To the memory of Joseph H. Silverman, peerless colleague and beloved friend.

The first Jews to arrive in what would later be the United States were Sephardim. Refugees from the Dutch settlement at Recife in Brazil, recently reconquered by the Portuguese, arrived at Nieuw Amsterdam in 1654. The congregation of Shearith Israel came into existence in 1655, when the Dutch West India Company—counter to the demands of Governor Peter Stuyvesant—granted permission for the immigrants to remain. Yeshuath Israel, the congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, was founded in 1658. The destiny of these two earliest Jewish settlements is inseparable from that of Amsterdam and London, and by extension of Dutch Brazil, Surinam, and the West Indies.

Though some early settlers probably came directly from Portugal or even Spain, a great majority of the pioneers were undoubtedly Portuguese crypto-Jews or their descendants—unwilling converts to Catholicism who, on arrival in Amsterdam, the “Dutch Jerusalem,” starting in the final years of the sixteenth century, gladly returned to their ancestral faith.

These Portuguese conversos, many of whom were originally of Spanish origin, posessed an essentially Renaissance Iberian culture. In Holland, they enthusiastically cultivated many of the literary genres characteristic of the Spanish Golden Age. At home and, to a degree, even in their formal writing, they came to use modalities of Spanish and Portuguese in which the two Iberian languages exerted strong reciprocal influences.

If the earliest immigrants to the future New York spoke Spanish and Portuguese—as they most certainly did—then they would surely have remembered, among other oral literary forms, certain ballads, riddles, and folktales, and would have enlivened their daily speech with pungent Iberian proverbs, but we have no extant textual evi-
dence to support such a reasonable supposition. Indirectly, however, we can perhaps form some idea of the sort of traditional literature the early American Sephardim may have known from the contents of a Portuguese miscellany put together in Holland in the late seventeenth century: *Relações, cantigas, adeuinhações, e outras corizidades, Transladadas de papeis Velhos e juntados neste caderno en Amsterdam, 1683* (“Narratives, songs, riddles, and other curiosities, copied from old papers and assembled in this notebook, in Amsterdam, 1683”). The nostalgic character of this booklet’s title, *Trasladadas de papeis Velhos*, unequivocally foreshadows the eventual disappearance of Hispanic oral literature among the Dutch Sephardim. Though their Hispano-Portuguese language would linger on vestigially even down to the early twentieth century, it was already taking on an aura of antiquarian nostalgia in the last years of the 1600s.

The distinctive conditions encountered in Nieuw Amsterdam—New York were even less propitious for the survival of Sephardic Hispano-Portuguese or of its oral literature. Though certain ritualized announcements in the synagogue continued to be made in Spanish or in Portuguese, and a specialized religious vocabulary was to survive even in modern times, the old languages seem to have died out in colonial America by the end of the eighteenth century at the very latest. In 1783, no less a figure than the distinguished hazzan Gershom Mendes Seixas, who ministered to the New York community and, during the Revolution, served at Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, could nonetheless allow that he was “unacquainted with the Spanish and Portuguese languages which have ever been used since the first establishment of the synagogue.” Barring the discovery of new documents—always a distinct possibility—we cannot know what oral literature may have circulated among the early Sephardic settlers in colonial America, nor exactly when it ceased to exist.

In the first decades of the present century, a new and culturally quite different wave of Sephardic immigration began to arrive in the United States. With their expulsion from Spain in 1492, Jews who had been unwilling to convert, even nominally, to Christianity had settled in various Eastern Mediterranean cities under Ottoman rule, as well as in North Africa. In contrast to the Renaissance culture of the conversos who took refuge in Holland and other parts of Western Europe
in the sixteenth century, the exiles of 1492 took with them a more conservative, essentially medieval Hispanic culture and language. Unlike the Western Sephardim, who gradually lost their Hispanic languages, the Eastern Mediterranean and North African Jews kept alive and cherished their Judeo-Spanish dialects and oral literature down to the present day.

During the early years of the twentieth century, a variety of interrelated developments—the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turk Revolution (1908), resurgent Balkan nationalism, and the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)—combined to pose a grave threat to the integrity of the Eastern Sephardic communities. Many Sephardim felt it was time to leave. By 1926, some 25,000 Sephardic Jews are estimated to have emigrated to the United States. These Eastern Spanish Jews brought with them to America an extraordinarily rich repertoire of traditional oral literature, in which elements dating back to pre-expulsion Spain were complexly interwoven with other features acquired in the Balkans and the Middle East.

In 1957, in collaboration with my deceased friend Professor Joseph H. Silverman, I began a research project aimed at collecting, studying, and editing Sephardic oral literature. In 1959, we were joined by our friend, the distinguished ethnomusicologist, Professor Israel J. Katz. Since that time, we have done fieldwork, individually and collaboratively, in the United States, Spain, Morocco, and Israel, and have interviewed a total of 241 informants in all: 164 from the Eastern Mediterranean communities and 77 from North Africa.

Though our principal efforts have been aimed at bringing together a massive collection of narrative ballads (romances), we have, whenever possible, collected other forms as well, and our collection has come to include examples of all the major genres of Sephardic folk literature. On the following pages, at the kind invitation of Professor Martin A. Cohen, I have edited, with brief critical remarks and the bibliography essential for further reading, a representative sample of some of these folk-literary materials.

Our fieldwork in the United States has for the most part been limited to Eastern informants—a total of 85 in all—so the present selection will include only Eastern Sephardic materials. Though other divisions can be defended, I have classified our texts into the following
generic categories: (1) ballads, (2) cumulative songs, (3) songs of passage, (4) lyric songs, (5) prayers and charms.12

1. Ballads

Judeo-Spanish ballads (romansas = Spanish romances) are narrative poems, typically with sixteen-syllable verses, made up of two eight-syllable hemistichs, with assonant rhyme in every second hemistich. Originating from fragments of long medieval epic poems, the ballads became established as a separate genre in the early fourteenth century, and the form was subsequently used to narrate numerous events in Spanish history, to recreate a variety of medieval narratives, to adapt stories borrowed from the balladic traditions of other European peoples (notably from France), and also as a vehicle for poems known only in the Hispanic tradition. From its medieval origins, the genre has survived down to the present day in the living oral tradition of all Hispanic peoples.13

Of all the genres of Sephardic oral literature, the ballads have the closest links to early Spanish counterparts, and, hence, Hispanists have lavished attention on them, unfortunately to the unwarranted neglect of other genres.14 Because of its conservative character, Judeo-Spanish balladry offers invaluable evidence for the comparative study of the Pan-Hispanic Romancero and, indeed, of the Pan-European ballad as well.15

From our collection of some 1,485 ballad texts, here are two previously unedited versions collected from Eastern Sephardic informants in the United States:

1.1 Gaiferos jugador

Por los palacios de Carlo
y non pasan sinon gügar.
2 Y non gügan plata ni oro,
sino vías y sivdades.
Ganó Carlo a Gaiferus
sus vías y sus sivdades.
4 Ganó Gaiferus a Carlo
y a la su spoza reale.

Gaiferos the Gambler

In the halls of Charlemagne's palace,
they do nothing but gamble.
They don't gamble for silver and gold,
but for cities and towns.
Charlemagne won from Gaiferus
his cities and his towns.
Gaiferus won from Charlemagne
his royal wife.
Más s’accontentava piedrere, piedrere que no ganare.

—¡Y sovrino, el mi sovrino, y el mi sovrino caronale!
Yo vos creí chequetico y el Dio te hizo barragane.

Y El te dio barvica roxa y en tu puerpo fuerza grande.
Yo te di a Lindabera y por mujer y por iguale.

Vos fuétex hombre covado y que vola dexatex yevare.
Espozada la tengo en Fransia y por sien rublas y por maze.

Vos que sox hombre garrero y vola puediax ganare.
Y la topó a Lindaibey y mañanicas de Sangíguare.

Better to have lost her, to lose her and not to win her.
"Nephew, my nephew, blood nephew of mine!
I raised you from childhood; God made you a valiant young man.
He gave you a red beard and great strength in your body.
I gave you Lindabella for your wife and equal.
You were cowardly; you let her be carried off.
I have betrothed her in France for a hundred rubles and more.
But you are a warrior and you could still win her."
He encountered Lindabella on the morning of St. John.

Ya se van los siete hermanos, ya se van para Aragón.
Las calores eran fuertes; agua non se les topó.
Por en medio del camino, toparon un poñó airón.
Echaron pares y nones; a el chico le cayó.
Ya lo atan a la cuedra; lo echan al poñó airón.
Por en medio de el poño, la cuedra se le rompió.
La agua se le hizo sangre; las piedras culevros son.

—Si vos pregunta el mi padre, le dizéx: "¡Al poñó airón!"

"If my father asks you, tell him: "He was left in the well!""

_Gaiferos jugador_ exemplifies the medieval origins of so many ballads in the Sephardic repertoire. Nowhere else in European balladry, except among the Eastern Sephardim (and in the similarly archaic tra-
ditions of Portugal, Galicia, León, and Catalonia), can there still be heard a narrative song ultimately derived from the tradition of the *Waltharius* epic and its various medieval Germanic congeners. By contrast with the medievalism of *Gaiferos, El pozo airón* is a direct and close translation of a modern Greek ballad. It is one of a small but significant number of romanzas which, except for their language and formulaic style, have nothing to do with the ballad genre’s medieval Hispanic origins, but derive from Eastern Mediterranean prototypes. This particular ballad, because of its tragic implications, is used as a dirge to be sung on the ninth of Av.

2. Cumulative Songs

Sephardic cumulative songs have never been studied as a genre. In addition to the two poems edited here, there are a number of others. *The Twelve Numbers (¿Quién supiese y entendiese?)* corresponds to the universally popular ‘*Ehād mī yādēa?*’ *The Hours of the Day (La cantiga de las horas)*, an exclusively Eastern children’s song, associates the hours with a variety of everyday activities. *Vivarduenía*, known both in the East and in Morocco, follows the procedures involved in planting, harvesting, and making bread. *Our bride says (Dicel a nuestra novia)*, current in the East and in North Africa, involves a metaphorical description of the bride’s beauty. Each of these songs has abundant counterparts in other branches of the Hispanic tradition, as well as in those of other European speech communities. A systematic study of the genre would be most welcome. Here are two examples from our collection:

2.1 *La moxca y la mora*

1. S’estávase la mora en su bel estar.
   Venía la moxca por hacerle mal.
   La moxca a la mora, mesquina la mora, qu’en sus campos moros . . .

12. S’estávase’l šoḥet en su bel estar.

*The Moorish Girl*

The Moorish girl was sitting in her sweet repose.

The fly came along to do her harm.

The fly harmed the girl, poor Moorish girl, in her Moorish fields . . .

The butcher was sitting in his sweet repose.
Judeo-Spanish Traditional Poetry

Venía el malaḥ a-mave
por hacerle mal.
El malaḥ a-mave al šoḥet,
el šoḥet al buey,
el buey al agua,
el agua al fuego,
el fuego al palo,
el palo al perro,
el perro al gato,
el gato al ratón,
el ratón a la rana,
l a rana a l’abezba,
l’abezba a la moxca,
l a moxca a la mora,
mesquina la mora,
en sus campos moros.  

2.2 El cavretico

Un cavretico,
que me lo mercó mi padre,
por dos aspros,
por dos levanim.

Vino el gato
y modrió el cavretico,
que me lo mercó mi padre,
por dos aspros,
por dos levanim . . .

Vino el malaḥ
y acuzó al šoḥet,
porque degoyó a la vaca,
porque bevió a la agua,
porque amató al huego,
porque quemó al palo,
porque aharvó al perro,
porque modrió al gato,
porque modrió al cavretico,
que me lo mercó mi padre,
por dos aspros,
por dos levanim.  

The Angel of Death came along
to do him harm.
The Angel of Death harmed the 
butcher,
the butcher the ox,
the ox the water,
the water the fire,
the fire the stick,
the stick the dog,
the dog the cat,
the cat the mouse,
the mouse the frog,
the frog the wasp,
the wasp the fly,
the fly the girl,
poor Moorish girl,
in her Moorish fields.

The Little Goat

A little goat
my father bought for me,
for two small coins,
for two little coins.
The cat came along
and bit the little goat
my father bought for me,
for two small coins,
for two little coins . . .
The Angel came along
and accused the butcher,
because he killed the cow,
that drank the water,
that put out the fire,
that burned the stick,
that beat the dog,
that bit the cat,
that bit the little goat
my father bought for me,
for two small coins,
for two little coins.
Ultimately, *The Moorish Girl* and *The Little Goat* embody the same Pan-European song-type. *The Moorish Girl* represents the song’s Pan-Hispanic “secular” form, while *The Goat* is a Judeo-Spanish adaptation of the beloved haggadic *Had gadya*, itself a late and rather imperfect Aramaic translation of one of the song’s Central European modalities. The Eastern Sephardic tradition knows yet a third form: *The Good Old Man* (*El buen viejo*), which is a close translation of the poem’s Greek variant. The three songs, all variations on the same text-type, eloquently illustrate the variegated cultural traditions—Hispanic, Hebraic, and Balkan—which have contributed to the Sephardic repertoire.

3. Songs of Passage

Songs of passage, pertaining to the major transitions of life, have not been investigated as such, though Manuel Alvar’s editions and studies of Moroccan Sephardic wedding songs and dirges are model contributions, and Paloma Díaz-Mas’s authoritative catalogues and studies of both Eastern and North African dirges can be considered essentially definitive surveys. In regard to such liminal songs, there are notable differences between the two Sephardic traditions. While we are fortunate to have Alvar’s richly documented Moroccan evidence, much less is known about Eastern wedding songs. Thanks to Díaz-Mas, dirges from both areas are well known, but the songs in question seem to have a rather different character in the two subtraditions. Little is known of birth songs from Morocco, and in the East also the evidence is scarce. Here are three texts from our collection, concerning, respectively, birth, marriage, and death:

3.1 *Cantiga de parida*  
*Birth Song*

When the midwife says:  
“Keep on, keep on!”  
the woman in labor answers:  
“May God help me!”  
The child says:  
“May I be delivered!”  
All the people answer:
— ¡Amén, amén, amén!—
"Amen, amen, amen!"
Ya es, ya es buen simón esta criatura.
Indeed this child
¡Bendicho’l que mos ayegó a esta ventura!
Blessed be He who brought us to this good fortune!
2
Ya viene el parido con los convidados.
Now the new father arrives with all his guests.
Qu’yeva’ la mano resta de pexcado;
In one hand he carries a serving of fish
por la otra mano siento y un ducado.
a hundred and one ducats.
Ya es, ya es buen simón esta alegria.
Indeed this joy
¡Bendicho’l que mos ayegó a ver este día!
Blessed be He who brought us to see this day!
3
Ya viene el parido a los pies de la cama.
Now the new father arrives at the foot of the bed.
Le dize la parida:
The young mother tells him:
—Hoy no comí nada.
"I’ve eaten nothing today."
—Presto que le tra’ gayina enxundiada.
"Quickly have them bring her a fattened chicken."

3.2 Cantiga de novia
Wedding Song
1
Hija mía, si te vas,
My daughter, if you are departing,
mira bien y apara mientes.
look out and pay attention.
Por los caminos que tú vas,
On the roads you will travel,
no hay primos ni parientes.
there are no cousins or relatives.
Las extrañas son tu gente;
Unknown women will be your family;
no te hagas aborreser.
be sure you’re not disliked.
¡Hija de un buen pareser!
Beautiful girl!
2
—Cuando m’iva para’l baño,
"As I was going to the baths,
todos me quedan mirando:
everyone looked at me:
"¿Quién es eya la que pasa?"
‘Who is that who’s passing by?’
"La mujer del mercader".—
‘It’s the merchant’s wife.’
¡Hija de un buen pareser!"
And I have little strength left, lying sick in my bed.
And after midnight, someone knocks at my door.
And who is this drunkard

"Who's knocking at my door?"

"I am no drunkard, nor did I come here for drink. I am a messenger from Heaven come to ask for your soul."

Open the door for me, so I can take your soul.”

Then he opened half the door, pretending and unwillingly.

“Open the other half for me and open it willingly.”

Then he opened the other half and he lay down to die.

His eyes were closing and death turned him pale.

Now they wash his hands and feet with orange-scented water.

Now they take away his food; his throat cannot swallow.

“And what songs of mourning you will compose for me!

Now there's no time left:

And with hardly a breath left,

then he took courage, for his hour had come,

and he delivered up his soul.

“And what sorrows and lamentations

they will weep for me!

And even more my family, whose eyes will not be dry!”

Our Cantiga de parida offers a graphic evocation of the harrowing, though ultimately joyous, circumstances surrounding the birth of a
Sephardic child. The somewhat startling detail that the child itself should speak out before birth, calling for its own delivery, reflects a widely known folklore motif. Our *Wedding Song*, which embodies urgent advice to the departing bride, is fragmentary. The fact that the girl is now “the merchant’s wife” stresses, of course, the economically advantageous character of her marriage. This second strophe, not found in any other version I have seen, doubtless originally belonged to some other nuptial song. The *Endecha* sung for us by Mrs. Perla Galante is, to my knowledge, unique. There is nothing exactly like it among the Eastern and Moroccan texts exhaustively catalogued by Paloma Díaz-Mas. I would guess that this song was improvised for our benefit, using authentic motifs and formulas to evoke a no-longer-practiced traditional custom with which Mrs. Galante was, all the same, still intimately familiar. The crucial motif of Death personified, who comes knocking at the victim’s door to carry him off, has medieval origins and is still well known in modern Sephardic dirge poetry.

4. Lyric Songs

The Moroccan Sephardic tradition of lyric poetry has been exhaustively documented and studied by Manuel Alvar. Much less is known about the Eastern tradition. All the same, as in the case of various other genres, we can distinguish songs of very different types and origins. The two texts published here exemplify the repertoire’s cultural and chronological diversity.

4.1

1. Morena de rufios caveyos, Dark girl with blond hair,  
   se queréx ganar denero. if you want to earn money.  
   ¡Por la madrugada! At dawn!

2. Cavayero, me engañates, Knight, you deceived me,  
   pur la güra que me gürates. by the oath you swore to me.  
   ¡Por la madrugada! At dawn!

3. Y se te güro por el sielo And if I swear to you by Heaven  
   y de no tocarte el dedo. not even to touch your finger.  
   ¡Por la madrugada! At dawn!

4. Y morena de rufios entrinsados, Dark girl with blond tresses,  
   se queréx ganar ducados. if you want to earn ducats.
American Jewish Archives

¡Y por la madrugada!
At dawn!

5 Y cavayero, me engañatis,
Knight, you deceived me,
por la gúra que me gúrates.
by the oath you swore to me.
¡Por la madrugada!
At dawn!

6 Y se te guió por la luna
And if I swear to you by the moon
y de no tocarte en la uña.
not even to touch your fingernail.
¡Y por la madrugada!
At dawn!

4.2

Echa agua en la tu puerta
Throw water on your doorstep
y pasaré y mi cairé.
and, passing by, I'll slip and fall.
Tuparé una chica cavza; ¡amán!
I'll find a small excuse
entraré y te havlaré.38
to go in and speak with you.

Our first text, Morena de rufios caveyos, clearly attests, prosodically, thematically, and stylistically, to its medieval Peninsular origins.39 These verses, with their synonymous rhyme words (caveyos/entrinsados; denerolducados; sielolluna; dedoluna), relate to the multi-secular Hispanic tradition of parallelistic couplets, typical of Galician-Portuguese songs and not unknown in the medieval Castilian repertoire, which have also survived in Moroccan Sephardic wedding songs and in marginal areas of Portugal down to the present day.40 The twin rhyme words ducados and dineros appear in a Castilian villancico included in the sixteenth-century gothic-type broadside, Cantares de diversas sonadas:

0 Mis ojuelos madre
My eyes, mother,
valen vna ciudad
are worth a city.

1 Mis ojuelos madre
tanto son de claros
each time I raise them
merescen ducados
they obtain ducats;
ducados mi madre
ducats, mother.
valen vna ciudad.
They're worth a city.

2 Mis ojuelos madre
tanto son de veros
each time I raise them
merescen dineros
they obtain coins;
dineros mi madre
coins, mother.
valen vna ciudade.41
They're worth a city.

The topic of the dark girl (morena)—even if here her hair is blond—also ties this song to an ancient and polysemic lyric tradition.42 At the
same time, our song's enigmatic, elliptical, intuitive style is typical of the early villancicos: What is really going on here? On one hand, there is the suggestive allusion to "earning money" and, on the other, a courtly promise not even to touch the girl—the same girl who, at the same time, reproaches the knight for having "deceived" her. Here too the allusion to dawn is highly ambivalent according to the poetic code of the traditional lyric. The exact details of this amorous minidrama remain a mystery, as the poem invites us to imagine and to elaborate upon its unlimited possibilities. Clearly these Judeo-Spanish verses became part of the Sephardic tradition at an early date.

_Echa agua en la tu puerta_ offers a very different perspective on Judeo-Spanish lyric poetry. Octosyllabic quatrains, with assonant rhyme in the even verses, were extremely popular in the recent tradition, and hundreds of texts are known, though they have never been systematically studied. Our song represents a word-for-word translation of a Modern Greek distich, thus exemplifying once again the significant—though, from a scholarly point of view, gravely neglected—impact of Eastern Mediterranean folk literature on the Judeo-Spanish repertoire. In translation, the Sephardic song's Neohellenic parent text reads: "Throw water on your doorstep,/ so that passing by I may slip,/ so, for your mother, I may find an excuse/ to go in and talk with you." The correspondence could hardly be more exact.

5. **Prayers and Charms**

Sephardic popular prayers and medicinal charms have hardly been studied at all. Here are two texts—a prayer for rain and a charm against the evil eye—from among the materials we have collected over the years.

5.1 _Agua, O Dio_

¡Agua, O Dio!

2 Que la tierra la demanda.  
Chicos, chicos y piqueños

4 pan queremos;  
agua no tenemos.  

Prayer for Rain  
Water, O God!  
The earth requires it.  
Children and little ones
6 ¡Abre los sielos,  
arrega los campos!  
we need bread;  
we have no water.

8 ¡Arregador, arregador,  
echa trigo al montón!  
Open the heavens,  
irrigate the fields!  
Waterer of the land,  
pile up mounds of wheat!

5.2 Contra el ainará  
Con el nombre del Dios,  
Against the Evil-eye  
In the name of God,

2 Abraam, Itshak, Yakov,  
Aarón, David, Šelomó:  
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,  
Aaron, David, Solomon:

4 Yo meto la mano  
y el Dios mete la melezina.  
I put in my hand  
and God puts in the medicine.

6 Como la señora de Miriám,  
a-neviá,  
Like Miriam  
the prophetess,

8 que sanava y melezinava  
y todo el mal eya quitava  
who performed cures and gave  
medicine  
and took away all the sickness

10 y a la fondina de la mar  
o echava,  
and threw it  
into the depths of the sea,

12 ansí yo quito el mal  
de fulana,  
so I take away the sickness  
of so-and-so,

14 hija de sistraná.  
Todo el que la miró,  
daughter of such-and-such.  
Every person who looked upon her

16 con mala ojada,  
con mala ariada:  
with an evil look  
or with bad demeanor:

18 Si es hombre,  
que no pierda el nombre;  
If it be a man,  
may she not lose her name;

20 si es mujer,  
que no pierda el saver;  
if it be a woman,  
may she not lose her knowledge;

22 si es ave muda,  
a-Kadús Baruḥú  
if it be a mute bird,  
may the Holy One, Blessed-be-He,  
give help to her.

24 esté en su ayuda.  
Caminando por un camino,  
As I was walking along a path,

26 encontré a un viejezico:  
Fierro vestía,  
I met a little old man:  
He was dressed in iron,

28 fierro calsava.  
— ¿Onde vas?  
with iron shoes.  
“Where are you going?”

30 —Ande fulana,  
hija de sistraná,  
“To the house of so-and-so,  
daughter of such-and-such,
con mala ojada, to take from her all the evil eye.
con mala arriada,

y a la fondina de la mar with an evil look
yo lo echava. and with bad demeanor:

Y el Dios la melezinava.\(^6\) I threw him
into the depths of the sea.

The little rain prayer must have been widely known in the Sephardic East.\(^7\) Such prayers, with classical antecedents, are also well known in Greek tradition,\(^8\) but there can be little doubt as to the origin of our Sephardic text. In his Vocabulario de refranes y frases proverbiales, compiled in 1627, Gonzalo Correas includes an essentially identical incipit: "¡Agua, Dios, agua, ke la tier-
ra lo demanda! Klamor a Dios en tienpo seko" ("Water, O God, water, for the earth requires it! Outcry to God in time of drought").\(^9\) The Judeo-Spanish prayer is, then, without doubt of ancient Hispanic provenience.

The charm against the evil eye, despite its distinctively Jewish invocations of God, the Patriarchs, and Miriam the prophetess,\(^50\) is closely related to ancient Pan-European folk-charms and folk-beliefs. The idea of a supernatural or divine apotropaic figure traveling or being met along a road as part of his curative mission is prominent in many folk-charms. Spanish texts continue to represent a meeting with the curing agent while on a journey.

San Pedro e San Pablo
viñan de Roma;
encontraron con Nuestro Señor

e díxolles:
— ¿Dónde vés, Pedro?

—Veño de Roma.
—¿Qué hai de novo alá?
—Moito Mal de Osipela
e de Sipilón . . .\(^5\)

St. Peter and St. Paul
were coming from Rome;
they met our Lord
and he said to them:
"Peter, where are you coming from?"
"I'm coming from Rome."
"What's new over there?"
"Many people suffer from erysipelas . . ."

St. Peter then describes the cure or turns back to put it into effect. The verses concerning who may have looked with an evil eye (vv. 15–21) are used differently in Salonika to refer to hiccups.\(^52\) Such enu-
merations of possible offending individuals (or creatures) are also well known in Hispanic charms: "... se-é de mala muller, vaite pra mala muller, se-é de sapo, vaite pro sapo, se-é de culebra, vaite pra culebra..." ("if it's from an evil woman, turn back upon her; if it's from a toad, go back to the toad; if it's from a serpent, go back to the serpent"). That the little old man should be dressed and shod in iron is highly significant. Metal, and particularly iron, has been seen as magical and proof against all sorts of evil influences since time immemorial. The figure of the old man as helper is also widely known. Again, the allusion to the depths of the sea suggests the practice of sympathetic magic, in which some object brought into contact with the sufferer is thrown into the sea or buried in the earth, thus taking the sickness with it and effecting the cure.

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The Sephardic tradition has often been regarded as a precious relic, a fossilized, archaic survival from medieval times. On the foregoing pages, I have attempted to show that it is indeed notably important for what it has preserved and for what it can teach us about ancient Spanish traditions. At the same time, the Sephardic heritage also represents much more. It records the vital, dynamic creativity of the Sephardim, who have shaped their distinctive tradition in relation to all the diverse peoples—Hispanic and Balkan—with whom they have interacted during their long and eventful history.

Notes

1. See David de Sola Pool and Tarnar de Sola Pool, An Old Faith in the New World (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), pp. 3-12 et al. Actually, Jacob bar Simson, who arrived a few months before the refugees from Recife, may well have been Ashkenazic (pp. 12-13, 16, 24, 26, 467). I take into account here the important work of a number of scholars concerning early Jewish settlements in America: Isaac S. and Suzanne E. Emmanuel, Lee M. Friedman, Hyman Grinstein, Morris Gutstein, Seymour B. Liebman, Jacob R. Marcus, Cecil Roth, and Peter Wiernik. For reasons of space, I will dispense with full citations. I wish to thank my friends and colleagues, Rabbi Pinchas Giller and Professors Israel J. Katz and John M. Zemke for their learned advice on bibliographical and Hebraic problems. Steve Kidner's excellent technological help in preparing master tapes is greatly appreciated.

2. See, e.g., Henry V. Besso, Dramatic Literature of the Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam in the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries (New York: Hispanic Institute, 1947); Kenneth R. Scholberg, La poesía reli-
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4. In 1910, the 86-year-old Amsterdam patriarch, David Montezinos, still remembered a few notable proverbs. Among them: “Sahiu de Egypte e entrou en Mizrajiem” (lit. “He left Egypt and went into Egypt [Heb. Miṣраı̂m];” i.e., He went from the frying pan into the fire). See Davids, “Bijdrage,” pp. 152–153; Wagner, Os Judeus, p. 11.


7. Pool and Pool, An Old Faith, p. 87; on Mendes Seixas and his distinguished service: pp. 167–168, 170–174. Note, all the same, that Mendes Seixas is using his ignorance of Spanish and Portuguese as a possible excuse for not returning to his duties at the New York synagogue, thus implying perhaps that the languages were still used, at least in ritual. In any event, “these languages were abandoned by the congregation after the Revolution” (p. 87).


11. Oro A. Librowicz has brought together a particularly rich collection of Moroccan Judeo-Spanish ballads in Canada. See her Cancionero sefardí du Québec (Montreal: Collège du Vieux Montréal, 1988).

12. For an authoritative survey of all genres of Judeo-Spanish literature, both written and oral, see Jacob M. Hassán, “Visión panorámica de la literatura sefardí,” Hispania Judaica (Barcelona: Puvill, 1982), 2:225–44. In the present article, I omit paraliturgical songs, which, although many have become traditional, ultimately go back to written sources: they stand, in a sense, at the frontier between written and oral literature. For reasons of space, riddles, proverbs, and folktales have also been omitted here. I have limited the article to poetic genres in the strictest sense.


19. See our En torno, pp. 154–157; for other romances derived from Modern Greek, see pp. 151–178.

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22. See our En torno, pp. 110-117.


24. Version from Rhodes (Greece), sung by Mrs. Leah Huniu, 67 years, collected by S.G.A. and J.H.S., Los Angeles, July 31, 1958. The following forms require comment: šoḥet (1zaef) “butcher (qualified to slaughter animals according to ritual requirements)” (Heb. šōḥēṯ); malāḥ a-mave (12ce) “angel of death” (Heb. malāḵ ha-māʿeṯeth). For the transcription of Hebrew used in the present article, see our Chapbooks, pp. 18-20.

25. Version from Çanakkale (Turkey), recited by Mr. Isaac Zacuto, ca. 60 years, collected by S.G.A., Los Angeles, Spring 1958. The word aspro (1c) is from Greek ἀσπρόν “money, coin: a farthing” (from ἀσπρός “white”); levánim (1d) is simply the Hebrew equivalent: láḥān, lēḇānîm “white; silver coin(s).” For malāḥ (9a) and šoḥet (9b), see the previous note.


30. Version from Salonika, sung by Esther Varsano Hassid, 65 years, collected by S.G.A. and J.H.S., Van Nuys, Calif., August 22, 1957. The following words need comment: sīmān (xi, 2g) “sign, omen” (Heb. sīmān); resta (2d) here perhaps “serving”; usually “string (of fish, figs, coins)”: other versions allude to a “resta de ducados” (= Sp. ristra); enxundia (3f) “fattened” (Sp. enjundia “fat, grease [of an animal]”). The sentiment expressed in vv. 1kl and zij echoes the benediction šehelēyānī (“who has granted us life . . . and permitted us to reach this season”).

32. Version from Rhodes, sung by Perla Galante, ca. 75 years, collected by S.G.A. and J.H.S., Los Angeles, January 8, 1958. The following forms need comment: hazino (2) “sick” (O. Sp. hazino “sad, poor, afflicted”; from Ar. ḥażîn “sad”); agua de turunqá (22) “orange water” (?) (turunqá = toronja “tree producing the toronja fruit”; the meaning of Sp. toronja varies regionally: grapefruit; citron; types of orange”; it is not certain exactly what meaning toronja has in E. J.-Sp.; if the word, seemingly limited to poetic contexts and not in current use, has been influenced by T. turunc, which seems probable, then it may well denote the bitter Seville orange; garón (24) “throat” (Heb. garón); englotar (24) “swallow” (cf. E. J.-Sp., O. Sp. englutir); xofletico (29) “light breath” (cf. Sp. soplar).


34. See our Chapbooks, pp. 188-189 and n. 4.


36. See our En torno, pp. 89-95. Vv. 13-14, 21-22, 25-26, and 33 embody formulas that are well known elsewhere in Judeo-Spanish traditional poetry.


38. Version from Rhodes, sung by Victoria Hazan Kassner, ca. 55 years, collected by S.G.A. and J.H.S., Los Angeles, October 27, 1957. The word amán (= T. aman “have mercy!”) is a popular poetic exclamation used in the traditional songs of all Balkan peoples. See our En torno, pp. 214-227.


41. Margit Frenk, ed., Cancionero de galanes y otros rarísimos cancionerillos góticos (Valencia: Castalia, 1952), pp. 62-63; as the editor observes (p. xli), veros doubtless corresponds to Old French xair “variable, changeable, of different colors; shining, brilliant, grey-blue, clear (of the eyes).” For more on this song, see M. Frenk, Corpus de la antigua lírica popular hispánica (Siglos XV a XVII) (Madrid: Castalia, 1987), no. 126.


44. For variants of the Greek and Sephardic verses, see our study in En torno, pp. 179-182. For other close translations of lyric songs from Greek, see Moshe Attias, Cancionero judeo-español...
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46. Text from Rhodes, recited by Rebecca A. Levy, 46 years, collected by S.G.A and J.H.S., Los Angeles, February 16, 1958. The following forms need comment: a-nmi‘a (7) “the prophetess” (Heb. ha-ne’ilh); a-Kadli Baruhli (22) –Heb. ha-Qaddis Birkh-hu; ainard (32) “evil eye” (Heb. ‘eyn hē-rā).


52. See Molho, Usos y costumbres, p. 290.

53. Quiben, La medicina popular, p. 77; also pp. 134, 141, 144, 275, 281, 285, 286.

54. For iron, see our Epic Ballads, pp. 53–55, nn. 30–34; for the old man, Thompson, Motif-Index: N825.2, Old man helper.