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***Discordia concors: A Reply to Professor Gulsoy's articles on Cat. inxa, Cast. hinchá, and Port. Incha***  
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DISCORDIA CONCORS:  
A REPLY TO J. GULSOY'S ARTICLES ON CAT.  
*INXA*, CAST. *HINCHA*, AND PORT. *INCHA*

GERMÀ COLÓN DOMÈNECH

In my contribution to this volume in honor of Professor J. Gulsoy, I would like to respond to two articles of his in which he defends implausible etymologies proposed by Joan Coromines.

Professor Gulsoy was privileged to have become a very close collaborator of Professor Coromines, and he remains one of his most faithful followers. In today's academia, such loyalty has become rare and is to be admired. Gulsoy very often raises to the defense of the "Mestre," even though the two scholars are of quite different character as far as their *modus operandi* in learned disputes is concerned. I always enjoy reading the articles Gulsoy contributed to the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*. He has written a great many, being the sole author of all entries beginning with the letters N, O, Q and U. His *DECat* articles are so different in style and tone from the ones penned by Coromines that the reader feels like having entered a combat-free zone of etymological peace, in stark contrast to all those harsh criticisms, unfair insinuations, or even direct personal attacks, coming from the the Master's poisoned pen. I am myself a great admiror of (most of) Coromines' writings, but I never let myself be intimidated when he raises his voice with "fighting words," nor have I ever turned the other cheek. However, I have gone public with my disagreements with him in several occasions, and, *Deo volente*, I shall continue setting the record straight whenever I consider it necessary.

In the two articles I would like to respond to today, Prof. Gulsoy takes it upon him to defend certain opinions of Coromines' which had been criticized by other philologists. In a talk about the *DECat* given at the Col·loqui of the North-American Catalan Society in Vancouver in 1990, entitled "El diccionari etimològic català de Joan Coromines: uns aclariments," he writes: "I considered it advisable to scrutinize Veny's and Straka's observations, while also clarifying some issues which were negatively commented upon by Colón and Soberanas; however, due to constraints of space, I will deal with that second point at another time" (*El Diccionari* 43). As far as I know, that rejoinder to those "negative comments" has never appeared in print. In his riposte to Veny's and Straka's criticisms —Straka was always abused by Coromines, while he treated Veny with more respect— Gulsoy cle-

verly introduces also other topics. For instance, in footnote 13 he mentions Father Massot's invalidation of Coromines' thesis that the Mallorcan word *primetxer* is of mozarabic origin; however, Gulsoy tries to weaken Massot's arguments, hoping to save at least something of the concept "mozarabic" for linguistics, even though all other arabists and romanists now agree that that notion was nothing but a *mirage* which should disappear from our studies (Solà, index, "mossàrab"). Gulsoy also repeats some of the volleys Coromines had sent my way, always missing his aim; for instance concerning the terms *llinatge* and *placer* ("fishing bank, raised level of the Ocean floor"). In the case of Cast. *rosicler*, he honestly cannot follow Coromines' absurd idea that this is a doublet of *rejalgar*, but he hides his agreement with me in a footnote dedicated to other questions (53, note 28). As for *llinatge*, Gulsoy saw that denying that Cast. *linaje* is a Gallicism—as does Coromines, who has to resort to a major linguistic juggling act with old spellings—means ignoring everything about medieval feudalism. He saw the weakness of his Master's case, but he couldn't bring himself to speak out against him.

The case of *placer* is similar. We don't know where this word comes from, but it is a fact that it appears first in a Portuguese text from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as a marine term used on Formosa and Taiwan (where there are still islands called *Parcels*, obviously an English alteration of the original name). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Castilian borrowed the word from Portuguese. When Spain became a major naval power, it spread *placer* to all of Hispanic America; from Mexico it entered also the South-Western United States, as a mining term. In spite of the abundance of Portuguese and Castilian early attestations of our word, Coromines holds on—aggressively, and insulting M. Metzeltin, who had settled the question in 1968—to his fixed idea that the word is of Catalan origin. But the term only starts appearing in Catalan dictionaries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which just copied the *Diccionario de la Academia Española*. Regretfully, Gulsoy sides with Coromines. That Catalan and Mallorcan sailors who had been to Cuba or other South-American ports brought the Spanish word back home with them, seems obvious to me. To believe, as Coromines does, that the use of the word *placer* in a novel of the contemporary Mallorcan writer Baltasar Porcel, who introduces it in a totally Cuban context and spells it in italics, proves its Catalan origin, borders on the absurd.

In that same conference presentation from 1990, my friend Gulsoy also refers to the paper on Cat. *inxà* I had published in the *Homenaje Martí de Riquer*. Therein I justified my opposition to several untenable opinions of Coromines'. Gulsoy criticises me for "not having seen that the full spectrum of meanings Cat. *inxà* has in the 14<sup>th</sup> century—from

'hissing of bombs', 'hatred', 'sliver or splinter', to 'reed of wind instruments'—, to which have to be added the meanings of the verb *inxar* 'to hiss, call a dog, to hate someone', force us to look for another etymology" (instead of Latin INFLARE) (42). Gulsoy adds a reference to an article of his which then appeared in vol. 4 of the *Miscel·lània Joan Fuster*. But before discussing Gulsoy's second article, I would like to point out that I was far from "not having seen" the many meanings of *inxal/inxar* in the Middle Ages, since it was me who had assembled them, with extensive quotations from many documents Coromines, with his peculiar style of textual philology, would never have found. (That's why he declared the word unknown before the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.) It was also me who has shown the wide semantic field covered by Cat. *inxà*, Cast. *hincha* and Port. *incha*. Since most of the examples adduced by colleagues who now write about these words are taken from my papers —often without mentioning my name— I don't want to fill these pages with repetitions.<sup>1</sup> However: I wish that fellow philologists, when they quote examples I had discovered and published first, would indicate their source. *Suum cuique!* But I would like to add a few supplementary facts about *inxà*, following my usual *modus operandi*, which Coromines ridiculed as "getting hung up on documentation" (*la superstición del dato documental*, DECH 4.577).

Coromines denies the existence of *inxà* meaning 'sliver, splinter' simply because he himself had never come across an example of it. And words he had never seen or heard simply were declared inexistant. But I was able to present examples from Vic and other places in the region of Osona and Girona, for instance in the Upper Empordà.<sup>2</sup> Today I can add that the word was used also by Father Jacint Verdàguer. Joan Requesens (169) quotes the following passage from a youthful work in which the great poet describes how, when he went for firewood, often:

"una espina s en clavava al peu, punxaguda y verinosa, o trencant un bruch, una hincha m saltava als ulls" ('a sliver stuck in my foot, sharp and poisonous, or when I broke branches, a splinter sprang into my eyes').

As for *inxà* meaning 'hatred', for which I had offered Barcelonense examples from 1396 and 1400, and Mallorcan ones from 1428, this word was in the Middle Ages quite common in Catalan, in contrast to today, when it is reduced to a so-called "lateral area," the Roussillon.

<sup>1</sup> I expanded my contribution to the *Studia...Riquer* 1986 in my book from 1989 *Español y catalán, juntos y en contraste*. When there are no changes I quote from this second publication, referring to it as *Contraste*.

<sup>2</sup> Later, thanks to Lluís Bonada, I could also adduce documentation from Ripoll and Girona (*Contraste* 169).

In his contribution to the *Fuster*-volume, Gulsoy takes a new and original position. He bases himself mostly on my materials —acknowledging this openly and often, something Coromines didn't like doing—, but his paper would have gained much had he not tried so hard to come up with a unified origin for all those homonyms, which obliged him to sidestep some of the problems caused by this intent —and if he hadn't felt obliged to salvage as much as possible of his Master's opinions.

Already F. Diez had proffered the idea that, in order to explain Cast. *hincha* 'hatred' one had to start with Latin INFLARE; all other linguists followed him (Meyer-Lübke, Malkiel, Coromines, etc.). I myself too thought that the inflation of the enraged person's facial features explains the semantic shift. From Castilian texts, the first ones dating from around 1270,<sup>3</sup> the term travelled to Portuguese and Catalan. Rejecting this hypothesis, Gulsoy prefers to see the point semanticists should depart from in exclamations such as /inšš/or/enšš/. This hypothesis is as defensible as the other; neither can be accepted apodictically. However, I find it difficult to believe that this lexicalization of the same hissing sound took place independently in all three linguistic domains of the Iberian Peninsula. Since it is a proven fact that Castilian carried the word *hincha* 'hatred' to Southern Italy (see *Contraste*, p. 175), it seems dubious that the two other Hispanic languages coincided in introducing independently the same word as an onomatopoeia. I prefer assuming waves of expansion coming from Castilian. I am not convinced by Gulsoy's argument that a postverbal *hincha* could not have been derived from the verb *hinchar* (*Fuster* 399).

What is certainly impossible is that the hissing sound which one might suppose at the origin of *hincha* 'hatred' is also at the basis of Cat. *inxà* 'splinter, sliver', 'punch, awl', 'chip of a bone', 'reed of certain wind instruments', 'tongue of a shoe', 'scion for grafting', etc.; these meanings are restricted to Catalan and are unknown in Castilian and Portuguese. This second *inxà* is widely known in Catalan, as I have shown in my book from 1989 (which Prof. Gulsoy seems not to have known at the time he wrote his article for the *Fuster*-volume). The meaning 'sliver, splinter, flake' can be found not only in Osona and Roses, but also in Ripoll and Girona. *inxà* means 'tongue of the show' in Agullent, near Valencia (*Contraste* 174, n. 32); 'pointed tool, slip or scion used in grafting' was its meaning in the Roussillon in 1617, as seen in the *Secrets d'Agricultura* by the Abbot Miquel Agustí. I am quite certain that this second *inxà* is just a homonym of the first one, but that it has a different origin. Around 1400, Lluís d'Averçó in his

<sup>3</sup> In the manuscripts of the *Primera Crònica General* the word is spelled *incha* and *fincha*. In the *Coplas de Mingo Revulgo* a group of furious wolves are called *lobos finchados*.

*Torcimany* explains that *inxà* refers to the "*siulet de la bombardà.*" Ever since the dictionary of Labernia from 1839 it is known that one of the meanings of the word *inxà* was 'reed of wind instruments'; this is confirmed in Griera's *Tresor* and in Alcover-Moll's DCVB. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, *bombarda* was a kind of wind instrument with seven holes, plus a mouthpiece in which there was the *siulet*. Averçó's *siulet de la bombardà* is not at all "el zumbido o silbato del arma llamada bombardà" ('the hissing noise of a mortar or cannon'), but the mouthpiece and reed of the instrument called, because of its sound, *bombarda* (*Contraste*, 171-173; for references to the instrument see M. C. Gómez Munané, *La música en la casa real catalano-aragonesa, 1336-1442*, Barcelona 1979, p. 78). I regret that my colleague Gulsoy chose to disregard my arguments. I also pointed out that this Catalan *inxà* 'reed' should be studied together with the French word *anche*, which has the same meaning; already in 1530 we find in the French-Latin dictionary by Etienne-Tierry the entry: "*anche que les menestriers mettent au bout de leur haut-bois. Ligula, lingula*" ('reed the musicians put into their oboes, called in Latin 'little tongue'). Gulsoy limits himself to mentioning in a short footnote (404, fn. 11) that "the resemblance of Cat. *inxà* and Gallo-Romanic *anche* (*enche, enchia*) attracts attention" (*crida l'atenció*). He makes a hopeless effort to demonstrate that *siulet* describes a hissing sound and refers to the word *guinxà* 'whinny, neigh, wail', also is used by Averçó (and which I had quoted already in 1987).<sup>4</sup> Gulsoy's arguments are not convincing, and even if we disregard the reference Averçó makes to the *siulet de la bombardà*, we would still have all those uses of the word *inxà* which show that it meant 'reed of a woodwind instrument'; meaning which, in my opinion, has to be studied in conjunction with the cognate forms from the Gallo-Romania.

Therefore, we have, for the word *inxà*, two groups of meanings:

a) 'hatred, anger', and other negative affective meanings which Catalan shares with Castilian and Portuguese. This word could be a derivate of INFLARE, or could have onomatopoeic origins (lexicalized independently in all three languages);

b) 'punch, awl, scion for grafting', meanings also found in the Gallo-Romania for words which have the same origin as Cat. *inxà*.

Trying to merge these two blocks of meanings, semantically so much apart, and consider them both derivates of onomatopoeia, seems

<sup>4</sup> See my *Problemes de la llengua a València i als seus voltants*, Valencia 1987, 232 and fn. 13, where I suggest that this word should be studied together with *vinça* and *guinceta*.

to me a fruitless undertaking.<sup>5</sup> Gulsoy, working with ill-chosen examples, leaves aside, unjustifiedly, the meaning 'reed of woodwind instruments' and concentrates on explaining how *inxà* is an onomatopoeia. He writes:

"Old Cat. *inxà* 'hissing sound' and *guinxar* 'hiss' derive from the sound-imitating exclamations *inš* / *ginš* or *inša* / *ginša*. When the mortar threw out the projectile people said "the mortar *inša* / *ginša*" or "the mortar *fa inša* / *ginša*." This is the origin of the words we find documented for the first time in the *Torcimany*" (409).

This kind of etymologizing, common in Coromines, has caused us etymologists the ridiculing epithet "Sorotapts."<sup>6</sup> Gulsoy, embarked with enthusiasm on his track which leads nowhere, declares Old Cast. *incha* (13<sup>th</sup> century) a descendant of "the exhortative exclamation *inša* / *inča* (...) a phonetic variant of the interjection *itsa!* / *issa!*, which, according to certain sources, was widely used already before the 13<sup>th</sup> century" (410).

After many references to phonetic variants and unnamed sources, Gulsoy explains the origin of the Catalan verb *bissar* in an sound-imitating exclamation which, independently, was also turned into a verb in Port. *içar*, Cast. *izar*, Cat. *bissar*, Fr. *bisser*, It. *aissare*, and even Swedish *bissa* and German *bissen*, in addition to leading to the variant French form *inse*. Everything is connected! That *bissar* and its family in the Romance languages are onomatopoeia was a 'brilliant' discovery of Coromines, which Gulsoy makes here his own, reinforcing it. I am not denying the possibility that soundimitating phenomena might be at work here, but I strongly object to the attempt to declare *all* those words as having evolved, spontaneously and independently, from onomatopoeia. There must have been a starting point. That primary word seems to have been French *bisser*. Phonetically, *isse* can lead to *inse*, but an evolution from *inse* to *isse* is impossible. For this reason, the whole argumentation based on Cat. *inxà* seems to me unproductive.

At the end of his article Gulsoy also discusses Cast. *hincha* 'soccer fan, sports fan, enthusiast'. Instead of correcting his Master's mistaken belief that this word can only be heard in Argentina, but not in the rest of the Hispanic world (Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Spain), he enters into a polemic with me stating: "it is

<sup>5</sup> It is only due to Gulsoy's effort to support Coromines' ideas that he could write such a surprising statement as the following: "The semantic evolution from *inxà* 'hatred, irritation' to *inxà* 'splinter, sliver' causes no difficulty" (*no presenta cap dificultat*, 412).

<sup>6</sup> [Translator's note: Coromines found the explanation to pre-Roman phonetic problems much too often in the little known language of the Celtic tribes called "Sorotapts," members of the Urn-Field civilization in the late Bronze Age. This hypothesis was criticised by several speakers during the conferences on Coromines published by Joan Solà; see index: *sorotapte*.]

impossible to explain this meaning starting from *hincha* 'hatred'; one should see here a postverbal derivate of *hinchar* in its meaning 'molest, bother', common in Argentina" (412-413). But here Gulsoy contradicts himself, because, precisely, Argentinian *hinchar* 'molest, cause hatred' is the same verb *hinchar* which was known in classical Spanish (*anda hinchado, está hinchado*) and cannot be separated from the noun *hincha* 'hatred'. Once more, examples are quoted which I had discovered, without giving me my due. Let me add that at the Rio de la Plata one can hear today, in addition to *hincha* 'fan', also *hincha* with the meaning 'a bore, pain in the neck' (*es un hincha, una hincha, ¡no seas hincha!*), or even with the meaning 'fastidious, finicky' (*ese profesor es un hincha*), meanings obviously derived postverbally from *hinchar* 'to bother' (*¡no hinchés!, ¡me estás hinchando!*)<sup>7</sup> as can be seen in slang expressions such as *es un hinchapelotas*,<sup>8</sup> *un hinchahuevos, hinchabolás, hinchacocos*,<sup>9</sup> etc. All this, I insist, shows the postverbal character of *hincha*. What gave me pause in my conclusion was that there are in Castilian only few postverbal formations which refer to the subject of an action; I could only think of Spanish *trepá* 'pushy social climber'. That is why I thought that *hincha* took its meaning of 'soccer fan' first in Argentina, under influence from Italian. But I now believe that this assumption is not necessary. Professor J.L. Rivarola, with whom I discussed this, explained to me that in Peru *tira* means 'policeman', probably a derivate of *tirapalo*, 'the one who pulls out the stick'. Returning to the examples from Argentina, I would like to point out that, in addition to *hinchar* 'molest, bother', the verb *inflar* is also used there, with synonymous meanings; this reinforces the traditional etymology for *hinchar*: Latin INFLARE.<sup>10</sup>

Let me finish repeating what I said at the outset: I do not believe in polygenesis. If Portuguese, Castilian and Catalan coincide in the word *incha / hincha / inxa*, we have to find a point of origin. It seems preferable to see this point of diffusion in Castile, where *hincha* is documented already in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as a derivate of INFLARE. The particular meanings of Cat. *inxa* 'punch, sliver, reed of woodwind instruments' have nothing to do with *inxa* 'hatred'; they should be studied together with the forms *enche, anche* found in the Gallo-Romania.

<sup>7</sup> I have heard in Lima people say *me tienes hinchado* with the meaning 'You're getting on my nerves, I'm fed up'.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. "Y el resto son nada más que *hinchapelotas*, hijos de puta o cretinos," Ernesto Sábato, *Sobre héroes y tumbas* (Buenos Aires, 8th ed., 1968) 46.

<sup>9</sup> See Haensch and Reinhold, *Nuevo diccionario de americanismos*. Vol. 2: *Nuevo diccionario de argentinismos*, Bogotá, 1993. These expressions are not listed in Lloyd's repertory in vol. 116 of the *Beihfte der Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*.

<sup>10</sup> See Haensch and Werner, *Nuevo diccionario*.

My colleague Joseph Gulsoy, in his two articles discussed here, wished to defend the tenets of his master, Coromines. Such loyalty speaks in his favour. But doing so he had to criticise my position. I'm always prepared to accept evidence that I am mistaken. But in the case of Cat. *inxà* and its two semantic fields, I don't think that I am on the wrong track. I would like to offer here to my friend my discrepant point of view, cordially, in the collegial spirit of *concordia discors*.

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