

An Ode to Salonika: The Ladino Verses of Bouena Sarfatty (Indiana Series in Sephardi and Mizrahi Studies)

Renée Levine Melammed



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Through the poetry of Bouena Sarfatty (1916-1997), An Ode to Salonika sketches the life and demise of the Sephardi Jewish community that once flourished in this Greek crossroads city. A resident of Salonika who survived the Holocaust as a partisan and later settled in Canada, Sarfatty preserved the traditions and memories of this diverse and thriving Sephardi community in some 500 Ladino poems known as coplas. The coplas also describe the traumas the community faced under German occupation before the Nazis deported its Jewish residents to Auschwitz. The coplas in Ladino and in Renée Levine Melammed's English translation are framed by chapters that trace the history of the Sephardi community in Salonika and provide context for the poems. This unique and moving source provides a rare entrée into a once vibrant world now lost.

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