

Talmud and jurisprudence, the Bible and the best known dictates and most authoritative comments were brought forth in support of their theses.

Finally, the *matarife* advised granting the divorce and endorsed the papers.

"Such is the will of God," affirmed don Moisés. "We, by order of the law, have first denied the divorce; but seeing that the representatives discuss with clear reason in favor of the separation; seeing that the spouses cannot live together for there is no love between them, we declare that it is by force of the same law that we grant the divorce, so that there may be no Hebrew home where discord reigns, and so return to each his peace of heart. Thus we swear and sign, conceding the right to a new marriage to the divorced persons, who are honest and worthy of our respect."

And each of the judges put his signature in Hebrew on the parchment, using his paternal family name. Upon signing his name, don Moisés Urquijo de Abinoim congratulated himself that Jews can always find justice in their law which espouses men's happiness through liberty. And he concluded, moved by his importance as a high judge, with the phrase: "Let us celebrate with wine the sentence in which your discretion and wisdom shines, and let us praise the Lord for having inspired us in the duties of His justice."

"Let us praise the Lord!" all the elders exclaimed.

The wine was brought and glasses clinked. Outside, the sky grew pale and the stars looked out on the still light earth.

"It is prayer time, and there are enough of us to fill a synagogue," Rabbi Malaquías said.

"Let our illustrious guest take the dais," said the *matarife*.

"It is a great honor and I thank you."

"Let us pray, then."

And don Moisés Urquijo de Abinoim extended his arms toward the East and began praising God:

"*Baruj Atha Adonai...*"

Samuel Glusberg
(Enrique Espinosa, 1898-1988)

Samuel Glusberg was seven when he arrived in Argentina with his family from Russia. Like Gerchunoff, he labored, studied, and had the good fortune to make influential friends. The prominent author Horacio Quiroga became his mentor and helped him into the elite literary and intellectual circles of Buenos Aires.

Glusberg, who wrote under the pseudonym Enrique Espinosa, is best known for his work as a journalist and short story writer. His stories, many of which are either autobiographical or drawn from real life, are spare and unaffected. Unlike Gerchunoff, who idealized the immigrant experience and romanticized the colonists' struggles to retain their own customs while adapting to their new environment, Glusberg's descriptions are realistic. His protagonists are generally Jewish immigrants imbued with Jewish consciousness and presented in situations which are sometimes wryly humorous and at other times ironic, poignant, sad, or even tragic. In a simple, almost conversational style, sometimes pausing to address a brief aside directly to the reader, he describes the immigrants struggle to cope with the varying problems of adaptation, assimilation and acceptance that inevitably arose as they strove to adapt to their new life in the colonies or in Buenos Aires.

In addition to his work as a journalist and author, Glusberg edited *America* and several other literary journals, founded a literary journal titled *Babel* and later, his own editorial house, Biblioteca Argentina de Buenas Ediciones Literarias, (BABEL/Argentine Library of Fine Literary Editions), both of which published avant-garde works by most of the leading authors of the day. As an editor he was active in organizing literary contests to encourage the young writers of his time, and also helped organize the Argentine Writers Association, becoming its first secretary.

His best known collection of short stories are *La levita gris* (*The Gray Frock Coat*, 1924) and *Ruth and Noemi* (*Ruth and Naomi*, 1934). He has also written several collections of essays and a number of biographical works on figures as disparate as the South American hero José de San Martín, the German author, Heinrich Heine, and the Dutch philosopher, Baruch Spinoza.

responds with a biblical quote that comes to his lips. Lifting him up, because he's fainted in his arms he again feels uneasily suspicious: "Did Yánquele have time to poison himself?"

Desperate with grief he puts the child to bed, begging doña Deborah to massage his eyes and temples so that he'll revive. Meanwhile, he looks for some sign on the table. When he doesn't find anything but the letter, he turns toward the woman with it: "The matches? Where are the matches?"

Doña Deborah raises her arms in a sign of ignorance.

"I left them on the table," she says with a husky voice. "Yánquele..."

At that moment, Yánquele comes to: "Water! Some water!"

And while doña Deborah goes for water, the poor widower overcome by grief, nervously crushes the letter until he reduces it to a small ball, and finishes by burning it in the lamp...now completely forgetful of the Sabbath and the heroic sacrifice he made to keep it even in the face of Betsy's death.

The Cross

by Samuel Glusberg

"Sonia!...Sonia!...Where the devil have you gone, child? Sonia!"
A Jewish woman calls her little girl in from the patio of her apartment.

It's five in the afternoon, and as it's midwinter, night is falling.

The woman—Sara is her name—has just finished blessing the Friday evening candles and she and the household are already entering the Sabbath.

"Sonia...Sonia..." Sara continues calling.

No one answers.

Finally irritated, tired of the cold, she enters the room.

"Have you seen your little sister? What a shameless girl!" she says in Spanish to Ruben—a nine-year-old who'd arrived a bit earlier from Hebrew school and was just having tea with his sailor cap pulled down to his ears.

And she adds in Yiddish: "It seems the devil's taken her; that child is always wandering around."

Ruben, busy having tea, doesn't answer her. But finally, when he finishes with a loud and noisy slurp, he raises his head—the name "General Belgrano" on his cap in gold letters. Then he answers:

"Sonia's probably with the Castro girls." And he shakes some crumbs off of his windbreaker.

"No, what a thought! She'd have heard me. I've been calling her for half an hour!"

But Ruben, realizing that his mother is exaggerating, opens the door and goes out in search of Sonia.



The boy returns after five minutes.

"I have gone," he says, "to all six apartments and haven't found her anywhere." Then he adds: "Doña Teresa told me she thought she'd seen her going off to school with her daughters."

"What!" Sara exclaims, surprised, "in school at this hour? Washing the seats with lemon oil again! That can't be!"

"Do you want me to go look for her, Mama?" Ruben proposes.

"No, I'll go," the woman says, and asks, "Where's my shawl?"

"Ah, in the other room," she answers herself, and goes to look for it.

She's back in an instant, covering her head and shoulders with a thick, checkered shawl, like the ones Jewish women bring from Russia.

"Take care of the baby, he's sleeping," she tells Ruben before going out. And at the door, she turns back to remind him to be careful with the candles.



A few minutes after doña Sara's exit, Reb Sujer, her husband, enters the house. He is small with a pointy chickpea-colored beard, black cap, blue overcoat and a bill collector's satchel under his arm.

"Good afternoon, Papa," Ruben greets him as he hides his pen knife and takes off his cap.

"Good Sabbath, son," the man answers as he enters and asks, "Where's mama?"

"She went to look for Sonia; she'll be right back."

In fact, Sara arrives shortly dragging Sonia behind her, a little eight-year-old redhead who is pouting and rubbing her eyes with her free hand.

"*Oi, vei is mir! Vei is mir!* A misfortune has befallen us; a disgrace!" doña Sara clamors, seating her round body in a chair and taking off her shawl.

"What's wrong, woman?" Reb Sujer turns to her frightened while Ruben opens his big eyes in surprise.

"*Oi Vei is mir! Vei is mir!*" clamors doña Sara even louder. "They've made us lose our child—my God what a misfortune!"

Because of her yelling, the baby in the next room wakes up and begins to cry.

"Ruben," his mother says, twisting her fingers and sighing, "go check on the baby."

Ruben obeys.

"*Oi vei is mir!* What a misfortune!" the woman wails again.

"But what is it, Sara, what is it?" Reb Sujer asks impatiently.

"They have converted our Sonia... *Vei is mir!* What a misfortune! My God, if you only knew!"

And while Sara loudly explains, without her husband understanding a word about the misfortune that has happened, the baby continues crying and wailing in the next room.

Finally, in answer to Ruben's insistent calls, the woman goes in to the next room.

"Straighten things out with your daughter," she says to her husband before leaving the room. "Teach her about becoming Christian with a good beating!"

Sonia, who was leaning on the edge of her seat, starts sobbing even more at this threat. Reb Sujer, a bit angry, his gray eyes moist and shining, looks at the menorah with its ritual candles and thinks about the sacred calm of the Sabbath. This thought makes him turn gently to his daughter.

"Where were you, little Sonia? What happened? Tell me about it," he says tenderly, drawing her to him.

Calmed by her father's voice, the child answers:

"Nothing, Daddy, nothing," still weeping.

"But where were you, little one? Where did Mama find you?"

"In school, Daddy. I went with Magda and Angelica, to religion class, and Mama came to get me out."

Having said this, Sonia breaks into tears again.

"Come now, that's enough tears. Tell me, what class? Where?"

"In school, Daddy, when the afternoon session is over, a priest comes to teach us catechism. All the girls go and I do too."

Reb Sujer buries his face in his hands.

"But don't you know," he shouts, "that a child of Israel cannot have anything to do with priests or the church? Who gave you permission to go?"

At this sudden change in her father, the little girl again bursts into tears. Then overcome by this paternal anger, she pleads in a tremulous little voice:

"Forgive me, Daddy, forgive me...I won't ever go again."

"The thing is you never should have gone! This is all we need! Your father is an Israelite, your mother is an Israelite, you and your brother are Israelites, all the family are Israelites...and you are going to be a Catholic! Whoever heard of such a thing?"

"I'm sorry," Sonia says, "I won't ever go again; but I get so bored at home. Doña Teresa's girls go there and leave me all alone. Doña Teresa lets them go..."

"Of course, because she's Catholic! But you have nothing to do with Jesus. Do you hear? I forbid you to go and that's the end of it..."

Because the little girl continues to cry, Reb Sujer softens his voice and promises to let her learn to play the piano so that she won't get bored.

At that, Sonia's little face lights up.

"And you'll send me to the conservatory, Daddy?"

"Yes, little one."

"To Saint Cecilia's?"

"Yes, my child."

"How wonderful, Daddy! How wonderful! I swear, I'll never go to religion class again!"

And to confirm her oath, Sonia pulls a small chain out from under her blouse and kisses the cross hanging there.

"Oh woe is me! Woe is me!"

Samuel Eichelbaum (1907-1967)

The son of immigrant Russian colonists, Samuel Eichelbaum was born in Dominguez in Entre Ríos and lived there until he left for Buenos Aires at the age of twenty-one. There, the young man who had never even completed elementary school educated himself by reading avidly and by frequenting literary conferences and *tertulias* (circles) where he met writers like Alberto Gerchunoff, who encouraged his literary inclinations and became a lifelong friend.

A translator and critic as well as an author, Eichelbaum published two collections of short stories: *Tormenta de Dios* (*Tempest from God*) and *El viajero inmóvil* (*The Unchanging Traveler*) but is best known for his work as a playwright.

Eichelbaum, who had no formal training in psychology, was fascinated by the complexities of human nature, man's capacity for good and evil, and the interactions of the human mind and heart. In his works he gently mocks the *porteño* (a person from the port city—i.e. Buenos Aires) attitude of superiority, and other human foibles like obsessiveness, hypocrisy, egoism, pride or arrogance. Rather than the action, it is the motivation behind the action that interests him and gives a universal quality to his work even when it is essentially Argentine in theme.

One of the few Argentine writers to treat ethnic and racial issues openly, Eichelbaum dealt with the problems of Jewish, Italian, and African heritage and identity in a number of his plays: *El judío Aarón* (*Aaron the Jew*), and *Nadie la conoció nunca* (*No One Ever Knew Her*) deal with Jewish protagonists; *El guapo de 90* (*The Brawler of the '90s*) and *Pájaro de Barro* (*Mud Bird*) with Italian immigrants, and *Dos Brasas* (*Two Embers*) presents a black protagonist.

"A Good Harvest," the story which follows is believed to be based on a real life incident. Some say it is the story of Eichelbaum's father, an unhappy immigrant farmer driven to desperate measures to relocate his family in the city.