

Interpreting the Present, Imagining the Future. *La trilogia de l'exclusió*

Dramaturgical Research Based on Contemporary Testimonies: *Mar de fons*, *Llum trencada*; *L'estigma*, *Fils de vida* and *La invisibilitat*

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English translation, Neil CHARLTON

Abstract

La trilogia de l'exclusió is a dramaturgical research project based on testimony which began in 2017 and has now yielded results: *Mar de fons* (Pere Fullana, Jaume Miró, Carme Planells and Aina Salom) and *Llum trencada* (Carme Planells and Aina Salom). It explores the exclusion suffered by the Reds at the end of the Spanish Civil War. The two plays make up the first part of the trilogy.

The second part, with the provisional title of *L'estigma*, is still in process of creation. And, later, the trilogy will be concluded with *La invisibilitat* (also a provisional title), which will revolve around people who are invisible in contemporary society, the homeless, the undocumented, the nameless.

This paper presents the ongoing research project about the effects of the stigmatisation and rejection of a very special group: the Jews in our country and, more specifically, those who in Mallorca are called *Xuetes*, direct heirs of the first Jewish communities that settled in the Balearic Islands in the early 5th century. The research on "the Xueta question" and the exclusion they suffered in Mallorca until the 20th century, has resulted in a first small-format production: *Fils de vida* (Pere Fullana, Carme Planells and Aina Salom, based on the emotional journeys through the family memories of three characters marked by the stigma of being Xueta. *Fils de vida* has shown us a reality we had barely glimpsed.

Keywords: theatre of testimony, historical memory, stigma, exclusion, converts, Judaism, Xueta, Inquisition, crypto-Judaism, *cremadissa*, call, reparation

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Documentary theatre is a court at the service of the oppressed.

Peter Weiss

Introduction

In 2017, the dramaturgy team of Iguana Teatre started a research project on the effects of the repression that took place in Mallorca against supporters of the Republic following the landing of Alberto Bayo on the eastern coast of the island, a dramaturgical research project based on real testimonies, which led to the play *Mar de fons*, co-produced with the Teatre Principal in Palma and the Teatre Lliure in Barcelona. It was later shaped as a smaller-format production, *Llum trencada*, featuring the testimony of women who lived through the Second Republic and the Spanish Civil War.

It was then that Iguana Teatre decided to work on a trilogy based on life stories told by those involved and which, more or less dramatised, became theatrical pieces. The starting point of the trilogy would be exclusion.

The first part, already written, produced and premiered (*Mar de fons*¹ and *Llum trencada*²), focuses on the Reds; that is, people suspected of being Republicans in a fascist state. The second, already underway, is a research and dissemination work on the effects of the exclusion of another very special group: the Jews in Spain and, more specifically, those who in Mallorca are called *Xuetes*.

The provisional title of this second part is *L'estigma* and a small-format play has already been written and premiered: *Fils de vida*. For this, the same *Mar de fons* dramaturgy team has explored the testimonies of people from different social strata who belong to or study this particular social group in Mallorca.

1. Award for Best Online Show of the Derek Award Edinburgh Fringe 2020.

2. Ciutat de Palma Award 2018.

The third part of the trilogy would look at the invisible people in contemporary society; that is to say, those excluded because they are immigrants or for economic racism, who are the remnants of a society plunged into an uncontrolled globalised capitalism, supported by technological advances difficult to control.

The Trilogy of Exclusion, Theatre of Testimony

For the last few years, and with the attack on the twin towers as an emblematic moment, the perception of reality outside of our immediate environment went through a cataclysm unthinkable until now. Suddenly, the reality we perceived through the media no longer produced the effect it should have. The widespread astonishment at what seemed to us a spectacular “staging” (like the image of the planes destroying the towers), probably made us realise that something in our perception of reality was not working.

This “theatrical trauma of 2001” has triggered in the world of contemporary theatre, in parallel with the world of the visual arts, a need to regain contact with palpable reality. Carles Batlle points out that “affected by the vertigo of news saturation and by the impossibility of keeping a distance, we have problems constructing the narrative of our history” (Batlle, 2011).

In recent years, we have witnessed a need to regain contact with the pulse of the real world and history without the mediation of the audiovisual media, and even to confront the two by highlighting the manipulation to which we are continuously exposed. The more difficult it is to capture the traces of reality in the media society, the more a longing for reality persists in the arts; reality becomes a utopia, it is dreamed of as a lost object.

What has been called *theatre of testimony* has multiplied its output in recent years, which, in addition to revealing a need for contact with immediate reality, can be seen as an impossibility of finding other spheres of communication that have the same effectiveness and enable us to repair ethical, historical and ethnic ruptures. That is why there is a certain testimonial urgency, particularly about the most important recent contemporary events (Groupov's *Rwanda 94* about the Rwandan genocide was created after only six years, and Michael Vinaver's show *11 de Setembre* after a few months).

This *theatre of testimony* takes to the stage in different forms, with more or less fiction, although, almost always, linked to the particular, intimate experience of individuals.

In a world like today's, what is the value of our lives, our experiences, our time? Is a documentary, testimonial theatre possible? Or is everything that appears on stage irreversibly transformed into fiction?

Fiction and truth appear in tension in this experience. However, terms such as *autofiction* and *historiographic metafiction* show the permeability of the words reality/fiction and the self-reflexive shift of (auto)biography and history as narrative constructs, although their references are still the world, life experiences, actions of men and women. These are the aspects that contemporary art explores from an aesthetic and political perspective that redefines its relationship with the two terms: the privileged link

of art with aesthetics and the link with party structures and traditional political discourses.

As Jean-Pierre Sarrazac argues:

From a theatrical point of view, there are two important types of testimony, one that we could call political and another that can be said to be of an intimate nature, which, very often, can be combined. [...] At one of the poles we have the Brechtian character, presented as an eyewitness to an event. At the other, the man as a witness to himself, to his own suffering (Sarrazac, 2011).

As for the type of testimony that Sarrazac calls political, it is clearly related to Piscator, Bertold Brecht, the documentary theatre of Peter Weiss, Hochhut, Kipphardt and Dorts, and has a very extensive range of references. We could also say that this form of testimony has a great impact in Latin America, especially in Mexico, Chile, Argentina and Peru.

In Europe, documentary theatre re-emerged in 1990s Germany. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the turbulent reunification everything changed radically, and theatre resumed a political dimension. The new documentary theatre arose “from the hunger for a dose of reality”, as the German playwright Roland Brus notes (Fullana, 2012), and became the possibility of questioning 1980s German society that was in a state of stagnation.

Roland Brus thought that theatre “repeated the same plays with the same codes,” and this led him to experiment:

In 1992 I took the performances into the street, the prison, the hospital, the train station and the workers’ meeting places, and I also made the “common” people, experts in their trades and specialists in marginality, the protagonists of the “black box” that is theatre [...].

As the German director notes, the idea was to reverse stereotypes and social structures, hierarchies and power relations through an “aesthetic operation”.

It is an experience that goes from performance to research. Theatre becomes the vehicle to discover other forms of life and contexts, and new microcosms emerge. Reality is increasingly complex and theatre seeks to reflect this movement, building various levels of content and expression, and from the use of new artistic strategies.

Research into reality focuses on everyday life: politics, the media, science. The public and non-public places. The street, prison and mental asylums.

Latin American theatre of testimony pursues more or less the same ideas as European documentary theatre. In both cases it is no longer so much about entertaining and teaching, but about inviting the reader to take a certain critical attitude towards the problem posed. To raise awareness among the audience and, by extension, the people. Latin American testimony has several aims, one of which is to seek justice. For this reason, it is necessary to report all types of violations. These range from murders, exploitation of the marginalised classes, political corruption, ideological, sexual and racist

persecution, and changes of high institutional officers who do not submit to the purposes of a certain government to scams for economic and political reasons. In short, thousands of stratagems and traps to achieve corrupt and shameful goals in our Latin America.

Testimonial sources are like little heroes that seek to help improve their society, and not tolerate abuses and injustices, while inviting the interlocutor to become aware, and the lower classes to denounce the injustices they suffer. These civilian models are seen by the “others” as rebels, as misaligned, as intruders who try to enter dangerous terrains, occupied spaces. For this reason, the testimony aspires to break the old traditions, not only literary but also social and political. In other words, it is not only a literary revolution but social and political.

Testimony seeks everyone’s action and participation, not just of those involved. These testimonial pieces are created to serve as models, appeal to the good judgment of the audience and invite them to follow the good example. It is difficult for them to take sides with the official version, if there is one, since the official version of certain events damages the image of a certain government, and generally this reality does not reach the ears of the people and, when it does, it is completely distorted, altered or manipulated.

The Stigma, the Paradigmatic and Unique Case of the Mallorcan Xuetes

The Xuetes make up a very peculiar and unique group in the Mallorca of the 17th to late 20th centuries. As Leonard Muntaner points out, “the survival of the so-called Xueta group, direct heirs of the first Jewish communities that settled in the Balearic Islands at the beginning of the 5th century [...] is a phenomenon that we do not find anywhere else in the world” (Muntaner, 40). Or, in the words of Miquel Dolç, a “differential fact, an unusual and incomprehensible phenomenon that has not yet become historical memory” (Pomar, 2016).

Throughout Mallorcan history, the Xuetes have experienced exclusion and rejection. In fact, they were discriminated against until the 1970s, when the arrival of outsiders (new residents unaware of the history) and tourists (temporary visitors with different customs) caused a social and economic change on the island that softened the pressure they had endured.

This is why the second part of the trilogy is entitled *L'estigma*, because being a Xueta in Mallorca is “a deeply discrediting attribute” (Goffman, 1963: 12-13; trans. 2006). An attribute that makes the Xuetes go from being complex and normal people to tainted and degraded. People with a virtual and, above all, stereotyped social personality.

The isolation, physical and social, which they had endured until the 1970s forced them to live secluded in specific streets in the Jewish quarter, the *Call*, or Carrer del Segell and conditioned to practice endogamy, which had genetic repercussions (*sa cucurulla xueta* or Mediterranean fever). This illustrates the social phenomenon on the island that Freud calls “the narcissism of small differences”³ (Bestard, 2012: 389).

3. It is the small differences between human groups that cause the most hatred; confronting the similar *other* is much worse than encountering the exotic and distant *other*.

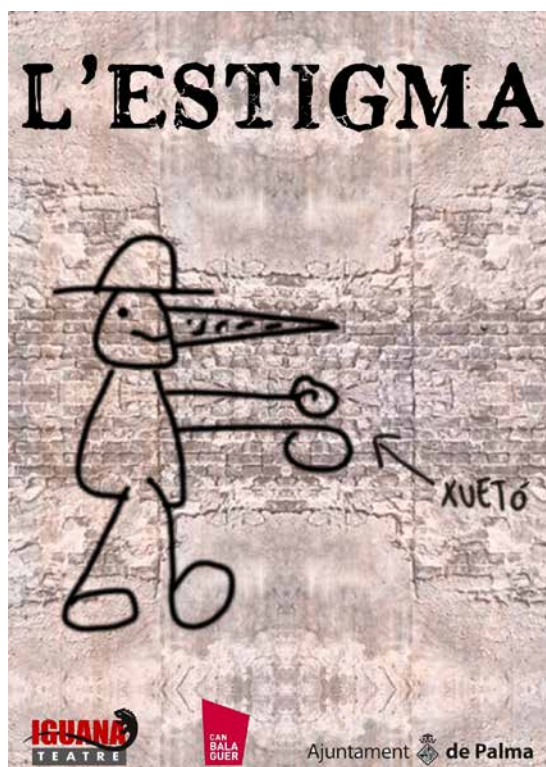


Fig. 1. Cover of the project presented at Palma City Council. The graffiti, offensive to the Xueta community, portrays them with a big nose and a hat like a *gramalleta*.⁴

For fifteen centuries in Mallorca we have had the Jews, first, and the converts and Xuetes, later, who live together with the rest of the social, religious and cultural groups in a coexistence that Muntaner defines as complex “because of the conflicts generated by different cultural, religious and anthropological models and, also – or especially – when the Jewish group, Xueta or convert, achieves a prominent role in the island’s economy” (Muntaner, 2018: 40).

The date of the end of the Jewish presence in Mallorca is given as 1435, because the Jews either went into exile or converted. But this is not the case as many of the converts practised crypto-Judaism, their religion under a Christian guise. However, as Laura Miró explains, “Contrary to what one might think, the conversion of the Jews did not end the conflict, but started a new one now against the converts, and, in the future, against their descendants, the so-called Xuetes” (Miró, 2019a: 7). And anti-Judaism in Mallorca turned into anti-Xuetism, which, finally, would also give way to anti-Semitism.

The Xueta question, therefore, began in the 17th century with the convictions under accusation of crypto-Judaism and the subsequent process of stigmatisation that this minority suffered. And it is in the inquisitorial documentation, precisely, when the name Xueta (a word of uncertain origin)⁵ appears and is definitively established as an insult against a minority of the Mallorcan population.

4. *Gramalleta* or *sambenet* was the penitential garment that those convicted by the Inquisition were forced to wear, decorated with elements (snakes, flames...) that reported the crime committed and the penalty imposed.

5. There are three hypotheses: the first says that it comes from the diminutive *juetó*, which would give the word *xuetó*; the second that it comes from *xulla* (pronounced *xuia* in Mallorcan), referring to the habit of the converts to consume pork publicly, and the last relates both etymologies by changing *juetó* by analogy with *chulla* and obtaining *xuetó*.

Between 1679 and 1691, when in Spain it seemed to have disappeared, the Holy Inquisition increased its activity in Mallorca and condemned eighty-eight people in three autos-da-fé that Laura Miró herself describes as “devastating”: three were burned alive for not wanting to abjure Judaism (Caterina and Rafel Tarongí and Rabbi Rafel Valls). This event still lives on in the collective memory as “*la Cremadissa*” or burning. Thirty thousand people attended and a great banquet was held afterwards.

This is how the official stigmatisation of the Xuetes began and the social marginalisation towards the converts started, which would be maintained due to two essential facts:

- The publication of the book *La Fee Triunfante en Quatro Autos*, by the Jesuit Francesc Garau, in which the torments and death of the condemned are gruesomely related.⁶
- Paintings featuring *gramalletes* condemned by the Inquisition and their lineages are displayed in the convent of Sant Domingo. However, those belonging to powerful and influential people were removed, by which a list with fifteen cursed lineages that everyone in Mallorca knew was created (Aguiló, Bonnín, Cortès, Forteza, Fuster, Martí, Miró, Picó, Pinya, Pomar, Segura, Tarongí, Valentí, Valleriola and Valls).⁷ The *gramalletes* are restored every time the weather damages them, to perpetuate the exemplifying memory of the sentence and not to let the fifteen lineages fall into oblivion.
- Since the first time it was used, the word Xueta (*Xuetó* derogatorily) has been used offensively and those so designated have preferred to refer to themselves by more neutral names (*del Segell* [from Carrer del Segell], *del carrer* [from the street]) or, more commonly, with a *noltros* [us] or *es nostros* [ourselves] in opposition to *ets altres* [the others] or *es de fora del carrer* [those from outside the street].

However, convert provenance is not a sufficient condition to be a Xueta, rather this provenance must have been established in the collective memory of the people of Mallorca through the identification of the families and lineages considered as such. Therefore, while Xuetes are descendants of converts, only a portion of the descendants of converts are Xuetes.

It is interesting at this point to mention that some members of the Xueta community have returned to the religious and identity roots of Judaism, to “set the clock to zero, [...] to show that the victory of the Inquisition was not real,” as Ferran Aguiló himself said when he was interviewed.⁸ In an act of vindication that closes the circle that has been open for about five hundred years, because Mallorcan Xuetes had to wait for the 21st century (2011) to see the city of Palma put up a memorial, in the same place of “*la Cremadissa*”, in

6. Reissued up to eight times to facilitate dissemination and, in return, to keep anti-Xuetism alive. It is said that almost every Mallorcan house has a copy.

7. There must have been many more lineages (in Mallorca we find clearly Jewish lineages: Abraham, Daviu, Salom...), but these fifteen are the ones that have been stigmatized and are the families on which the research work has been focused.

8. See the video: *L'estigma* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeQxG4X6t_Y>.

memory of the Xuetes that the Inquisition executed there. “[...] It is simply a small tribute to men and women who were victims of injustice without any justification. May their memory not fall into the well of oblivion, may the Mallorca that they loved so much treat them fairly for once” (Conxa Forteza, 2007).

Documentary Investigation and Research

Research on the meaning, essence and Xueta identity has been based on two pillars. On the one hand, the field research formed by interviews documented by audiovisual recordings, with the idea and objective of recovering the experiences of the Xuetes in the first person and reassessing their identity. And, on the other, documentary and bibliographic research to establish a well-founded historical base.

Constructing this reflection theatrically must require an open approach to the historical documents, the large number of studies on the subject and also the literature generated, but, above all, we have to go to the testimonial sources still present from people – over 70 years of age – who have personally experienced the significant resurgence of Jewish stigma and Jewish identity, still present in the descendants of the Catalan Jewish community, during the years of the Franco dictatorship (Fullana, 2019a).

Personal and field research

The possibility of still having direct witnesses to this exclusion,⁹ as well as direct, uncontaminated sources, from family traditions and groups, is what convinced Iguana Teatre of the need to narrate on stage, that is to say, to embody emotions, part of the memory of Mallorcan Xuetes. Real biographical experiences take to the stage. And the intimate real is also shown made into fiction or, at the very least, dramatically arranged, either from a direct or indirect testimony.

With personal research, an attempt has been made to locate the meaning, essence and identity of the Xuetes based on interviews documented with audiovisual recordings. The aim of these meetings has been to recover the experiences of the Xuetes in the first person and to revive reflection on their identity.

The talks have revolved around the questions that have arisen today, in contemporary times, since there is a clear perception that the stigma which haunted the Xuetes well into the mid-20th century is fading. For this reason, a need to know prompted the interviews: Is the essence of this Mallorcan human group disappearing? According to Laurà Miró, it is: “[...] there are still echoes of the history of Xuetes in Mallorca and of the disdain suffered until recently. Many people of my generation have heard it, like a myth, but they don't know where it comes from or what happened. The Xuetes have

9. See the video of *L'estigma*.

gone from suffering marginalisation and strong social rejection to oblivion” (Miró, 2019b).

The research also aimed to answer other questions: Are the Xuetes an ethnic group, a genetic group, or a cultural group? Or rather all at once? Is there something beyond surnames that unites the bearers of the Xueta lineages? And if so, what? What has been the effect of discrimination on today’s generations? (Fullana, 2019b)

As the Xueta question is quite complex, and to avoid being too dispersed, the research work focused on three main ideas as a starting point:

The archaeology of the myth: one of the aims of the research is to look for the common myths between the Jewish tradition and the Xueta tradition. What do Jewish humour, myths, legends or history have in common with the story of the Xuetes? What remains (if there is anything left but ruins in memory)? Is there a Xueta memory for the bearers of the fifteen lineages?

The common spaces of Xueta awareness: find out to what extent there are still *Calls* in Palma. And how did the descendants of the Jews organise themselves to help each other.

The historical relationship between theatre and Xuetes: historical research to find out the traditional relationship that existed in Palma between theatre (with playwrights and actors such as Gabriel Cortès, Xesc Forteza, Cristina and Catalina Valls, Joan Valls or Bartomeu Martí, among others) and the Xuetes.

In order to expand the knowledge needed to tell this story, or stories, we looked for information and guidance in various associations, such as Memoria del Carrer, Limud Mallorca, ARCA Llegat Jueu and the Comunitat Jueva de les Illes, and around twenty interviews among groups of people were conducted.

The researchers participating in the first set of interviews were:

Laura Miró: professor and collaborative researcher at the UIB. She has worked on the research and dissemination of knowledge about the Jewish, convert and Xueta past in Mallorca, as well as on its didactic applicability. Author of *La contemporaneïtat xueta* (2019) and *La qüestió xueta surt de l'illa* (2021).

Miquel Segura (Mihael Bar Haïm): journalist and writer. Author of the books *Memòria xueta* and *Arrels xuetes, ales jueves*, to name a few.

Leonard Muntaner: the great specialist and researcher in Xueta history in Mallorca. Author of the books *Los chuetas de Mallorca: antisemitismo y competencia económica a finales del siglo XVII; Sobre La fe triunfante i els seus vertaders promotors; Mossèn Josep Tarongí i Cortès, del ressentiment a la controvèrsia; La Inquisició a les Balears. Segles XV al XIX; and El tribunal de la Inquisición en Mallorca. Relación de causas de fe, 1578-1806.*

Antònia Picornell: professor of Biology in the Department of Human Genetics at the UIB, researcher specialised in population genetics (with

special interest in island populations) and author of the study *Genètica de la població xueta*.

On the other hand, we have interviewed some Xueta people who have contributed the most essential details: the everyday experience of being Xueta in our time and the stigma this entails. In addition, they have expanded the initial point of view with a great diversity of perspectives on the Xueta experience; individual and family life stories, some older than others, from different social classes and even from different neighbourhoods:

Lluís Miró: father of the historian and author Laura Miró. Xueta and silversmith in the *Call* until he retired. He has always lived in Carrer de l'Argenteria.

Càtia Valls: Xueta and daughter of *Call* silversmiths and heiress of the Cande silversmiths to this day. She was born and grew up in Carrer de l'Argenteria.

Josep Pomar: Xueta, enthusiast and passionate about history. He has written articles on the Xuetes and carried out extensive research on his Xueta background.

Aguiló family (Miquel Àngel, Pilar and Agustí): a very large Xueta family, originally from Carrer de l'Argenteria.

Finally, a third group of interviewees who, due to their uniqueness (within the already unique history of the Xuetes) deserve a separate mention. They are the returned Jews, Xuetes who, based on their historical legacy and the experience of the Xueta stigma, have taken the opposite path of their ancestors and have converted to Judaism. This list also includes the aforementioned Miquel Segura (Mihael Bar Haïm). Other cases are:

Toni Pinya (Pinhas Ben Abraham): Xueta, Jew. A chef by profession, he set out on the path back to Judaism through cooking and studying.

Xisca Oliver Valls (Isca Ben Abraham): Xueta and Jew. Direct heir of Rafel Valls. Married Toni Pinya in Israel according to Jewish ritual in 2018.

Ferran Aguiló: Xueta and Jew. Sculptor by profession, he is one of the most recognised visual artists of our island. Unlike the other returned interviewees, Ferran Aguiló is a Reform Jew, and not an Orthodox Jew.

Dani Rodstein, an American Jew, who since arriving in Palma has been fully involved in researching and disseminating the city's Jewish history and legacy, has also been interviewed. He leads the association Limud Mallorca and is part of the board of directors of the Palma synagogue.

Documentary and bibliographic research

Documentary and bibliographic research has been carried out to establish a well-grounded historical foundation. And, if we take into account that the first book on the Xueta question was published in 1691 (*La Fee Triunfante*) and the latest in the 21st century (*Gente de la calle. Orígenes y evolución del*

caso de los chuetas, judeoconvertos mallorquines, by Pedro de Montaner),¹⁰ it is clear that, in Mallorca, the Xueta question has occupied countless pages and continues to do so.

There are numerous and varied publications on the subject that interests us or that refer to it, such as books, articles in the press, letters to the editor, novels (*Dins el darrer blau*, by Carme Riera, to cite an example), dissertations and theses and autobiographies.

Moreover, being part of the collective imaginary, it is a recurring theme in Mallorcan popular literature, so we can add oral literature to printed literature, such as proverbs and sayings that people know by heart and can recite or sing. In fact, when talking about the Xueta issue it is normal for people to add some of these sayings, as even the Xuetes do in interviews: “*Xueta, xuetó, comes tortes cul redo*” [Xueta, Xuetó, twisted legs and round ass]; “*Cacauets i avellanes, xuetons a grapades*” [Peanuts and nuts, handfuls of Xuetons]. Or the famous songs about the “shameful” lineages: “*En Miró mirava, / en Picó picava, / en Fuster feia sa creu / i en Pomar l'enclavava, / en Bonnín duia sa bandera i... / tots ets altres xuetons darrere*” [Miró looked, / Picó hit, / Fuster made the cross / Bonnín carried the flag and... / All the other Xuetons followed].

And we must not forget to include all the documentation kept in the municipal and ecclesiastical archives, such as two very interesting and surprising cases that show us the repercussions of the Spanish Civil War on the lives of Xuetes in Mallorca:

- The first was the obligation to present a certificate of belonging to the Aryan race if any woman wanted to marry a German or Italian soldier: “[...] I declare that my two surnames are not of Jewish origin [...]. This certificate is for matrimonial purposes” (Miró, 2019a: 55).
- The second, the aim of the Spanish Falange, in 1942 and at the request of the German Nazis, to obtain a list that included all the Mallorcan Xuetes to control them and potentially deport them to concentration camps. A task that was undertaken by Bishop Miralles and the diocesan archivist Vich Salom, who soon gave up the job when they found that the list affected 35% of the Mallorcan population.

Although there were a few years of “silence” — broken, precisely, by the publication in 1966 of the book by Miquel Forteza i Pinya, *Els descendents dels jueus conversos: quatre mots de la veritat* —,¹¹ the subject of Xuetes was present in Mallorca until the 1970s and 1980s. In 1979 there were some events that revived the anti-Xueta fever and the appearance of pro-Nazi graffiti in the streets: the first was the victory in the elections of a young socialist of Xueta lineage: Ramon Aguiló (“Ramon Aguiló = Chief Rabbi”); the second, the TVE broadcast of the series *Holocaust* that was received with graffiti on

10. The book by Pedro de Montaner, Marquis of Zavellà, once again opens a can of worms by assuring that the Mallorcan aristocracy “never wanted to harm the Xuetes, because they were their partners.” Quite the opposite of what Leonard Muntaner and other experts assert, even ignoring the autos-da-fé in which it is described how some aristocrats and nobles accompany the convicts to the bonfire, proud and aware of the role they play there.

11. With which he was accused of rekindling the fire.



Fig. 2. Graffiti against Mayor Ramon Aguiló, alluding to his Xueta lineage and membership of the PSOE (*Última Hora* archive).

some façades in the old Jewish quarter (“Holocaust, Jewish lie”) (see the last picture).

And from the existing abundant bibliography, we have selected a sample from the different eras (and we could say centuries) and by different people: male and female authors involved in the subject by their lineage (memoirs, biographies, autobiographies) or scholars from a more scientific point of view and with an external vision (such as the aforementioned Lleonard Muntaner and Laura Miró).

We can cite as a sample of the variety of authors and periods covered a few: by the priest Josep Tarongí i Cortès: *Libros malos y cosas peores. Algo sobre el estado religioso y social de la isla de Mallorca* (1877); Baruch Braunstein: *The Chuetas of Majorca. Conversos and the Inquisition of Majorca* (1936);¹² Gabriel Cortès i Cortès: *Historia de los judios y de sus descendientes cristianos* (1944); Robert Graves: *A Dead Branch on the Tree of Israel* (1986); the study by Eva and Juan Laub: *El mito triunfante. Estudio antropológico-social de los Chuetas mallorquines* (1987); by Nissan Beb-Avraham: *Els Anussim. El problema dels xuets segons la legislació rabínica* (1992); Enric Porqueres: *L'endogàmia dels xuetes de Mallorca. Identitat i matrimoni en una comunitat de conversos (1435-1750)* (2001) and Baltasar Porcel: *Els xuetes mallorquins. Quinze segles de racisme* (2002).

Fils de vida, Mallorcan Xuetes Take to the Stage

Fils de vida is structured around emotional journeys through the family memories of three characters marked by the Xueta stigma. The persistence of the exclusion of converts in Mallorca is unique in the entire history of Judaism and has marked, sometimes subtly and at other times painfully explicitly, their social behaviour.

12. Braunstein's book was the first rigorous and serious study on the Xueta subject based on the documentation of the Inquisition; we can say that he revealed the issue when historians of the island had not yet even considered it.

The play features current and documented experiences to build three family stories between reality and fiction, in a stage space where life and death share the present. It is a production without condescension, of course, which seeks nothing more than to contribute a theatrical vision to the extensive bibliography on the subject.

Theatre has the power to recover lost souls and give a voice to the dead. Perhaps this is one of the keys to being able to build the present with honesty and justice (production programme).¹³



Fig. 3. A scene from the play *Fils de vida*, premiered at the Teatre del Mar in July 2021. ©Rubén Ballester

Individual or family information that, despite the large amount of bibliographic material generated around the Xuetes, has not yet come to light lies in personal memory. Information and, especially, what nourishes theatre: stories.

From the outset, one of the clearest goals of the dramaturgical team of Iguana Teatre was that the research had to be done in person and in contact with the guardians of these memories and bringing together living voices that can speak of these experiences. Without losing sight of the fact that the final goal was not academic research, it would be too pretentious to try, but simply to find stories based on the testimony of those who have experienced Xueta history and also on the knowledge of the experts consulted.

All these different stories revolving around a way of being and living, with stories that deserve to be rescued from oblivion and that show us where we come from and who we are, not only the Xuetes but all of Mallorcan society, have formed the basis of the dramaturgy for *Fils de vida*,¹⁴ a small-format

13. <<http://iguanateatre.com/ca/ocioespectaculo/iguana/fils-de-vida/121795.html>>.

14. 'Fils de vida', un viatge emocional que llega al Teatre del Mar <<https://www.fancultura.com/fils-de-vida/>>.

show with three actors. The play is based on the life stories of some witnesses to the Xueta experience and also on material taken from bibliographic and documentary research on what it means to be a Xueta and what this stigma still entails.

We have already mentioned that we have worked both with direct witnesses and with the information we have been able to extract from the collective imaginary about legends, anecdotes and myths that are told, almost in secrecy, and repeated with varying accuracy about the Jews and their descendants. And also, the documentation and bibliography tell us what the people who demonised them and those who accompanied them to the bonfires must have been like. We have a book published the same year that the autos-da-fé took place (*La Fe Triunfante*, 1691), a chronicle of the events and thinking of the era that describes the punishments, the torments and the people who attended the events as entertainment.

The aim of the dramaturgy was for the actresses and actor to tell us the personal experiences of various families related to this stigmatisation they suffered, or that they helped to create and spread. And although life is unrepeatable, *Fils de vida* achieves a certain sense of reality that creates complicity with the audience.

The emotional involvement of the actresses and actor is very clear, since the subject on which we have worked is part of the history of Mallorca (of the Mallorcan idiosyncrasy, since the Xuetes do not exist on any other of the islands) and some vestiges remain. We must also assume that the history of this discrimination is exactly the same as so many other stories of contempt and infamy inflicted, and being inflicted, on social, ethnic or cultural minorities by the majority that feels superior. All this in addition to the fact that, in contemporary Europe, we are experiencing a disturbing revival of certain political currents spearheaded by the denigration and demonization of Jews, among other religious and social groups, just as it was five hundred years ago.¹⁵

The fact that the actors work with the “*plateau de conteurs*” technique, through which they are at the same time protagonists, narrators, objects, sounds, climate, etc., in the manner of the old minstrels is important when addressing the audience and involving them. And, gradually, with the directionality of the first person, they build an atmosphere, an atmosphere between life and death, of certainty, of reality, in which the audience feels they are in front of people who have experienced this story. Recovering, from the present and for the future, those stories that have made us who we are.

Memory Talks¹⁶

In conclusion, we could say that we have achieved one of the objectives of the productions that have already been premiered, which is none other than

15. Remember the slogan “the Jew is guilty” heard in February 2021 in a neo-Nazi act in homage to the Blue Division.

16. A phrase we borrowed from the Mallorcan writer Valentí Puig (*Bosc endins*, 1982).

giving a voice to memory, letting it speak through the actors and actresses who shape it, and presenting it to the audience.

But we must also remember that we are referring to a trilogy, *La trilogia de l'exclusió*, which we have not yet concluded and is in process of research and creation, that *Fils de vida*, which we have focused on, is one part of this ambitious project.

The objective of all the work we have described so far is a theatrical production, the natural conclusion to which the entire research and investigation process leads us. And yet, the plays we have written are also open to new testimonial contributions, to new discoveries, so they can be rewritten and rehearsed and reassembled... in a kind of circular movement that would seek to include the new voices that come to us from memories.



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