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When Was(n't) There Race in Spain: New Trends in the Study of an Old Idea in Spain's Past, Present and Future

Joshua Goode

Studying race in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spain has always challenged scholars to decide first whether they are analyzing a home-grown topic, one that is deeply entwined in the intellectual, political and social history of the Iberian peninsula, or whether race is an import, read onto Spanish history through a lens borrowed from other historical and geographical contexts.¹ Analyzing the last decade or so of study into the concept of race in Spanish history suggests this old divide is beginning to disappear. Scholars studying new, more global contexts of race have joined with others from a variety of disciplines to forge a new history of race that makes it far more focused not just on the meaning of the term but also its application; the idea coterminous with the social purpose it serves. This trend has been particularly apparent in the recent literature on race and racial thought in Spanish history. At the same time, older frameworks for understanding Spanish history, like the “two Spains” thesis, have dissipated. Thus, new subjects and new approaches created an overall new vibrancy and depth in Iberian history to which this volume is dedicated. A widened field of subject matter, the colonial world most especially, and a new focus on older topics like the complexity of Spanish intellectual thought including more than just well-known writers and political figures, have begun to appear. Historians are also working in more transnational, comparative frameworks to approach older topics

¹ The editors of this issue asked the contributors to discuss new trends in Iberian History with the hope that they would include more than just Spanish history. Apparently, the boundary separating Spain and Portugal remains a rather rigid one for historians. This essay was not alone in failing to include much discussion of Portugal in its focus on race in recent historical writing. Despite this essay's effort to present race in transnational terms divested of a geographically bound reading of the term, the historical freight of race is still largely expressed and rooted in national contexts. As a result, these contexts still overdetermine the discrete historiographies that frame the historian's approach to the past. Part of this legacy produces a caution (or, perhaps more generously put, a humility) about easily transferring concepts from one context to another, without a confidence in the different meanings, both linguistic and political, that shape historiography, or in other words, the contextual values and meanings that shape historical writing. Still, the pathways for doing more comparative historiographical analysis are clear. Some of the signposts that guide this essay might easily lie along the paths of a more comprehensive study of the idea of race in Portugal, including the study of post-colonial imaginings of ethnic diversity and its relative weight in the Portuguese past, or the attitudes toward immigration in the present. On the difficulties of transnational history, see C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, “AHR Conversation: On Transnational History,” in *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006): 1441–64.

like nationalism, the Spanish Civil War and Francoist and post-Franco Spain. All of this “newness” has allowed room for discussion of race, and its bedfellows like nationalism and ethnicity, to proliferate. Another contributing factor producing these new studies is a more transnational and interdisciplinary one. For example, how the subject of race has developed outside of Spain has begun to migrate into Spanish history. Race is now perceived as part of a wider classificatory system, a tool, a social construction, usually rooted in physical differences in appearance, but sometimes not. What matters most about race in this social constructivist school is how the idea is used, what social purposes these hierarchies of difference serve for those in or outside the racial group.

Historians of Spain have largely left this study to those in other fields. They have remained mostly focused on some older debates that have haunted Spanish historiography of race: definitional debates about whether *raza* is really a cultural reference completely different from other manifestations of the term; whether Spain had a unique purchase on racism given the historical tether connecting blood purity as a medieval cognate of modern racial thought or whether it was completely different. In their stead, new interdisciplinary approaches have enlivened the overall understanding of race in Spanish history. These approaches have provided important insights into a wide array of contemporary debates about identity, migration and multiculturalism. Thus, this essay will tread over a wide array of writing in contemporary Spanish history and society that is not always about race, but that examines the ways in which difference and identity play out in some of the most energetic areas of study in modern Spanish history, especially colonialism, the Spanish Civil War and the politics of memory in post-Franco Spain. The challenge for future work on race will be to find the pathways that connect historical work with the interdisciplinary advances that scholars from other fields have offered the historiography of race in Spain.

A surprising theme that emerges in an examination of new works on race in Spain is that these new topics are not just allowing Spanish history to catch-up in breadth and depth to other national historiographies. Here, the Spanish histories of race, ethnicity, and the nation and their reliance on the themes of mixture and fusion, are seen as less idiosyncratic and different from other countries. Either mimicking or merely adumbrating ideas elsewhere, Spain’s unique example of racial thought now appears in scholarly work not as the absence of racial ideas but as an early progenitor of the reliance on mixture of peoples as the basis of political identity and social cohesion. Those who easily dismissed me in the 1990s when I was doing my dissertation research on race in Spain with a quick “*no tenemos un concepto de la raza en España,*” must be doubly perplexed now. Not only have scholars examined Spanish concepts of race, but others are also suggesting it is a model for understanding the mechanisms of racial thought

everywhere. A good illustration of this shift and the resulting impact on Spanish historiography took place at the American Historical Association in 2014.² A roundtable of historians of the United States who work in European universities sought to dissuade US historians residing in the United States from assuming that their term for race could easily be translated into European countries. Context mattered. In post war Germany, *rasse* resonates as a purely false, dangerous idea, one long abandoned after its venal apotheosis under the Nazis. France's associations were also freighted with negative connotations. *Race* read as a foreign term, race itself a false construct. Spanish notions, surprisingly, appeared as the most relatable for an international comparative study. Spanish notions were rooted in mixture and were unburdened by an historical association with World War II. The history of Spanish racial thought was oddly enough more modern than other conceptions. *Raza* with its reliance on mixture smoothed over modernity's tensions between the individual and the masses, purity and impurity. In fact, tracing the history of Spanish political and cultural references to *raza* became a palimpsest of race's history everywhere:

...race was long used to construct a unifying notion of a Spanish *raza*, not as a category that broke down the population into irreducibly different groups. Indeed, the concept of *raza* is loaded with a plurisecular history of racial construction, against the Moors and the Jews first, and then in the context of the New World empire, on terms somewhat different from those of the English-speaking world, but also with the importation of scientific racism and of the influence of Nazi ideas during the Franco years. More recently, however, especially in academic circles, *raza* and derived terms such as *racial*, *racismo*, and *racista*, tend to closely follow American English usage.³

² Manfred Berg, Paul Schor and Isabel Soto. "The Weight of Words: Writing about Race in the United States and Europe," in *The American Historical Review* 119, No. 3 (June 2014): 800-808.

³ Ibid., 803. The works these authors were citing as of 2014 were Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Magali M. Carrera, *Imagining Identity in Spain: Race, Lineage and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press 2003); T. F. Earle and K. J. P. Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan, *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Jo Labanyi, *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain: Theoretical Debates and Cultural Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Susan Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

Others share this sense that Spanish notions of race provide an early and clearer model for the multiplicity and hybridity that dominate contemporary discussions of identity today.⁴ Christiane Stallaert has recently suggested that Spain's history of mixture is multi-modal; religion, ethnicity and nationality all share a basic grounding in pluralism versus unitary identities. As a result, Spanish history is a model for understanding and dealing with "Europe's current identity crisis."⁵ Indeed, even broader notions of identity and the definition and treatment of the "other" all seem grounded in tackling the tensions implicit between Spain's pluralist and unitary view of its national identity, its political conflicts and even its present day responses to immigration. All of this presentism poses an on-going challenge for the historical study of race. Ruth Hill has recently cautioned scholars to be vigilant about the "metanarratives" that they inevitably and inadvertently construct about race (or class, caste, and gender) when they try to study the past.⁶ Here, the AHA roundtable concerns are equally applied. By studying mixed identities in the past, do we anachronistically apply notions of hybridity to the past? It is important not to forge melting pots in history or conflate past categories to the present. This essay will conclude with examples of the lingering complexity and ambiguity of the categories of analysis we use when we discuss race.

Race, Coloniality and the (Lack of) Spanish Difference

One of the more vibrant areas in the study of race is in histories of Spanish colonialism. These new studies have grown out of an already ample historiography of race in the colonies that examined how identity and meaning were attached (or not) to physical differences in appearance. The phenotype mattered but less than the overall effort to deal with the fact of diversity, mixture and complexity of different populations across vast imperial terrain. Peter Wade, Ada Ferrer, and the late Christopher Schmidt-Nowara have all shown that in the various locales of empire, *mestizaje* provided an opportunity to play out complex social relations, modes of exclusion and inclusion through the language of mixture. Mestizaje might rely on mixture but that did not preclude the possibility that there were better mixes than others. Schmidt-Nowara expressed the ramifications of mestizaje well.

⁴ In his history of the concept of identity, Gerald Izenberg contextualizes the rise of multiplicity and unitary identities at least in the context of European and US twentieth century history, see Gerald N. Izenberg, *Identity: The Necessity of a Modern Idea*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

⁵ Christiane Staellert, "Theorizing Iberia," in Joan Ramón Resina, ed., *Iberian Modalities: a Relational approach to the Study of Culture in the Iberian Peninsula* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 110.

⁶ Ruth Hill, "Categories and Crossings: Critical Race Studies and the Spanish World," in *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 10, no. 1, (2009): 4.

The point is not to collapse *mestizaje* into contemporary theorizations or celebrations of hybridity. Rather it is to suggest that *mestizaje*, while peculiar and specific is not necessarily incomparable to hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses and lived processes in other colonial and postcolonial societies. Thus, one might emphasize the strategic uses of *mestizaje* as a form of identity and as an ideological paradigm to make claims about peculiarity, abnormality and incomparability.⁷

While *mestizaje* is not a new topic of study, the focus on how this rhetoric of mixture operates has widened to include far more localities and subject matter. Legal codes, self-fashioning of identities, top-down imposition of racial codes, and the resistance or accommodation from below to these codes have made more complex and fulsome the conversations about race within Spanish colonial systems. These new histories of race in the colonial system, as described in greater detail in the essay by Andreas Stucki in this volume, suggest that the most effective way to write about race, this supposedly singular and interconnected term with shared meanings across the broad swath of the Hispanic World, is to assume it is a mere fulcrum for organizing and unifying vast, colonial and postcolonial societies in the Spanish-speaking world. As Tomás Pérez Vejo and Pablo Yankelevich have recently explained in their volume, *Raza y Política en Hispanoamérica*, race is always the explanatory variable in these nationalist efforts.

este problema para dar cuenta de proyectos y estrategias políticas, de debates en la opinión pública, de guerras y sistemas normativos, y de reflexiones e investigaciones que colocaron a la raza como la variable explicativa de las dificultades para cimentar una identidad nacional.”⁸

While most now agree that race serves a social or political purpose in its expression rather than merely reflecting visual differences, an unevenness of approach and deployment of the term race still haunts this literature in the colonies. Some works approach race as a term meant to chart the complexity of

⁷Christopher Schmidt-Nowara and John M. Nieto-Phillips eds., *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism Empires, Nations, and Legends* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 8; see also, Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press, 1997); Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation and Revolution 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁸ Tomás Pérez Vejo y Pablo Yankelevich, *Raza y política en Hispanoamérica* (Mexico City: Editores Artiga, 2017), 13.

real differences, as if skin color were the sole basis of differential treatment, rather than its use as a screen to justify these differences and social discriminations. Race and caste often travel together but are not the same. In her attempt to provide a more transnational history of race, Isabel Wilkerson expressed this constructivist idea in her recent work on *Caste* this way: “race is the skin but caste is the bones.”⁹ Examining the idea of race by the social purpose first and foremost rather than as a product of obvious differences in physical appearance has allowed recent scholars of colonialism to approach racial thought as just as much an effort to define the self, or the colonizer, as it was to define the other, the colonized.¹⁰ Thus, scholars of the Spanish colonial system are increasingly focused on how race functioned across the Spanish imperial system rather than just how it categorized obvious differences in physical appearance.

As a result, with its networks of people, goods and ideas traversing almost the whole globe, a more complicated portrait of *mestizaje* has begun to appear. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara’s first work on *Empire and Antislavery* was an essential first foray in the transnational study of race. The recourse to race arrived not just to justify the perpetuation of slavery but by default it defined everyone in the empire. The Antillean context was racially complex; the metropole was coded as “white.”¹¹ Abolitionists in Spain, peninsular elites, liberal nationalists, all worked within this racial coding, hoping to “transform...the racial boundaries of empire and nation, not just in Cuba and Puerto Rico, but in Spain as well.”¹² To borrow from Herman Lebovics, Schmidt-Nowara’s study of abolitionism “brought the empire home” implicating Spain and Spaniards in the racial rhetorics of slavery and antislavery.¹³

Colonial scholars have since focused more on the complexity of racial coding in the Spanish colonies seeing it as a negotiation between political authority and populations under its control. Here, some have focused on the crown and colonial administrators.¹⁴ Increasingly aligned with the approaches of critical race studies—the legal constructs of race and how race then becomes an unseen, structural component throughout all of society—and the forms of resistance to official categories has attracted attention in the Spanish colonial world. Rather than just describing static categories or curiosities without real

⁹ Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020), 19

¹⁰ Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833-1874* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 9

¹³ See Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ A good example of this work among the many excellent articles in the special issue on Critical Race Studies is Jovita R. Baber, “Categories, Self-Representation and the Construction of the Indios,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009).

relevance or meaning, scholars have increasingly shown how these ideas and categories operated in both colonial and peninsular society. As Ruth Hill noted in her edited volume on categories and crossing in the Spanish empire, what stood out was not the fixed meanings of race but the fungibility of these meanings.

Persons categorized as Indians or *pardos* on Thursday might be categorized as Spaniards or *mestizos* on Friday. This was true also of Jews, *conversos*, Moors, *moriscos*, and others in Spain, though the timescales were often independent owing to disparate legal codes and events (wars, expulsions, cultures of slavery).¹⁵

Again, contexts mattered. Legal cases that demonstrated negotiations of category and identity between authority and indigenous groups, *indios*, slave traders, abolitionists, all dispensing racial ideas and categories to suit a particular historical moment or to justify status and caste, show that racial categories changed and shifted over time and in different places. “Invention and praxis,” as Hill explained, provided a much denser and more interesting context to study race in the colonial world.¹⁶

Much of this recent focus on invention in the modern period has concentrated on the flux and transmission of racial categories and meaning across the empire. Akiko Tsuchiya and William Acree’s recent, edited volume *Empire’s End* examines debates about citizenship, selfhood, capacity, and class at the moment of decolonization, Spain’s official withdrawal from its colonies. As Tsuchiya explained, these moments of imperial transfer focused most intensively on shifts in how to categorize and define populations, or as she wrote: “which subjects...could be considered part of the nation.”¹⁷ Many of the essays in this volume stressed how race moved across the spaces of empire; how it differed in meaning and use in the metropole and in the colony; and, how it lingered in the postcolonial moment, in the memories of the metropole and in the politics of the former colonies. Also important in this volume was wider inclusion of areas not always studied in the Spanish empire, not just the transatlantic but also Morocco and the Philippines.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ruth Hill, “Categories and Crossings,” 1.

¹⁶ Ruth Hill, “Towards an Eighteenth Century Transatlantic Critical Race Theory,” in *Literature Compass* 3, no. 2 (2005): 61.

¹⁷ Akiko Tsuchiya “Introduction,” in Akiko Tsuchiya and William G. Acree, eds., *Empire’s End: Transnational Connections in the Hispanic World* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016), 2.

¹⁸ See, in particular, the works on racial theory in this volume by Joshua Goode, “The Genius of Columbus and the Mixture of Races;” Alda Blanco, “Theorizing Racial Hybridity in Nineteenth-Century Spain and Spanish America;” and Joyce Tolliver, “‘El color nacional’: Race, Nation, and the Philippine Ilustrados,” in Tsuchiya and Acree, eds., *Empire’s End*, 63-130.

While historians might note that the large majority of essays in this edited volume were written by literature scholars, the tracking of race as an “unstable discursive construct” is done through a historical framework that directed the spotlight to moments of historical import and change.¹⁹ Here, then, is another important trend in these studies of race: their interdisciplinarity. While historians wrote the first works on race, literature scholars have taken up the mantle with studies of literature that are deeply informed by historical context and also importantly by charting change over time, the heart of the historian’s project. Lisa Surwillo’s recent work, *Monsters by Trade*, is a good example. Her study is embedded first in an historical charting of the shifts in racial thought in mid- to late nineteenth century between Cuba and Spain, and then how these racial ideas lingered in twentieth century Spanish culture.²⁰ Surwillo’s focus on the image of the slave trader in the peninsula and the colonies testified to a kind of racial dialectic in imperial Spain.

Slave traders were many different things: they were monsters of trade according to Blanco White, or vile criminals who [flouted] international law, but later some came to be seen as influential men either whose business acumen fueled the metropolitan economy or whose aggressive politics subjected the metropolis to the colony. More recently, they are remembered in contemporary depictions as pioneers of the American Dream.²¹

She then shows how this image of slave traders and the system they represented attained a variety of meanings in their appearances in Spanish culture well into the twentieth century. As a result, the wide range of reactions to the slave trade over the course of time complicate the view that the racism that underlay the slave system was invisible or non-existent in Spain. What is more, Surwillo shows that a range of complicated attitudes to race appeared throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even an adumbration of later anti-racism underscored the abolitionist movement. She notes that Blanco White’s arguments against the “monstruo por oficio” of the slave trader

inverts the characteristics of monstrosity and, correspondingly, race and the justification of the trade in Africans. By severing the idea of physical appearance from monstrosity, he undercuts the fundamental belief in racial thought: that external physical traits

¹⁹Ibid., 12.

²⁰ Lisa Surwillo, *Monsters by Trade: Slave Traffickers in Modern Spanish Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 10-11.

²¹ Ibid., 11.

reveal something about the individual person's character, spirit, soul, or essence. he tells us, fundamentally, that you cannot trust what you see—a characteristically radical position to take at a time when modern race recast these old beliefs in scientific terms.²²

As Surwillo's work suggests, race is a key ingredient in understanding the colonial/imperial cultures of Spain. Albert Garcia-Balaña's recent discussion of AfroCubans fighting in the *Guerra de África* (1859-1860) traces the confluences and interpenetrations of discourses of race, civilization, and patriotism throughout the colonial world. Here, the object of study is the efforts of colonial leaders to bring one group of colonial subjects to fight a war in defense of imperial power in another part of the empire. In this reading, race was a useful mechanism for Spanish liberals who offered AfroCuban troops of Cuba an opportunity to fight for the modern liberal nation. Balaña's article is less interested in the formation and content of racial thinking. Here, like in other colonial histories, race is less a social construction and more a marker of real, visible differences. But, implicit in this discussion is the clear political *modus operandi* of racial thought.

Un factor clave para la traslación de aquellos lenguajes patrióticos fue su definición de la comunidad nacional en términos crecientemente racializados. La Guerra de África enfatizó los marcadores fenotípicos como termómetros de civilización y mérito, acreditando su potencia y polisemia política en la España europea.²³

My own recent work also tracked a transatlantic application of racial thought to uncover how imperial and postcolonial interests unfolded in distinct geographies. By examining the interactions between the Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz, and his Spanish colleagues between the 1890s and the 1920s, one could observe similar formulations of race deployed differently either to secure a new Cuban national identity or to justify continued Spanish imperialism in Africa.²⁴ For these scholars, race has formed a part of the exchanges that buttress Josep Fradera's argument that the nineteenth century was most marked by the influence of coloniality in Spain, the efforts to define Spain first and foremost as an "imperial

²² Ibid., 24.

²³ Albert Garcia-Balaña, "Patriotismos trasatlánticos. Raza y nación en el impacto de la Guerra de África en el Caribe español de 1860," in *Ayer* 106, no. 2 (2017): 207-236

²⁴ Goode, "The Genius of Columbus and the Mixture of Races: How the Rhetoric of Fusion Defined the End and Beginning of Empire in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Spain," in Tsuchiya and Acree, *Empire's End*, 63-83.

nation.”²⁵ Scott Eastman’s most recent book places race much more directly at the heart of peninsular imperial ideology. Not mere metaphor and not isolated from broader European conceptions of race and empire, race, according to Eastman, provided liberal Spaniards a modern term to forge broad, transatlantic connections between peoples and thus fortify Spanish national strength not just through the religious imperative of conversion but also through the biological impetus of mixture. Examining the decades of the 1840s-1880s, Eastman traces an historical connection to racial ideologies developed later in Spain and that served a wide range of political positions.²⁶ One area for future work is to examine how racial thought, or the notion of clear historical and transmissible differences between people developed within the peninsula. Internal colonialism sometimes elicited thoughts of race as much as external colonialism.²⁷

Before leaving the empire, one must note that scholars have also widened the lens of Spanish colonialist studies. Morocco has generated particularly focused attention of late. Interestingly, one sees similar expressions of Spanish racial thinking in Africa. Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste has taken the lead in examining how notions of hybridity, *mestizaje* and race developed within Morocco starting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His first book *El moro entre los primitivos*, provided an important view of the complexity of identity formations in Morocco during the formation of the Spanish protectorate.²⁸ The jigsaw puzzle of meanings for “el moro” were the product of a basic ambivalence on the part of Spanish authorities. The meaning of “el moro” wavering between a figure of alterity, difference and exclusion to a figure of proximity, shared disposition and religiosity.²⁹ Mateo Dieste has begun to examine Moroccan and Muslim contributions to these notions of mixture. In his article, “Are there 'Mestizos' in the Arab World? A Comparative Survey of Classification Categories and Kinship Systems,” Dieste probes the ways in which mestizo identity has played out in the Middle Eastern and North African Arab (MENA) world. Again, what is important here is how mixture and hybridity become an important discourse in multiethnic societies. In Morocco, Spanish notions provided a mixed model for this kind of approach, providing a version of Hispanidad for North Africa or a discourse of segregation and difference.³⁰ Mateo

²⁵ See Josep M. Fradera, *La nación imperial (1750-1918)* (Barcelona: Edhasa, 2015); and García-Balaña, “Patriotismos trasatlánticos,” 237.

²⁶ Scott Eastman, *A Missionary Nation: Race, Religion, and Spain's Age of Liberal Imperialism, 1841–1881* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021).

²⁷ See Goode, *Impurity of Blood*, 91-2.

²⁸ Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, *El “Moro” entre los primitivos: El caso del protectorado español en Marruecos*. Barcelona: Fundació La Caixa, 1996.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁰ Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, Are there 'Mestizos' in the Arab World? A Comparative Survey of Classification Categories and Kinship Systems *Middle Eastern Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2012),

Dieste, like others discussed here, wants to find a new language for the oversaturated meanings of race, especially when they do not quite fit the context he describes:

I propose to transfer the discussion to a large and diverse area such as the Arab one, where these reflections have generally little attention. In studies into colonial and post-colonial America, and later into the continent of Asia and Africa, attention has been paid to the study of mixtures and to various social categories produced by contact; however, the area of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has not received this attention. It is not a case of going in search of the 'lost mestizo' but rather to rethink the mixing and their many expressions, understanding that they cannot be used indiscriminately as was done for a long time with such categories as race.³¹

Mateo Dieste's work has participated in a growing interest in Morocco from Hispanists drawn not only to the imperial setting of Spain's holdings there but also to a more cultural and social interactions of people living in the region. Ali Al Tuma's work, *Guns, Culture and Moors*, importantly does not just examine the image of the Moroccan *Regulares* who fought on the Francoist side during the Spanish Civil War, he also contributes a fascinating oral history of some of the Moroccan veterans of the war to demonstrate a more fluid, complex and complicated exchange between Francoist leaders and these soldiers during and after the war.³² Al Tuma complicates the view that Moroccan soldiers simply symbolized a contradiction in the Francoist ideological world, i.e. using Arab forces to fight the *crusada*, but actually demonstrated that interconnected factors like sexualized forms of social control, as in marriage laws and differing policies toward prostitution among the troops, usually played out along different (racist) expectations of the troops under command. Also demonstrating the intersections of race and gender, Hayley Rabanal has recently shown that the turn of the century focus on racial mixture as expressed in Spanish novels set in Morocco

pp. 125- 138; Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, *Health and Ritual in Morocco : Conceptions of the Body and Healing Practices* (Boston: Brill, 2013).

³¹ One might note that his use of the term miscegenation speaks to the use of terms in one scholarly context that is profoundly unattuned to the connotations these terms possess in others; the imbalanced "weight of words" that European historians of the US discussed in their focus on race. See Mateo Dieste, "Are there 'Mestizos' in the Arab World?," 126.

³² Ali Al Tuma, *Guns, Culture and Moors: Racial Perceptions, Cultural Impact and the Moroccan Participation in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)*, Routledge/Cañada Blanch Studies on Contemporary Spain, 21 (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018).

reveal gendered as well as racialized fears and concerns alongside celebrations of the supposed ability of fusion and mixture to overcome differences. Rabanal focusses specifically on women-authored works of literature in the late 1940s that take as their theme the effects of mixed marriages between Moroccans and Spaniards. Embedded in Francoist versions of *hispanismo* and *Hispanidad*, Rabanal notes that Francoist eugenic notions of good marriages and poor ones were tied to notions of good versus destructive racial mixture. Fusionary notions of *raza* appeared in a wide swath of cultural production: “The discursive prevalence of *raza* in postwar society, as well as the malleability of the concept, made it open to interpretation and applicable to situations beyond those circumscribed by official discourse.”³³

Race in the Peninsula: A Search for Autochthonous Roots

While the colonial context has elicited quite a bit of attention, these revelations about colonialism, coloniality (the penetration of colonial attitudes in Spanish culture and thought) or imperialism have not necessarily permeated and enlivened the recent historiography of Spanish nationalism, a topic of so much interest in the 1990s and 2000s. However, with a newfound focus on Spain as a collection of regions, languages, and traditions, there has been some recent attention directed toward the ethnic roots of the Spanish nation. There remains a great potential for deeper study into the conflicts of the 19th century and how historical figures understood the divisions of nineteenth century Spain not just in purely, religious, regional and political terms, but also, perhaps in ethnic ones. There has been some testing of the waters recently.

Since the late Carolyn Boyd’s definitive work on textbook writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there has not been a large swell of works that probe the politics of history writing in and about Spain.³⁴ Outside Spain, there was an early recognition of the politics of race and difference embedded in mid-twentieth century explorations of Spanish history.³⁵ The

³³ Hayley Rabanal, “Courting Convivencia: Hispano-Arab Identity and Spanish women’s Orientalism in the Franco regime’s years of ‘unbearable solitude’ (1946-1950)” in *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 19, no. 3 (2018): 341. 339-364.

³⁴ Carolyn P. Boyd, *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

³⁵ I argue that structurally this is an argument about race as defined as characteristics inherited, transmissible and immutable, *Impurity of Blood*, 11-13. A growing literature directly tackles this subject. An early discussion critical of the flirtations with racism implicit in Sánchez Albornoz’s arguments is in P.E. Russell, “The Nessus-Shirt of Spanish History,” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, vol. 36 (1959): 219–25; for a more recent distillation of the debate, see Kenneth Baxter Wolf, “Convivencia in Medieval Spain: A Brief History of an Idea,” in *Religion Compass* 3, no. 1 (2009): 72–85.

question here was whether there was always a strong unifying impetus in Spanish history that was perpetually winning a battle over religious, regional and cultural differences. Or was Spain a uniquely pluralist nation, smoothing over differences and balancing interests behind an effort to forge one federation of multiple peoples? The classic debate remains the one between Claudio Sánchez Albornoz and Américo Castro. Recently, Jon Juaristi has written a short but illuminating essay detailing the efforts of Spanish historians in the 1950s-1970s to build on this history of unity or pluralism. Juaristi examines the historical visions of Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Miguel de Unamuno, Ángel Ganivet, and how they came to inform the work of Pere Bosch Gimpera and Julio Caro Baroja. In seeking ancient roots for Spain, each writer substantiated a view of a unified Spain or a plural Spain of cultures and regions, languages and peoples. Juaristi notes how some of these writers cannot be understood as doing anything other than trespassing on racial and ethnic identity in the search for ancient roots of transmissible, inherited, and, at best, only vaguely mutable characteristics. What is interesting, Juaristi notes, is the blending of pluralism and unitary thought in many of these versions of the past. Between the more pluralist model of Bosch Gimpera and the conservative or unifying historical view of Julio Caro Baroja, Juaristi suggests they both lead to the same place, a unified Spain.

Pero dicha tesis implicaba suscribir lo contrario, una pluralidad de caracteres, lo que se acercaba bastante al paradigma defendido por Bosch Gimpera, aunque Caro Baroja eludía el dualismo de lo indígena y lo superestructural. España, afirma, ha incorporado diversas herencias: la ibérica y, «más aún», la hispanorromana, la visigótica y la islámica. Sin embargo, tal incorporación no se ha producido de forma homogénea: «Estas herencias son (...) diferentes en cantidad y calidad en las distintas partes de la Península, y sus proporciones, muy variables, hacen que a veces lo que es fundamental para la vida del español del Mediodía sea casi irrelevante para el del Norte, dentro de este acervo de bienes y de males heredados».³⁶

He concludes that these efforts to dig out the roots of Spanish notions of pluralism have lasting and current political purposes, perhaps less mystical than in earlier telling but equally meaningful.

³⁶ Jon Juaristi, "Las bases míticas comunes de las identidades españolas modernas," in Silvina Schammah Gesser, and Raanan Rein, eds., *El otro en la España contemporánea: Prácticas, discursos y representaciones* (Sevilla: Fundación Tres Culturas del Mediterráneo, 2011), 390.

De un paisaje de identidades regionales fuertes y débiles, desigualmente repartidas, España ha pasado a otro de identidades entrópicas, cada vez más semejantes, como resultado de un proceso morboso de emulación recíproca. Las diferencias ancestrales que creía ver Bosch Gimpera entre pueblos arraigados en sus personalidades originarias, no se perciben por ninguna parte. Había más variedad, si no étnica al menos etnográfica, en la España franquista que en la actual. Las distintas comunidades autónomas parecen perseguir idénticos objetivos: monopolizar sus recursos hidráulicos naturales, llevarse la mayor tajada posible del presupuesto estatal, contar con televisiones y universidades controladas por el gobierno de turno, y ser reconocidas por las demás como naciones originarias, lo que les legitimaría para tener su propia selección nacional de fútbol.³⁷

Current historiography on nationalism still remains in some ways overdetermined by a sense of difference rather than comparison. A recent example is a volume in which language, music, tourism, gender, history, and law are all analyzed in terms of their role in constructing Spanish nationalism. The editors make clear that an organizing theme for their volume is that Spain is not different from other European nations struggling to find cultural and historical tools to define and unify the nation-state in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Yet, race and racial thought are not among them. Ethnicity is read out of the story presumably because the idea of *la raza* did not meet the supposed threshold of a basic biological or physical meaning in this period. In his discussion of the history of the *Día de la Raza*, the historians David Marcilhacy, who wrote an excellent study of race among Spanish intellectuals during the Restoration, and Marcela García Sebastiani, seemed to differentiate between the racial language of Spain and the racial practices of other countries.³⁸ Their essay relied on an unexplained bracketing throughout. *Día de la Raza* was rendered as the “Day of the [Hispanic] Race.”³⁹ This bracketed clarification implicitly asserts that the Spanish “race” has to be different from others.

³⁷ Ibid., 403.

³⁸ See David Marcilhacy, *Raza hispana: Hispanoamericanismo e imaginario nacional en la España de la Restauración* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2010).

³⁹ Marcela García Sebastiani and David Marcilhacy, “The Americas and the Celebration of 12 October,” in Javier Moreno-Luzón and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, eds., *Metaphors of Spain: Representations of Spanish National Identity in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 162.

New Views of Race and Memory in the Well-Trodden Terrain of Jewish History in Spain

This same divide between difference and comparison characterizes other historiographical settings that touch on race and the history of mixture. For example, the rhetoric of racial fusion has unlocked a variety of new readings of the Jewish history in Spain, not just in the medieval or early modern era, but in the more unexpected terrain of modern Spanish history. These confrontations with the past are not generally viewed in Spain as contests over the makeup of the population in any ethnic or racial sense. They do not involve groups of people with obvious differences in appearance. In fact, as Yosef Yerushalmi argued decades ago, what elicited the blood purity statutes was just as likely the disappearance of Jews *into* society, the loss of social, legal and economic proscriptions against them that allowed Jews to own property and hold offices otherwise prohibited, as it was an inherent antisemitic attitude in society.⁴⁰ As in the colonial work discussed earlier, the figure of the Jew and the meaning ascribed to the Jew were contextual and reflective ultimately of a social and political purpose of the moment rather than the product of a grand pall of autochthonous hatred in Spain.

Isabelle Rohr's 2008 *The Spanish Right and the Jews* built on earlier works that discussed the image of the Jew in contemporary Spanish society. Rohr's efforts disentangled what seemed to be contradictory impulses among conservative and liberal figures who saw the Jew as a historical tether to the Spanish past, either as the symbol of Spain's historic enemy, or as a symbol of Spain's lost potential, or as a tool for Spanish renewal. Rohr found that antisemitism and philosemitism, both prevalent among Spanish intellectuals, politicians, and military leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries traveled together to provide a "manipulative use of the past."⁴¹ For liberals hoping to solidify Spanish colonial interests in Morocco, Moroccan Jews became first and foremost lost Sephardim. They transformed into a potential economic intermediary in the service of colonial expansion. For more conservative and traditional voices, Jews could serve as an important historical connection to past greatness: "Spanish colonists," Rohr wrote, "tried to legitimize the expansion of Spain in Morocco by presenting it as the fulfilment of Isabella's will."⁴² Or, in other readings, Jews and Muslims served as "as the archetypal "Others" to the Catholic Spaniards," symbolizing primitiveness and debauchery at

⁴⁰ Yosef Yerushalmi, *Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models*, Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture no. 26 (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1982).

⁴¹ Isabelle Rohr, *The Spanish Right and the Jews, 1898-1945 : Antisemitism and Opportunism*, Cañada Blanch/Sussex Academic Studies on Contemporary Spain (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 7.

⁴² *Ibid*, 6.

the same time.⁴³ But, like most of this rhetoric, the context, both political and historical, allowed for a protean, often contradictory, application of these attitudes toward Jews. Later, during the Civil War, Spanish military leaders focused more on Jews in Morocco as historical re-agents of Marxism and as purveyors of republicanism, thus forging a totalizing view of the Jewish enemy as a threat to the new Spanish Reconquista and to international peace under threat from international Marxism.

Philosephardism produced similar contextual fluctuations. Isabelle Rohr followed the publication of her book with an article that delved deeper into the biological and anthropological expressions of philosephardism in Spanish Morocco.⁴⁴ Jews in Morocco represented the apotheosis of their arguments for the historical bonds between Spain and Morocco. Using anthropological language and language born of more than mere metaphor, like blood brotherhoods, Spanish colonial authorities argued that Jews were the living embodiment of Spain's timeless connection to Morocco. Jews, far more than the "moor," represented modernity and civilization, rather than "underdevelopment and barbarism."⁴⁵ The Jewish connection turned an antisemitic trope on its head, arguing that connecting with Jews would foster economic development. At the same time, colonizing Morocco would help civilize the "moor." The Jewish Other for the philosephardic movement was a link to the past and a promise for the future. That some of these thinkers were doctors and anthropologists offered a kind of scientific substantiation for these ideas, thus appealing again to a modern and liberal new interpretation of the Spanish past.⁴⁶

Philosephardic policy emerged elsewhere on the peninsula. Allyson González has recently shown that the *fin de siglo* fascination with Jews was a political project masquerading as a racial one. Her work focuses on Abraham Yehuda, the first chair of Jewish Studies in Europe at the Universidad Central in Madrid, long before the more famous and seemingly definitive chairs were created at Harvard and Columbia University. "How is it," González asks, "that this figure, apparently so marginal as to be largely forgotten today, held a Jewish studies chair at a national university [starting in 1915] a full decade before Baron and Wolfson, and, from all places, in Spain—where there were few Jews, and where the Edict of Expulsion was still in effect?"⁴⁷ Her conclusion focuses on the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Isabelle Rohr, "'Spaniards of the Jewish Type': Philosephardism in Service of Imperialism in Early Twentieth-Century Spanish Morocco," in *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 2011): 61-75.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 62, 63-5.

⁴⁶ For both the inversion of antisemitic tropes and the modern appeal of philosemitism, see Goode, *Impurity of Blood*, chp. 8.

⁴⁷ Allyson Gonzalez, "Abraham S. Yahuda (1877–1951) and the Politics of Modern Jewish Scholarship," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, No. 3 (Summer 2019): 408.

confluence of forces of imperial interests in the Moroccan protectorate that had created a belief that Moroccan Jews might serve as necessary interlocutors in the spread and maintenance of Spanish control and economic benefit, along the lines of the French colonial formation of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. This imperial hope coincided with a rise of philosephardic feeling among Spanish liberals who saw that re-stitching the Spanish racial fabric meant weaving in expelled Jews. From this confluence of forces ultimately emerged the story that González tracks of a short-lived but very early chair of rabbinic studies at the University of Madrid in 1915.⁴⁸

A new group of scholars has shown that the reintegration of Jews is a form of finding a usable past in Spain even in the present day. Here the present-day mimics the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Spanish Jews become a template for modern cultural and economic claims for multiculturalism, diversity, and integration. Daniela Flesler, Tabea Alexa Linhard and Adrián Pérez Melgosa have compiled a number of previously published essays in an excellent volume, *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era* that serves as a good introduction to the range of images and roles the Jewish past has taken in contemporary Spain.

Thus the Spanish re-encounter with Sepharad and Jewish culture coexists with hostility and prejudice. This apparent paradox can be better understood in the context of the highly ambivalent relationship of Spain and the Jews in the modern period, marked by the interconnectedness of philosephardism and antisemitism and the complex ways in which they contain, to various degrees, both genuine desires of reapproachment and interested political opportunism.⁴⁹

Charles McDonald focused his attention on repatriation laws both in 1924 and in 2015 as symbolic acts that demonstrate the “natural correspondences[s] between race, language and political fidelity” that animates the conferral of citizenship rights to descendants of expelled Jews of Spain.⁵⁰ Silvina Schammah Gesser has also written about how these “memories” of Spain and the supposed historical and cultural connections underwrite recent laws of return for descendants of Sephardic Jews to Spain and Portugal. These scholars are not testing the biological accuracy of these claims of historical connection. In fact, the genealogical connections have proven to be the most difficult part of verifying

⁴⁸ Ibid, 410-17.

⁴⁹ Daniela Flesler, Tabea Alexa Linhard, and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *Revisiting Jewish Spain in the Modern Era* (London: Routledge, 2013), 3.

⁵⁰ Charles A. McDonald, “Rancor: Sephardi Jews, Spanish Citizenship, and the Politics of Sentiment,” in *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 63, no. 3 (2021): 28.

these claims. Instead, they more importantly ruminate on the political and social interests that are being served by these repatriation efforts.⁵¹ Genealogy and identity mask other interests and, thus, operate like race does elsewhere.

Race, Genocide and Comparison: Again, the (Lack of) Spanish Difference

What these aforementioned scholars show, whether literature scholars, Hispanists, Jewish historians, cultural studies specialists or anthropologists, is ultimately how the historicity of identity, whether expressed in racial, ethnic, or religious terms, allows it to be redefined and redeployed in different historical moments. Alejandro Baer has been a particularly acute voice in presenting how the Jewish past has been reconfigured to serve different purposes especially in the post-Franco era. He has written extensively about the way memories of expulsion, murder and extermination are constituted to fit Spain's relatively distinct course through the major genocidal events of the twentieth century. First presented in his article, "The Voids of Sefarad," Baer examines the way the Jewish past in Spain, not the presence of Jews but rather their absence, becomes a story of Spanish exceptionality. Spain's emergence in the post-Franco period took place on "the margins of the prevailing European value system, in which the memory of Auschwitz and its ilk occupy a central place."⁵² But as Spanish memory debates have taken on a more popular and political resonance, itself the product of Spain's own trepidatious turn at *vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), as reflected in laws of historical memory and exhumations, the Holocaust has returned to refract historical phenomenon thought to be unique into now a more exemplary form. The Holocaust's unique role as a "universal imperative" to remember, atone, forgive and confront past acts in moral and political terms has arrived in Spain.⁵³ Conflicts that have lain relatively unexamined before roughly a decade ago have generated quite a bit of attention of late. Works on the criminality of perpetrators in the Spanish Civil War, the genocidal intent behind mass killings and the targeting of specific populations, the treatment of Spanish prisoners and refugees from the Second Republic in Nazi camps, Franco's behavior toward European and Spanish Jews in the war have all generated recent interest. What was once Spanish exceptionality has become Spanish exemplarity.

Twenty-five years later the tables have turned dramatically. If the leitmotiv of the *Transición* was to turn the page of history and look

⁵¹ Silvina Schammah Gesser, "Virtually Sephardic? The Marketing and Reception of the New Iberian Laws of Nationality in Israel," in *Lusotopie* 18 (2019): 192-217.

⁵² Alejandro Baer, "The Voids of Sefarad: The Memory of the Holocaust in Spain," in *The Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 2011): 95.

⁵³ See Alejandro Baer and Natan Sznaider, *Memory and Forgetting in the Post-Holocaust Era: The Ethics of Never Again* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), especially chp. 3; on screen memories, see Baer, "The Voids," 95.

ahead in order to overcome the past, the memory movement that emerged in the heat of the first mass-grave exhumations reverses this relationship and urges Spanish society to look back.⁵⁴

Or has Javier Rodrigo has expressed it, “With the feet standing in the present, looking at the 1930s and the finger pointing to the *Transición* [the] recovery of historical memory in itself constitutes an attempt at a ‘*metanarrative* on our contemporaneity.’”⁵⁵ New historical reckonings, the product of a lack of conversation about them in the past four decades, combined with the rediscovery of older remnants of the past, Jewish, Muslim, victim and perpetrator, has made current conversations about race, difference, identity and history ripe for greater historical interrogation. Daniela Flesler notes that the presence of difference in Spanish history is anchored not just by memories but sometimes literal concrete symbols sprinkled throughout Spain; within each town’s judería or albaicín, a complex history of different people is tangible.

[the] unresolved conflict that lies at the root of Spanish national identity, a conflict toward which the many physical remnants of the Muslim and Jewish pasts act as silent witnesses.⁵⁶

Some of this confrontation with the past has had more direct reference to race and racism. Alejandro Baer and Natan Sznajder have recently interrogated the increasingly common references to the events of the Spanish Civil War as genocidal in scope and motivation. Do the repressions of the Spanish Civil War and their most resonant symbol today, the mass exhumations of victims of Francoist repression, bespeak a criminal policy similar enough to other events that they justify the increasing references to these historical events as a Holocaust or a genocide?⁵⁷ Currently, the debate has played out as a contest of the accuracy of

⁵⁴ Baer and Sznajder, *Memory and Forgetting*, 67.

⁵⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁶ Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, “Marketing Convivencia: Contemporary Tourist Appropriations of the Spain’s Jewish Past,” in Eugenia Afinoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella, eds., *Spain is (Still) Different: Tourism and Discourse in Spanish Identity* (Lexington Books: Lanham, MD, 2008), 65; see also, Mikaela H. Rogozen-Soltar, *Spain Unmoored: Migration, Conversion and the Politics of Islam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017); and, David Coleman, “The Persistence of the Past in the Albaicín: Granada’s New Mosque and the Question of Historical Relevance,” in Simon R. Doubleday and David Coleman, eds., *In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 157-188.

⁵⁷ A selection of these works include Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2012); Javier Rodrigo, *Los campos de concentración franquistas. Entre la historia y la memoria* (Madrid, Siete Mares, 2003); Antonio Míguez Macho, *La genealogía genocida del franquismo. Violencia,*

labels. Do Francoist repressions fit into a spectrum of genocidal acts? Less has been done to explore the actual motivations, justifications, mental processes, ideological framework, and philosophical and historical traditions that underlay these policies. Here Paul Preston's use of the term Holocaust for his book about repressions and mass murder during the Spanish Civil War was a bit thin explaining why what happened in Spain was equivalent to what happened to Jews and other Nazi victims in Occupied Europe. But, its implications were valuable to suggest that the dehumanization of enemies, imagined or real, in the context of war can transform paroxysms of violence into something far more understandable as cold, calculated, bureaucratic, and organized mass murder. Perhaps the content of the hatred matters less than actions that unfold from it. Or, the context of the moment serves as a trigger, a catalyst that unleashes a lethality for ideas that had always existed. Here, these works do not depart much from the historiography of the genocides of World War II.⁵⁸

A more fruitful comparative approach would examine both how the enemy is defined and how policies and actions performed in the name of dealing with this enemy were justified. Categories of identity, responsibility, threat, and safety are all tethered to historical contexts. What ideas and attitudes become lethal policies? Here, the notion of structural racism might be helpful as well. On one level, structural racism is race hatred that over time has become part of the basic functioning of society, unseen and subtle. As Howard Winant once explained, social policies reinforce social and ideological structures so that the long-term effects of the original racist attitudes can submerge into laws, urban planning, policing, etc.⁵⁹ The force of historical research implores us to see how two components, idea and policy, interact over time. The comparisons of the past, whether something is "like the Nazis" or not, have faded under an effort to see how ideas and policies interact in time and place and over time and space. As Timothy Snyder has recently expressed it for Germany, one can easily apply to any context the historical analysis of state-wide violence and murder as rooted in a development and transformation of attitudes and ideas that has existed within and across many borders:

It is tempting to see the Holocaust as just a matter of German racial prejudice; then we can easily distance ourselves by assuring ourselves that we are not Germans and not anti-Semites. But it is

memoria e impunidad, (Madrid, Abada Editores, 2014); and Montse Armengou y Ricard Belis, *Las fosas del silencio: Hubo un Holocausto español?* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 2004).

⁵⁸ This literature is vast, a good introduction and summation of the field remains Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: a Concise History of the Holocaust* 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

⁵⁹ Howard Winant, "Discrimination," in *The New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 2004), 589.

impossible to explain how nearly six million people were murdered in a particular time and place simply by referring to attitudes. Atrocities begin in everyday life...⁶⁰

Race Past, Present and Future: Immigration and Spain's Wide Circle of We

Here, then, the last site for examining how race is studied is also concerned with contemporary issues and conditions. The most recent discussions of immigration in Spain broadly reflect a newfound focus on race and racism that pays less attention to the content of racial thought, and instead focuses on the impact of policy. This research has played out mostly in the fields of sociology and cultural studies. Media constructions of immigration in literature, the news, and film all play an important descriptive and formative role in the view of immigration. They also consider the social constructions of difference that operate prior to or in response to the arrival of different people. Here, Spain's context is increasingly presented less as aberrational—Spain is not magically free of racism, for example—and more as an interesting test case for the limits of pluralism. Regional differences, nationalist separatist movements, the transition from emigrant to immigrant nation, even the rise of ethno-nationalist political parties all present Spain as managing a changing population and being forced to reexamine anew, like many European countries, who has rights, who belongs and how “wide is the circle of the we.”⁶¹

In Mary Nash's analysis of press coverage of the immigration in the 1990s, she notes that a transition took place that “normalized” the sense that all arriving groups were not Spanish and that this difference, their alterity, was the most important characteristic of immigrants. Nash shows that Spain's particular or unique history as a country of emigrants did not necessarily matter. The mediation of press accounts increasingly presented immigrants as subalterns, as culturally distinct, as “Others.”⁶² As an historian Mary Nash was quite sensitive to how these attitudes changed over time. Others also sense the influence of historical context but reach different conclusions about its impact. Silvina Schammah Gesser has noted that Spain's particular notions of pluralism and welcoming immigrants were the product of delayed experiences with the arrival of immigrants compared to other nations. Spain benefitted from a kind of intellectual hibernation born of isolation and slower economic development:

No obstante, en la década de los 60 y principios de los 70, la España del estado de excepción, del desarrollismo económico, de la migración

⁶⁰ Timothy Snyder, “Forced Forgetting” in *New York Times Magazine*, July 4, 2021: 42.

⁶¹ David A. Hollinger, “How Wide the Circle of the ‘we’? American Intellectuals and the Problem of the Ethnos Since...” *American Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (1993): 317-37.

⁶² Mary Nash, *Inmigrantes en nuestro espejo* (Barcelona: Incaria, 2005), 15-25.

interna y de la emigración, esa España del crecimiento irreverente de sus ciudades y de un nuevo consumo masivo de bienes de cierta calidad, se mantendrá relativamente ajena a estos nuevos posicionamientos y abordajes. El país es, por entonces, telón de fondo de una dictadura decrepita que aún pretende someter a la sociedad española a un proceso interminable de hibernación intelectual e ideológica por no decir política.⁶³

The result, she concludes, is that Spain has a more sensitive and ambivalent engagement with “the other.”⁶⁴

Clearly, the reaction to immigrants in Spain is not a stable or static one, and like the use of the Jewish past, says as much about the needs of the political moment as about the immigrant. Raquel Vega-Durán has noted a gradual shift in the one-time rhetoric of empathy for immigrants. In her recent book, *Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders*, Vega-Durán examines multiform cultural representations produced by Spaniards of the figure of the immigrant in feature films, documentary photographs, paintings, fiction, and popular music. Focusing on the increasing number of narratives from the perspective of the migrant, Vega-Durán argues that reactions to immigrants are usually read through narratives of the Spanish past. Spain’s ability to absorb new populations remains as the primary leitmotif. What Vega-Durán demonstrates is that immigrants in Spain are expanding the limits of who and what is a Spaniard:

the evolution and variety of the concept of Spain as it develops from contacts between Spaniards and foreigners at different stages of the journey: outside Spanish territory, at the border, upon arrival, and after their settlement in Spain. As these diverse encounters reveal, debates about Spanish identity (and identities) can no longer take place without considering the role of immigrants in contemporary Spain.⁶⁵

But remembering the caution of the historians at the AHA roundtable in 2014, there does appear to be a certain confusion in the deployment of words in this analysis. What kind of discourses of difference exist in Spain? Is Spain unique or is the nation just one more example of an increasing reliance on ethnicity to fuel its national identity? In her recent work on Muslim immigration

⁶³ Gesser, *El Otro en España*, 12

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 14.

⁶⁵ Raquel Vega-Durán, *Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders : Migrants, Transnational Encounters, and Identity in Spain* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2016), xxx.

into Spain, the historian Aitana Guia, makes a strong argument for the value of state apologies in the face of historical wrongs. In Spain, she notes that

[a]n official apology for the expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492, the forced conversions of Muslims after the fall of Granada, and the ethnic cleansing of Moriscos between 1609 and 1614 would have gone a long way to signal to Muslim immigrants and converts that Spain welcomes them and that Spanish democracy is secure enough to recognize past wrongs and embrace a pluralistic future.⁶⁶

Yet, her next line points out the confusions that are only now being confronted both in Spain and in Europe more broadly. The purpose of the apology is not just for the aggrieved but also for those apologizing.

A public apology would also have signaled to ethnic Spaniards that casual derogatory behavior towards religious and ethnic minorities is no longer acceptable, and that a pluralistic democracy must demand respect and dignity for all of its members. To this end, migrant writers have reflected on the cultural dynamics of ethnic exclusion and have been at the forefront of denouncing the use of the word Moro (“Moor”) to broadly refer to Arab and Muslim populations. The word Moro combines old imagery and new; it juxtaposes the medieval, belligerent, lascivious Moor, as well as Franco’s reviled mercenary soldiers during the Spanish Civil War, with the poor, uneducated and undocumented Muslim immigrants of today...the efforts of migrants to overcome reductive labels have gone generally unacknowledged by ethnic Spaniards.⁶⁷

Guia’s argument is strong and clear. But part of the difficulty moving forward is the language we will use in a more “mixed” world. What is an ethnic Spaniard? And where are the limits of this ethnicity that is derived here primarily in terms of reactions to newly arrived immigrants? Trying to pin down an answer again places in clear relief the need for a contextual read of collective identities like race.

Clearly, the era of Spain is different has passed. Discussing race in Spain is part of this transformation. Yet, there is a cautionary tale amid this change. What historical genealogies can historians abide by in composing contemporary histories of the transnational, mass phenomena that defined the modern era, like

⁶⁶ Aitana Guia, *The Muslim Struggle for Civil Rights in Spain: Promoting Democracy Through Migrant Engagement, 1985-2010* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), 135.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

genocide, political repression, fascism, and racism? Where do we locate the beginning? And, as we construct these genealogies, how do we make certain that we are not reflecting an anachronistic desire to insert too much of the present in the past; as David Niremberg once cautioned about historical comparisons regarding terms like race, blood purity, and *Convivencia*, in a “polarized political field, even the most technical arguments lose their innocence.”⁶⁸ Again, back in the 1990s, I recall another moment while in Spain. Bumping into an eminent US professor of history outside an archive in Spain, I was thrilled when he graciously asked me what I was working on. When I told him “the idea of race in the early twentieth century,” he playfully feigned exhaustion and said, “Ah, race, class, gender” and added with an eye-roll, “what’s new?” Again, I usually was met with a view that race was not a concept to be found in Spain. From this professor, I was greeted with the exact opposite sensibility. I was not pulling at an imaginary thread; I was pulling on a threadbare one. To be equally flummoxed by assertions that what I was working on was either nowhere in Spain or tiresomely everywhere in the American academy, signaled the comparativist’s conundrum. Across time or across places, work on race has to be both cognizant of what race means and also what it does. The last decade or so of writing on race Spain has both opened and reflected a willingness to widen Spanish historiography to new studies of old ideas and new studies of new ideas.

⁶⁸ David Niremberg, “Mediterranean Exemplarities: The Case of Iberia,” in Joan Ramon Resina, ed., *Iberian Modalities: A Relational Approach to the Study of Culture in the Iberian Peninsula* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 183; Ferrán Gallego discusses similar concerns in his work on embedding discussions of the Franco Regime and Fascism; see, Ferrán Gallego, “En Busca del Siglo Perdido. De la reivindicación imperial al rescate del siglo XIX en los años de consolidación del régimen franquista,” in *Studia Historica. Historia Contemporánea* 31, no. 1: 113-38.