

# Juan Gelman

The Argentinean poet was born in Buenos Aires in 1930 to an immigrant Ashkenazi family from the Ukraine. The political situation in his country forced him into exile in 1975, which from the beginning had a powerful impact on his work. He lived in Rome, Madrid, Paris, and Mexico City, where he died in 2014. It was under the influence of the Converso poets, the Hebrew poets from Spain, and later of Clarisse Nicoïdski's poetry that he wrote *Dibaxu* (1994), a book of poems in Ladino accompanied by their Spanish translations. This complex journey into Ladino language and literature was called "self-Sephardizing" by Monique R. Balbuena. According to Balbuena,

Gelman writes *Dibaxu* in... Balkan Ladino. He does not speak Ladino, he does not belong to the ethnic community that speaks Ladino, and the Ladino he uses is basically the one he reads in Nicoïdski and learns from her... For the culmination of his self-Sephardization, Nicoïdski's poetry becomes his main intertext. (Monique R. Balbuena. *Homeless Tongues: Poetry and Languages of the Sephardic Diaspora*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2016. 137-38)