



The Mapmaker's Daughter

Laurel Corona

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A sweeping story of 1492 Spain, exploring how what we know about the world shapes our map of life Valencia, 1492. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella issue an order expelling all Jews who refuse to convert to Christianity. Amalia Cresques, daughter of a Jewish mapmaker whose services were so valuable that his faith had been ignored, can no longer evade the throne. She must leave her beloved atlas, her house, her country, forever. As Amalia remembers her past, living as a converso, hiding her faith, she must decide whether to risk the wrath of the Inquisition or relinquish what's left of her true life. A mesmerizing saga about faith, family and Jewish identity.

The Mapmaker's Daughter Details

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From Reader Review The Mapmaker's Daughter for online ebook

Beth says

In her usual fashion, Laurel Corona breathes life into a strong female character, wrapping the story in gorgeous prose. Although *The Mapmaker's Daughter* does not top *Finding Emilie* for me, there was so much beauty and strength to be found in this story. The events portrayed are often tragic, but the way the story is told is beautiful.

The main character, Amalia Riba is a true embodiment of strength, and I enjoyed watching the details of her life as they unfolded. Amalia is a Jew in a time when that is a dangerous thing to be, and grows up under the looming shadow of persecution and eventual expulsion under the reign of Isabel and Ferdinand. Though she was born as a converso, her mother has secretly remained a Jew while outwardly appearing to be Christian. Amalia follows in her footsteps and as she grows older must decide what the ultimately means for her and the decisions she makes for herself and her daughter.

I loved the look into the lives of those from another time, culture and of different beliefs. This book is rich with historical detail of Jewish and Islamic customs and the setting of each place is so colorfully described that I felt like I had been there myself. The scenes of Amalia growing up on the seaside with her father were particularly beautiful, and the descriptions were beautiful enough to read over again. I found myself highlighting several passages.

There were times when I felt that the lack of dialogue was noticeable, so much so that I was excited when someone finally spoke. Sometimes the story leaned a little bit too much on introspection between major events. Due to the time period of the book, some of the language comes across as a bit crude. I know that in those days words we consider off-color weren't considered that way then, but sometimes I wish the language had been a bit different. In my own personal opinion, the scenes of intimacy bordered on gratuitous and gave too much information that was not necessary to the scene. This is based on my personal preference, and I'm sure that other readers wouldn't mind it quite as much as I did.

Although there were many things to pull from this story – the cruelty of one person to another, the harsh realities of life, the beauty of nature and peace found with God & self – I found that the familial bonds between the characters to be the most thought-provoking. While *The Mapmaker's Daughter* is not necessarily a happy story, it shows that even in the darkest of times, there is power in family. Family goes beyond blood relation, and brings to life the idea that home truly is where your heart is – if you are with the ones you love, you are never far from home.

Jaksen says

Had to force myself to get through this one and skimmed the last 100 pages or so. The content was interesting; the writing just sort of so-so. Endless sentences that did not catch my attention and the paragraphs? Starting and ending wherever - just wherever. I felt like I was reading I did this; I did that; then I did this again; then she did that again.

Not my style of writing at all, but for some, perhaps a tremendous book. But for me, 'too simply written' as

my mother would have said.

A shame, too, as this book concerns a topic, time and place I'd like to learn more about it, and in more depth.

Shomeret says

I had no expectations of *The Mapmaker's Daughter* by Laurel Corona when I decided to read it. I had never read this author. I had seen the book in my Goodreads friends feed and was curious. Yet when I didn't have time to finish the book and was forced to return it to the library, I checked it out again because I was so impressed by what I'd read.

In the first two sections of this book the accomplishments of fictional protagonist Amalia were really impressive. As an adolescent she created a signing system for her deaf father, and presumably taught it to him so that they could utilize it for communication. Then she became his interpreter. Since her father became the mapmaker for Prince Henry the Navigator, he traveled in exalted circles and so did she. She had a facility for spoken languages and learned a number of them. Later she translated a great deal of Hebrew poetry into Portuguese for the Duke of Braganza. She also wrote her own poetry. She became the instructor of the grandchildren of the King of Granada, and then returned to her birthplace to teach the future Queen Isabella of Castille.

Yet Amalia maintained family as her haven when she felt a need for support. What's interesting about this is that it wasn't her genetic family of conversos. Amalia had actually chosen a prominent family that remained Jewish, and were leaders in the Jewish community of Andalusia, as her own. They warmly embraced Amalia. They were the Abravanel's. The Abravanel's of this era are known historical personages.

So I felt that the third section in which Amalia made a permanent life for herself among the Abravanel's and completely identified with them also made a strong statement. She could have made another choice, and become a fervent Christian converso like her sisters. She had a number of opportunities to take that road. She could have joined Ferdinand and Isabella's court as a converso, but it was filled with intolerance, danger and suspicion. She had previously experienced a culturally vibrant court in Granada where her knowledge was valued and her Jewish religion was respected. It's easy to see why Amalia decided to distance herself from the monarchs known as Their Most Christian Majesties.

For me, the themes of Jewish survival and the maintenance of tradition were very well demonstrated by Laurel Corona through the story of Amalia in *The Mapmaker's Daughter*

For my complete review see <http://shomeretmasked.blogspot.com/20...>

Meryll Levine Page says

If you're interested in understanding the situation of Jews in Spain before the expulsion, this book offers a chance to feel the fear, joys, and uniqueness of this era. As a historical romance, it's a love story between men and women but also a love story of the land, of learning, and of Jewish life. It may be difficult to suss

out what is historically accurate and what's invented, but Corona helps the reader by including a brief discussion at the end of the book on the historicity of her story. As one might expect, many male characters are historical figures while the women's characters had to be imagined. A bonus of this book is the inclusion of poetry from Andalusia in English translation. The meter and wordplay may be lost in translation but the sensuousness of the poetry remains.

The Idle Woman says

Amalia Cresques is descended from the great family of Majorcan cartographers who produced the Catalan Atlas in 1375 (they are historical figures, though she is invented). As a child growing up in Seville in the 1430s she experiences the struggle of converso life: outwardly living as a Christian, but secretly continuing to celebrate the rituals of her family's Jewish faith. When tragedy strikes her family, Amalia moves to Portugal with her mapmaker father, where he serves Henry the Navigator in charting the new discoveries along the African coast. Here, in the environment of a (temporarily) tolerant court, she finds the foundations of her future, through marriage and through an increasingly warm friendship with the Abravanel family of Jewish advisers and scholars. But this happy balance can't last long, and Amalia and her friends must soon come to terms with ever increasing hatred and discrimination - which eventually looks set to drive them from their country altogether. It's a sombre and sobering piece of history.

Despite the book's fascinating subject, there are certain elements which aren't carried off quite as successfully. I found some of the characterisation rather simplistic and was especially struck by the fact that certain relationships felt like dramatic necessities rather than genuine emotional connections. This was particularly true of Amalia's great love affair, which seemed to happen very quickly and which had plenty of physical description but not, in my opinion, a correspondingly deep emotional conviction. Having said this, the story will still be of interest to those who are keen to learn more about this period, or who have an interest in Jewish culture and history. Corona describes Jewish customs with great warmth and respect, and the book was most interesting for me in this respect, as I knew so little about them. But unfortunately overall, as a novel, it just didn't quite grab me.

For a longer review, please visit my blog (where there are some spoilers - but also some images from the Cresques Catalan Atlas):
<http://theidlewoman.blogspot.co.uk/20...>

Jessica says

So, fun fact: I misread the descriptive copy on the back of this book and thought that it took place in 1942 Spain -- a World War II novel. So it was a little bit of a surprise to realize that it actually centers around 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and incorporates several real-life historical figures into its plot, such as noted titular mapmaker Jehuda Cresques and Queen Isabella of Christopher Columbus fame.

Going in, I knew basically nothing about the historical context of this book (the Spanish Inquisition and the Alhambra Decree) and that maybe hindered my enjoyment a little. There's also a lot of Jewish tradition and royal genealogy that flew over my head that other readers may digest a little more easily. As a nonreligious person, it was sometimes very hard for me to get into the head of our narrator Amalia, whose family, along with the other Spanish Jews of the time, were forced to convert to Christianity in order to escape persecution.

Amalia's mother continued to teach her Jewish traditions and belief in secret, and Amalia spends much of her adulthood living openly as a Jew despite rampant anti-Semitism. Her decisions sometimes frustrated me no matter how hard I tried to understand her point of view.

The book is very well-written but moves rather slowly and at times assumes the reader will have enough knowledge of this historical context to understand the nuances of the plot. To be honest, some elements of the plot rang false to me (Muslims and Jews living together in peace?) until I perused Wikipedia for a bit and realized just how ignorant I was of the historical facts – the Moors were actually very tolerant of Jewish enclaves in Iberia. Isabella was a character in this book for maybe 100 pages before it dawned on me that she was *that* Isabella. Someone who actually knows a little bit about that time in history may appreciate Corona's storytelling -- and may be able to follow some of the complicated family trees -- a little bit more than I did. But, I'm ultimately glad that I read this book because I learned a great deal more than I was expecting to. I just...lost interest after a while.

So I would recommend this book to fans of rich historical fiction, but with the caveat that it may be worth spending some time on Wikipedia if you're not too familiar with the Inquisition.

Tuck says

a sprawling saga of medieval Spain and Portugal 1432-1492 told through 1st person of Amalia Riba (Cresques), or better, he family thought of her as ama - lia, god loves Leah. They were conversos, Jews who went Catholic, but like many, secretly kept their Jewish faith. So Amalia is the descendent of the Cresques who made the Catalan Atlas <http://www.bigmapblog.com/2011/cresques...>. She gets in all kinds of situations, living in Sagres while her first husband sails for Henry the Navigator, lives in Queluz with the free Jews, she's a widow now and meets a Granadan Muslim diplomat and they fall in love, so she moves to Granada to teach and fuck, then that falls through, she is invited to teach for Queen Elizabeth in Spain (who goes mad eventually when her children, Isabel and Alfonso are taken from her) so Amalia goes back to Portugal, livin' large til King João kicks 'em all out, back to Spain they go, the new King/Queen Isabel and Ferdinand finally conquer Al-Andalus/Granada, kick all the Muslims and Jews out of Iberia, then decide to kick out or burn, all the conversos and Jews in rest of Spain, so in 1492 Amalia is on the shore waiting for a ship, and she has to leave the Atlas behind.

Full of intricate historical detail, strong feminist characters and situations, and historical characters, the novel rocks fast and is sad and inspiring. Not the greatest plot/writing in the world but good novel of complicated scenario.

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

3.5 stars. In "The Mapmaker's Daughter," Amalia's life is changing quickly. She is living in Spain just prior to and during the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. She is a part of an affluent family but her family is of Jewish descent. She and her family are straddling two sides of history. This book was a mixed bag for me. It started out strong for me and then tapered off through the story. Overall, I still liked this book because of the historical detail.

Amalia was a very interesting character to me. A lot is happening to her and around her and in many ways, she is an observer and it felt as if she was merely being taken along for the ride, especially during the last part of the book. I really felt like I wanted more involvement from her. I really enjoyed reading about her young life. Her family was fascinating. They live as Christians after their conversions but the women in her family still practice some of the Jewish traditions, which I found absolutely fascinating.

I have not read a lot of historical fiction set in this time period. I really liked reading about how some of the people, like Amalia's family still practiced their religion in secret. It was interesting how many people pretended to be someone they weren't in order to escape the notice of people like Torquemada. I also really liked reading about how the Spanish royalty really felt about the Inquisition. It was interesting to see all of the different perspectives!

Linda Harkins says

The author, a professor of humanities at San Diego City College, identifies deeply with Jews and explains that she is a Jew and a novelist by choice. Her passion for this book's subject matter is evident throughout.

This historical novel begins with reflections of 1432 and is told in the first person through the eyes of Amalia, the mapmaker's daughter who is looking back on her life. Because the story includes both Henry the Navigator and queen Isabella of Spain, the protagonist had to live across a number of generations. Beginning on the eve of the Inquisition, the story focuses on underappreciated and sometimes forgotten women in fifteenth-century Iberia. We are introduced to the converso, a Jew who pretends to be Christian in order to remain safe and survive persecution. We also learn of Jewish rituals and their importance to the community of believers. Observance of Shabbat and the ritual of mikvah predominate. Corona, in fact, dedicates her book to "the mikvah and the countless Jewish women who have restored their strength and optimism in its waters," a practice that has obviously shaped the world view of any female who has practiced it. Informative and compelling, this novel teaches readers about identity, choices, persecution, exile, and the importance of community.

Debby Hammer says

For those of you who love Spain and consider themselves Sephardic in nature, then this is the book for you. Yes, being a Wandering Jew is part of my soul. Life-long learning of the past educators entwined with personal traits in their histories will define us as a people. We are living proof that our existence will continue. We who have descendants will sing and dance and document our future. Books and film are testimonies today.

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

I first noticed Laurel Corona's *The Mapmaker's Daughter* when it was added to the Historical Fiction 2014 book list on Goodreads. The buzz caught my attention and by the time the title appeared on Netgalley, I was positively giddy at the prospect of reading it. Unfortunately, my enthusiasm was short lived.

Corona relies heavily on macro level ideas and motifs, offering her audience very little substance with which to relate on the micro level of the narrative. Concept heavy and exceedingly complex, I found Amalia's journey impossible to get into and while I greatly appreciated the author's illustration of faith, I felt her thesis overwhelmed her fiction and dragged the pacing to a pitifully painful crawl.

Focal character Amalia Cresques lacks both purpose and dimension. Ever a spectator, she doesn't actually do much of anything over the course of the story. Honestly, she spends ninety-five percent of the narrative sitting on her hands, a mere witness to the upheaval caused by the political and religious conflict of the period. Had she been properly developed, an active participant, or portrayed as a confidant and loyal friend to one of the key players, I might feel differently, but as it stands I felt her position as casual acquaintance of the noteworthy and powerful made exceedingly dull reading.

While I'm on the subject, I was incredibly disappointed with Corona's treatment of the historical cast. Individuals like Jehuda Cresques, Henry the Navigator, Isabella of Portugal, Muhammed IX, Isabella I of Castile, and Isaac Abrabanel. Corona doesn't explore their personalities or give them a function in Amalia's story. Treating them as stock characters, they wander in and out of the narrative at random, flat impersonations with intangible identities, objectives and motivations.

A slow and impersonal read, *The Mapmaker's Daughter* a chore to get through. Thematically interesting, but otherwise unremarkable.

Regina Lindsey says

The Mapmaker's Daughter by Laurel Corona
3 Stars

Alternating between 1430's and 1492, we follow Amalia's struggle living in Spain during the Inquisition. Amalia was born into a family torn apart by the struggle of dealing with their Judaism. Her father and two sisters have decided to live as a converso. However, her mother and her grandmother are determined to pass down the rituals Jews hold dear. They see Amalia as the vessel for their dream. Amalia's ultimate decision to remain true to her mother's faith leads to a tremendous amount of sacrifice, heartbreak, and danger.

I'm a bit frustrated with this book. It should have been excellent, but it was simply mediocre. The attention to the customs of the Jews was fascinating. The common bond between the Jews and the Moors was interesting. However, apart from the customs Corona's narrative was sparse, which was ironic since Amalia was a poet. As Amalia watches the terror inflicted on the Jews around her I felt absolutely nothing. I just never felt a connection to any of the characters.

Korey says

A good read that is nonetheless somewhat anti-climactic. I was hooked into Amalia's story from the beginning. Her lifelong struggles as a conversa facing anti-Semitic persecution in Spain and Portugal were heart rending. However, I felt like this book lost rather than gained narrative momentum as it progressed. When the climax of your book is the Spanish Inquisition (this is revealed early on in an unnecessary and unsuccessful framing device where elderly Amalia reminisces about her life) and that climax lacks weight

you know something has gone awry with the quality of the storytelling.

For as much as I enjoyed aspects of this book it failed to wow me because Corona could not decide if she wanted to write an intimate, small scale portrayal of one woman's experience of fifteenth century Judaism practiced under adversity or a broader work encompassing all the major royal, political and historical upheaval that occurred from 1432-1492.

This is yet another of book that I think really would have benefitted from being told in third rather than first person. Since Amalia's perspective on some pivotal plot points and supporting characters is limited the reader fails to engage with them. The third act in particular is basically a laundry list of Amalia's descendants (none of whom are developed in their own right) and hamfisted exposition.

This book needed to either be longer to give the royal characters, and Amalia's large extended family personalities or it needed to be shorter and more limited in its ambitions.

I am probably making this book sound worse than it is in my review. It is definitely worth reading for all my nitpicks. It's just a bit frustrating that this book doesn't fully capitalize on the potential inherent in its premise.

Maggie Anton says

I was quite disappointed in this novel, as I loved Corona's others. The writing was good, particularly the descriptions of the various locale, but it read more like a travelog than a novel. I found another Goodreads review that pretty much summed up my view so I'm quoting it here:

"I found Amalia's journey impossible to get into. Focal character Amalia Cresques lacks both purpose and dimension. Ever a spectator, she doesn't actually do much of anything over the course of the story. Honestly, she spends ninety-five percent of the narrative sitting on her hands, a mere witness to the upheaval caused by the political and religious conflict of the period. Had she been properly developed, an active participant, or portrayed as a confidant and loyal friend to one of the key players, I might feel differently, but as it stands I felt her position as casual acquaintance of the noteworthy and powerful made exceedingly dull reading. While I'm on the subject, I was incredibly disappointed with Corona's treatment of the historical cast. Individuals like Jehuda Cresques, Henry the Navigator, Isabella of Portugal, Muhammed IX, Isabella I of Castile, and Isaac Abrabanel. Corona doesn't explore their personalities or give them a function in Amalia's story. Treating them as stock characters, they wander in and out of the narrative at random, flat impersonations with intangible identities, objectives and motivations."

In addition I had a hard time keeping track of all the people and places. This book really needed a map, even more disappointing in one titled "Mapmaker's Daughter." Not to mention that the 'map' of the title hardly makes an appearance in the story at all.

Jim says

The 15th Century in Spain and Portugal was a time of great upheaval with political intrigue, economic ups and downs, social and civil unrest. The tensions between Catholics, Jews, and Muslims were widespread and violence was common. This was a complex and interesting situation that had an effect on all of Europe and

parts of Africa.

This is the backdrop for *The Mapmaker's Daughter* as we see the experiences of one Jewish/Converso family and their daughter Amalia in particular. Despite having such a rich and interesting era from which to mine her story, Laurel Corona's book is little more than a formulaic Gothic romance with heart throbbing, bodice ripping, breathless tripe. If you like these sorts of romance novels then this might please you but it is certainly not my cup of tea.
