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AN EARLY 20th-CENTURY CHARACTERIZATION OF
MOROCCAN JUDEO-SPANISH:
RICARDO RUIZ ORSATTI (1905)

On February 6, 1860, Spanish armed forces occupied Tetuán, thus initiating the first sustained contact between “modern” Spaniards and the Sephardic Jews of Morocco. Yet the intellectuals who accompanied the Spanish forces seem to have been strangely insensitive to the cultural and linguistic implications of the neo-medieval Hispano-Jewish microcosm they had just uncovered. Quite lacking in philological perspective, their writings offer no comment on the archaic Spanish dialect that must have been spoken all around them — and in a state of relative purity which can only fill later field workers with a mixture of envy and frustration. Though there are a few humane and sympathetic exceptions, most contemporary comments on the Moroccan Jews merely echo the shabbiest canards and hackneyed commonplaces of European anti-Semitism and, on the language in particular, even a fine writer like Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, can only see a repugnant and “estudiado alarde de hablar español.”¹ It was to take another generation before more enlightened sensibilities would come to appreciate what the Moroccan Sephardim could contribute to a knowledge of Hispanic culture.

Early explorations of Moroccan Jewish culture were, in general, folk-literary rather than linguistic in their intent. In the early 1900's, Antonio Sánchez Moguel collected dramatically archaic Cid ballads in Larache

1. See Vilar Ramírez (1969:68-79) and the review by Armistead-Silverman (1975-76: 274-275). It is a pleasure to thank our friends, Professors Iacob M. Hassán and James T. Monroe, for their learned suggestions concerning Hebraisms and Arabisms (respectively) during the preparation of the present article. Professor Joseph Schraibman graciously answered questions concerning the readings of R. O.'s MS.

and Arcila (1907). The Sephardic polymath, José Benoliel, of Tangier, in correspondence with Menéndez Pidal, forwarded a rich collection of traditional *romances*, evaluated by the great Spanish scholar in his still indispensable “Catálogo del romancero judío-español” (1906-07). In 1915 and 1916, with the encouragement of Menéndez Pidal, Manuel Manrique de Lara, brilliant field-worker and musicologist and one of the champion ballad collectors of all time, explored all the major Spanish-speaking Jewish communities of Morocco to collect an astounding total of 839 ballads and songs, many of which are accompanied by musical transcriptions.² His still largely unedited MSS., of crucial importance for ballad studies, but not insignificant too for our knowledge of the Judeo-Spanish lexicon, belong now to the rich holdings of the Seminario Menéndez Pidal in Madrid and are gradually being edited as part of the monumental on-going *Romancero tradicional de las lenguas hispánicas* (Catalán *et al.* 1957-85). Not until 1922 did the Moroccan Sephardic dialect, so rich in echoes of medieval Spanish, begin to attract serious attention. In the winter of that year, Américo Castro visited Tetuán, Tangier, Xauen, and Larache to collect a splendid body of still unedited linguistic and folk-literary materials. The only publication to emerge from this important trip — which indeed may have been formative for Castro’s subsequent concept of a tri-religious medieval Spain — was a short but customarily perceptive article calling attention in particular to the Judeo-Spanish dialect of Xauen (now extinct), whose symbiosis with local Arabic Don Américo found particularly impressive (1922).³ José Benoliel’s fundamental monograph on Moroccan Judeo-Spanish began to be published four years later (1926). Though he had no formal training as a linguist, Benoliel’s extremely detailed documentation and perceptive commentary, compiled and written by a cultured and sensitive scholar, who, at the same time, was a member of the in-group, remains an indispensable starting point for any study of the dialect.⁴ In subsequent years, crucial studies of Moroccan

2. On Benoliel’s and Manrique de Lara’s fieldwork, see Armistead *et al.* (1978:50-54). For appraisals of Manrique’s musicological contribution, see Katz (1972-75:31-41) and (1979); for a brief history of ballad fieldwork in Morocco, Armistead-Silverman (1977:15-22).
3. On Castro’s pathfinding Moroccan fieldwork and unedited MSS of Moroccan materials, see Armistead-Silverman (1971).
4. Because part of the text was misplaced (“por extravió del original”), the conclusion of Benoliel’s monograph was not printed until 1952. (See p. 255.) The entire publication has now been reissued in book form (Benoliel 1977), but, in the present study, we always cite the original article. M. L. Wagner (1931) offers an important appraisal of Benoliel’s work.

Judeo-Spanish would come to fruition: Paul Bénichou's impressive monographic article (1945) constitutes the best overall appraisal.⁵ Manuel Alvar has contributed important documentation and essential linguistic commentary, principally embodied in the apparatus of his indispensable editions of traditional dirges (1969) and wedding songs (1971). Juan Martínez Ruiz's splendid series of monographic articles on the dialect of Alcazarquivir and other Judeo-Spanish problems has further enriched our perspectives.⁶ Most useful too are the contributions of Iacob M. Hassán in studying the substrate character of dialect forms in the modernized current speech of Moroccan Sephardim (1969) and in documenting the abundant Hebraisms present in the traditional poetry of the Hispano-Moroccan Jews (1977).

Our purpose in the present article is to call attention to an early precursor of such important dialectological initiatives, which, though certain of its literary implications have already been pointed out, has remained unnoticed by scholars interested in Judeo-Spanish linguistics. We are referring to a letter written in February 1905 to the Spanish novelist, Benito Pérez Galdós, by Ricardo Ruiz Orsatti, a Spanish Arabist born in Tangier in 1871. R.O. served as *Intérprete Canciller* for the Spanish consulate in Tetuán in 1890 and, in 1898, he was promoted to *Vicecónsul Intérprete* for the Imperial Russian Legation in Tangier (which Spain was administering for the Czar). His next official position was that of Director of the Escuela Hispanoárabe in Tangier (beginning in 1907) and subsequently (in 1916) he became Inspector for the Escuelas Hispanoárabes, as well as for "[los] indígenas de la zona española del protectorado en Marruecos" (Anon. 1926:783b). A prolific writer of articles and monographs, and a *Correspondiente de la Academia de la Historia*, R. O. also published his own journal, *Marruecos*, in Tetuán in 1908 and 1909.⁷

5. See also his important articles on the state of the dialect in 1950 (Bénichou 1960) and on the name *hakiíta* (Bénichou 1982).
6. For reviews of scholarship on Moroccan Judeo-Spanish, see Benarroch (1970:264, n. 5), Sala (1976:21-23), and Bunis (1981:47-48). Note also Studemund (1975), which offers a single alphabetical listing of studies on both Eastern and Western Judeo-Spanish. Recently published is Martínez Ruiz's important characterization of Arabic influences (1982). The contrast between the abundance of publications on E. J.-Sp. and the relatively limited number of studies on M. J.-Sp. is immediately apparent. Nández's interesting report (1965-66) concerns the various modalities of Spanish in Morocco (Sephardic Spanish; "franpañol"; Spanish spoken by Muslims, etc.).
7. For a photograph of Ruiz Orsatti and additional details concerning his activities, see Laredo (1935:241-243).

Ruiz Orsatti first wrote to Galdós on February 17, 1901, when he read in the newspaper *El Corresponsal* that the great novelist was planning a fourth series of *Episodios Nacionales* — which would include a major consideration of Spain's African campaign of 1859-60, “desde el punto de vista marroquí” (Ricard 1968:102). With this first letter, R. O. sent historical material he had personally translated and also offered to be of further assistance. Five letters later (Sept. 18, 1902), R. O. informed Galdós that he had “encontrado lo que V. necesita y desea: Una casa de hebreos de la clase media [en Tetuán] donde podrá V. vivir en familia con más holgura y libertad y mejor atendido que en un hotel” (Ricard 1968:104). Galdós was, however, not able to visit this Jewish family during his subsequent trip to Morocco in 1904. A violent storm prevented him from travelling from Tangier to Río Martín, the port for Tetuán.⁸ Consequently, Galdós had to return home without having had first-hand contact with Judeo-Spanish speaking residents of Tetuán. To compensate for this deficiency, and to remain loyal to the aesthetic of realism (at the height of Angel Pulido's *Movimiento Pro-Sefardita*), Galdós decided to make up his own version of Judeo-Spanish using printed sources (Chamberlin 1963).⁹ He included much of this material in *Aitta Tettauen* (1905), the first of his two *Episodios Nacionales* concerning Morocco. R. O. read *Aitta Tettauen* with enthusiasm and, in his letter of February 23, 1905, he praised many aspects of Galdós' new novel. In his very first paragraph, R. O. observed: “Es exactísimo e inimitable el lenguaje que Usted pone en boca de los judíos tetuanés” (Ricard 1968:110). Then, in this same letter, he added a list of “palabras del castellano anticuado o de árabe españolizado de uso corriente entre los judíos de Tetuán.” When writing his next *Episodio Nacional*, entitled *Carlos VI en La Rápita* (also 1905), Galdós included many of the items in R. O.'s list.

Beginning as early as 1876, in his novel *Gloria*, Galdós had attempted to create Sephardic characters from a Jewish point of view.¹⁰ In subsequent writings, he added more and more Judeo-Spanish linguistic material. The character Almudena, in *Misericordia* (1897), for example, recites “oraciones hebraicas en castellano del siglo XV” and, significantly,

8. Overland travel was rendered impossible because of hostile Moroccan tribesmen, according to R. O.'s letter of Sept. 29, 1904 (Ricard 1968:104).
9. For details of Pulido's benevolently neo-colonialist campaign for reconciliation with Spain's “hijos perdidos,” see Chamberlin (1981).
10. For a comprehensive study of the Jewish characters in Galdós' works, see Schyfter (1973; 1978). Note also Lasry (1980). On Galdós' altruism regarding the Sephardim, see Chamberlin (1981).

refers to God as *Adonai* (rather than using the Christian misinterpretation, Jehovah, which Galdós had put into the mouths of Jewish characters in *Gloria*).¹¹ Then, in *Aitta Tettauén*, Galdós combined very disparate linguistic items (from Vienna, Salonika, Ferrara, and Amsterdam) to create his own pseudo-Judeo-Spanish dialect, thus giving the speech of his Moroccan characters a decidedly Sephardic flavor.¹² Finally, in *Carlos VI en La Rápita*, he added items from Ruiz Orsatti's list and thus expanded his previous verisimilitude of a generalized Sephardic linguistic flavor to include a degree of local authenticity.

Ruiz Orsatti's word list and observations concerning the dialect and folk-speech of the Jews of Tetuán were edited by Robert Ricard (1968) as part of R. O.'s correspondence with Pérez Galdós. We reproduce the text as edited by Ricard:

Palabras del castellano anticuado o de árabe españolizado de uso corriente entre los judíos de Tetuán: [1.] La Meará (el cementerio). —[2.] La joyerá: el escusado. —[3.] Alasba: jovencita. —[4.] Fidioño: podrido. —[5.] Niscalía: mujer pública. —[6.] Forno: horno. —[7.] Tener el meollo huero: estar loco. —[8.] Preto, Preta: Negro, Negra. — [9.] Mazzal: suerte. Tienen un refrán que dice: “*Daca un cuaxito de mazzal y tírame a las fondinas de la mar*”. Es decir: Dame un pedacito de suerte y tírame al fondo del mar. — [10.] Maldiciones: Te venga el mal de la cabra: cuerno, sarna y barba. —Te veas como el vapor: con agua en los lados y fuego en el corazón. —Te veas como el café: tostado, molido, bebido y meado. —Te venga un mal que te leve. —Hijo de la *baraniddah* enconada (hijo concebido durante la menstruación de la madre). — [11.] Bendiciones: Te haga el mazzal como esa cara pintada. —No me alte tu jiar. —Así te dé el Dió un *azri* (a una mujer encinta deseándole hijo varón). — [12.] Varias frases: El Dió se apiade de *nosotros*. — Me vaya *cappará* por ti. — [13.] Dutor: médico. — [14.] Tienen casi todos los tetuanés un defecto de pronunciación que consiste en lo siguiente: a mí me llamaban Ricadro, dicen esta *tadre* en vez de tarde; esto es que la *re* que preceda a una *de*, la colocan ellos a continuación de ésta (Ricard 1968:111-112).¹³

11. Pérez Galdós, *Misericordia* (1965:1954). For more on Almudena, see Lida (1961); Chamberlin (1964; 1978).
12. Chamberlin (1963). The otherwise very valuable study by Martínez Ruiz (1977) does not take into account printed Sephardic source materials from Galdós' personal library, preserved at the Casa-Museo Pérez Galdós (Las Palmas, Gran Canaria). Galdós made underlinings and marginal notations in these texts and subsequently used them in *Aitta Tettauén* and in the first part of *Carlos VI en La Rápita*. On Galdós' Sephardic types in *Aitta Tettauén*, see Vilar Ramírez (1971).
13. Immediately preceding this list, R.O. observes: “Para el judío, el moro y en general todos los no israelitas son *Goi* (creo que el plural es *Goim*)” (Ricard 1968:111). In

The following abbreviations have been used in our commentary: Aram.: Aramaic; E. J.-Sp.: Eastern Judeo-Spanish; H.: Hebrew; Hisp.-Ar.: Hispano-Arabic; M. Ar.: Moroccan Arabic; M. J.-Sp.: Moroccan Judeo-Spanish; O. Sp.: Old Spanish; St. Ar.: Standard Arabic; St. Sp.: Standard Spanish. H. citations are glossed according to Alcalay (1970); M. Ar., Mercier (1951); St. Ar., Wehr-Cowan (1961).

1. *meará* 'cementerio': H. *mēṣārāh* 'cave, cavern, den'. See Benoliel (1926-52:510, 220). M. J.-Sp. has altered the meaning, doubtless because of a linguistic taboo. Cf. Wagner (1930:33-38). Note that variations of the H. circumlocution *bēth ḥayîm* (or *bēth ha-ḥayîm*) 'cemetery' are used in both E. and M. J.-Sp.: *bet-haḥayyim* (Benoliel 1926-52:578); *bedajayîm* (Nehama 1977:85). In the East, *meará* 'grotte, caverne' conserves its original meaning (Nehama 1977:353). Concerning all these forms, see Corré (1984).

2. *joyerá* 'excusado': Benoliel (1926-52:532) records the phrase *boca de ḥožerá* 'maldiciente' and identifies the word's origin as "ár. *retrete*". He also lists the expression: "¿Mnain jrež el mando? Men el ḥožerá uel caño ('¿De dónde proviene el mando, la orden? Del excusado y del caño') (M. Ar. *mnayn*, *mnin* 'd'ou'; *ḥrej* 'sortir', p. 229; Benazeraf 1978:no. 374). Though an analogous form is not to be found in the M. Ar. lexica currently available to us, the M. J.-Sp. word is certainly based upon St. Ar. *ḥajara* 'to deny access; forbid; interdict' etc.; hence *ḥujra* (pl. *ḥujarāt*) 'room; cell; chamber'. Dozy lists *ḥujra* 'petite maison; caserne'; pl. *ḥujar* 'les chambres' (1967:s.v.). Note that R. O. has apparently not perceived the contrast between Ar. /ḥ/ and /h/. It is worth noting that a well documented word for 'latrine' in O.Sp. was also a euphemistic Arabism: *betamel* (and its variants), from Ar. *bayt al-mā* (lit. 'water room'). Aside from the fact that

contrast to the obvious authenticity of R. O.'s list itself, this statement strikes a false note. Though Benoliel does, in fact, list "*goy*, *goyá* 'gentil, el que no es israelita'; *goyîm* 'naciones, pueblos gentilicios'; *goyito* dim. de *goy*" (1926-52:192), the term's common use to designate non-Jews is more characteristically Ashkenazic than Sephardic. Typically a Moroccan Jew might use the more charitable *šākhēn*, *-îm* 'neighbor' as a code-word for 'Christian' and the somewhat less charitable *'ummāh*, *'ummōth* 'nation' for Muslims. R. O. could well have learned *gōy* / *goyîm* from Ashkenazic acquaintances during his work at the Russian Legation or during a trip he made to Russia in 1901. Compare Lida (1974:32, n. 21). Corré notes the Sephardic use of *goy*, *goyá*, *goyîm*, *goyót* for 'non-Jew' (1984:46-47); Nehama lists *gōy* 'non-juif'; *gōyim* 'les nations, toutes les nations de la terre, sauf les Juifs' (1977:222) in Salonikan E. J.-Sp. The Judeo-Arabic dialect of Fez embodies a different use of *gōi*, *gōya*, *goyîm* 'musulman'; the Ar. *nāṣṣṣani* being applied to Christians (Brunot and Malka 1940:111; Leslau 1945:72).

hujra ‘latrine’ is already a euphemism in Ar. (‘room, chamber’, etc., without specification of purpose), the word’s use as a borrowing in M. J.-Sp. is also euphemistic, for, as Max Gorosch rightly observes: “Tratándose de cosas como las representadas por los vocablos que aquí tratamos, siempre se ha de contar con el eufemismo, ya que muchas veces se prefiere una palabra extranjera a la indígena por el hecho de que no evoca tan crudamente las asociaciones desagradables inherentes a ésta” (1949-50:210).

3. *alaska* ‘jovencita’: M. J.-Sp. *aláázba* ‘doncella’ (Benoliel 1926-52:569; Martínez Ruiz 1966:49, 68), from M. Ar. *ʕazba* ‘vierge, pucelle; demoiselle’. The term is in frequent use among the Moroccan Jews, being one of a limited number of Arabisms that even come over into the *romances* (Bénichou 1960:308; Armistead *et al.* 1978:III, 340; Martínez Ruiz 1982:244). Dozy (1967:s.v.) lists the word, with the same meanings, in Hisp.-Ar. sources: Schiaparelli (1871:631): *ʕazba* ‘virgo’; Pedro de Alcalá (1928:50): *āāzba* ‘manceba; moça que crece’. See also Steiger (1932:277): *ázva*.

4. *fidiondo* ‘podrido’: M. J.-Sp. *fidiondo* ‘hediondo; lo que arroja hedor’ (Benoliel 1926-52:190). Forms in *f-* also occur in E. J.-Sp.: *feđer, feđor, feđorento, feđyente*, etc. (Nehama 1977); *fedionda* (Armistead- Silverman 1979:29). For the problem of initial *f-* in M. J.-Sp., see Martínez Ruiz (1957).

5. *niscalíá* ‘mujer pública’: This is a misreading; the correct form is *niscaháá*, from the H. euphemism *niškāhāh* ‘forgotten one’ (based on *šākhaḥ* ‘to forget’). Corré (1984:52) cites Isaiah 23:16: ‘poor, forgotten harlot’. Martínez Ruiz’s learned article (1977:176a; cf. 172) should be emended in this regard.

6. *forno* ‘horno’: identical in Benoliel (1926-52:190); E. J.-Sp. also has *forno* (Nehama 1977:215).

7. *tener el meollo huero* ‘estar loco’: Sp. *huero* ‘empty, addle, void’ somehow seems out of place in Moroccan Judeo-Spanish. One might be tempted to suspect that, as in *niscalíá*, R. O.’s MS. had again been misread (*huero* for *hueco*), but, as a *lectio difficilior*, *huero* is authenticated and must be retained. Benoliel lists *meoyo* ‘meollo’ (1926-52:222), but the meaning ‘brains, mind’ is clearly specified here; the same is the case in E. J.-Sp. (Nehama 1977:357). We cannot but recall an expression only too frequently used by our aged ballad singers: “No m’acodro. Se me fue del

meoyo.” For more on *meoyo* in E. J.-Sp., see Wagner (1950:76); Crews (1955:197, nos. 23-24).

8. *preto* ‘negro’: Bénichou observed: “*preto*, muy empleado en el dialecto; jamás *prieto*” (1944:67; Benoliel 1926-52:158); the same form is used in the East (Nehama 1977:450); it could well be a Lusism. See Wagner (1914:90-99); Luria (1930:97, 209); Crews (1935:180, n.13).

9. *mazzal* ‘suerte’: H. *mazzāl*; R. O. records the dialect’s characteristic gemination (particularly in affective words): *dezgras-siado*, *mal-logrado*, *hermoz-zo*, *dichoz-zo*. See Benoliel (1926-52:157, 209, 218, 232); Bénichou (1945:229-234); Martínez Ruiz (1982:247). R. O. has picked up a beloved proverb, known to Sephardim both in Morocco and in the East: Moroccan variants: “Dame un grano de mazal y túrame a fondina(s) de la mar” (Benarroch 1951:no. 40); “Dame una onsa de mazzal y échame a hondinas (fondinas) de la mar” (Benoliel 1926-52:213; Benazeraf 1978:no. 120); Eastern forms: “Tien ventura, échate a la mar, y de allí salvarás” (Danon 1903:no. 295); “Dadme ventura y echadme a la mar y de allí me savré salvar” (Foulché-Delbosc 1895:no. 210); “Dami vintura i éčami a la mar” (Levy 1969:122); “Dami un gramo [*sic*] de mazal, échame a la ondura de la mar” (Moscona 1981:52); “Dame un grano de mazal y échame a las fundinas de la mar” (Saporta y Beja 1978:124). Benoliel lists *cuažo* ‘cuajo’ (1926-52:51). In footnotes (pp.116, 117, nn. 9 and 17), Ricard points out that Galdós used this proverb (“citado textualmente”), as well as *fidionda*, *baramiddah*, and two of the curses, in his novel, *Carlos VI en La Rápita* (Chaps. II and III). Galdós even reproduces the misreading *niscalíá* (for *niscaḥa*).

10. curses and insults: R. O.’s first three curses seem to be rather modern (with their references to a steamship and coffee). Note that there is not a single dialect form in these texts. One has the impression that R. O.’s informants initially may have approached the subject with a certain nervousness, a mixture of humor and precaution. They wanted to please, yet, at the same time, traditional curses in *ḥakitta* are not to be taken lightly. They are no laughing matter. The solution was to provide three modern, non-traditional examples that *could* be laughed at. The fourth and fifth examples, however, represent a very different category. The informant(s) are now “playing it straight”. These are serious, authentic curses: “Te venga un mal que te leve” (with the last word an archaic dialect form) rings true. Benoliel records: “¡Venga lo que le leve!” (1926-52:155). The phrase represents a frequent formula: “¡Venga lo que le quite de en medio!”; “Los venga una muerte que los leve a todos”; “Venga

lo que mos descanse de él (o de ellos)”; “¡Venga una cosa que le tiyré del òlam!” (1926-52:153-154). (As Benoliel explains: *tiyré* is based on M. Ar. *tiyir* ‘faire voler’; *tir* ‘voler, s’envoler; oiseau’; *tiyyara* ‘aéroplane’; St. Ar. *tāra* ‘to fly’; *òlam* is, of course, H. *ʕōlām*.) The tautological insult “hijo de la *baraniddah* enconada” (*hijo* reproduces Aram. *bar-*) reflects ancient, essentially universal beliefs concerning menstrual impurity. See Leach-Fried (1950:II, 706-707). The M. J.-Sp. form consists of Aram. *bar-* plus H. *ha-niddāh* ‘menstruant’.¹⁴ We can cite no other M. J.-Sp. instances of *enconado*, but Nehama (1977:s.vv.) has collected rich E. J.-Sp. documentation which confirms very exactly the word’s use in R. O.’s *ḥakitā* expression: *enkonádo* ‘pollue, profané, souillé, devenue intouchable, taboo (au point de vue religieux)’ (and further citations under this word and *enkonador*, *enkonamyénto*, *enkonár*, *enkóno*, *enkonózo*). Benoliel offers a vivid commentary on *ḥakitā* curses which is worth quoting in the present context: “De lo que no es fácil dar idea y que, sin embargo, caracteriza y realiza particularmente este género de ‘literatura’, es el gesto y la entonación, propios a cada una de esas beldiciones, en su vasta escala de matices e intensidades ascendentes y descendentes. Hoy día, sin embargo, este género está en notable decadencia, y sobre todo la maldición de alto estilo parece haber fenecido para siempre” (1926-52:158). Traditional, serious M. J.-Sp. curses are notably virulent: “¡Le coma el león discué (después) de harto (*read* jarto)!”; “¡Le entre un Huerco en las tripas!”; “¡Se le arremate su nombre!”;¹⁵ “¡No se le entierre pie con mano!”;¹⁶ “¡Con los pies adelante! (en el ataúd)”]; “¡Le echen en un foyo!”; “¡Venga una estruición que lo estruya todo!”; “¡Le morda un culebro!”; “¡Se le caiga el mazzal!”], etc. (Benoliel 1926-52:153-157). Such curses compare “favorably” with equally venomous expressions used in M. Ar. (Westermarck 1968:I, 479-492) and in Greek (Argenti-Rose 1949:II, 989-

14. Concerning *bar-ha-niddāh*, see Chamberlin (1963:88; 1974:167-168); Lambert (1973:44-45); Zlotchew (1980:134-135).

15. The curse is based on H. *yimmaḥ šēmō wē-zikhro* ‘may his name and memory be blotted out’. See Hassán (1969:2131).

16. This curse may be based upon an Arabic model. Compare the following passage from the *Chronique anonyme de la dynastie saʿdienne* (916-1045 H.): “Le sultan, s’approchant alors de lui [Ez-Zakkāk], l’interpella: ‘Vois, sorcier, quel genre de mort je t’infligerai! choisis si je te pourfendrai ou si je t’enlèverai la chair des os?’ — choisis toi-même’, répondit le cheykh, ‘la manière dont tu veux mourir!’ — ‘Tranchez-lui la tête!’ — ‘A toi aussi, repris Ez-Zakkāk, on te tranchera la tête, qui ne sera pas inhumée avec le reste de ton corps.’ C’est ce qui arriva: plus tard on lui trancha la tête, qui fut envoyée à Constantinople, ainsi qu’il sera dit dans ce livre” (Fagnan 1924:377).

1000). It is a pity we do not know more about E. J.-Sp. curses. Note Matisoff's delightful studies on Yiddish curses (1977; 1979).

11. blessings: Though we find none of R. O.'s blessings documented in Benoliel (1926-52) — the basic source — they are certainly authentic. For *cara pintada*, see Benoliel: “una *cara pintada* es la que naturalmente está dotada de buen color” (1926-52:48); interesting observations and parallels in O. Sp.: Alvar (1969:121-122): *cara pintada* ‘cara de buen color’; *pintado* ‘hermoso’. For *jiar*, see Benoliel: *jiar* ‘bien, muy bien, de acuerdo, sí’ (1926-52:209), from M. Ar. *hyar* ‘ce qu’il y a de mieux’; from *hir* ‘bien, abondance, fortune; richesse; mieux’ etc., which is used in innumerable M. Ar. set phrases (=St. Ar. *hair*). The M. J.-Sp. expression would seem to mean something like: ‘May I witness your good fortune’. For *alte*, read *jalte* (*jaltar*=*faltar*; as in the traditional song, *Las tablas de la Ley*: “en los sielos y la tierra, / su mersed nunca haltó” (Martínez Ruiz 1963:no. 45.14). Benoliel lists “*àazrí ár.* ‘soltero’,” but its meanings in M. Ar. obviously correspond more closely to those of R. O.'s expression: *ʕazri* ‘garçon; jeune homme’, as well as ‘célibataire’. Dozy (1967:s.v.) lists similar meanings.

12. “El Dió se apiade de *nosotros*” is a standard invocation. Benoliel lists more complex variants: “El padre de la piadad se apiade y se henné de él” (with reverent avoidance of *Dio*; M. Ar. *henn* ‘avoir pitié (de)’); “Así il Dió se apiade de mí y sinó (es verdad que no se apiade)” (1926-52:157, 197). *Nosotros* must have been underlined as a reflection of some dialect form, such as *mozotros*, *nozotros*, or even *m’otros* (Benoliel 1926-52:256). *Cappará* is, of course, H. *kappārāh* ‘atonement; forgiveness’. The expression reflects well known religious practice and is used in all forms of J.-Sp.: “Kappará por ti” (Benoliel (1926-52:164); “Por kappará ke sea por todos, por fulano” (Nehama 1977:268).

13. *dutor* ‘médico’: Benoliel imagines the following dialogue: “¿Vino el médico? — No, señor (responde una criada de Arcila); el que vino es el *dutor*” (1926-52:212; 57). In the children’s parody-dirge, *Don Gato*, the cat falls off the roof and cracks its head: “Ya mandan por los dutores,/dutores y cirujanos” (Larrea 1954:no. 173.6).

14. Metathesis (-rd- > -dr-) is characteristic of many substandard Spanish dialects. We have not heard *tadre* in M. J.-Sp., but it is altogether likely that the form existed in 1905, when the language was much less affected by St. Sp. than it was to be in later decades. Such metathesis is typical of E. J.-Sp.: *tadre*, *acodrar*, *cuedra*, *guadrar*, *godro*, etc. For ample bibliography: Sala (1971:154, n. 135).

Ruiz Orsatti's account of Moroccan Judeo-Spanish, sent to Pérez Galdós to provide the great novelist with authentic (and exotic) background materials for his future North African *mises en scène*, is only too brief. Yet brief and superficial as it may seem at first glance, in a single paragraph R. O. emerges as a discriminating observer. He has managed to pack his exiguous word list with significant linguistic and cultural information, from which many of the most striking characteristics and components of M. J.-Sp. speech and its cultural context can be inferred: Here we have Hebraisms (1, 5, 9-12); Arabisms (2, 3, 11); a possible Portuguesism (8); Spanish archaisms (4, 6, 10) and vulgarisms (13, 14); two interesting phonological features: gemination and metathesis (9, 14); euphemisms and linguistic taboos (1, 2, 5, 10); and, lastly, the Sephardim's characteristic delight in proverbs (9), blessings (11), devastating curses and imprecations (10), and other set phrases (7, 12). In addition to its literary importance as a source of Galdós's novels, Ricardo Ruiz Orsatti's perceptive characterization, dating from almost two decades before the first serious attempts to study the dialect, deserves to rank as a pioneering (though minuscule) glimpse of the language of Moroccan Sephardic Jewry.¹⁷

17. The only publication that, to our knowledge, can challenge the precedence to R. O.'s letter is Menéu (1890), which includes an interesting list of 33 *hakitta* verbs in *-ear* derived from M. Ar., accompanied by the Ar. forms, together with accurate transliterations. For its time, this is a truly remarkable publication and worthy of high praise. (We owe the reference to a private communication from our friend Dr. David Bunis.) By contrast, Benchimol (1901-04) gives no specific information on the dialect and, aside from general remarks on the situation of North African Jews, is little more than a paean in praise of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and its good works.

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