

English summaries vol. 71 (2022)

Se ayoltará tu mazal: Fortune and the Devil in Three Ladino Versions of a Moralizing Tale

Irene Fernández García

UNED/CSIC

This article analyses and describes the textual tradition of three Judeo-Spanish versions of the tale of the man who managed to change his fortune by educating his father-in-law (930*J). The analysis focuses, in particular, on the character of the devil and the theme of fortune from the perspective of the different textual traditions that affect each version.

Of the three versions, one was written by Abraham Hakohén Perañiá as part of the compilation *Sipuré noraot* (Thessaloniki, 1885). The remaining two come from oral sources: the storyteller Merú Levy who told it to Cynthia Crews (Thessaloniki, 1935) and an unknown storyteller who told another version to Arcadio de Larrea Palacín (Tetouan, 1953). In addition, since the earliest known publication of the story dates back to the *Osé Fele* (1855), a Hebrew compilation of moralizing tales, the article also looks at the confluence of the Sephardic versions with Hebrew sources.

Clearly, ‘folktale’ in this study is understood as what Alexander-Frizer (1998:256) denominates a ‘parallel multitextual phenomenon’: the story lives in parallel versions, oral and written, which are related to each other. Moreover, the versions that have been told to researchers are to be understood as performative events and as such they lose part of their expressive power (voice, body, gaze, interaction) in the two-dimensional written letter. As a consequence, the tools of literary and folktale analysis are used and, in the case of oral sources, some observations are made from the perspective of studies on the art of storytelling.

As for the character of the devil, as opposed to his frequent mythical or biblical representation as a deity or incarnation of evil, here he is characterized positively (human coexistence, just and grateful behaviour, Jewish religious practices) and is the possessor of a knowledge hidden from humans: their *mazal*, their fortune. He is, because of his function in the story, not an opponent, but the helper, the hero’s donor.

The different versions of the story show a particular perspective on destiny that is in line with the Jewish conception of Fortune as opposed to the Greco-Latin perception of destiny, more deeply rooted in the Western world. On the other hand, the analysis reveals how the character-motif of the demon migrates with different variations in the three texts affected by the literary genre in which it is framed, a tale of magic, and the intentionality of the writer or storyteller. Thus, due to its textual tradition, linked to the Hebrew version in the *Osé Fele*, with a remarkable ethical-moral intention, the Thessaloniki versions present this character with attributes that differ from those of the Tetouan version.

The Predominance of the Old Testament Influence on Leon Ebreo's Idea of the Love of God towards His Creatures

Miquel Beltrán

Universidad de las Islas Baleares

The concept of divine love in the *Dialoghi d'amore* by Leon Ebreo sparks a dialogue between Sophia and Philo, the two characters who discuss all the topics that are examined in this magnum opus.

On the one hand, Sophia argues that, following the characterization of the God vindicated by Plato, creatures cannot feel love; they are perfect and love as an affect would imply something lacking in that perfection. This kind of default could not even be imagined in a God.

On the contrary, in his approach to divine love, Philo refuses to admit that it is possible to infer some failing in the one who loves in every kind of love. He asserts that a father's love for his son is perfect in that the father does not show some inadequacy when professing that love, whose aim is to remedy the failings in the son due to immaturity or inconstancy. The father has a kind of unconditional love that perfects the recipient. Ebreo seems to find a foreshadowing of this love described in several books from the Old Testament in the word '*chesed*'. This article examines the adequate or inadequate attempts to translate into modern languages the word *chesed*, which is used in many passages of the Old Testament to describe the loving kindness of God, but also means the strength possessed by the human beings who receive His love. This would explain how love can be felt by a perfect being and how this perfection helps to repair the vulnerability and fragility of creatures. Philo defines this as divine love.

In this situation, if some imperfection does occur, it is because the relationship involves a perfect God and an imperfect creature, and the imperfection has to be found in the way the relationship take place. Ebreo argues that this was presaged by some Ancient Hebrews, most likely earlier Kabbalists. If an imperfection is found, it would be in the link between the two, but not in God Himself (even if the Old Testament never explicitly discusses the topic of God's perfection). Inversely, as discussed in this paper,

some Kabbalists introduced the concept of divine needs concerning the role of creatures, in order to re-establish the appropriate effect in the divine kingdom. It is in this sense that the righteous help the sustenance of the world through their actions.

Cinema that is (in) Yiddish: Images of a Devastated Culture

Lior Zylberman

CONICET/Centro de Estudios sobre Genocidio, Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero

Yiddish cinema had a brief heyday in the first half of the twentieth century in the Soviet Union, Poland and the United States, and was characterized – among other things – by its strong links to and dependence on both theatre and literature. Its production ended abruptly after World War II and most of the titles have been forgotten.

This article questions how this output should be seen and analysed today, since Yiddish cinema has turned out to be an important vector of the imaginaries, as well as the fears, of its time. Accordingly, Yiddish cinema proves to be a valid document, not only for the study of Yiddish culture, but also the tensions in Judaism before the Second World War.

The article first provides some guidelines for understanding cinema as a document, followed by a brief history and periodization of Yiddish cinema, which encompasses five stages or moments. Subsequently, some of the central themes explored by the various films from Yiddish cinema will be analysed, with a focus on how some productions were staged.

As shown by the article, these films not only reveal how the Yiddish-speaking and Jewish worlds were conceived of at the time of the filming, but also how that Jewish world is viewed from the perspective of the present day.

Understanding the Jewish Legacy in Lleida through Archaeology: La Cuirassa

Marta Morán Álvarez | Xavier Payà Mercè

Secció de Patrimoni Cultural Històric i Artístic- Arqueologia de l'Ajuntament de Lleida

For the first time ever, thanks to the archaeological work done in the Seminari district of Lleida, we finally have a greater understanding of what it would have been like to live in that city's La Cuirassa neighbourhood. In its day, it was one of the most important Jewish quarters of the Crown of Aragon, but with the passing of time, it disappeared completely from the urban landscape. The widespread demolition of buildings turned this area of the old city into a 5,000m² largely unused wasteland, making it the ideal location for a new city park. Thus, a large-scale urban project, El Parc de la Cuirassa,

was born with the aim of recovering the city's Jewish quarter, once home to Lleida's aljama and, therefore, the city's Jewish past.

Various field surveys were conducted throughout the area, and three fully intact neighbourhoods were discovered, with the remains of streets and houses where members of the Jewish community had lived between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. The article describes the different archaeological phases, from the earliest dating from the twelfth century, up to and including the time of the assault on the Jewish quarter that occurred on 13 August 1391. According to sources, La Cuirassa was later partially restored and continued to be inhabited until the final expulsion of the Jewish community on 20 July 1492. However, any structural evidence of the last century of a Jewish presence disappeared once construction of the new Seminari neighbourhood began in the eighteenth century.

We have attempted, as far as possible, to correlate our archaeological findings with existing records to recreate a map of La Cuirassa, where we have been able to identify some public buildings as well as to reproduce an approximate layout of the settlement and even include some street names. This was one of those rare occasions where the work of urban archaeology uncovered the material remains of a medieval Jewish legacy. Added to the exceptionality of the find is the significance, and state of conservation, of one of the houses in La Cuirassa and the bridal trunk or trousseau found there, which provides evidence of the everyday life of a Jewish family that, on 13 August 1391, suffered first-hand the consequences of the Christian attack on the Jewish quarter in Lleida.

The most notable materials found in the rubble left by the fire – which would have formed part of the family's assets in the late fourteenth century – include a set made up of a jar, its support (in the form of an architectural model to scale) and the remains of a possible Almohad era ewer, made in a Murcia workshop. These exceptional pieces provide an insight into the level of the commercial relations that existed with the southern Peninsula and the purchasing power of this Jewish family before the attack on their home. The materials recovered in other parts of the dig, which are still under study and are not presented in this article, highlight how differently the Jewish community lived from their Christian neighbours, with items like a hanukkiah and skeletal remains related to the exclusive eating patterns of the community, and objects of very diverse origins (peninsular and Mediterranean) that would have been rare in a fourteenth-century Christian context.

A portion of these personal artefacts can be found in the La Cuirassa park dedicated to the city's historical memory, where texts, drawings, photographs and QR images along the walkways provide information about the history and customs of a community that formed an essential part of the institutions and economic progress of the late medieval city. Important challenges still lie ahead, such as completing the excavation of the house burned down during the pogrom, as well as the adjoining houses and streets that surrounded them. These remains are located in the extreme northwest corner of the Jewish quarter and are protected and covered by the park garden.

On Love, Social Class and Death: The Literary Constants in the *Romansos* of Moiz Habib

Tania García Arévalo

Universidad de Granada

Little is known about Moiz Habib, a Sephardic author whose literary career flourished during the first half of the twentieth century, primarily in Istanbul. He is believed to have been born in Izmir, Turkey in 1892, but it is only possible to conjecture about the time and place of his death. Despite this lack of biographical information, his publication history has been established: a total of fourteen works produced between 1921 and 1931. This time, in turn, can be divided into three periods: the first (1921-28), characterized by the composition of stories and *romansos* in Aljamiado, including *El molino de oro* and *La mujer fornikadera*, with different publishing houses, such as Aboab and Ardití, among others; a second (1929-30), during which time he wrote no known works; and a third (1931), during which he produced almost half of his total output in the form of *romansos*, written using Latin characters and distributed only by the publisher Rekabet. In contrast to the works written during the first period, which contain a greater variety of themes and characters, those from the third period conform to a plot triangle that continually modulates the action: love, protagonists from different social strata and the many scenarios in which death, as a means or an end, appears linked to love.

To shed light on this hitherto overlooked author, this study analyses the way in which love, social class and death drive the actions of Habib's protagonists in his third-period works through the textual study of the following selected pieces: *El amor de Antonio por su mujer* (16 pp.); *El amor de Matilda* (16 pp.); *Sinko matados por su mujer* (27 pp.); *La ermoza Luisa i su amante* (15 pp.) and *Porke mato a su mujer* (32 pp.). All of these are treated as originals, in so far as no analyses exist that make it possible to determine their potential sources. Their influences, however, are clear in the context of the modern Sephardic narrative, because of the more than evident Gallicization of the texts, seen in the places where the action unfolds, the names of the characters, the lexicon and the description of customs that Habib includes as part of the text beyond the development of the action, and which are superfluous in some cases. The leitmotifs present the female characters as the architects of the plots, with the male characters being relegated to a fate that is determined by the female protagonists who act, in all cases, as articulations or hinges between these literary constants. A more profound examination of the formulation of the author's mature literary style will require a comparison of all the data extracted from these texts with the works written by Habib during his first phase.