes, and between ‘Spiritualismus’ and ‘Sensualismus’.³⁵ Reeves’s interpretation foregrounds a tragic view of history in which sensuality is crushed by asceticism. If, however, we approach *Almansor* from the perspective of *convivencia*, a different picture emerges. The funeral oration for Muslim Spain is, in fact, a peroration: Heine wants to show his audience that religious tolerance and plurality bears richer fruit than dogmatism. Our discussion of *Almansor* will focus on Heine’s sources and on the centrepiece of the play, the chorus scene.

Heine’s interest in Spain always differed from the approach taken by his fellow Romantics, who generally regarded the *Reconquista* as a good thing.³⁶ The genre of *Maurenromantik* was inaugurated by Herder, who included Spanish folk songs in his collections of *Volkslieder* (1778–1779; revised edition: *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, 1807), followed by his translation of *El Cid* (1805). Herder found the songs in *Historia de los caballeros moros de Granada, de las civiles guerras que hubo en ella... hasta que el rey don Fernando quinto la ganó* (1595–1604) by Ginés Pérez de Hita (1544–1619).³⁷ This chronicle

³⁵ Nigel Reeves, ‘From Battlefield to Paradise: A Reassessment of Heinrich Heine’s Tragedy *Almansor*, its Sources and their Significance for his Later Poetry and Thought’, in *Heine und die Weltliteratur*, ed. by T. J. Reed and Alexander Stillmark (London: Legenda, 2000), pp. 24–50 (p. 40).

³⁶ For an overview, see Carol Tully, *Creating a National Identity: A Comparative Study of German and Spanish Romanticism*, Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik 347 (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1997).

³⁷ Hita’s chronicle later appeared in French translation in 1809 and in German in 1821. Heine used the French edition, see Reeves, ‘From Battlefield to Paradise’, pp. 35–37.

inspired Herder with the idea that the Arabs brought ‘Rittergeist’ and ‘Frauendienst’ to Spain, and to Europe in general.³⁸ Hita also served as the source for A. W. Schlegel’s story *Morayzela, Sultanin von Granada* (1796).³⁹ While these authors celebrated the *Reconquista*, E. T. A. Hoffmann took a more nuanced approach. In ‘Das Sanctus’ (1817), a Moorish woman who converts to Christianity (Zulema/Julia) becomes the focus of different cultural projections.⁴⁰ However, as Mounir Fendri points out, Heine’s *Almansor* stands apart from the *Maurenromantik* of the period because the author’s sympathies are clearly with the Muslim characters, not the Christians.⁴¹ *Almansor* focuses not on what has been gained by the Christian reconquest, but on what has been lost.

Almansor depicts the predicament of the Moors who had to choose between conversion and exile after Granada fell to the Christians in 1492. The fact that Spanish Jews also had to choose between conversion and exile at this time indicates what Fendri calls the *Schicksalsverwandtschaft* between Muslims and Jews.⁴² Indeed, and in contrast to Veit’s thesis, at this point Heine is not imagining himself as a Marrano, but as a Muslim who refuses to become a Morisco. The tragedy of the doomed lovers *Almansor* and *Zuleima* points towards the wider historical tragedy, namely the end of Moorish civilization in Spain. This accords with the sources which Heine borrowed from the libraries of Bonn and Göttingen

³⁸ On this point, see ‘Rittergeist in Europa’, in Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Book XX.

³⁹ Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, p. 23.

⁴⁰ See Joanna Neilly, *E. T. A. Hoffman’s Orient: Romantic Aesthetics and the German Imagination*, *Germanic Literatures* 11 (London: Legenda, 2016), pp. 63–67. Heine’s *Almansor* also features a female protagonist who has converted to Christianity, *Zuleima/Clara*. But while Hoffmann’s *Zulema* is ultimately saved by her conversion, Heine’s *Zuleima* is doomed by hers because it drives a wedge between her and *Almansor*.

⁴¹ Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, p. 37.

⁴² Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, p. 74.

between the summer of 1820 and early 1821 while working on *Almansor*.⁴³ Two of these, Ignaz Aurelius Feßler's *Die alten und die neuen Spanier* (1820) and Ginés Pérez de Hita's *Histoire chevaleresque des Maures de Grenade* (1809), describe Muslim Spain in particularly glowing terms.⁴⁴ Hita's work contained romances which Herder had included in his *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, another item on Heine's reading list. Feßler (1756–1839), a Capuchin friar, was the most authoritative source, as he drew on the work of the French scholar Denis-Dominique Cardonne (1720–1783).⁴⁵ Feßler highlights the Muslim rulers' tolerance towards Christians and Jews: on payment of a 'moderate tribute', they could practise their faith undisturbed.⁴⁶ Feßler also describes how European arts and sciences benefited from Arab influences:

Das glückliche Ereignis für Spaniens und Europa's wissenschaftliche Cultur war die frühere innigere Verbindung der Spanier mit den Arabern und der erstern reger Fleiß, der letztern Sprache zu erlernen. Dadurch wurde eine Spanische National-literatur vorbereitet; dadurch wurden die Arabern den Spaniern und allen übrigen Völkern

⁴³ Walter Kanowsky, 'Heine als Benutzer der Bibliotheken in Bonn und Göttingen', *Heine-Jahrbuch*, 12 (1973), 129–53. See also Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, pp. 43–44.

⁴⁴ I. A. Feßler, *Die alten und die neuen Spanier. Ein Völkerspiegel*, 2 vols (Berlin: Maurer, 1810); Ginès [sic] Pérez de Hita, *Histoire chevaleresque des Maures de Grenade, précédée de quelques réflexions sur les Musulmans d'Espagne*, trans. by A. M. Sané (Paris: Cérioux Nicolle, 1809).

⁴⁵ Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, pp. 45–46.

⁴⁶ Feßler, *Die alten und die neuen Spanier*, I, 336; Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, p. 53.

Europa's Lehrer höherer Wissenschaften, welche sie von den Griechen durch die Syrer empfangen hatten.⁴⁷

In this way, Feßler's account stresses the enlightened rule of the Muslims and the many cultural advances which resulted when Europeans took the trouble to learn Arabic. Here, Heine found a view of history showing the positive developments which occurred when Europeans engaged in serious dialogue with Arab culture: this was an 'intimate connection' between nations which benefited the Europeans. Feßler, a former Catholic who had converted to Protestantism, was highly critical of the Christians' persecution of Muslims and Jews after the fall of Granada in 1492.⁴⁸

Heine's other major source, Ginés Pérez de Hita, had been studied by Herder and A. W. Schlegel, who read it in the original Spanish. Heine, however, read the French edition, which included a critical introduction by the translator, A. M. Sané. There is much in Sané's introduction which would have appealed to Heine. Sané emphasizes the Moors' reverence for women, which caused them to emancipate women from harems and allow them to enter social life.⁴⁹ Sané thinks that this feminine influence refined and civilized the Moors, but also ultimately doomed them because it softened their customs.⁵⁰ Sané, like Feßler, also stresses the interchange and fraternity between cultures: in his view, the most significant quality of

⁴⁷ Feßler, *Die alten und die neuen Spanier*, I, 361; Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, pp. 53–54.

⁴⁸ Feßler, *Die alten und die neuen Spanier*, II, 198; Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, p. 54.

⁴⁹ Sané, 'Quelques réflexions sur les Musulmans d'Espagne', in Hita, *Histoire chevaleresque*, I, pp. iii–iv.

⁵⁰ Sané, 'Quelques réflexions', p. v: 'divinités suprêmes qui tout à-la-fois défendaient l'empire en faisant des héros de tous leurs amans, et le perdaient par la mollesse qu'elles introduisirent dans les moeurs, et par l'abandon des maximes antiques'.

the Moors was their hospitality towards the Christians.⁵¹ Hospitality (*Gastfreundschaft*) was, of course, a commonplace in descriptions of Arab culture by European observers.⁵² Sané's account, like Feßler's, concludes by condemning Ferdinand's broken promises to the Moors after 1492: 'l'honneur ne marche point dans de telles voies.'⁵³ The Moors' tolerance of the Christians contrasts with the brutal treatment visited on the Moors by the victorious Christians: 'Les Maures, vainqueurs des Espagnols, ne persécutèrent point les vaincus; les Espagnols, vainqueurs des Maures, les ont persécutés et chassés.'⁵⁴ These are the key elements Heine includes in *Almansor*, particularly in the chorus sequence, which delivers a potted history of Spain from the Muslim conquest to the present day. We should also note that the characters in *Almansor* have no ties with the Middle East, they are attached to their own Moorish culture. There is a modern, secular note here, for example when we learn that the dying wish of Abdullah is to be buried, not facing Mecca in accordance with Islamic tradition, but facing Granada.⁵⁵ Like a modern-day liberal, Abdullah's love for his *Vaterland* takes precedence over religious observance.

In *Almansor*, the chorus appears in a 'Waldgegend', a natural temple intended to contrast with the monks' procession of the previous scene. On Spain's fertile soil, cities flourished, planted by the first ruler of al-Andalus, Tariq ibn Ziyad (I, 315). Al-Andalus soon

⁵¹ Sané, 'Quelques réflexions', p. xxxii: 'Les Maures et les Espagnols [...] plus ils se connurent, plus ils apprirent à s'estimer, à s'admirer [...]. Les cours Moresques et Castellannes s'invitèrent mutuellement à des fêtes; les deux nations se mêlaient dans les tournois, où chaque parti luttait d'élégance, et d'adresse, de luxe et de galanterie, d'hospitalité sur-tout; le Maure naissait, pour ainsi dire, avec cette noble vertu'.

⁵² Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, p. 27.

⁵³ Sané, 'Quelques réflexions', p. xxviii.

⁵⁴ Sané, 'Quelques réflexions', p. xxx.

⁵⁵ Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 6 vols, ed. by Klaus Briegleb (Munich: Hanser, 1978), I, p. 306. Subsequent references to Heine's works are from this edition, with the exception of the letters. Quotations are identified by volume number and page number.

developed its own advanced, liberal form of Islamic culture which was independent from the Arabian peninsula.⁵⁶ In Heine's description of al-Andalus, imagery is not prohibited, women are emancipated and exert a positive influence on social customs:

Wo sonst der finstre Herr, mit strengem Blick,
Die bange Sklavin trieb zum Liebesfron,
Erhub das Weib jetzund sein Haupt als Herrin,
Und milderte, mit zarter Hand, die Roheit
Der alten Maurensitten und Gebräuche,
Und Schönes blühte, wo die Schönheit herrschte. (I, 316)

Having thus affirmed the Moors' poetic refinement and respect for women, the chorus proceeds to acclaim the philosophical achievements of Cordoba during the reign of the 'Abderamen' (I, 316). Here, Heine refers to three Emirs of Cordoba of the Umayyad dynasty, particularly Abd-ar-Rahman III, the Caliph of Cordoba, who reigned from 912 to 961. Heine's text stresses the cosmopolitan character of the region:

Und Scharen wißbegieriger Schüler wallten,
Aus allen Ländern, her nach Cordova,
Um hier zu lernen, wie man Sterne mißt,
Und wie man löst die Rätsel dieses Lebens. (I, 316–17)

⁵⁶ Al-Andalus was declared as a rival caliphate to the Middle Eastern caliphate by Abd-ar-Rahman III in 929 AD.

Here Heine presents Cordoba not as a religious centre, but as a seat of secular learning. This accords with the latest scholarship, which views al-Andalus as ‘an active participant’ in a rationalist ‘Mediterranean intellectual tradition’.⁵⁷

Heine’s chorus continues, observing that after the fall of Cordoba (in 1236), Granada became the seat of ‘Maurenherrlichkeit’, famed for its ‘Höflichkeit im Kampf’ and ‘Siegergroßmut’ (I, 317). This echoes Sané’s description of the Moors as generous to a fault in victory, and participants in friendly tournaments with their Christian rivals. Heine’s chorus also echoes Sané’s condemnation of Ferdinand’s broken promise, when he abandoned his guarantee of freedom of religion to the conquered peoples of al-Andalus (I, 317). The chorus ends with a reference to the Spanish Revolution of 1820 and its leaders Rafael del Riego (1784–1823) and Antonio Quiroga (1784–1841). There is also an allusion here to the current Spanish monarch, Ferdinand VII (1784–1833), who broke his promise of a liberal constitution. In this way, the chorus of Heine’s play suggests a direct parallel between medieval struggles for religious freedom and contemporary struggles for a liberal constitution. This brief analysis of the chorus scene suggests that Heine is indeed promoting the civilization of al-Andalus as a model of religious and intellectual tolerance.

Heine’s enthusiasm for Muslim Spain seems to have peaked in the spring of 1822. On 27 February 1822 he dedicated a poem to David Ferdinand Koreff (1783–1851), a friend of E. T. A. Hoffmann, born a Jew but baptised as a Protestant. Koreff had just written the libretto for an opera, *Aucassin und Nicolette*, with music by Spontini, which premiered that year. The opera, depicting struggles and loves between Muslims and Christians, was a typical example of *Maurenromantik*. Heine’s poem celebrates the opera, contrasting the ‘schlechte,

⁵⁷ Peter Heath, ‘Knowledge’, in *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, ed. by María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Schneidlin and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 96–125 (p. 115).

neue Zeit' with the 'alte, gute Zeit' (I, 245).⁵⁸ Two months later, on 14 April 1822, there is an extraordinary outburst in a letter to Christian Sethe, in which Heine expresses his disgust for Germany and his wish to move to the Middle East and live a pastoral existence. He underlines the point by switching from German into French: 'je quitterai Allemagne, je passerai en Arabie, j'y menerai une vie pastorale, je serai homme dans toute l'étendue du tême, je vivrai parmi des chameaux qui ne sont pas étudiants, je ferai des vers arabes [...]'.⁵⁹ The reference to camels and students strikes a comic note, and warns the reader not to take these protestations too seriously. And yet the letter suggests a yearning for *convivencia*: Heine says that if he moves to the pastures of Arabia, then he will be a man 'in all senses of the word'. French or German pastures will not do: Heine believes that, as a Jew, he is more likely to be treated as a man in Muslim lands than he is in Christian ones.

We can conclude our discussion of *Almansor* by noting that in 1825, the year of Heine's conversion to Protestantism, he wrote a poem, 'Almansor' (I, 159–62). This Almansor is a Morisco, a Moor who submits to forced baptism. Ironically, the baptism takes place 'In dem Dome zu Corduva', in a former mosque redesignated as a church. In contrast to Veit who emphasizes Heine's 'Marrano pose', we might speak here instead of a 'Morisco pose'. The event of Heine's baptism puts him in mind of the fate shared by Muslims and Jews — another allusion to the *convivencia* which was gradually extinguished after 1492.

'Jehuda ben Halevy'

⁵⁸ For a discussion of this poem, see S. S. Prawer, *Heine's Jewish Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 53–55.

⁵⁹ Letter to Christian Sethe, 14 April 1822. Heine, *Werke-Briefe-Lebenszeugnisse*, 27 vols, Säkularausgabe (Berlin: Akademie; Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1970-84), xx, p. 49. Nigel Reeves describes this as 'a key letter'; Reeves, 'From Battlefield to Paradise', p. 34.

Almost three decades separate the composition of *Almansor* in 1820–1821 and the publication of *Romanzero* in 1851. One event of the intervening years is particularly worth mentioning, because of its relevance to our theme: the Damascus Affair of 1840, in which the European blood libel spread to the Ottoman Empire for the first time. Damascene Jews were blamed for the disappearance of a Christian monk and his servant on 5 February 1840. The French consul, Ulysse de Ratti-Menton, supported these accusations; as a result, many notable Jews were arrested and tortured; the case became a *cause célèbre*, although the surviving Jewish prisoners were acquitted and released in August 1840.⁶⁰ The affair led many European Jews, who were unaccustomed to seeing themselves as members of a global diaspora, to realize a new sense of responsibility for Jews in other countries.⁶¹ It also inspired Heine to extend his prose fragment of the 1820s, *Der Rabbi von Bacherach*, which features the blood libel; it was published in 1840. An analysis of *Der Rabbi von Bacherach* would go beyond the scope of this article.⁶² It is sufficient to observe that, at a time when Jews were under attack in Ottoman Syria, Heine's artistic response was to reaffirm the cultural achievements of emancipated Jews in Muslim Iberia, by introducing the figure of Isaak Abarbanel, fictional nephew of the Portuguese statesman Isaak Abarbanel (also known as Abravanel, 1437–1508).

⁶⁰ For Heine's response to the Damascus Affair, see Praver, *Heine's Jewish Comedy*, pp. 297–309, and Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, pp. 299–306. For the historical context, see Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: 'Ritual Murder,' Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁶¹ Efron, *German Jewry*, p. 135.

⁶² On *Der Rabbi von Bacherach*, see in particular Praver, *Heine's Jewish Comedy*, pp. 88–92, 383–401; Veit, 'Heine: The Marrano Pose', pp. 151–53; and Efron, *German Jewry*, pp. 175–82.

Heine's most authoritative references to Muslim Spain occur, however, in the poem 'Jehuda ben Halevy', which forms the centrepiece of 'Hebräische Melodien', Book III of *Romanzero*.⁶³ The poem, a 'Fragment', pays tribute to three Sephardi poets: Halevy (or 'Halevi', 1075–1141), Abraham Ibn Ezra (or 'Ezra', 1089–1167), and Salomon Gabirol (1021 or 1022–1050 or 1070). Above and beyond these three poets, however, the poem also celebrates the tolerant, cosmopolitan society in which they lived. For example, Halevy's 'Buch Cosari' (VI.I, 132) or *Al Chazari* implies a dialogue between the three great monotheistic religions. And when Heine declares his wish to preserve Halevy's poems in Darius's treasure-box, the list includes Halevy's poems in Arabic form: ghazals (VI.I, 145).

Heine's principal sources for 'Jehuda ben Halevy' were Michael Sachs's *Die religiöse Poesie der Juden in Spanien* (1845), and, once again, I. M. Jost's history of the Jews, specifically, volume VI (1826). While Sachs emphasized the orthodox and religious character of the Sephardi poets, Jost's study was characterized by a more secular tone and an awareness that these poets were members of a multicultural society. Jost notes, for example, that many of Gabirol's poems were written according to Arabic tastes.⁶⁴ The work of Halevy and Ibn Ezra, too, was informed by their extensive knowledge of both Hebrew and Arabic literature.⁶⁵ Jost's account even points out that Ibn Ezra had a son who converted to Islam, and comments: 'Es war dies damals freilich nichts seltenes, wie fast immer das Fortschreiten der Juden in der Bildung einen Verlust an der Zahl der Anhänger des Judenthums zur Folge

⁶³ The first book of *Romanzero*, 'Historien', also contains the poem 'Der Mohrenkönig', about the last sultan of Granada, Boabdil (Abu Abdallah Muhammad XII, 1460–1533). It describes Boabdil's tears as he witnesses the fall of Granada in 1492; in doing so, it tries to rehabilitate the historical figure. On this point, see Fendri, *Halbmond, Kreuz und Schibboleth*, p. 88, and Elizabeth Drayson, *The Moor's Last Stand: How Seven Centuries of Muslim Rule in Spain Came to an End* (London: Profile, 2017).

⁶⁴ Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, VI, 149.

⁶⁵ Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, VI, 159, 162.

gehabt hat'.⁶⁶ The contemporary relevance for German Jews is clear: Jewish emancipation will inevitably be accompanied by lapses in religious observance, and even, in some cases, apostasy. Jost, a rationalist and moderate reformer, fully accepts this.⁶⁷

The most important intertextual source for 'Jehuda ben Halevy' is, however, not Jost or Sachs or even Halevy himself, but Psalm 137 — Heine's favourite Hebrew text.⁶⁸ Psalm 137 gives a kind of structure to the poem, which quotes from verses 1, 2, 5 and 6 of the Psalm. The opening lines are a quotation of verses 5–6:

'Lechzend klebe mir die Zunge
An dem Gaumen, und es welke
Meine rechte Hand, vergäß ich
Jemals dein, Jerusalem —' (VI.I, 129)

This opening imagines poetry itself as a response to the ethical injunction to remember, a frequent trope in Hebrew scripture. Poets must not forget that they speak from within a cultural context and tradition; they ignore their origins at their peril. Psalm 137 also opens the second section of 'Jehuda ben Halevy': 'Bei den Wassern Babels saßen | Wir und weinten [...] ' (VI.I, 135). Significantly, Heine's poem omits the sub-clause that follows: 'wenn wir an Zion gedachten'.⁶⁹ Although the opening verses of the Psalm are not quoted in full, most readers will know verse 4 of the Psalm: 'Wie sollten wir des Herrn Lied singen in fremden

⁶⁶ Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, VI, 166.

⁶⁷ On Jost and his politics, see Heinrich Zirndorf, *J. M. Jost und seine Freunde. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte der Gegenwart* (Cincinnati: Bloch, 1886).

⁶⁸ Praver, *Heine's Jewish Comedy*, p. 561.

⁶⁹ There is, however, a reference later on in the poem to 'das Zionslied, | Das Jehuda ben Halevy | Sterbend auf den heiligen Trümmern | Von Jerusalem gesungen' (VI.I, 147).

Landen?’ Asking this question introduces what Peter Routledge calls the ‘polarity’ of the poem: the pressure to conform to a foreign environment, which militates against ‘the transmission of the Jewish cultural heritage’.⁷⁰ This ‘polarity’ is considerably amplified by the uncertain status of Babylon itself in the poem. There is a profound ambivalence here between Babylon as a topos of lamentation, as suggested by Psalm 137, and joyful, ecstatic depiction of the Hanging Gardens of Semiramis in Babylon elsewhere in the poem (VI.I, 132–33). In this way, section I of the poem already wavers between orthodoxy and anti-orthodoxy.

Psalm 137 is important here for another reason. As Routledge points out, its concluding verses emphasize ‘the dark side of cultural exchange’, for they contain a terrifying call for revenge against the Babylonians and their children, which Heine would certainly have been aware of.⁷¹ In my view, the ending of ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ does indeed respond to the violent ending of Psalm 137, and it does so in an attempt to update it. While the Biblical Psalm ends with a vicious curse, ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ finishes with a murder trial: the murderer of Salomon ibn Gabirol, a Moor, is tried and executed.⁷² The ending of Heine’s poem thus has a civilizing force, which tempers the violence of the original Psalm and asserts the need for the rule of law. Instead of the Psalm’s sweeping declaration of hatred for the enemies of Israel, ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ depicts a Muslim ruler who ensures that the murderer of a Jew is punished. Although ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ is usually interpreted as a catalogue of injustices, it is important to note that it concludes with an affirmation of Muslim justice.⁷³

⁷⁰ Peter Routledge, “‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ and the Restructuring of Memory within Poetic Discourse’, *Heine-Jahrbuch*, 54 (2015), 58–83 (p. 67).

⁷¹ Routledge, ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’, p. 78.

⁷² Heine’s source was Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, VI, 150–51.

⁷³ Reeves is one of the few critics to stress the importance of justice in the poem. Nigel Reeves, ‘Religiöse Disputation und Ermordung: Kräfte und Grenzen der Dichter und der

Reading ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ as a representation of *convivencia* thus presents an ambivalent picture of Muslim Spain. On the one hand, it shows that Iberian Jews were sometimes the victims of violent crimes. On the other hand, it shows that Muslims who attacked them were subject to the full force of the law. This compares favourably with the situation in the Middle East, since Jehuda ben Halevy is killed by a Saracen on arrival in Jerusalem, Ibn Esra is captured by Tartars before he reaches the city. It is also a world away from the violence of the Spanish Inquisition, which features in the poem. It is highly significant that a poem about the injustices experienced by Jews and poets should end with an act of justice carried out by a Muslim ruler.

‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ pays tribute to the Caliphs of Cordoba in a number of other ways, too. Although section I makes fun of the Minnesänger (VI.I, 137), there is hardly a trace of mockery in the portrayal of the tournaments of Muslim Spain in section III of the poem, which narrates the travels of a string of pearls belonging to Darius of Persia:

Mit dem letzten Omayaden
Kam die Perlenschnur nach Spanien,
Und sie schlängelte am Turban
Des Kalifen zu Corduba.

Abderam der Dritte trug sie
Als Brustschleife beim Turnier,
Wo er dreißig goldne Ringe

Dichtung in Heines *Jehuda ben Halevy*. Betrachtungen über Heines Verhältnis zu jüdischer Dichtung und zum Judentum’, in *Harry... Heinrich... Henri... Heine. Deutscher, Jude, Europäer*, ed. by Dietmar Goltschnigg, Charlotte Grollegg-Edler and Peter Revers (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2008), pp. 101–09 (p. 108).

Und das Herz Zuleimas stach. (VI.I, 143)

It is hard to detect irony in this description of Abd-ar-Rahman III, the Caliph of Cordoba, who hits the target in a tournament and, in doing so, metaphorically ‘pierces the heart’ of his chosen lady, Zuleima.⁷⁴ This is the same Abd-ar-Rahman III alluded to in the chorus scene in *Almansor*. Under his rule (912–961), Cordoba became ‘the most prosperous city of Europe’ and its ‘intellectual and political centre, outshining by far both Constantinople and Baghdad’.⁷⁵ ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ says nothing about Abd-ar-Rahman’s success as a statesman, merely presenting him as a lover and a sportsman. His appearance at this point has a twofold function. Firstly, it paves the way for the appearance of the avenging Caliph at the end of the poem. Secondly, it contrasts with the chilling depiction of the Catholic rulers of Spain in the subsequent stanzas: ‘Sich erquickten am Geruche | Von gebratnen alten Juden’ (VI.I, 144). Strangely, few readers of ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ seem to have noticed the difference between the Umayyad monarch, under whose reign Jewish and Christian communities flourished, and subsequent Christian monarchs who used the Spanish Inquisition to enforce absolute power. Compared to these Catholic majesties, the poem makes Abd-ar-Rahman III seem like a gentleman.

At the end of ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ it is not Abd-ar-Rahman III himself, however, but one of his successors who ensures that Gabirol’s murderer is executed. In Sachs’s version it is

⁷⁴ Jeffrey Grossman misreads this verse, claiming that the poem depicts ‘Abderam the Third fatally stabbing an opponent in a sports competition.’ This misses the point that ‘Zuleima’ is a female name. Jeffrey Grossman, ‘Heine and Jewish Culture: The Aesthetics of Appropriation’, in *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, ed. by Roger F. Cook (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), pp. 251–81 (p. 270).

⁷⁵ Anwar G. Chejne, *Muslim Spain: Its History and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), p. 35.

the ‘Caliph’ who sees that justice is done; in Jost’s version it is ‘der Arabische Fürst’.⁷⁶ The appellation ‘Caliph’ used by Heine and Sachs is anachronistic. The year of Gabirol’s death is recorded as either 1050 or 1070, but the Umayyad caliphate had crumbled in 1031 into a number of independent principalities known as *taifas*; there was no Caliph when Gabirol died. Heine uses his sources selectively here: on the one hand, he takes the anachronistic ‘Caliph’ from Sachs; on the other hand, he sides with Jost, who takes the story much more seriously than Sachs.⁷⁷ Indeed, Heine’s poem gives considerable weight to the story by placing it at the end of the poem and embellishing it. This Muslim monarch is presented as a just ruler, since he takes it upon himself to direct the murder investigation, even tasting the figs himself:

Dieser prüfte eigenzünftig
Jenes Feigenphänomen,
Und ernannte eine strenge
Untersuchungskommission. (VI.I, 157)

It must be conceded that the murderer only confesses after he has received ‘Sechzig | Bambushiebe auf die Sohlen’ (VI.I, 157). The fact that the confession is extracted under torture is obviously problematic, and it complicates the picture, although the poem is set in

⁷⁶ Michael Sachs, *Die religiöse Poesie der Juden in Spanien* (Berlin: Veit, 1845), p. 220; Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, VI, 150.

⁷⁷ Unlike Jost, Sachs appears reluctant to give any credit to Muslim justice. Compare Sachs, *Die religiöse Poesie der Juden*, p. 220 and Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, VI, 150.

the eleventh century.⁷⁸ However, ‘eine strenge | Untersuchungskommission’ sounds remarkably modern, suggesting a rather more sophisticated judicial process. Whether we interpret this process as rigorous or brutal, it does achieve a measure of redress. The tree is dug up, and Gabirol’s body is discovered. The poem ends with the burial of Gabirol’s ‘Leiche’ and the murderer’s execution:

Diese ward mit Pomp bestattet
Und betrauert von den Brüdern;
An demselben Tag henkte
Man den Mohren zu Corduba. (VI.I, 157)

‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ thus closes with the restitution of the poet’s body to his community, who bury him with dignity. The description of the judicial process is problematic, but it seems that justice is done. It is significant that the closing word of the poem is not ‘Jerusalem’, where Saracens can apparently murder Jews with impunity, but ‘Corduba’. ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ contrasts the Middle East, where violence against Jews (Halevy and Ibn Esra) goes unpunished, with Muslim Spain, where the rule of law is strictly enforced, irrespective of the suspect’s ethnic origin. The poem contrasts the anarchic conditions in the Holy Land with Cordoban justice, harsh but effective. As its final word shows, Heine’s poem ultimately yearns for Cordoba, the intellectual centre of medieval Europe. It can thus be read as an affirmation of the Jewish diaspora in Muslim Spain.

⁷⁸ Such beatings may well have been common in the eleventh century, but they would be inadmissible in a modern court of law. The beating seems to be an invention of Heine’s: it is absent from the versions given by Jost and Sachs.

Conclusion

In ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ Heine measures himself against the medieval Jewish poets. He portrays them as cosmopolitan authors who mediated between Arabic and Hebrew cultures, much as Heine saw himself as a mediator between German and French culture, or between Gentile and Jewish culture. What he really admires about these Sephardi poets is their internationalism and their immersion in the pluralist, emancipated culture of Muslim Iberia. While *Almansor* depicts Muslim Spain unambiguously as an earthly paradise, ‘Jehuda ben Halevy’ presents a more differentiated picture, showing that, even at the height of Muslim civilization in Cordoba, Salomon Gabirol was murdered by his Muslim neighbour. Even so, the murderer was tried and executed, and this contrasts with the situation of Jews in the Holy Land during the Crusades, and with their nightmarish situation in Spain after the *Reconquista*. By asserting that Jewish poetry reached its highest point in Muslim Spain, Heine is paying an ample tribute to the tolerant, pluralist culture which enabled these poets to emerge. His tribute is echoed in a recent history of Mediterranean civilization by the British Sephardi scholar David Abulafia, who cites the Catalan philosopher Ramon Llull (c. 1232–1315) as a typical ‘exponent of old-fashioned Iberian *convivencia*’ precisely because of his intellectual exchanges with his Muslim and Jewish neighbours.⁷⁹ The memory of *convivencia* has considerable political resonance today.⁸⁰ Europe has many historical traditions worth remembering, and one of these is the remarkable degree of religious tolerance and intellectual freedom which was achieved over a period of several centuries in Muslim Spain.

⁷⁹ David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 647.

⁸⁰ See for example Harriet Sherwood, ‘Europe’s top rabbi calls for solidarity with Muslims’, *The Observer*, 9 April 2017, p. 14.

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