



México Interdisciplinario / Interdisciplinary Mexico

ISSN 2193-9756



XIV. La experiencia judía en México

2018/2, año 7, n° 14, 156 pp.

Editores: **Jacobo Sefamí / Matthias Lehmann**

DOI: 10.23692/iMex.14

The Semiotics of Djudeo-Espanyol in Recent Works by Myriam Moscona

(pp. 110-121; DOI: 10.23692/iMex.14.9)

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Abstract: The present essay examines the semiotics of Djudeo-Espanyol in the novel *Tela de sevoya* (2012) and the poetry collection *Ansina* (2015) by Myriam Moscona. While in some of her previous volumes of poetry Moscona explores her Sephardic identity –in part through language– in these two recent works Djudeo-Espanyol takes center stage not only as a marker of identity, but as integral to the process of literary creation. In both the autobiographical novel and the volumen of poetry, the use and function of Djudeo-Espanyol in conjunction with Spanish, or as the sole language (as is the case with *Ansina*), communicates and indeed performs language in unique ways. The objective of the essay is to explore the multiple ways in which Djudeo-Espanyol, as a language of creation and as affective linguistic register, transfers meaning to the reader.

Keywords: Djudeo-Espanyol, Myriam Moscona, Sephardic identity, *Tela de sevoya*, *Ansina*



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The Semiotics of Djudeo-Espanyol in Recent Works by Myriam Moscona

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Each human language maps the world differently. There is life-giving compensation in the extreme grammatical complication of those languages [...] whose speakers dwell in material and social contexts of deprivation and barrenness. Each tongue –and there are no 'small' or lesser languages– construes a set of possible worlds and geographies of remembrance. [...] When a language dies, a possible world dies with it. Even where it is spoken by a handful, by the harried remnants of destroyed communities, a language contains within itself the boundless potential of discovery, of re-composition of reality, of articulate dreams, which are known as myths, as poetry, as metaphysical conjecture and the discourse of law. (George Steiner 1992: xiv)

This epigraph by George Steiner serves as a relevant starting point for an examination of the presence and function of Djudeo-Espanyol as a linguistic sign system in recent works by Mexican author Myriam Moscona. Moscona, who primarily established her voice in contemporary Mexican letters as a poet who began publishing in the early 1980s. Such volumes as *Último jardín* (1983), *Las visitantes* (1989), and *El árbol de los nombres* (1992a) firmly established her reputation not only within the context of Jewish Latin American literature but also within the broader framework of Mexican and Latin American poetry. To date she has published ten volumes of poetry, including the highly acclaimed and complex *Negro marfil* (2006), which was translated into English as *Ivory Black* in 2011 by Jen Hofer and won the PEN America award for translation. The stunning visual poetry collection *De par en par* (2009), which presents poetic texts in a unique visual format to create an aesthetic experience that reaches beyond the boundaries of poetry and into graphic representation; and, of course, her most recent book *Ansina* (2015), written –save for a few verses– entirely and solely in Djudeo-Espanyol. Her poetry has been anthologized in diverse volumes and in multiple languages, and in 1989 she received the Premio de Poesía Aguascalientes. Finally, as her highly successful novel *Tela de sevoya* ([2012] now in three separate editions, and for which she obtained the prestigious Premio Xavier Villaurrutia) has made apparent, her literary prowess is not limited to the genre of poetry, but she has shown herself to be a highly skilled and innovative narrator as well.

From the beginning, or the genesis of her poetry shall we say, Moscona has engaged in the creation of a poetic universe defined though not constrained by recurrent themes related to her multifaceted identity as woman, Mexican and *sefardita*.¹ Furthermore, as Florinda F. Goldberg has demonstrated, her poetry is at once intimate and universal, secular and liturgical.² Most recently, Naomi Lindstrom explores the visionary aspects of Moscona's poetry.³ One of the central leitmotifs in her work is that of exile, the historical experience of *galut*, that influences one's relationship to the past and way of being in the present; what in the context of Sephardic diaspora studies David A. Wacks calls the dichotomy between the Here (hostland/present) and the There (homeland/past).⁴ Moscona contributed a brief essay to the 1992 special double edition of the journal *Noaj* that commemorates the fifth centenary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. In the essay, titled 'La paradoja de promesas y exilios', she writes:

En la constante creación que es cada texto, en ese devenir, se concentra la paradoja de promesas y exilios y en esa paradoja la historia queda inscrita, queda escrita en el instante: la suma de sus fragmentos es el puente que sirve para comunicar un tiempo con otro, para hablar con los muertos, para ajustar cuentas con la vida: la mía, como la de todo judío dentro y fuera de la diáspora, está enmarcada por una cadena de exilios (Moscona 1992b: 31).

In 2006 Moscona was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for a literary project specifically focused on the exploration of her Sephardic past, primarily rooted in Bulgaria. The project came to fruition as *Tela de sevoya* and *Ansina*, her recent works in which the paradox of promises and exiles is fully realized.

Sephardic literature in Mexico has its earliest roots in the colonial period with the writings of Luis de Carvajal, el Mozo (1567-96). Indeed, one may claim that the urtext of Jewish-Mexican literature is the autobiographical testimony left behind by Carvajal.⁵ In many ways it serves as the master narrative for Jewish-Mexican literature, in much the same way as Gerchunoff's *Los gauchos judios* (1910) does in Argentina. Nevertheless, the story of Sephardic literature in Mexico – as with the rest of Latin America – is primarily a contemporary one. Sephardic identity, and along with it Djudeo-Espanyol, came to literary prominence in Mexico with the publication of Rosa Nissán's autobiographical novel *Novia que te vea* (1992) and its sequel *Hisho que te nazca* (1996). Nissán incorporated Ladino into the narrative thread of the novels as a secondary linguistic element in which language functions to communicate not only

¹ See Lockhart (1997).

² See Goldberg (2013).

³ See Lindstrom (2017).

⁴ See Wacks (2015).

⁵ There are multiple historiographical and literary studies on Carvajal's testimony. For a contemporary and engaging reading of Carvajal, see Perelis (2012).

the narrative plot, but is charged with cultural and historical meaning.⁶ While Nissán was the first to integrate into her texts Djudeo-Espanyol beyond the incorporation of isolated lexical examples, there are multiple Mexican authors who have engaged in literary Sephardism, defined by Yael Halevi-Wise as "politicized literary metaphor used by Jewish and gentile novelists, poets, and dramatists [...] to explore their own preoccupations with modern national identity (2012a: xiv). Among such authors would be included Vicki Nizri with her novel *Vida propia* (2000), and of course Angelina Muñoz-Huberman with novels such as *Tierra adentro* (1977), *El mercader de Tudela* (1998), *El sefardí romántico: la vida azarosa de Mateo Alemán II* (2005), *Los esperandos: piratas judeoportugueses... y yo* (2017), and finally Jacobo Sefamí with his novel *Los dolientes* (2004). As an aside, a curious facet of the socio-literary record of Jewish-Mexican writing is that it primarily has been produced by women authors. Moscona's *Tela de sevoya* and *Ansina* are – to date – the culmination of Sephardic literature in Mexico, or to invoke a more optimistic perspective, they are the revival of this body of literature in the twenty-first century.

It may be useful to foreground my discussion of these two works by delineating the parameters within which I see them operating. The first such set of parameters is Sephardic Studies in general, but more specifically what is commonly referred to as Sephardism, or the broad strokes that includes both literal and figurative embodiments of Sephardic identity to interpret the many aspects of the lived experience of Sephardic Jews over time and across space.⁷ Moreover, as scholar Edna Aizenberg has succinctly explained, Sephardism, or what she terms Neosephardism – at least in the case of Argentina – was utilized by early twentieth-century Ashkenazic writers as a means to establish Jewish legitimacy within the hegemonic Hispano-Catholic environment of Argentina.⁸ Neo-Sephardism has its own manifestation in Mexico, most evidently in the works *1492: vida y tiempos de Juan Cabezón de Castilla* (1985) and *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* (1998) by Homero Aridjis, a Mexican author of Greek origin – written, not coincidentally, around the time of the quincentenary. Critic Jonathan Schorsch has written somewhat at length on the representations of Sephardic cultural history through the memoirs and autobiographical texts of Sephardic authors. His inclusion of Latin American authors in a wider global context is rare in the broader field of Jewish literary studies. In his

⁶ Yael Halevi-Wise has examined in depth the role that Ladino plays in Nissán's novels as cultural signifier. See Halevi Wise (2012b).

⁷ See Halevi-Wise (2012b) and Bejarano / Aizenberg (2012) as two excellent sources on contemporary Sephardic identity and the concept of Sephardism.

⁸ See Aizenberg (2012).

essay Schorsch discusses three Latin American authors: Teresa Porzecanski, Rosa Nissán, and Jacobo Sefamí – essentially what is available in English translation.⁹

Like most of the Mexican texts mentioned above, Moscona's *Tela de sevoya* is autobiographical in nature; that is, it is not strictly an autobiographical novel though it certainly contains autobiographical elements. For that matter, it is not strictly a novel either. For instance, *Tela de sevoya* contains no real plot or character development, at least not in any traditional sense. It is a narrative amalgam in which memoir, history, fiction, and fantasy come together to comprise a unique text. While *Tela de sevoya* has much in common with its Sephardic counterparts in Mexico, what sets it apart is the rather innovative way in which Moscona incorporates Sephardism not as a trope or an ethnic flare with which to flavor the text and provide a glimpse into an otherwise hermetic world, but as the central axis of the narrative. She thus makes Sephardism the nucleus of her text in a way that is not overly stylized and hyperliterary, and yet invites the reader into an authentic and rather intimate representation of a world that in the vast majority of cases would be foreign to him or her, while maintaining its universal appeal.

The second set of parameters that delineates the novel is the consistent use of Djudeo-Espanyol as the distinguishing linguistic element of the narrative. This becomes even more important in the poems contained in *Ansina*. Djudeo-Espanyol is known by a variety of other names: Judeoespanol, Ladino, Judezmo, Spanyolit, Muestro Espanyol or El Kasteyano Muestro, Espanyolico. In fact, according to George Zucker, the language has over twenty names.¹⁰ For the purposes of this essay, I have elected to use the glottonym Djudeo-Espanyol, not only because this is the term used primarily by Moscona in her texts, but also because, for me, this is the term that most suitably describes the sociohistorical development of the language over time throughout the diaspora. Most scholars agree that Djudeo-Espanyol is a moribund language essentially spoken only by an increasingly aging population, which for all intents and purposes has ceased to exist as a day-to-day vehicle for communication. That is, Djudeo-Espanyol is fast becoming a postvernacular linguistic phenomenon. Its survival hinges upon its incorporation into literary texts, in song recordings, in the preservation of idiomatic expressions that constitute the lexicon of history and memory, and most recently in cyberspace¹¹ with such interactive websites as *Ladinokomunita* and the publication of the relatively limited-circulation periodical such as *Aki Yerushalayim* (Israel). As Monique Balbuena states, "Ladino is not yet as 'hip' as Yiddish, as there are no cards, no fridge magnets, or summer camps in Ladino, but it

⁹ See Schorsch (2007).

¹⁰ See Zucker (2010).

¹¹ See Brink-Danan (2011) on the semiotics of Djudeo-Espanyol in online communities.

has undoubtedly seen a rise in interest, with university professors, popular singers, writers, poets turning to it with renewed enthusiasm" (Balbuena 2012: 163).

One of the fortunate aspects of Djudeo-Espanyol for the Spanish-language reader is that for the most part one can comprehend the meaning of the texts without too much difficulty, save for those words that are borrowed from majority languages (Bulgarian and Turkish, for instance, in the case of *Tela de sevoya*).¹² This is an advantage when it comes to reading Djudeo-Espanyol, but modern-day Spanish is actually a hindrance when it comes to speaking as it tends to interfere with the archaic characteristics of the language. Djudeo-Espanyol exists in a linguistic bubble in non-Spanish-speaking countries of the diaspora where its linguistic particularities and idiosyncrasies are preserved, but in Latin America, for instance, contemporary Spanish has the tendency to contaminate and dilute the archaic lexical, grammatical, and syntactic elements of Djudeo-Espanyol.

As stated previously, *Tela de sevoya* contains many autobiographical elements and it is fairly safe to claim that most readers will read it as autobiographical fiction. Just as the young narrator Oshinica is understood to be Rosa Nissán in her novels, one presumes that the young female narrator in *Tela de sevoya* is Myriam Moscona. The similarities between the two fictional autobiographies do not extend far beyond that point. Comparisons can also be made with other Jewish-Mexican autobiographical or self-writing narratives such as Margo Glantz's *Las genealogías* or Sefamí's *Los dolientes* that recreate the past as a means of writing about the present. However, *Tela de sevoya*, just like the expression from which the title is derived – "*El meoyo del ombre es una tela de sevoya*" – is a multilayered blend of narrative fragments. In this sense, Moscona's novel conforms to the narrative strategy of fragmentation as a common characteristic of the contemporary Mexican novel.¹³

Tela de sevoya is constructed around six narrative threads or fragments that alternate throughout the novel: *Distancia de foco*, *Molino de viento*, *Del diario de viaje*, *Pisapapeles*, *Kantikas*, and *La cuarta pared*. The latter two have less of a presence throughout the narrative than the former four, and each of these compartmentalized threads has a distinct function in the novel which takes the reader a few cycles to realize and become accustomed to the semiotic dimensions of the discursive role that each plays.

Distancia de foco, a cinematographic term, turns the "eye" of the reader to the past and in episodic form narrates a non-linear family history. These episodes take the reader back to Bulgaria, to remote times and distant relatives. Grandparents and parents come alive as the

¹² See Fay / Davcheva (2014) on the popular-folkloric use of Djudeo-Espanyol in Bulgaria.

¹³ See D'Lugo (1997).

narrator explores the story of her family from the time of the expulsion from Spain to emigration to Mexico, passing through Turkey and Bulgaria along the journey. It is also in these fragments that the strange relationship between the young narrator and her cantankerous grandmother comes alive in vivid dialogue, as the following abbreviated conversation reveals:

- ¿Qué hora es, abuela?
 - Ocho kere vente.*
 - No hables así.
 - Ocho kere kinze.*
 - No sabes ver la hora. ¿Qué hora es, abuela?
 - Nunka ni no, janum. Las ocho son. La hora de dormir.*
 - No tengo sueño.
 - A echar, janum. A pishar i a echar.*
 - No, quiero ver la tele.
 - Deja estos maymunas.*
 - No, ¿por qué? Para que sepas: mi otra abuela sí me dejaba ver caricaturas.
- (Moscona:2012: 22)

The episodes titled *Molino de viento*, a quijotesque allusion, comprise the imaginative dream world of the narrator in which she envisions the past, present, and the future as a fluid continuum of lived experience. Throughout the novel the narrator struggles to interpret the strange visions and symbols she sees in her dreams and the cryptic messages from deceased relatives. Ultimately, the novel concludes with a series of *Molino de viento* episodes that gradually lead the protagonist and the reader through a process in which the dream world and the real world come together and the narrator comes to the realization that the past is always present; that those who have gone before us are still with us; and that those who remain are the continuation of a story told "*en la lengua y los biervos*" of Sepharad (Moscona 2012: 292).

The *Del diario de viaje* fragments narrate the protagonist's journey primarily to Bulgaria but to other destinations as well in order to discover and unravel her family's roots. This was, in fact, part of the project that Moscona proposed and for which she received a Guggenheim fellowship. In many ways, these are the most emotionally compelling episodes of the novel and they take on different forms. Some are descriptive narratives of travel, others of places or people, and a few take the form of brief notes or interviews with people along the way. One of the episodes, for example, is a compilation of quotations by different Sephardic writers on what Djudeo-Espanyol signifies to them. For example, the quotation from Souhami Renaud (France) reads: "*El djudezmo es komo un iliko de seda ke mos ata injuntos*" (Moscona 2012: 133).

The *Pisapapeles* episodes constitute an historical record of the Sephardic diaspora and of Djudeo-Espanyol as a linguistic register. There is a wide variety of information that provides a historic-cultural background for the novel and both contextualizes and grounds the experience of the narrator in the history, politics, linguistics, and other aspects of Sephardic reality. These

episodes include such things as the edict of expulsion, information on *Ladinokomunita*, or archaic forms of Spanish spoken in rural Mexico, to name but a few of the elements that come together to trace Sephardic language and history.

La cuarta pared, the theatrical term for the "fourth wall," allows the reader to observe narrative enactments of events in the lives of a cast of characters that includes relatives and others. And finally, *Kantikas*, of which there are very few, are poems or 'songs' interspersed in the text, which later came to be included in the poetry volume *Ansina*.

Tela de sevoya was published in English translation by Jen Hofer – the translator of *Negro marfil* – in 2017 under the original title followed by the subtitle, or alternate title, "Onioncloth". The novel presents particular obstacles for the translator, who must not only render the original Spanish into English, but also find a way to adequately transmit the interlarded Djudeo-Espanyol as authentic speech. In the original Spanish version of the novel, Djudeo-Espanyol is able to retain its "exotic" flavor and bridge the historical past to the present by relying on linguistic commonality. In other words, Djudeo-Espanyol retains its foreignness and temporal distance without risking unintelligibility. This becomes much more problematic when rendering the two languages into English. How does one preserve the unique subtlety and vitality that Djudeo-Espanyol exhibits in close proximity to Spanish? How does one distinguish and transfer the two distinct tonalities so readily apparent in the original in English translation? The prior example of Rosa Nissán's novels in English translation show just how difficult a task this can be. In her essay 'A Taste of Sepharad from the Mexican Suburbs' (2012b), Yael Halevi-Wise devotes considerable discussion to how this was handled rather unsuccessfully. She states, "the English version considerably limits the ability of a non-Spanish-speaking audience to understand and appreciate Nissán's key use of Ladino" (Halevi-Wise 2012b: 186); and she continues, "Unfortunately, the translation of Nissán's novels erases her wonderful use of Mexican slang along with the bilingual toggling between Ladino and modern Spanish" (Halevi-Wise 2012b: 188). This example seems to demonstrate that linguistic transfer between languages is insufficient to communicate the full tone and meaning of the original, whether it be the unique characteristics of Djudeo-Espanyol or the colloquial phatic speech patterns of Mexican slang.

The English translation of *Tela de sevoya* makes an attempt to overcome this obstacle by conserving the original passages in Djudeo-Espanol, while simultaneously providing English translation in immediate conjunction. Such that the same passage of dialogue quoted previously is rendered in English translation as follows:

- What time is it, abuela?
- Ocho kere vente Twenty to eight*
- Don't talk like that. What time is it, abuela?
- Ocho kere kinze Quarter to eight.*
- You don't know how to tell time. What time is it, abuela?
- Nunka ni no, hanum. Las ocho son. La ora de dormir We can agree to disagree hanum. Eight it is. Time to go to sleep.*
- I'm not tired.
- A echar hanum. A pishar i a echar Time to lie down, hanum. To go pee and then to lie down.*
- No, I want to watch TV.
- Deja estos maymunas Leave those talking monkeys.*
- No, why? Just so you know: my other grandmother lets me watch cartoons. (Moscona 2017: 8)

The resultant effect is an example of the performative nature of translation. In this way, lexical, phonetic, and even visual aspects (signs) of language are performed on the page for the reader to interpret. Djudeo-Espanyol is preserved visually on the page for the reader to witness, even if s/he is unable to comprehend it; its mirror image is (re)produced in direct juxtaposition, without even punctuation to separate the two languages. Subtle orthographic/phonetic changes occur so that should the reader make an attempt at enunciating the original Djudeo-Espanyol, authentic pronunciation has a better chance of being preserved. The salient example in the foregoing passage is the word *janum/hanum*; written with a "j" in the original version and an "h" in English translation in an effort to preserve phonetic consistency and authenticity. Notably, there is no translation into English of this word, which is a term of endearment of Turkish origin. The reader is left to glean the meaning of the word from the context in which it is used. This parallels the choice to leave the Spanish *abuela*, rather than translate the word to 'grandmother.' Another instance, among many in the text that signals the semiotic performativity of the translated text can be found in the simple phrase "*Ayde, ijika, ya esta presta la kumida Ayde, ijika, the food is ready*" (Moscona 2017: 31; from one of the "Focal Length" segments). Again, remnants of the original are maintained in the translation, not only to preserve Djudeo-Espanyol as a linguistic and cultural artefact, but also to highlight the affective meaning of the language that resists translation. One could translate *Ayde, ijika, ya esta presta la kumida* as 'Come on, little one (my child), the food is ready,' but it fails to communicate the intimate register of the original. Ultimately, translation always falls short in its attempt to convey original meaning, but therein lies the value of translation as a performative act of rewriting. Translation can transfer the story from one language to the next, but the transference of memory and the connection to the past is preserved through one's maternal language, as the narrator in *Tela de sevoya* states:

La única forma de traducción que la memoria tiene a su alcance es el lenguaje. Sólo el materno nos da la entrada a ese valle nativo y único en el que decimos mejor aquello que pensamos. Aun cuando hablemos con soltura otros idiomas, aquel en que nos brotan los insultos, las operaciones aritméticas y las expresiones intempestivas suele ser el de nuestra lengua primera. En ella conservamos los fotogramas de toda la cinta vital que nuestro cerebro nos traduce en forma de recuerdos. (Moscona 2012: 90)

It is logical to surmise that *Ansina* is the companion volume to *Tela de sevoya*, an outgrowth of its narrative predecessor. What is unique about this volume of poetry is that, to my knowledge, it is the first and only volume of poetry from Latin America written exclusively in Djudeo-Espanyol. We have, of course, the volume of poems by the Argentine poet Juan Gelman titled *Dibaxu* (1994) that he wrote in Djudeo-Espanyol with accompanying translations into Spanish. We return here to the ideological implications of Sephardism and Neosephardism. As Monique Balbuena asserts, "Gelman does not write in Ladino because it is the language of his people, or his nation, or because it conjures up childhood memories. Ladino is for him an ideological and stylistic choice. Exiled from his land and his language, Gelman turns to a language that counters the rules and authority of the state, while presenting the expressive, affective qualities he values" (Balbuena 2012: 181). Clearly, Moscona is fully aware of Gelman's poetry and in fact engages in dialogue with it throughout her own collection, but she also makes a conscious choice to not translate her poems into contemporary Spanish, thus revealing the political unconscious of *Ansina* that every text, as Frederic Jameson has demonstrated, contains.¹⁴ In fact, in the prefatory "Exordio" she states:

Estuve tentada a traducir estos poemas por las mismas razones que Juan Gelman expresa en su libro *Dibaxu* con belleza y claridad. [...] Sin embargo, yo opté por dejar los poemas en su versión original con la asistencia de un glosario. Creo entender que mis razones se hallan en el carácter que recoge para mí el judeo-español. Es decir, las cosas solo pueden ser dichas en una lengua y no en otra (Moscona 2015: 11).

She later provides "aclaraciones ortográficas" to guide the reader with a consistency of spelling and accentuation usage. She likewise signals here the essential untranslatability of language by stating that things can only be said in one language and not in another.

Ansina is divided into five thematic groupings of poems that not only delve into the evocation of a Sephardic past or a bygone age and homeland to be lamented in poetic verse. Her poems also employ Djudeo-Espanyol as a language of science, of literary creation, of wisdom, and of humor. In other words, she showcases Djudeo-Espanyol as a language of everyday use, even if in reality it is not entirely the case. A clear example of this is the poem 'Klaze de djudeo-espanyol (el puerpo)':

¹⁴ See Jameson (XXXX)

el kulo es posterior
la tripa es anterior
el bofe es anterior
el rinyon es posterior
el karkanyal está en el pie
el diz en la patchá
los kaveyos koronan la kavesa
la kaniya te sale de los pies
tener korason es por un kardiak
tener ijada es infekсион de urina
la durera es konstipasion
la chuchurela es koza de mal güesmo
el párrparo poedes tener serrado
ama el tino siempre avierto

—entenditesh la klaze, pashá?
—i si i no (Moscona 2015: 65).

In this simple poem Moscona gives the reader a crash course in the lexicon of anatomy, and at the same time is able to demonstrate that Djudeo-Espanyol is a language of humor and everyday communication, while also imparting the wisdom that while one may keep the eyes closed, the mind should always remain open.

Sephardic linguistic heritage is also transmitted through non-fiction books. Muñiz-Huberman's *La lengua florida: Antología sefardí* (1989) was for many years the standard anthology and source that brought together the writings of classical pre-expulsion Iberian authors. The volume highlights the noble heritage of Sephardic authors and the linguistic virtuosity of their works. This volume recently has been joined by a more contemporary anthology compiled by Jacobo Sefamí and Myriam Moscona. Their *Por mi boka: Textos de la diaspora sefardí en ladino* (2013) contains texts that range from Biblical excerpts to contemporary authors such as Juan Gelman, Marcel Cohen, and Denise León. It even contains fragments of Carlos Levy's translation into Djudeo-espanyol of *Martín Fierro*, José Hernández's famous nineteenth-century epic gauchesque poem. Riding in large part on the popularity and success of *Tela de sevoya* one year before, the book enjoyed considerable sales and distribution.

Moscona's contemporary texts reveal much about the semiotics of Djudeo-Espanyol in the twenty-first century. Her texts show that there is an interest in, and a readership for, contemporary fiction that speaks to the Sephardic past and present. The unique way in which she is able bridge the There to the Here through the intimacy of language demonstrates that Djudeo-espanyol signifies beyond mere linguistic communication and takes on symbolic meaning with historical, social, and political elements. Her recent works make a significant

contribution to the rich diversity of Latin American Jewish literature and surely will have a lasting impact on the continuation of Djudeo-Espanyol as a literary language.

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