Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *Sefarad* (2001): Creation Without Communication or Contact

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Abstract

Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *Sefarad*, published in 2001, is a novel constructed from a weaving together of many voices res, ranging from the fictionalised voices of persecuted historical figures such as Primo Levi, to fictional characters, who also experience one form or another of alienation such as terminal illness, homelessness and emotional alienation. These threads, brought together under the title of *Sefarad*, are united by the common theme of persecution, marginalisation and their antidotes, solidarity and love. The use of the title creates the expectation of a link between the contents of the novel and the Jewish inhabitants of the Iberian peninsular prior to 1492, victims of persecution and marginalisation under a very specific form. It is not unnatural therefore to expect them to appear as characters in the novel yet they are absent, even in the very last chapter which is itself entitled “Sefarad”. Nowhere in the novel is there a specific representation of their persecution. Named but not shown, the Spanish Sephardic Jewish community hover over the text in phantasmagoric form. Invoked as a generic symbol for the Outsider of the twentieth century, they are both present and absent.

This paper will examine the implications of this presence and absence in this literary creation, constructed without contact with or communication of the specificity of the central figure in the novel, the Sephardic Jew.