

on until their tenth birthdays, when El Mochito finally had enough. The little old man looked at the triplets in the eyes and said, “Dress your own selves! Grow up, you *sinvergüenza mamones!*”

Belen and Belinda were petite, with dark complexions. They had jet-black hair, full and smiling lips, black eyes, and dimples. They looked like Tía Antonia, albeit not as exotic, because my aunt was a raving beauty. Levi had green eyes and red, curly hair like my Tío Gibi. Before we were teenagers, Levi was as tall as me and had as much muscle as I did. I had always been a strong child. Even as a little boy, Levi had a husky voice like Padrecito. When singing with the family, Levi sang his heart out, much to the delight of Tío Gibi and Tía Antonia, who both had incredible singing voices.

When I was a child and the holiday *fiestas* of *rosa y rana* and *¿Ké va pasando?* were approaching, El Mochito would take my hand and together we'd go from house to house to announce my upcoming birthday. The announcement wasn't made because the people we saw were already invited to my party. Instead, we simply reminded people that my birthday came the Sunday before *rosa y rana* and *¿Ké va pasando?*. As he spread the news of my upcoming birthday, El Mochito rarely let me speak, even when questions were directed at me.

Our annual journey and its meaning became a joke around the surrounding villages. Someone would ask, laughing, “*¿Ké va pasando?*” Whoever heard the question would smile and answer, “*Rosa y rana* and Yisraela's birthday!” Everyone smiled except for Mana Dulcinea, who was the owner of the tiny candy store on the side of the road where students bought penny candy and bubblegum on credit. Everyone called her “Mana Dulce.” In Spanish, *dulce* means candy. She referred to herself as Dulce even though her personality was anything but sweet. Most of the boys called her “*Dulce Agria*” instead—the Spanish term for sourball.

I remember that one time, as we approached the door of the candy store to announce my birthday, Mana Dulce said, “Yisraela, it's your birthday again! How nice!” Looking at me in the eyes, she continued, “How old will you be this year, *mi reina?*” “She'll be

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seven, *señora*,” El Mochito answered respectfully. But Mana Dulce wasn’t satisfied and furrowed her brow as if she was trying to remember something important. “I believe that a year ago her birthday came on the fifteenth. The year before that...let’s see. Hmm, was it September twentieth? My, I can’t keep track. Who keeps changing it?” “Padrecito changes the date,” El Mochito scowled in reply.

With her hands on her hips, Mana Dulce continued to harangue the pair of us. “Does Rabino Benjamin change her age, too?” Like an old hen, she cackled, “What calendar does he use?” Then she winked at me and lowered her voice, “Is it the *Marrano* calendar?” Her voice lingered over the word. *Marrano* is slang for “pig” and is used as a derogatory word to describe the Spanish Jews.

Completely confused, El Mochito pondered aloud, “I don’t believe pigs have a calendar, *señora*. I never heard of pigs reading, and anyway we don’t have pigs on the ranch. We only have cows, sheep, goats, hens, horses, turkeys, roosters, and my dog, Chueco. They are all first cousins!” “*¡Mira nomás!* First cousins, no less!” replied Mana Dulce. “That crazy fool rabbi passed *la lokura* to the rest of his family! Oh well, live and learn. *¡Pobrecitos inocentes!*” El Mochito had heard enough and he tore back, “*Pues, ¿ké le importa, vieja entremetida?* It’s none of your business!” And off we went to the next house.

It didn’t matter on which date my birthday came, we celebrated it. I’ll never forget my seventh birthday. That morning, I did not awaken to El Mochito sounding the *shofar* as usual. Instead, Madrecita came and sat at my bedside and gently said, “Wake up, my love, wake up. Listen, Yisraela, come look at this glorious morning, just like the mornings when King David sang to all the beautiful maidens.”

I heard voices singing “Las Manañitas.” “Wake up, wake up! Look, the day has dawned! Wake up, wake up! Look, the day has dawned!” The walk from my bed to the window seemed to take forever because I was so groggy with sleep. I often found it difficult to wake up. Since as long as I can remember, I would

suddenly and inexplicably fall asleep, especially when I became upset. On other occasions, it was almost impossible to wake me up at all. But today was my birthday. I wanted to wake up, and to do so right away.

My grandmother stood at the window and said sweetly to me, “Listen to the music, just for you. *Una serenata pa mi amorcito, Yisraela.*” My heart lilted when I saw that my grandfather was there with his violin, my Tío Moises on the trumpet, Tío Gibi on the accordion, and Tía Antonia on the *guitarrón*. I saw Levi, Belen, and Belinda, each on a guitar. And I saw my dear old El Mochito playing his tambourine. I could hear the sweet and pure voices of my Mami and Papi singing:

*Éstas son las mañanitas  
Ke kantaba el Rey David  
Hoy por ser día de tu santo  
Te las kantamos a ti.*

*¡Despierta, mi vien despierta!  
Mira, ke dya amanezió  
Ya los pashariyos kantan  
La luna ya se metió.*

As soon as “*Las Mañanitas*” came to an end, El Mochito climbed up onto the rooftop and sounded *el kuerno*, the *shofar*. The seven well-timed trumpet blasts, each reverberating from cliff to canyon to *arroyo* and back to my window, made me feel like a princess. Still in my nightgown, I ran out to the courtyard with Madrecita. As soon as we emerged, everyone sang, “Happy *verde* to djew.” El Mochito could not pronounce the word “birthday” and instead he sang the word “*verde*,” which means green. Nor could he pronounce the word “you” properly and said, “djew.” So as not to insult the little old man, everybody sang, “Happy *verde* to djew.” It was an unspoken house rule that everyone should do this, because El Mochito was a gift from G–d.

My mother said to me, “And now we have something very special for you, *mi’jita*.” She walked out of the courtyard and came back

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with the most beautiful palomino I've ever seen! The horse walked right up to me and lowered his head like a shy little boy. All I could do was look at him and smile. I had never seen such a beautiful creature. "What are you going to name him?" Padrecito asked. "Doesn't he have a name?" "It's your horse and it's you who should give him his name," replied Padrecito. Since El Mochito was my best friend, I asked in a chipper voice, "May I name him Mochito?" "That's my name!" El Mochito objected crossly. "Name him something else." I thought for a moment and then announced proudly, "I'll name him Horse." "That's a very noble name," Padrecito agreed. "Horse shall be his name."

As soon as everyone was seated at the breakfast table, Padrecito blessed us with the *Shema*. "Hear ye, O' Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One." Other prayers and hymns composed by Padrecito or our Ladino ancestors followed. Quite often, we sang selected Presbyterian hymns, like "Blessed Be the Tie that Binds" and "The Church's One Foundation." Sometimes the hymns were really lively, because El Mochito would sing both high and low at the same time. He could not carry a tune, but no one seemed to mind, since he was a gift from G-d.

Breakfast was always delicious. Once we were done, everyone took up an instrument: guitar, violin, tambourine, trumpet, flute, accordion, or piano. Added to this was percussion, which El Mochito mastered. Even though he had only six fingers, the old man hammered out his forceful rhythms as we tapped our toes to the fast beat and applauded. At El Mochito's insistence, singing always began and ended with his favorite hymns: "*Bendito, bendito, bendito sea Dio*" and "*Oh, Maria madre mia*." On my birthday, El Mochito would repeat, "*¿Ké va pasando?*" The family merrily replied, "*Rosa y rana* and Yisraela's birthday!"

Mami and Madrecita cooked all day-long for my birthday dinner. Children my age were not invited to the party because in those days it wasn't the custom for young children to be invited to formal suppers at which the family gathered around the table and took their seats with a certain air of solemnity. On my birthday, I was the guest of honor and permitted to sit in Madrecita's chair, right

next to Padrecito, who always held court at supper like a king at the head of his table.

The triplets had each received a horse on their sixth birthdays but afterwards paid little or no attention to their animals. This was heartbreaking for my Tío Gibi and Tía Antonia, who had hoped that their children would enjoy riding. Instead, my three cousins preferred tormenting the frogs at the nearby pond or simply fishing. And yet, as much as I begged them, the triplets were extremely stingy and never let me borrow their horses. Mami always let me borrow hers, however. Tía Antonia and I would go riding for hours. Next to El Mochito, Tía Antonia had been my best friend. However, from my seventh birthday forward, Horse became my best friend, followed by El Mochito, and then Tía Antonia.

Each of us children also owned a few sheep which we herded. Madrecita believed in teaching her grandchildren the value of ownership—never mind that there were thousands of sheep on our ranch. She believed that it was better for us to own sheep and to learn hard work than to grow up to be gamblers like Padrecito. Each weekday morning, Madrecita packed our lunches and off we went to the *korral* to let our sheep out. The pasture was barely across the pond, but that didn't matter. At issue was responsibility. As we tended our sheep, the triplets and I composed silly poetry. Nothing ever made sense, but that didn't matter. When early afternoon came, someone from the ranch would come to relieve us of our duties and we would go home to nap.

El Mochito's only job on the ranch was to entertain my triplet cousins and me. From El Mochito, we learned how gold becomes enchanted when buried and that it sinks deep into the earth because it has been cursed. When people die without telling family members where their gold is buried, their spirits keep strangers away by killing them when they come too close to the buried treasure. El Mochito insisted that the hidden gold had to be found or stars will eventually suck away its glitter and turn it into tin. "Why would the stars want to suck away the glitter?" we asked. El Mochito always gave the same answer. "The world is so big that the stars need help from earth. The only way they can light up the

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sky at night is by sucking up the glitter from gold, especially buried gold.” We couldn’t believe it. Why would *mi* Tatita Dio put gold on earth only to have the stars suck up its glitter? But of course El Mochito had an explanation for that: “How else could we see in the dark if it wasn’t for the glitter the stars suck up from the gold? Imagine! Black stars! Nobody would be able to see at night!” The triplets and I couldn’t imagine black stars.

Quite often, El Mochito reminded us that there was gold buried right there on our ranch. Sometimes when I couldn’t sleep at night, I would get up and look out of the window to see if I could see the stars sucking up the glitter. After a while, I’d get back into bed and cuddle up next to Madrecita, thankful that our gold was still untouched by the stars. I could hear the coyotes howling at the moon, but that was all right, since the moon wasn’t sucking up the glitter from our gold. Not at any rate according to El Mochito.

There were many times when everyone was asleep that I thought of walking down the hill to the river to check if the stars might be sucking up the gold. Oh, how quickly I always changed my mind—and for good reason, too. El Mochito warned us that La Llorona was looking for boys and girls so that she could take them away, never to be seen again.

“Never go near the river unless I go with you,” he cautioned us. “If La Llorona doesn’t take you, for sure *los difuntos* will. You must be very careful with the dead. They grab boys and girls by their legs and pull them underground— never, but never to be seen again! Then you have the witches. Those *brujas* hold their dances every night.”

The triplets and I listened to El Mochito with our eyes closed so that the witches couldn’t see us. “Guess who dances with the witches?” El Mochito asked wickedly. We were too scared to ask, but he told us anyway. “Demons! Hundreds of demons that come up from the burning hell to dance with the old hags! One time, I saw a goat dancing with a mean-looking, black she-dog. The goat was dressed in black pants, a black coat with tails, a white shirt, and a bowtie. On his head, he wore a silk tophat that had two holes

in it and horns stuck out! I looked closely and saw his long, long tail dragging from under the coattails. And those hoofs! Oh G-d! Those hoofs were so sharp they could carve an *arroyo* from the top of your head to the tip of your toes. ¡*Es un kabrón!* Bad news!”

El Mochito continued, “And I saw another mean, black she-dog that wore nothing but her mangy, torn coat. Balls of fire were coming out of her eyes as she snorted through her nose. The scary part was the blood drooling from her mouth right down to her paws. For sure, she had just finished eating someone alive! I could hear a beedy-weedy voice calling out, 'Please, please, let me out of here!’“

The triplets and I almost died of fright! We didn't want to hear any more, but at the same time, we wanted to know the rest of the story. “And let me tell you about the musicians,” El Mochito continued. “You know who plays for them? Bats! That's right! Bats flutter their wings and create the scariest music ever! But of course all the evil devils and mean witches love the music. They dance until almost sun-up, then go back to their haunted houses and sleep inside black coffins. For blankets they use cobwebs with black spiders tangled all over in them.”

Since El Mochito was so sure there was gold on our very own ranch, his buried treasure stories fascinated us. One evening, the triplets and I were playing hide- and-go-seek in the orchard. The moon and the stars illuminated the area around us. We were hiding from Belen behind the fruit trees when we heard El Mochito approaching, whistling a happy tune. “Tiooo! Tiooo!” He couldn't whistle too well, because he only had one tooth in his whole mouth. We all ran to meet him.

“Please tell us a story,” we begged. We loved his stories. El Mochito had just started a story when I spotted an odd and unaccountable light dancing about in the woods on the other side of the river. Then we all heard strange, garbled noises. “Look!” I yelled. We all stood up. “It's a witch,” Belen said, peering into the darkness. “The ghosts are dancing,” Belinda guessed. “G-d is slapping the devil's face,” Levi laughed nervously. I had what I

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thought was the best answer: “A fox is giving birth.” “No, no,” El Mochito insisted, “It’s buried treasure! The stars are reaching down to suck the glitter from the gold at the end of the rainbow and turning it into tin!”

Agggghhh! We had caught the stars in the act! How could we rescue the gold? I suggested that we all go look for the buried treasure before the stars could turn it all into tin. El Mochito warned us, “The mean spirits might kill us! They protect the gold with their lives. No, we can’t go. *¡Ni modo, amigos!* Absolutely not! I’m afraid of mean spirits.” At that moment, I didn’t believe in mean spirits and felt that we should go dig up the gold right away. The triplets were more obedient than I was and suggested that we ask our parents’ permission first. But we would never be permitted to go to the other side of the river at night, so I suggested that we take a vote to go or not go. El Mochito said nothing. He just told the stories. The vote was yes and since it was my idea, I led the caravan. The rest of the group followed me, including El Mochito, who was last in line.

In order to get to the treasure, we had to cross the road, walk down a steep hill, wade across the Río Chiquito, traverse a thicket, and then climb up a hill on the other side of the valley. The trail was difficult even in the daytime. At night by the light of the moon it was downright treacherous. Heading for the light we believed to be emanating from the buried gold, we went straight down another hill that was overgrown with cactus and prickly bushes of *rosa de castilla*. There were many dried-up branches, cobbles, and large rocks.

As I descended, some of the rocks came loose. All of us slipped, slid, and fell as the rocks rolled down the hill. Finally, we reached the river below. We took our shoes off so we could cross. When our feet touched the water, we screamed. It was bitter-cold! The rapid flow swirled around our legs, threatening to pull us under.

Belen’s foot got caught between two large rocks and, as she struggled to loosen it she lost her balance and fell into the rushing current. El Mochito and I dragged her out. Levi threatened to run



back to the house. He turned to go but I called him back and held his hand as we plunged on, rushing to find our buried treasure before the stars turned it all into tin.

Belen and Belinda begged me to lead them back across to the other bank and safely home, but I insisted that we all keep moving forward. By the time we got across the river, we were thoroughly soaked. We continued the trek anyway. We lost the footpath and fought brambles and thickets that stung and scratched with every step and whipped those walking behind. Soon the girls were crying and begging me to *please, please turn back*, but I shamed them and we kept going. As we climbed each hill that was between us and the treasure, the mysterious light seemed to disappear, only to reappear further on. El Mochito kept telling us that the spirits were angry and were playing tricks on us. He was starting to sound miserable, too.

When we arrived at the spot where we had first seen the light, our arms, legs and faces were covered with scratches. Belinda was still crying. Worse yet, the light had disappeared. Then everyone blamed me because the stars had already sucked the glitter and turned the gold into tin. I ordered them to start digging anyway.

“We have no shovels to dig with, you *tonta*,” said Levi. “Now Levi,” El Mochito reminded him, “you voted to come out here.” “I have an idea,” I told them. “Levi and Mochito can dig with their fingers, while Belinda and Belen scoop the dirt out with their hands. And, because it is my idea, I’ll grab the gold and run.” “I don’t have very many fingers,” El Mochito complained. “Yeah, and Yisraela only has half a brain!” Levi yelled. I grabbed Levi by the throat and told him to repeat that again. “Tell me again what you just said about my brain!” I was indeed sensitive about this remark because of my sleeping affliction. “I can’t! You’re choking me! Let me go!” he gasped. “Not yet, you disrespectful brat! Do you promise to never say ever again that I only have half a brain?” I said as I pressed down on him. “I promise!” he choked out. “Repeat after me: Yisraela is very smart and can out-think me because I’m a no-brain idiot!” “Yisraela, you’re hurting me!” Levi sputtered. “Repeat or I’ll squeeze you even harder!” “Okay!

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Yisraela can out-think me. I'm a no-brain idiot!" I let go of him and said calmly, "There, don't you feel much better? Just remember that I'm stronger than you and can out-think you. *¿Estamos?*"

On our return journey home, El Mochito led the way. No one wanted to hold my hand or even to speak to me. I walked alone close behind them. When we approached the river again, we suddenly heard strange cries nearby. "Aoooooo! Aoooooo!" We all froze. "Aoooooo! Aoooooo!" "La Llorona! The dead-walking witch!" Levi cried out. "She's going to kill us!" As we picked our way through the thicket, the trees began to shake furiously. We were scared to death. I began to pray aloud, "*Santa Maria, Madre del Dio. Dame tortilla y pan pa los dos.* Hail Mary, Mother of G-d, give me a tortilla and bread for us both." "What kind of a prayer is that?" Levi yelled. "It's the prayer that you taught me!" I answered. "I never taught you that prayer!" "Stop fighting!" El Mochito cautioned in a whisper. "Walk softly and lower your voices." By that time we were in the middle of the Río Chiquito and my feelings of fright were almost killing me. All of a sudden, I heard dry twigs snapping. I was sure that La Llorona or the devil must be lurking behind the nearby trees. We continued to walk softly and, one by one, we crossed the river as cautiously as possible. I had just barely reached the far bank when a large, hairy hand grabbed mine! I screamed and screamed, but the hairy hand would not let go!

Everyone took off running, leaving me alone as the hand held firmly onto mine. I screamed and screamed and kept on screaming. I tried to tear myself loose, but the hand held tight. In the light of the moon, I could see that it had long, crooked devil claws. I tried to kick, but couldn't break free! "Aaagh! Aaagh! Aoooooo!" the thing shrieked, "Aoooooo!" By tugging and pulling hard, I was finally able to break away. I ran as fast as I could until I became so weary that I could hardly walk. I was looking for a place to lie down when I came to a long, bright-red tunnel that I hadn't seen before. I was shocked to find a little angel dressed in a brilliant, white robe and sitting on a misty-looking rainbow. I was surprised to see that she looked exactly like me. She pulled me toward her.

But then the evil hand caught up to me! “Aooooooo!” The hairy hand gripped me again very tightly and tried to pull me back the other way! The little angel struggled with all her might to pull me onto the rainbow with her to safety.

From far, far, far away, I heard someone calling my name. I woke up suddenly. The evil hand let go of mine. My little angel also vanished. “Yisraela, where are you?” a voice called in the darkness. I shook my head, trying to wake up. I could hear men calling in the distance, “Yisraela!”

Blinking in the light of the moon, I stood up and saw my Papi. I ran up the hill into his arms. He carried me all the way to back to the ranch and into Madrecita’s kitchen where Padrecito, Mami, and Madrecita were waiting, frantic with worry. No sooner had Papi set me down than he was out the door, racing off into the darkness to locate the others. “Don’t go!” I screamed after him. “The evil hand will get you!”

When Padrecito explained that Papi had to go find El Mochito and the triplets, I screamed louder, “The evil hand must have taken them! It’s out there. It was trying to kill me!” Then it dawned on me that my aunt wasn’t there. “Where is Tía Antonia?” “She’s out with your Papi, Tío Gibi, and Tío Moises looking for El Mochito and the triplets,” Padrecito said calmly. “The hand is going to kill them,” I sobbed. “It’s just waiting to grab someone else. And maybe there are more evil hands!”

Just then we heard the search party calling out to those of us waiting at home. “We found them! We’re coming! They’re all fine!” Everyone was soaking wet. Tía Antonia dropped to the floor, half out of relief and half out of exhaustion. After a few minutes, she recovered her composure and began to laugh uncontrollably. Pointing at Tío Gibi, she said, “Honey, you look like a wet cat! Moises you–you–you look like a wet Chueco! You, Mochito, look like a drowned beaver!”

Standing as tall as a little old man can stand, El Mochito placed his hands on his hips and told Tía Antonia in a no-nonsense tone, “And

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you look like a dirty dishrag!”

Papi joined Tía Antonia in laughter. Then Tía Antonia noticed that my Papi wasn't wet. She scolded him, “Daniel, you're dry. How dare you?” Mana Timia, the housekeeper said, “I can take care of that!” Without hesitation, she grabbed a bucket of water and dumped it on Papi's head. Except for Madrecita, Padrecito, the triplets, El Mochito, and me, everyone started laughing. Then Madrecita stood up and ordered everyone to go home and change into dry clothes. “Now! Then we have some unfinished business to take care of.” “After you get dressed, I want all of you to come right back—in exactly ten minutes,” Padrecito ordered. And, in ten minutes flat, we were all dry and sitting around the table ready to face the music.

As I sat there on Madrecita's lap, my Padrecito took a chair at my side and asked, “What were you doing by the river?” “We were looking for gold,” I told him. “Who gave you permission?” he wanted to know. Then right away the triplets blamed me for everything. They blamed me because they were wet, because they were scratched and bruised, and because they had lost their shoes. And those were just the nice things they said about me. Levi told them I was a murderer and had tried to kill him. Madrecita interrupted him. “Levi, how can you say that?” “Because she had him by the throat and wouldn't let go!” Belinda said as she held her own throat. “I'm afraid of her!” Then she pretended to cry. “And I saw her do it!” Belen burst out, crying for real. “I don't want to hear any more *chismes!*” Padrecito told them sternly. “I've watched how the three of you gang up on Yisraela.” My grandfather turned to me and asked in an equally stern voice, “Did you grab Levi by the throat?” “Yes!” I replied. “He said that I only have half a brain!” My faithful friend Mochito came to my rescue. “He sure did say that to her! I heard him. Levi often tells her that. This time she got really, really angry and grabbed him by the throat!” El Mochito mimicked the action.

“This has gone too far,” Padrecito said. “I will not have any of you telling Yisraela that she only has half a brain.” He looked directly at the triplets, who shrank in their chairs. El Mochito pleaded,

“Please don’t be angry, Padrecito. I went along to take care of them and to make sure that they were safe.” “You did right,” Padrecito assured him gently. “You are a good man.” Then he turned to me. “Who do you think grabbed you, *mi ijita*?” “The devil,” I sobbed. “La Llorona! It was La Llorona!” Levi interrupted. “La Llorona? What makes you think it was La Llorona?” Padrecito asked. El Mochito chimed in, “Because of the way she cries: ‘Aooooooo!’ ‘Aooooooo!’” El Mochito’s imitations were almost as scary as the real thing. He continued, “I don’t like to go down to the river at night. Several times, I got caught in the dark and *la pinche kabrona* has been right there waiting to take me—but I’ve always been ready to outrun her.”

At that moment, I agreed that it must have been La Llorona who grabbed me because I believed that El Mochito knew everything. I looked back to Padrecito and saw from his stern but gentle face that the discussion had ended. However, the events of that night didn’t stop me from looking out my window from time to time to see if I could catch the stars sucking up the glitter. And, once in a while, I did see lights moving in the distance. I figured that the witches and the demons were there holding their dances, just like El Mochito said. The thought of this was not pleasant, and it did frighten me some, but then I’d think of the little angel who had helped me escape the devil’s hairy hand. That thought truly warmed my heart, because I knew that G–d had blessed me with a guardian angel. My other guardian angel continued to be El Mochito, who had watched over me since the day I was born.

### Limited New Mexico Area Literature Survey

Mark L. Bennett

Many books about New Mexico do not directly discuss *anusim/ conversos*, but instead they contain details of New Mexico’s social and cultural history that may unintentionally corroborate claims regarding the presence of crypto Jews/*conversos* in the region. For example, author Ramon A. Gutierrez’s *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away* well documents endogamous marriage.<sup>1</sup> In-group marriage patterns being a notable feature of Jewish marriage

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patterns. (The legal history of first cousin marriages in New Mexico may warrant further research).

The non-normative Catholicism of this area may also indicate a crypto-Jewish presence and is detailed in Michael P. Carroll's *The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico*. He states that "the Hispano experience in New Mexico before 1800 seems marked by the general *absence* of elements that in other parts of the Catholic world are the hallmarks of popular Catholicism"<sup>2</sup> and "the surviving documentary record simply does not say very much about the religious beliefs and practices of the Hispano settlers in colonial New Mexico."<sup>3</sup>

However, unlike Gutierrez and others who have ignored the converso element, Carroll adopts the Neulander hypothesis. This stance is particularly evident in Carroll's 2002 *Society of Religion* article, "The Debate over a crypto-Jewish Presence in New Mexico: The Role of Ethnographic Allegory and Orientalism." While very informative and generally balanced, he misses the relationship between the later Ashkenazi Jews and people such as Archbishop Lamy.<sup>4</sup> He also makes the statement: "another feature of life in colonial New Mexico would have made it an unappealing destination to crypto Jews living in Mexico: the near-complete absence of mercantile activity."<sup>5</sup>

While Carroll's statement is accurate, it does not acknowledge the mercantile activity which did emerge; nor does it acknowledge that the majority of Iberian-origin Jews were artisans, as were most urban people of that time. As detailed by historian Susan Calafate Boyle in her work, *Los Capitalistas, Hispano Merchants and the Santa Fe Trade*,<sup>6</sup> trade began as soon as possible, starting with illicit trade partly with Native Americans.

By the 1720's commerce with French traders aroused the interest of Mexico City officialdom. New Mexico exports always filled the returning supply caravans from central Mexico. A mule pack-system was developed that was later adopted by the US Army as the superior technology. By the time of the Santa Fe Trail an international trade flourished with European goods entering

Mexico via the Santa Fe hub. Many scholars believe that the people and families she describes are of converso origin. Furthermore, due to Carroll's acceptance of Neulander's hypothesis, evidence of *conversos* as Penitentes is also skipped.

*Marranos on the Moradas, Secret Jews and Penitentes in the Southwestern United States from 1590 to 1890* by Norman Simms explains the social psychology, or perhaps, social pathology of Penitentes who were also crypto Jews.<sup>7</sup> Oral histories of present Penitentes of converso descent are presented in Gloria Golden's *Remnants of Crypto Jews among Hispanic Americans*.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, *The Penitente Brotherhood, Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico* contains many "anomalous" facts such as reciting the sudario for the dead or wearing the sambenito.

*The People of El Valle: A History of the Spanish Colonials in the San Luis Valley* by Olibama Lopez-Tushar provides detailed genealogies of the Valley families. Many are of converso origin, as noted in the October 2008 *Smithsonian Magazine* article "The 'Secret Jews' of San Luis Valley" by Jeff Wheelwright.<sup>9</sup> Lopez-Tushar, like others, ignores this and instead fills her book with statements like: "The funeral took place the following day, after which neighbors again came to extend condolences."<sup>10</sup> Of the colcha stitch, Lopez-Tushar writes:

This method of embroidery seems to be strictly an invention in New Mexico, carried into Southern Colorado. There is only one sample found in Spain and it is thought it may have been taken there by a visitor. It never has been used in Old Mexico, nor is it found on embroidery traced as far back as the 15th century.

Regarding the colcha stitch there are various contrary opinions to Lopez-Tushar's view. "The colcha stitch is similar to the stitch used by Jewish women making fine silk altar cloths, and to the Bokhara stitch, an embroidery stitch used in Turkey prior to the Muslim conquest" states Santa Fe's Museums of Spanish Colonial Art website. Bellaonline.com adds, "The colcha embroidery stitch... dates back to Turkestan in AD 709." One can easily conclude that an embroidery stitch from Turkestan traveled over a

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Jewish trade network to the Sephardim in the Mediterranean Basin and then to New Mexico and Colorado. It also should be noted that the San Luis Valley of Colorado and Turkestan have the same elevation, topography, climate, etc. and the types of wool would have similar qualities facilitating similar techniques. The many sources that explain the other origins for this stitch seem to confuse the designs with the physical stitch/technique. Examples from Spain may not have survived because they may have been destroyed with the synagogues.

*The People of El Valle* has a Foreword by Ken Salazar of San Luis Valley origin and current American Secretary of the Interior. This book contains another Foreword by Daniel T. Valdes, also from the San Luis Valley. He describes the keeping of Spanish traditions as “the faith of their fathers.”<sup>11</sup> His word choice could easily be a double-entendre. I say that knowing Dr. Valdes, having been his undergraduate research assistant.

Mark Bennett holds a Master’s degree and has a true passion for history. He is an avid amateur researcher of crypto Jews.

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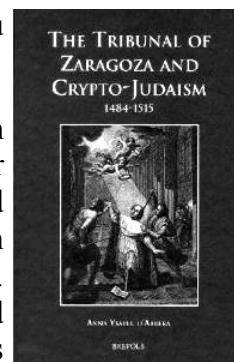
11. *Ibid.*, x.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Anna Ysabel D'Abrera, *The Tribunal of Zaragoza and Crypto Judaism*. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2008), 240 pages. Reviewed by David Ben Yosef**

The book *The Tribunal of Zaragoza and Crypto-Judaism 1484-1515* is an important scholarly work which sheds light into historical proof of the crypto-Jewish experience in the fifteenth century. During that time period the inquisitorial tribunal tried and prosecuted countless “Catholic” heretics for the crime of Judaizing. D'Abrera's profound understanding of the subject exposes the social and political issues connected with this crucial part of Jewish history as well as the controversies that are part of this academic field. D'Abrera shows the basis for this persecution. The 1484 Valencian Edict of Grace for example stated that those who partook of the following should be prosecuted by the Inquisition: “if you have believed, taught or said you believe something against the Catholic faith or if you know anyone who has blasphemed.”<sup>1</sup>

D'Abrera not only addresses how the Inquisition persecuted the *anusim* systematically, but her research adds important facts to the limited resources on this subject. Her scholarly approach documents and explains the sources thoroughly. The book exposes the Inquisitional record, and lets it speak for itself something other scholars fail to do in many cases. She addresses many important issues not dealt with by other scholars, such as Ben Zion Netanyahu, Norman Roth and Henry Kamen. The formerly mentioned scholars view *conversos* not as crypto Jews, but as sincere Catholics who were falsely accused of practicing Judaism due to their Jewish lineage. On the other hand Haim Beinart and Yitzhak Baer, show from multiple sources that many crypto Jews



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were Jewish martyrs who died honoring Torah, or at least committed Jews in hiding. D'Abrera is part of the new generation of scholars who study the Inquisitional records to find clues which point to a real crypto-Jewish community. These findings are not based on a preconceived agenda, but built on a case based on historical evidence. She writes, “The inquisitors' questions and conduct throughout the trials indicate that they were far more interested in the religious behavior of the defendant after he or she had been received into the Church, rather than presuming to judge whether the conversion had been genuine or not.”<sup>2</sup>

She also contends with contemporary scholars such as Henry Kamen who “believes that the inquisitors possessed minimal understanding of Jewish religious practices” and were not able to adequately document Jewish practice, something she shows to be contrary to the available evidence.<sup>3</sup> The inquisitors possessed books such as *Directorioum inquisitorioum* [a manual on Judaism created by Catholic scholars], which assisted them in being able to distinguish Jewish practices from false accusations.<sup>4</sup>

D'Abrera's conclusions are that the *anusim* in Christian Spain, specifically Zaragoza, experienced many challenges while in captivity. D' Abrera further asserts that the doubt raised by some scholars regarding the historical legitimacy of such an interpretation is driven by their own philosophical biases. To her, Benzion Netanyahu's elaborate theory not only undermines their Jewish practices as real but envisions the inquisitors as having the power to falsify their testimonies for political purposes. This challenges the existence of sincere crypto Jews and builds a case against their halachic status. Netanyahu bases his arguments on the negative view that some rabbis had towards crypto Jews during that time period. These rabbis (either in exile or from other communities not affected by the persecution) saw them as *meshumadim* (willing converts) rather than *anusim* (forced ones). They were not able to fathom that Jews would partake in Christian idolatry and embrace the theologies of the Catholic Church. D'Abrera shows how in Valencia in 1484 the inquisitors worked in collaboration with several Jewish communities, “some of which may have been particularly antagonistic toward *conversos*, whom

they saw as traitors.”<sup>5</sup>

By only using Jewish sources such as rabbinic *responsa* as legitimate sources of information, Netanyahu cripples his research and findings. His “Zionist Revisionist belief that Jews will always be prevented from assimilating while living among non-Jews” has caused scholarship to view this as an anti-Semitic conflict among Catholics instead of part of the history of anti-Judaism in Christian Europe.<sup>6</sup> If this is followed to its logical conclusion, scholars such as Kamen are justified to believe that the Inquisition was correct in disciplining crypto Jews for partaking of the “remnants of their former religion.”<sup>7</sup>

D'Abrera exposes the prejudices of those scholars who agree with Netanyahu as they choose not to consult or consider available sources in their research. She brings this important information to public attention in an engaging and profound way, addressing issues that only academics are aware of. By retelling of the struggles of Spanish Jews who were under Christian rule through well documented cases, she shows how the Inquisition was very thorough in their interrogations. The book is composed of detailed records of the observances kept by crypto Jews, such as Shabbat, High Holidays, *kashrut* practices, as well as prayers, all of which paint a picture of the religious devotion to Judaism on the part of the *anusim* of Zaragoza. The defendants not only possessed items such as *siddurim* (prayer books), but used them in liturgical services. These accounts D'Abrera argues, validate their Jewish identity, and show that these practices were not simply cultural vestiges. “When preparing an arraignment, the prosecution included such external manifestations of the internal religious beliefs of the accused as koshering meat or fasting for Yom Kippur and claimed that, by participating in Jewish rituals, the defendant was effectively declaring his or her religious affiliation.”<sup>8</sup>

Of particular concern is chapter 8 where D'Abrera documents the syncretistic view of salvation which some crypto Jews espoused. For example one of them believed that “[if] you believe in the Law of Moses and observe it, and so too the same in the faith of Jesus Christ and we will observe them both” as “you can be saved in

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either one of them.”<sup>9</sup> Something that traditional Jews and Christians would find objectionable. The identity struggles of these *anusim* are recorded with brutal honesty, showing the impact of their plight.

In the book's conclusion, she reiterates her thesis that “there appears to be little or no internal evidence within the records themselves that the inquisitors invented the charges of Judaizing or manipulated evidence in order to falsely condemn the accused.”<sup>10</sup> She drives this home as she shows that no evidence was fabricated by the Inquisition, and exposes how improbable this idea is. She quotes Yerushalmi's book *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* “To view the inquisitors as involved in what amounts to a universal conspiracy of fabrication is to ignore the mentality of men of a bygone day and to flatter them with Machiavellian intentions and capabilities beyond their reach.”<sup>11</sup>

D’Abrera concedes that there might be some exaggeration in some of the documentation available, but all scholars agree that “crypto-Judaism existed among some *conversos*.”<sup>12</sup> The problem lies in assuming that just because the accusations against the *conversos* were the same in different parts of the Spain and the New World that they were false and based on unfounded testimonies. D’Abrera clearly conveys a key element of Jewish practice—that by its very nature Judaism is monolithic in the way that it is expressed by individuals in different circumstances around the world.<sup>13</sup> The religious convictions of crypto Jews were constantly challenged and had to be recreated as they struggled to keep any semblance a Jewish identity. Through forced conversion to Catholicism, they lost their culture and their way of life as it was expressed through a spiritual connection to Sinai. According to *The Tribunal of Zaragoza and Crypto Judaism 1484-1515*, the Inquisition possibly succeeded in eradicating their Jewish identity but not without a fight.

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2. *Ibid.*, 51.

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4. Ibid., 57-8.
5. Ibid., 58.
6. Ibid., 20.
7. Ibid., 25.
8. Ibid., 172.
9. Ibid., 172.
10. Ibid., 7.
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**Avraham Milgram, *Portugal, Salazar and the Jews* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011), 324 pages. Reviewed by Rui Afonso.**

Avraham Milgram's *Portugal, Salazar and the Jews* is—and will doubtless remain—a landmark in studies on Portuguese dictator António de Oliveira Salazar and his handling of the question of Jewish refugees during World War Two (WWII). It shatters a number of myths that held sway for decades. The chief of these was the belief that somehow, and in contrast to a pervasive “closed door” policy in the West, Portugal welcomed Jewish refugees with open arms. Milgram's book documents conclusively that this was simply not the case.



Such a study is all the more convincing coming as it does from a historian with Milgram's credentials. A Brazilian as well as an Israeli citizen, Avraham Milgram received his Ph.D. in Contemporary Jewry from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was, for many years, an educator at the Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies, as well as Research Director of the Holocaust History Museum. He has published extensively on Brazilian and Portuguese Modern Jewish History, as well as helped edit Yad Vashem's *Encyclopedia of the Righteous among the Nations*. He has written a number of articles and books, including a ground breaking one on Brazil, the Vatican and the Jews.

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Milgram had already tackled some of the main issues of his new book in an article posted online by Yad Vashem: “Portugal, the Consuls, and the Jewish Refugees, 1938-1941.” In that article, Milgram demonstrates how, while attitudes among Portuguese diplomats varied, some—notably the Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux, Aristides de Sousa Mendes—were willing to defy the anti-semitic regulations of the Salazar regime in an attempt to help save Jews.

Milgram’s book, however, goes much further than the article and is necessarily much more all-encompassing.

The book consists of four large chapters. The first chapter deals with the specific nature of Portuguese antisemitism. In a country traditionally noted for its “mild costumes,” it is to be expected that Portuguese antisemitism was also “mild” at least by European standards. Milgram even discovers philosemitic elements in Portuguese history. Unlike his predecessors, Milgram is not naive enough, however, to deny the existence of antisemitism in Portuguese society and political policy prior to WWII. Even though his focus is clearly on World War II, Milgram deals extensively with the issue of crypto Jews in Portugal.

The second chapter explores “Portugal’s Policy on Jewish Refugees from 1938 to 1941.” In it, Milgram details how the Salazar regime, confronted with the possibility of an influx of Jewish refugees, also shut its doors. If this is the case, however, how did tens of thousands of refugees enter Portugal in 1940? Milgram is not entirely clear on this point, as we shall see.

The third chapter discusses Lisbon as the international headquarters of relief operations for WWII Jewish refugees. Milgram shows how co-operation between relief organizations was not always the rule. The leaders of some organizations, like Moses Amzalak, the president of the Lisbon Jewish community, were reluctant to ruffle the feathers of a regime intent on doing the minimum. Still others, such as community leaders Augusto d’Esaguy and Isaac Weismann, unofficial representatives of the World Jewish Congress, and Zionist Wilfred Israel, wanted to go much further,

but found that the Salazar regime had put insurmountable obstacles in their way.

The final chapter of Milgram's books addresses Portuguese rescue operations of Jewish refugees. The Salazar regime saw to it that most attempts to obtain entry into Portugal for Jewish refugees failed. This included attempts to save Jews of Portuguese origins in Holland and Greece. If Jews of Portuguese ancestry were helped in France, it was in part due to the efforts of diplomats who defied Salazar's orders—the shift in attitude likely being a result of the changing tide of the War. Eventually 137 French Jews were reluctantly allowed into Portugal. Similarly, because of the unilateral actions in Budapest by Portugal's diplomat, Sampaio Garrido, and the impending Allied victory, 1,000 Hungarian Jews were granted Portuguese papers and managed to save their lives.

Milgram's ability to embrace such a wealth of topics and materials in his typically laconic and clear manner is so remarkable that one is hesitant to criticize his work. For one, Milgram is a bit soft on the extent to which antisemitism played a role in the Salazar regime. Yes, other factors played a role in the policies of the regime, but the regime was profoundly and innately antisemitic. Also, Milgram does not give Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes his rightful due. The author suggests Sousa Mendes let in less than twenty percent of the 15 000 Jewish refugees who entered Portugal in 1940. If so, given the near impossibility of entering Portugal because of stringent regulations, who let in all the other refugees? How Milgram came up with his seemingly arbitrary statistic is not entirely clear. The available police and relief organization information would seem to indicate that the number of refugees (Jewish and other) who Sousa Mendes allowed passage into Portugal must be closer to 10 000 or more. In his recent biography of Salazar, Portuguese historian Ribeiro de Meneses concurs with this figure.

These shortcomings aside, this book is largely worth its hefty price and anyone interested in the subject should read it.

**Selected Reading List**

David Gitlitz

**Iberian and crypto Jews**(\*= general interest or introductory)

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## *News Notes*

### **Conference Dates selected for 2012**

Add July 24-26, 2012 to your calendar, the dates for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of SCJS in Albuquerque. The date has been moved back into July to permit educators to attend from communities with school starting dates in early August. We've been missing some old members because of the date-conflict and hopefully we will be seeing them, and newcomers, with the new dates. Look for updated information on the conference at <http://www.cryptojews.com>, in the Fall/Winter issue of *HaLapid* and in *La Granada*, upcoming online newsletter.

### **SCJS to Launch Online Newsletter**

*La Granada* (The Pomegranate), an online newsletter for members and friends, will begin appearing near the close of 2011. It will be emailed to those for whom we have email addresses, and will contain announcements, news, and features of interest. Editor Deborah Wohl Isard has developed a lively informational format and graphic design for what combines the elements of a newspaper and a magazine. It will appear at regular intervals, still to be determined, as well as when needed, to inform members more immediately.

### **“Like” SCJS on Facebook**

SCJS has a presence in Facebook under Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. Coordinator M. Miriam Herrera has just completed coordinating the original group page, in service since 2009, with a new, more accessible page for interested readers. The profile picture for the new site is the same as the Southwestern banner image that crosses the top of our website, [www.cryptojews.com](http://www.cryptojews.com). Members and friends are invited to visit, “like” us, post and comment. <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Society-for-Crypto-Judaic-Studies/180566498664080>

**JOSPICJ Mailed to Members**

The third edition of *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto Jews* was published this spring. Copies were distributed to members at the 2011 Conference in San Diego and mailed to members not attending. Editor in Chief Abraham Lavender writes “Welcome to an intellectual exchange involving secrecy, complexity and controversy, a scholarly educational perspective for both academicians and non-academicians.” SCJS is a partner in the publication of the annual journal, published by Florida International University.

**New Mexico Bound!**

**Mark July 22-24, 2012** on your calendars and plan a summer stop in Albuquerque for the annual SCJS conference. Although modern, this multicultural metropolis is more than 300 years old and the city remains strongly connected to its past. Aside from attending the conference, visitors can explore the ancient rock carvings at Petroglyph National Monument, visit the historic Old Town Plaza and travel along the famous Route 66, which spans the city.

**Hope to see you in Albuquerque!**



PRELIMINARY

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**For the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference**

**Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies to be held in  
Albuquerque, NM, July 22-24, 2012**

We invite papers on crypto Judaism from any discipline (e.g., anthropology, history, sociology, philosophy, literature, music, etc.) and from any geographic location or time period.

We also welcome papers on all aspects of the Sephardic experience and that of other communities exhibiting crypto-Jewish phenomena.

Papers breaking new ground in research on New Mexico and Southern Colorado are particularly welcome.

Interested scholars and professionals, including advanced graduate students, are invited to submit proposals for papers, presentations or workshops.

Proposals are also welcome from individuals with personal stories or other research relating to crypto Judaism.

Proposals may be for individual papers/presentations or for complete sessions on specific topics. Please indicate if presentation represents completed research or work in progress.

Conference presentation proposals must include a 200-word abstract and a brief bio.

Please send proposals or inquiries to  
Seth Ward, Religious Studies, University of Wyoming,  
at: [sward@uwyo.edu](mailto:sward@uwyo.edu).

**Proposal Deadline: April 1, 2012**

For information on our 21<sup>st</sup> conference (August, 2011), see the SCJS website at:

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## Featured Artist: Nitzah Avigayil

Nitzah Avigayil, née Mercedes Gail Gutiérrez, was born in East Los Angeles, California, near the end of World War II. Her parents were Mexican-American Activists. Her father, Félix, was from an old Californio family. Her mother, Rebecca Pérez Muñoz, was from an old *converso* Mexican family. As a second generation Mexican-American she studied hard and was awarded a full scholarship to Stanford University where she studied Pre-Medicine and Studio Art. Graduating in 1966, she was awarded a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship to study sculpture in Madrid, Spain. She went on to obtain a Masters degree in Sculpture from the University of California, Berkeley in 1970. Her work has been exhibited internationally, nationally and throughout California. In the late 1980s, she and her daughters began to study Judaism to learn more about her mother's family and her Jewish heritage. The influence of this reconnection pervades her subsequent work, in particular, her feelings of otherness and secrecy. Though trained as a sculptor, she began working with printing processes to use the transparency and resist techniques to express her "veiled" self and how it related to her Judaism. In 2007 she made Aliyah to Israel and began using her Hebrew name, Nitzah Avigayil Bat Rivkah v Abraham v Sara. Returning to Zion, Nitzah has encountered many of the roots of her identity as well as the multi-identified otherness common to the Jewish Nation.

Artist comments on the print "Our Hidden Light still Burns," featured on the back cover of this double issue: "There is a secret that has been in my family from the beginning. It lives behind closed doors and windows. It is whispered to the girl who will be a bride. It takes the uncles, fathers, grandfathers, teenage boys into a secret room. It is the way the women and girls are taught to prepare and cook food, when we eat and when we fast, when we dance and when we sit on the floor, when we light our candles. We cover the secret with a veil to keep the outside world from knowing it. Sometimes cousins forget the secret and their candles go out. Here, I will lift my veil for you. See my light is still burning. See, I am a secret Jew."

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*All is illuminated for one who seeks the Light - Ben Resh*