

PROPAGANDA AND ANTI-SEMITIC STEREOTYPES IN THE *SIGLO DE ORO*

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1. *The case of Spain*

Spain was populated by a multi-religious mix of Muslims, Christians and Jews but, from the very beginning, their coexistence was disrupted by repeated waves of antisemitism, which culminated in 1492 with the Catholic Monarchs' expulsion of the Jews from Spain and all its territories. The phenomenon of the conversos, which can be ascribed to the same period, aimed at calming the religious conflicts while, actually, exacerbating them, created a culture of suspicion and a contraposition between *cristianos viejos* and *nuevos*. The latter were often accused of having received only a makeshift christening that did not inhibit them from furthering their treacherous schemes. As Adriano Prosperi states, such conflict led to a climate of "permanent crusade"¹ in Spain and caused an obsession for the so-called *limpieza de sangre*, leading to repercussions in the social and literary fields in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Looking at just two well-known cases, we find first the proud statements of Sancho Panza on *sangre limpia* (*Don Quixote* 1, chap. 21; 2, chap. 4) and then the many ferocious anti-Semitic allusions contained in the works of Quevedo. In a sonnet in reply to criticism from his literary adversary Góngora, Quevedo writes a sonnet warning Góngora that if his criticism continues, Quevedo will smear his own poems with pork fat to keep Góngora away from them. («Yo te untaré mis versos con tocino / porque no me los muerdas, Gongorilla / [...]»)²

The issue of *conversos* was also prevalent in the theatre, especially after the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609), a treatise in verse by Lope de Vega, where he argued for a new aesthetics of dramatic reception, based on the taste and expectations of the public rather than on an observance of the so-called Aristotelian unities. Being heavily influenced by the ideology of Imperial Spain, this type of aesthetics could not fail to make use of the widespread anti-Semitic sentiments found across all classes of the audiences who thronged to the *corrales* of the time. However, as shown in a recent conference on this subject, there are relatively few dramatic works in existence that address the Jewish problem squarely. More commonly, the stereotypes of antisemitism were introduced via secondary characters, as we shall see later on.³

2. *Lope and Cervantes*

Cervantes, despite his differences of opinion with Lope de Vega on theatre issues (famous were his statements in the prologue to his eight comedies, written in defence of classic theatre as opposed to the new "*monarquía cómica*"), actually agreed with him on the theme of the *cautiverio*. As often noted, there are curious similarities between the two plays inspired by Cervantes' captivity in Algiers (*Los tratos de Argel*, written before 1587 and *Los baños de Argel*, dated to 1596) and Lope's *Los cautivos*

¹ A. PROSPERI, *Il seme dell'intolleranza. Ebrei, eretici, selvaggi: Granada 1492*, Laterza, Bari 2013.

² F. DE QUEVEDO, *Poesía original completa*, ed. J.M. BLECUA, Planeta, Barcelona 1981, p. 1171: "I will smear my poems with pork, / in order that you should not gobble them up, poor Góngora". Unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine.

³ See F.B. PEDRAZA JIMÉNEZ, R. GONZÁLEZ CAÑAL, E.E. MARCELLO (eds), *Judaísmo y criptojudasmo en la comedia española (XXXV jornadas de teatro clásico, Almagro, 5-7 de julio 2012)*, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca 2014.

de Argel, composed in 1599. Similarities are evident not only in the plot (which both authors based on fate-crossed love affairs between Moorish masters and Christian slaves), but also in individual scenes in the play (such as the martyrdom of a Valencian priest by the Moors as a reprisal for the Inquisition's burning at the stake of one of their companions) or even in certain characters who pass through one or the other of the texts. The relationship between the two authors and their texts is complex, and could be interpreted as a *catena teatrale*, literally "theatrical chain".⁴ First, Lope drew inspiration from Cervantes by transforming a work such as *Los tratos de Argel*, conceived as a "comedia de noticia", into a comedy "de fantasía" (i.e. *Los cautivos de Argel*).⁵ Cervantes then replied to Lope by rewriting in his own style the same dialectics between Christian, Moors and Jews that in Lope's *Los cautivos de Argel* had dealt mainly with a question of money.

The framework in Lope's comedy is a sordid commerce of human lives where the playwright introduces the figure of Brahín the Jew, who tries to convince Basurto, a Christian prisoner of a Moorish master, to pass himself off as a Jew in order to be sold off for a small sum. Brahín tells Dalì, the Moor, that Basurto is Jewish.

BRAHÍN ¿Cuánto quieres
por lo que sabes que tener no puedes?
DALI Cien escudos, no más, que, ¡por Mahoma!
que si fuese cristiano que eran pocos
dos mil ducados⁶ (I, ll. 926-929).

[B. How much do you ask, / something you know you cannot obtain? / D. Only a hundred escudos, by Muhammad / for if he were a Christian, even two thousand ducats / would be too few].

The bargain is struck. Basurto swears that he will find the hundred escudos to buy back his freedom, and then sets off for his new life-as a slave in the home of the Jew. As soon as Basurto is alone on the stage, however, he informs the audience of his intention to make his master's life so miserable that he will force Brahín to give back for only one escudo what he had bought for one hundred.

BASURTO [...] Pues, vive il Cielo,
que os he de dar tal vida, que si agora
lo que vale dos mil compráis por ciento,
que lo que vale ciento déis por uno (I, ll. 937-940).

[But, by Heaven, I will make your life / so difficult that / if you now buy for a hundred what is worth two thousand, / what is worth a hundred / you will give away for one].

A series of skirmishes, interwoven into the play's love-story and the bloody execution of the Priest of Valencia, shows us Basurto lamenting the Jew's stinginess, while the Jew, in turn, complains about the slave's thieving habits («Echa tocino en la olla / por comérsela después.»⁷) There follows the final, inevitable capitulation of the Jew who, pursued by Basurto dressed as a moor, ends up paying an enormous price:

⁴ See G. POGGI, *Stereotipi e propaganda antisemita nel teatro spagnolo dei secoli d'oro*, in F. FRANCESCHINI, M. TONIAZZI (eds), *Shem nelle tende di Yaphet. Ebrei ed ebraismo nei luoghi, nelle lingue e nelle culture degli altri*, Pisa University Press, Pisa 2019, pp. 223-240: 225; A. RUFFINATTO, *Funzioni e variabili in una catena teatrale (Cervantes e Lope de Vega)*, Giappichelli, Torino 1971.

⁵ According to the observations of L. FOTHERGILL-PAYNE, "Los tratos de Argel, "Los cautivos de Argel" and "Los baños de Argel": tres 'trasuntos' de un 'asunto', in J.M. RUANO DE LA HAZA (ed.), *El mundo del teatro español en su siglo de oro, Ensayos ofrecidos a J. E. Varey*, Deveshouse, Ottawa 1989, pp. 177-184.

⁶ I am here quoting, as later on, from LOPE DE VEGA, *Los cautivos de Argel*, ed. N. OHANNA, Castalia, Madrid 2016.

⁷ The entire text is strewn with signs of that "tocinophobia" in which R. FINE, *Lo hebreo, lo judío, lo con-*

BRAHÍN Espera, toma esta bolsa
y tu crueldad reporta.
BASURTO ¿Qué lleva?
BRAHÍN Cien cequíes.
BASURTO Mil quisiera.
BRAHÍN Dios me libre de ti.
BASURTO La lengua acorta.
BRAHÍN Ya me voy. Lo que has hecho considera.
Quejarme quiero al Rey por este robo,
mas es pedir el corderillo al lobo (III, ll. 2548-2554).

[BR. Wait, take this purse. / Be not cruel. /BA. What does it contain? BR. A hundred gold coins. BA. A thousand I ask – / BR. God save me from you. BA. Hold your tongue, / BR. I depart. Think over what you have done / For I shall complain to the king about this theft, / for it's as if I were a small lamb confronted by a wolf].

Basurto, with his demands for an ever-increasing amount of money, outwits his former master and then, through violence, induces Brahín to behave like a *corderillo* (a little lamb). This device introduces into a play with characters from different religious groups (Moors, *Moriscos*, Christians, renegades and Jews), not only the stereotype of the greedy, cowardly Jew, but also the inevitability of his punishment. Brahín, driven on by his miserly calculations, thinks he has struck a bargain when he buys a Christian disguised as a Jew, but his scheming, in fact, backfires on him. Thus, what we meet here is a typical *bur-lador burlado*, a stock figure made all the more ridiculous by the character's avidity and thirst for profit.

The character of Basurto, with his cunning and the language puns suggested by his name,⁸ plays the role of the *gracioso* in Lope's comedy. It is not unlike the role played by Tristán, the Sexton,⁹ in Cervantes' *Los baños de Argel*. This same type of ambiguous, swindling, lascivious character will also appear as the Sexton in Cervantes' distinctly comic *Entremeses*.¹⁰

In *Los baños de Argel*, Tristán, after landing with other Christian prisoners on the African coast, becomes the persecutor of an unidentified Jew to whom he makes increasing demands. The first time, he rudely asks the Jew for help carrying a load he himself has been asked to bear – a request the Jew declines because it is the Sabbath day. The second time he asks the Jew to pay for a pot of the Jew's own food that Tristán has stolen from him. Through this double joke, a device inherited from a folkloric

verso: diferenciación y sincretismo en la obra de Cervantes, in D.M. BUNIS (ed.), *Languages and Literatures of Sepharadic and Oriental Jews*, Misgav Yerushalaim and the Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 2009, pp. 411-418: 413, recognizes a distinctive mark of the *conversos*. Cf., for example, Basurto's words, ll. 852-860 («[...] yo haré / por la patria que deseo / cuanto quisieres, Brahín, / trasformarme en perro, en galgo, / que aunque he nacido hijo de algo / seré diablo y puercoespín. / Y porque de puerco digo / advierte que he de comer / tocino y que he de beber / aquel licor que bendigo» (“I will do, for the homeland to which I aspire, what you want, Brahín: / I will turn into a dog, a greyhound / and, even if I am the son of nobles, I will be the devil and the porcupine. And, because I mentioned the pork, know that I will eat lard and drink that liquor I bless”; the pun between *galgo* “greyhound” and *algo* “something” in the phrase *hijo de algo* “son of someone who own something, i.e. the gentry” is lost because of the translation). Cf. also l. 2555 «¡Por el rancio pernil del Gran Profeta!» (“for the rancid ham of the Great Prophet!”).

⁸ As in I, ll. 920-925, where Basurto, by using an etymology invented to support his false identity as a Jew, derives his name from that of the orchard (of Gethsemane) in which Judas caused Christ to be captured. Basurto plays on his name again in III, 2355 when he claims as his coat of arms an apple (the same one, lent to him by Fatima, that had made him invisible) with the motto “Adán Basurto”); also a little later (l. 2548) when, disguised as a moor to chase the Jew, he says his name is Muley Arambel, a name with humorous (Arambel = “tattered”).

⁹ Basurto evokes indeed the character of the sexton, referring to the sacred representation which the Christian prisoners are staging: «¿Quereisme hacer sacristán de los pasos que veréis?» “Do you want me to be the sacristan of the scenes you are going to see?” (II, 1396-1397).

¹⁰ See H.R. RECOULIS, *Un personnage des “Intermedes” de Cervantes*, «Revue des Langues Romanes» 70 6 (1974), pp. 51-61.

past, Cervantes cunningly allows Tristán not only to rob the Jew, but also to make a profit from his own theft. An emblematic scene occurs in Act two when the Jew, in order to redeem his casserole, asks the Sexton himself to take five *reales* from his pocket (since his religion forbids him to handle any money on Saturdays). Later when the Jew asks why another ten coins have been taken from him, Tristán answers: «Son por otras dos / cazuelas que pienso hurtarte» (“It is for the other two cazuelas / that I am thinking of stealing from you”) (II, ll. 1710-1711).

Finally, in Act three, in an attempt to raise money to buy his freedom, Tristán demands the Jew to pay a ransom for a child that Tristán himself has kidnapped. The Jew finally refuses and takes Tristán before the king for judgement. The king rules in favor of the Jew, but Tristán asks that he be paid for wages he lost on the day he kidnapped the child:

Señor, haga
que este puto judío dé siquiera
el jornal que he perdido por andarme
tras él para robarle este hideputa.

[Sir, at least make / this bloody Jew refund me /for the day I lost when robbing this son of a whore.]

The Jew pays the wages on the condition that Tristán promises never to steal anything from anyone ever again. Tristán gives his word, knowing full well, of course, that he will not keep it for long («Yo he dado mi palabra / de no hurtarle cosa / mientras no fuere a España / y por Dios que no sé si he de cumplilla», “I have given my word / not to steal a thing / while I am not in Spain / and by God I do not know if I have to comply”, III, ll. 2836-2839).¹¹

Cervantes used the same lever of the conflict between Jews and Christians in *La Gran sultana*, a comedy set in an oriental background. In this play, Madrigal, a Christian slave closely resembling the stock figure of the *gracioso*, because of his eschatological jokes and his astuteness, runs on stage pursued by yet another nameless Jew, who accuses Madrigal of having thrown a big piece of lard into his cooking pot (as Lope’s Basurto had done).¹² In an exchange of insults, the Jew, who realizes that his meal has been ruined, hurls a series of curses at the Christian.

¡Muera de hambre, bárbaro insolente,
el cotidiano pan te niegue Dios,
andes de puerta en puerta mendicando,
échente de la tierra como a gafo,
agraz de nuestros ojos, espantajo,
de nuestra sinagoga asombro y miedo,
de nuestras criaturas enemigo,
el mayor que tenemos en el mundo! (I, vv. 443-450).

[May you die of hunger, you ugly bastard, / may God deny you your daily bread. / may you go begging from door to door, / may you be chased off like a leper / you shady character, you scarecrow, / you terror of our Synagogue and enemy to our children, / the greatest one we have in this world!].

The reciprocal relationship between the texts of Lope and Cervantes (see above) also involves Lope’s *El niño inocente de la Guardia* – one of the most significant episodes of the anti-Semitic propaganda that swept over Spain under Hapsburg rule. This play is Lope’s triumphant retelling of one of the

¹¹ Cervantes’ quotations are from M. DE CERVANTES, *Teatro completo*, ed. F. SEVILLA ARROYO, A. REY HAZAS, Planeta, Barcelona 1987.

¹² Regarding the affinities between Tristán e Madrigal and their similarity to the figure of the *gracioso* see J. CANAVAGGIO, *Sobre lo cómico en el teatro cervantino. Tristán y Madrigal, bufones “in partibus”*, «Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica» 34 (1985-1986), pp. 538-547.

several ritual murders attributed to the Jews from the Middle Ages onwards.¹³ Probably dating between 1598 and 1605, the *pieza* may be ascribed to the hagiographic genre of the so-called *comedias de santos*. Its protagonist is Juan Cristóbal de Pasamontes, called Juanico, a child from La Guardia, a village near Toledo, who in the twentieth century was still venerated as a local saint.¹⁴ Bookended between two events – the appearance in a dream of Saint Domingo de Guzmán, the founder of the Inquisition, to the Catholic Queen Isabelle to convince her to expel the Jews, and the glorification of the martyrdom inflicted on the innocent child – the play emerges as a skilful interweaving of religious and political issues that uncompromisingly positions the Old Law against the New, evil against good, darkness against light. Lope manipulated the timeline of the events so that the Inquisition trials, actually held in 1492, were made contemporary with the trial of the supposed child murderers in 1490-91. In doing this, Lope presented the Jews' God-killing attempt as the cause rather than the consequence of the Catholic Monarchs' edict of expulsion of 1492, with the precise scope, as Donatella Pini has argued,¹⁵ of creating fear among the *cristianos nuevos*.

What ensured the play's success was not so much its anti-Semitic stereotypes as its schematic layout. In Act one, we already see Juanico embracing his future role of martyr; by Act three, he endures, without shedding a tear, the violence wreaked upon him by his kidnappers. Juanico is made to retrace the steps of Christ's Passion, transformed – according to María Rosa Lida de Malkiel's definition – into a miniature *ecce homo*.¹⁶

The hackneyed obviousness and the flat psychology of the plot were clearly aimed at evoking a sense of pity and horror in the audience, who certainly could not remain impassive in the face of the closing image of the Christ-like child covered in blood and wearing a crown of thorns. Between the preamble and the epilogue of the play, Lope inserts comic scenes not only to enrich the piece, but also to relax the audience and to give them some enjoyment by distancing them from such gory and dramatic content. Lope shows two married couples in conversation: a poor *hidalgo* and his cunning wife in Act one, and a *molinero* with his cantankerous wife in Act three. These scenes are laid out in a precise mirror-like pattern and within them lurks the trite anti-Semitic stereotypes to which the population was so easily prey.

In the play, some Jews, on the instructions of a French Rabbi, set out in search of a *hechizo* (magic charm) to be made from a child's heart and a Sacred Host. The charm is supposedly capable of stopping the crusade started by the *negros dominicos* (the Blackfriars). The Jews try to convince the character

¹³ The bibliography regarding this episode is vast. See, in particular, E. GLASER, *Lope de Vega's "El niño inocente de la Guardia"*, «Bulletin of Hispanic Studies» 22 (1955), pp. 140-153; M.R. LIDA DE MALKIEL, *Lope de Vega y los judíos*, «Bulletin Hispanique» 75 (1973), pp. 73-113. L. DE CAÑIGRAL CORTÉS, "El niño inocente de la Guardia" de Lope de Vega: análisis de sus fuentes, «Revista de Literatura» 112 (1994), pp. 349-370, has suggested that, in writing this play, Lope had probably based it on the booklet of the Dominican monk Juan de Marieta, rather than on the various reports of a historical or literary nature on the episode (among which the *Memoria muy verdadera de la pasión del Niño de la Guardia* by Damián de Vegas, the *Historia del Santo Inocente que llaman de la Guardia* by the Hieronymite monk Rodrigo de Yepes, or the poem in Latin hexameters *De raptu innocentis martiris guardiensis* by Jerónimo Ramírez) What strikes us is the presence in it of historical figures such as the Catholic Monarchs, or the baptized Jew Benito García in whose luggage was discovered a consecrated host. This episode led to one of the most famous Inquisitorial trials and to the creation of the *niño de la Guardia*, the child allegedly crucified by some *conversos*, who supposedly took his heart out in order to concoct a potion with which to exterminate the Christians. Even if the body of the presumed child martyr was never actually found, the trial ended up in an *auto de fe* in which two Jews and two *conversos* were sent to the stake. This episode is mentioned by PROSPERI, *Il seme dell'intolleranza*, pp. 94-98.

¹⁴ See J.A. FARRELL (ed.), *El niño inocente de la Guardia*, Tamesis Book, London 1983, especially *Introduction*, p. XVI. On the persistence of these anti-Semitic legends see also H. ETTINGHAUSEN, *Jews in the News: the antisemitismo en la primera prensa europea. A propósito de Simon de Trento*, in G. CIAPPELLI, V. NIDER (eds), *La invención de las noticias y las relaciones de sucesos entre la literatura y la información (siglos XVI y XVII)*, Università degli Studi di Trento, Trento 2017, pp. 705-724, and Veronese's essay in this volume.

¹⁵ See D. PINI, *Giudei deicidi*, in M.G. PROFETI, D. PINI (eds), *Leyendas negras e leggende auree*, Alinea, Firenze 2011, pp. 9-25.

¹⁶ See LIDA DE MALKIEL, *Lope de Vega y los judíos*, p. 98.

Bernardo to sell them one of his ten children, but he refuses their offer of a thousand gold pieces. His wife Rosela, who does not want to lose such a sum, offers the Jews a bloody pig's heart that she pretends she has torn from her own child's bosom (Bernardo shouts out at the end of Act one: «mamáronla los judíos!» "They fell for it, the Jews!"). The Jews first fall for the trick, but once they realize they have been deceived, they decide to kidnap a child from a village near Toledo. This takes place in Act two when, during the procession of the Assumption, Juanico's parents lose sight of their boy who, enthralled by the giant figures of the procession, falls into the hands of his murderers. They then inflict various tortures on him in preparation for his final martyrdom by crucifixion.

The prank against the Jews in Act one, which involves the symbolically unclean animal of a pig, is not the only one involving the Jewish dietary taboo on the consumption of pork. Another occurs in Act three when the kidnapers turn to the *molinero* to get some wood for the cross needed for the child's crucifixion. Here Lope takes the opportunity to underscore the difference between Christians and Jews through the ironic words of the miller's wife about the reward they have been promised in exchange for a simple piece of wood (the cartwheel) that the Jews have obtained.

MOLINERO ¿Qué te parece, mujer, de estos hidalgos?
 MUJER Que no se os dé por sus mercedes mucho,
 que de lo que sabéis no hay buen virote.
 MOLINERO Antes, el mal es que no comen puerco.
 MUJER Dalde esta carreta con el diablo,
 haced placer, marido y sea a quienquiera.
 MOLINERO Para llevarlos a quemar le diera.¹⁷ (III, ll. 2377-2385).

[MO. Woman, what think you of these gentlemen? / MU. That you should not give too much weight / to their promises, for nothing good/ ever came from those you-know-what. MO. The worst thing is that they do not eat pork. / MU. Give them this devil of a cart, / Husband, whoever they are / just to please me. / MO. Aye, It will give it them, all but to have them burnt at the stake later on!].

In addition to being another reference to tocinophobia topos, the wife's reply («de lo que sabéis no hay buen virote») is an allusion to the proverb «De rabo de puerco nunca buen virote,» literally, "no straight arrow was ever made of a pig's tail," meaning "for those born in evil, expect no good". For his part, the *molinero*'s final auspice makes quite clear his contempt for the heretical God-killers. The scene shows how Jews were regarded as dangerously untrustworthy both in the humbler classes – which (in the humbler classes-which), in Lope's works are often the truest bearers of the values of the Christian faith – and in the higher spheres of society (Queen Isabella compared the Jew to a snake to be uprooted by cutting off its «cuello impío,» "impious neck").

This crude vision of the conflict between the two religions is invariably aimed at condemning and execrating the Jews, often with open derision, as seen in the following example from Cervantes' *Los baños de Argel*: the Jews proclaim they are waiting to see the Messiah appear in the form of a *barbio*, a barbel, (a freshwater fish commonly found in the River Tago, and known as *barbo judío*). As noted by Barbara Weissberger,¹⁸ Cervantes uses in *Los baños de Argel* the same scenic device already employed by Lope when he exposes the battered body of the small *ecce homo* («Descúbrase una cortina, y véase detras el niño en la cruz» ("Pull back a curtain and see behind it the child on the cross"). Cervantes staged the immolation of one of the two small sons of an old Christian prisoner who had refused to disown his religion by complying with the *Cadís*' demands, by writing: «Córrese una cortina, descúbrese Francisquito atado a una columna en la forma que pueda mover a más piedad» ("Draw back a curtain, discover Francisquito tied to a column in a way that moves us to pity"). Here too, the child-victim is made to call

¹⁷ I am quoting from *El niño inocente de la Guardia*, ed. F. BAÑOS VALLEJO, in *Comedias de Lope de Vega*, P. VIII, Milenio, Lleida 2009, pp. 1503-1627.

¹⁸ B.F. WEISSBERGER, *Es de Lope: Child Martyrdom in Cervantes' "Los baños de Argel"*, «Cervantes» 32 2 (2012), pp. 145-170.

on his father before breathing his last, just as the innocent child of La Guardia at the end of his ordeal that faithfully replicated Christ's Passion, calls on his own father by repeating the words of the Gospel («¡Señor mío, señor mío!, / ¿Por qué me has desamparado?» "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", III, 2588-2589):

FRANCISQUITO Oh padre, lléguese a mí
que el velle me da consuelo.
Ya la muerte helada y fria
a dejaros me provoca
con su mortal agonía.
PADRE Exalha tu alma en mi boca
para que ensarte la mía.
¡Ay que espira!
FRANCISQUITO ¡Adiós, que espiro! (III, ll. 2563-2569).

[FR. Father, draw near to me / for you console me when I see you. / Already does the cold icy death / force me to leave you / through its mortal agony./ PA. Breathe your soul / into my mouth so that / it may be mingled with mine. / PA. Alas, he breathes his last. / FR Alas, I die!].

This emotional scene is followed by an even more poignant one where we see the father, as he is escaping with the other Christians, carrying his son's remains wrapped up in a sheet as if they were relics. As Barbara Weissberger has also pointed out, this leads the play towards a hagiographic close, but Cervantes in contrast to Lope turns an unyielding message into an ultimately relativistic one by suggesting that conflict and intolerance are inherent in any religious confrontation whether Catholic, Jewish or Muslim.

3. The "gracioso" and the Squire

Cervantes also presented a more nuanced treatment of Jewish characters than Lope did, such as Cervantes' Sexton in *Los baños de Argel* or Madrigal, the Christian slave in *La Gran Sultana*.¹⁹ This characterization continued in the years after the composition of his comedies (collected in 1615 under the title *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses*) and resulted in a general trend among playwrights toward a "couple dynamics" in which the *gracioso* was made to alternately take on the role of the persecutor and the persecuted. A representative of the former, who goes by the telling name of Salomón, plays the role of the *gracioso* in Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's *La Manganilla de Melilla*. Premiered in 1617, the play unfolds against the backdrop of a cross-border conflict with the usual amorous adventures between Moors and Christians. The nodal couple are Salomón, the Jewish servant of Hacén (one of the Moorish protagonists) and Pimienta, the unscrupulous sergeant of the Christian troops led by Captain Pedro Venegas de Córdoba. On the promise of a substantial sum of money to be paid to him for the mission, Salomón, is sent by his master to redeem the beautiful Halima, who is being held in the Christian camp. Later in the play, Salomón is caught trying to rob Pimienta who, disguised in Moorish clothing, is pretending to be asleep in the middle of the woods. Salomón pleads for mercy, but the sergeant, deaf to his pleas, delivers the harsh punishment of lashing him to a tree and leaving him as a prey to wild animals.

SALOMÓN ¡Ah Pimienta de mis ojos!
Muestra el valor español
en perdonar.

¹⁹ In accordance with a binary pattern, as underlined by O. HASSON, *Los baños de Argel. Un análisis del tratamiento cervantino de lo hebreo y lo judío desde un punto de vista kleiniano*, in R. FINE, S.A. LÓPEZ NAVIA (eds), *Cervantes y las religiones. Actas del Coloquio Internacional de la Asociación de Cervantistas* (Univ. Hebraica de Jerusalén, Israel, 19-21 dic. 2003), Iberoamericana, Madrid - Vervuert, Frankfurt 2008, pp. 473-502.

PIMIENTA Ya os perdono
la vida, mas quedaréis
atado a este leño corvo
hasta que venga el Mesías
a libraros.
SALOMÓN. Riguroso
te muestras, ¿quieres que sea
pasto aquí de hambrientos lobos?

And again:

SALOMÓN ¡Pimienta, sargento mío,
español, hombre, cristiano... !
Voces doy al aire en vano.
Aquí dio fin el judío.
Madres, las que parís hijos,.
no los paráis si podéis
porque verlos excusáis
en tormentos tan prolijos.
Aquí el triste pecho mío
dará su sangre a una fiera,
si hay fiera acaso que quiera
tener sangre de judío (II, ll. 1643-1675)²⁰

[SAL. Ah, Pimienta of my heart/ show your Spanish valour/ by sparing me! PIM. Your life / I will spare, but you / are to stay tied to this / curved tree until / the Messiah shall come and /set you free! SAL. Without pity / you show yourself. Do you want me / to become the meal for greedy wolves? /PIM. I wish the same to all who live / by obeying your laws / so that we would have fewer usurers/ [...] SAL. Oh Pimienta, my Spanish Sergeant / you who are a man, a Christian! / I am shouting at the wind in vain. / Here will the Jew witness his end. / Mothers who beget children / conceive them not, if you can / for this will prevent your seeing them / tormented with such sufferings. / Here my poor breast / shall yield its blood to a wild beast / if ever a wild beast does exist / that can want the blood of a Jew].

Here in one short scene, we find a concentration of all the stereotypes that accompanied the Jew onto the stage: greed, cowardliness and the illusion of waiting for the Messiah.

After coming close to being devoured by a lion, Salomón is set free by a Christian soldier after he himself promises to become a convert. and act as translator between the Moors and the Christians. In the final clash of the play, the Sergeant, who had left Salomón for dead, makes a scatological joke (“Si no es ya escremento de leones” – If he is not already lion droppings).

Salomón’s counterpart is Mingo, the Christian *gracioso* who, in *El árbol del mejor fruto* by Tirso de Molina, is Queen Elena’s special envoy charged with finding wood from the True Cross. Mingo (whose name is unquestionably of rustic origin) conducts a detailed cross-examination of the Jews aimed at making them reveal the burial place of the True Cross. During it, as Arellano has pointed out,²¹ he touches on all the most obvious anti-Semitic clichés: tocinophobia; stereotyped physical features, such as big noses and red hair; the Jews’ useless wait for the Messiah; their greed for money; and their strict observance of the Sabbath.

Jewish greediness also forms the basis of one of Calderón de la Barca’s early plays *El astrólogo fingido*. Written around 1625, it applied the debate on astrology (which was to become very prominent

²⁰ J. RUIZ DE ALARCÓN, *La manganilla de Melilla*, in ID., *Obras completas*, ed. A.W. EBERSOLE, I-II, Albatros Hispanófila, Valencia 1990, II, pp. 101-135 (spelling modernized). The topos of the Jewish or Converse *gracioso* is present even in the theatre of the late Golden Age. See, for example, its recurring appearance in Moreto: J. VÉLEZ SAINZ, *De Comino a Cansino: metáforas del criptojudasímo en los graciosos de Moreto*, in PEDRAZA JIMÉMEZ, GONZÁLEZ CAÑAL, MARCELLO (eds), *Judaísmo y criptojudasímo en la comedia española*, pp. 59-75).

²¹ I. ARELLANO, *Judíos y antisemitismo en dos comedias de Tirso*, *ibid.*, pp. 39-59.

in philosophical dramas, such as *la vida es sueño*) to the peripeties and misunderstandings typical of the *comedia de enred*. In this play, a character is forced to dress up as an Astrologer in order to remedy a *gaffe* he has committed. He is so credible that his fame spreads like wildfire all over the town, and all sorts of people turn to him for a solution to their most disparate problems. One of the many simpletons who turn to the so-called self-styled Astrologer is Otáñez, an old Squire who asks for the power to fly from Madrid to the Pyrenees (his home country) so he can safely stash away his savings there without incurring the hazards of ambushes and robberies possible on an overland journey. Forced to play out his role, the mock astrologer turns to his crafty servant, Morón. Here, the playwright, using a prank that had already appeared in the second part of *Don Quixote*, has Morón blindfold the old man and tie him to a pole, tricking him into believing he is riding a winged horse. When the poor Otáñez is finally convinced that he has reached his village, he finds himself not only back at the starting point, but also bereft of his money, which has been stolen from him by Morón. Once again, we are confronted with a ruse played on an avaricious man by an astute servant, a prank made even sweeter by insinuations about Morón's Jewish ancestry. In the dialogue below, we can see how the servant manages to convince poor Otáñez to embark on the supposed flight despite the adverse weather conditions he might encounter:

MORÓN Lo que agora habéis de hacer
 es poner os de camino
 botas y espuelas; si acaso
 tenéis algún papahígo,
 ponéosle, que es menester
 que llevéis muy grande abrigo,
 porque en la sierra de Aspa
 hace temerario frío;
 aunque vos en esta vida
 más veces habréis temido
 aspa y fuego que aspa y nieve,
 OTÁÑEZ Mentís. que no soy judío.
 MORÓN. Pues qué. ¿ Moro?
 OTÁÑEZ. Vos sois moro,
 y aun Morón que es lo mismo
 que moro grande (III, ll. 2800-2814).²²

[What you must do now / is put on these travel boots / and, if by chance, you have any kind of cap / do put it on, because its useful / for you to be well protected, / for on the Mountains of the Cross / it is terribly cold / even though, in this life, / you will have more often feared / the fiery cross than the snowy cross, certainly. OT. You lie, for I am not a Jew! MOR. What are you then, a Moor? OT. No, for you are the Moor, / and Morón, which means a big Moor].

The Petrarchan wordplay *fuego/nieve* (we are now well into post-Gongorism) is a pun based on the coincidence of the toponym *Aspa* (a mountain in the Pyrenees the Squire was supposed to fly over) with the Spanish word *aspa* (blade) which also denotes “St. Andrew’s Cross,” the insignia Jews were then obliged to wear as a badge of identification. The old man’s quick rebuttal might sound like a Freudian

²² Quote from Calderón de la Barca, *El astrólogo fingido*, ed. F. RODRÍGUEZ GALLEGU, Iberoamericana, Madrid -Vervuert, Frankfurt 2011. As the editor notes, the textual transmission of the comedy shows two separate branches corresponding with the editions of Zaragoza (1632) and of Madrid (1637), respectively. The quotation refers to the version of 1632 (p. 445) where the dialogue between Morón and the Squire is better articulated than in the 1637 one. As Rodríguez Callejo suggests, this may be due to a revision less conditioned by the theatre public’s reactions. The passage is quoted by J.C. GARROT ZAMBRANA, *Judíos y conversos en las comedias de Calderón*, in PEDRAZA JIMÉNEZ, GONZÁLEZ CAÑAL, MARCELLO (eds), *Judaísmo y criptojudaismo en la comedia española*, pp. 59-75, who points out its analogy with a similar squabble in *El escondido y la tapada*: here a *criada* accuses Squire, also known as Morón, of crypto-Judaism. Hence, the hypothesis (still to be verified) of the frequent presence of *conversos* among the old Squires who, at the time, acted as chaperones to young ladies.

denial, were it not for the allusion to the other persecuted minority. Instead, it takes the long-standing problem of the co-existence with Moors and Jews and smooths it into a kind of linguistic *kermesse* (see the pun on *moro/morón*) as is widely seen in the comedies of Lope, Cervantes and Ruiz de Alarcón. However, it is significant that beyond this crossfire of puns, the figure of the Jew was being stripped of most of the stereotypes previously so popular with the audiences of the *corrales*. It is almost as if, by refurbishing the image of the Jew from a linguistic point of view, Calderón was rescuing it from the prejudices of a public opinion growing increasingly concerned with issues of religious and ethnic identity.

4 *The Jew and the Queen*

María Rosa Lida de Malkiel has pointed out that the connection between the character of the Jew and the practice of medicine dates back to the Middle Ages.²³ In Cervantes' *Gran sultana*, however, we see the anti-Semitic sentiments shown by the brazen Madrigal balanced by the beneficial effects obtained by Sedequías, a Jewish physician who is summoned to alleviate the "*profundas melancolías*" of Doña Catalina, the Christian slave with whom the Muslim Grand Sultan is desperately in love.

Essentially evil, on the contrary, are the intentions which motivate Ismael, the Jewish physician, whose plotting receives harsh punishment in *La prudencia en la mujer* by Tirso de Molina.²⁴ Politically inspired, its composition coincided with Philip IV's rise to the throne (1621). The play celebrates the political shrewdness of María de Molina, Queen Regent and mother of the future king of León and Castilla Ferdinand IV. María dexterously dodges the attempts of those who wish to marry her in order to usurp the right of the throne of her three-year-old son and, with equal cleverness, foils a treacherous death plot against her son. The plot is hatched behind her back by the Infante D. Juan with the complicity of the Chief Physician to the infant King, Ismael the Jew, who is lured by promises of future assignments and rewards. («Su protomédico soy; / la muerte llevo escondida / en este término breve [...]», II, 1125-27).²⁵ However, at the critical moment when Ismael lifts a silver goblet and is about to give the child a poisonous potion in the guise of a purge, the wicked Jewish physician transforms himself into the stereotypical cowardly Jew. Now alone on the stage, Ismael abandons himself to a litany of fears and doubts which will eventually prove fatal for him

La purga le voy a dar.
¿De qué tembláis, miedo frío?
Mas no fuera yo judío
a no temer y temblar.
Alas pone el interés
al ánimo; mas ¿qué importa
si el temor las plumas corta
y grillos pone a los pies? (II, vv. 1187-94).

[I leave to give him a purge. / Why do you tremble, cold with fear? / But I would be not a Jew / if I didn't tremble and fear. / Interest has put / wings to my courage. But what's the use / if my fear clips my feathers / and puts stocks on my feet?].

His fear grows even greater when, having finally made up his mind to put his treason into effect, Ismael suddenly catches sight of a portrait of the Queen, an sight which fills him with dark forebodings:

²³ LIDA DE MALKIEL, *Lope de Vega y los judíos*, pp. 78-85.

²⁴ Whose figure is examined in detail by ARELLANO, *Judíos y antisemitismo en dos comedias de Tirso*, pp. 40-46.

²⁵ I am taking this and the following quotation from TIRSO DE MOLINA, *La prudencia en la mujer*, ed. G. TORRES NEBRERA, Cátedra, Madrid 2010.

Mas, cielo, ¿no es el retrato
este de su madre? Sí.
No sin causa me acobarda
la traición que juzgo incierta
pues puso el rey a su puerta
su misma madre por guarda (II, ll.1205-1210).²⁶

[But is this not the portrait / of his mother? / Heavens! It is! / Nor is it without significance, I fear, / that this dangerous treachery / makes me afraid / seeing that the King / has placed his mother at the door to guard him].

Suddenly the portrait topples from the wall right before the threshold of the door. With his fears turning to certitudes, Ismael searches for another way out, only to encounter the Queen herself. At this point, the figure of the cowardly Jew gives way to another stereotype, the Jew as blubberer. When challenged by the Queen, Ismael protests his innocence, throws all the blame on the Infante Juan, and assures her he had only pretended to replace the purge with a poison. Just as he is about to pour the potion out, the Queen orders him to drink it, which he is forced to do while declaring himself a victim to the ancient law of retaliation:

Muerte, bien os llaman trago,
pues es purga que se bebe.
pero la que receté
a costa de tantas vidas
en julepes y bebidas
por el talión pagaré.

And after swallowing it, he adds:

El primer médico soy
que castigan por matar.
Ya obra el veneno fiero
ya se rematan mis días.
¡Favor, divino Mesías,
que vuestra venida espero! (II, vv. 1380-1394).

[Death, you bitter cup, for it is a purge I drink / though the one I did prescribe / at the cost of many lives / in syrups and drinks / I shall pay for the law of retaliation. [...] I am to be the first doctor / who is punished for committing murder. / Already I feel how fierce the poison is / already my days are ending. / Divine Messiah, help me, / for I expect your coming].

The satirical theme of the murderous doctor was common in the seventeenth century, but here the theme of the derided Jew seems to take on sombre tones foreshadowing tragedy, even though the role is showered with ridicule by the character's expectation of the Messiah, another common-place, anti-Semitic device. Tirso staged the role of Ismael with great mastery, alternately slowing down or interrupting the action in order to concentrate in a single character all the hazards (greed, cowardice, lying) seen as threats to a kingdom that claimed to represent the purest embodiment of Christian values. It was no coincidence that the Jew was given the name of Ismael, the slaughterer of the Old Testament,²⁷ since the very *desenlace* of the play is based on the Jew's attempted murder of the future king. Continuing to be persecuted by the Infante Don Juan, María de Molina is unjustly accused of treason in front of her son,

²⁶ For the dramatic device of the salvific portrait, also exploited by Tirso in *La firmeza en la hermosura*, see C.B. WEIMER, *Los retratos salvadores en dos comedias de Tirso de Molina*, in E. GALA, B. OTEIZA (eds), *El sustento de los discretos. La dramaturgia áulica de Tirso de Molina*, Revista Estudios, Madrid 2003, pp. 149-158.

²⁷ Ismael, the son of Agar with homicidal tendencies, Gn 16,12, but also the Ismael son of Nethaniah of Jer 41; see ed. TORRES NEBRERA, pp. 104-105.

now become King. She proves her own innocence by drawing out from her sleeve the very silver goblet with which the Infante had attempted to assassinate the future King with the complicity of the “vile Jew.” Episodes of this nature, inspired by folkloric models, are found in the plays of Lope and Cervantes (such as the exchange of a child’s heart with that of a pig’s in the *Inocente niño de la Guardia*, the crescendo of persecutions against the Jew and the double joke in *Los baños de Argel*.) However, the episode here (of the physician led to kill himself with the very potion with which he intended to commit a homicide) is a motif with a long list of literary antecedents. The ultimately political topic of the Jew as traitor and murderer (and more precisely, child-murderer) can be traced back, via Damián Salucio del Poyo’s *La próspera fortuna de don López Dávalos*, to a historical document (the *Crónica del Rey Enrique Segundo de Castilla*), whereas the motif of the woman coercing someone to commit suicide is the dramatization of an episode in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, X, 24-25, later to reappear, for example, in Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, XXI 59-66. These two lines of transmission intersect with the connection between the Jewish doctor and the Queen Regent, so glorified by Tirso. However, the physician in *Crónica* was not a Jew, nor was the physician in Salucio del Poyo’s play forced to commit suicide by a female character, as is the case with both Apuleius and Ariosto.²⁸ By making the figure of the corrupt physician a Jew, Tirso showed the extreme depth of some prejudices. At the same time, by pitting the Jew’s treacherous intentions against the Queen’s virtuous behaviour, the playwright turns into *prudencia* what in Apuleius’ and Ariosto’s two female characters is arrogance and malignity.²⁹

5. Some final reflections

Having reached the end of this short review of anti-Semitic stereotypes in the theatre of the *Siglo de Oro*, I realise I have added only little to what has already been said and discussed. Yet, the path traced from Lope to Calderón across roughly two decades through the different genres of the theatre of the Golden Age (*de cautiverio*, *de santos*, historical, *de enredo*) sheds light on a few issues which bear reflection. The first one regards the progressive stylization of the figure of the Jew: as its historical connotations gradually recede into the background, “the Jew” becomes in Calderón a linguistic pretext, a mere comic gag. As shown by Carlos Garrot Zambrana’s exhaustive study, the comic role of the ever-present *gracioso* – whether filtered through a folkloric pattern in Cervantes or mingled with the everyday, common occurrences in the contemporary satire in Tirso – ended to defuse anti-Semitic violence (the same character appears in the *autos* clothed in ecclesiastical garments). With the Jew being reduced to a mere gag, Calderón did not abandon the religious conflict between Jews and Christians, but rather repropounded it in an allegorical context. We also see this in Calderón’s *autos sacramentales* (for example, the dialogue on Judaism versus Christianity, and the Old Testament versus the New, which is a central theme of the *Nuevo Palacio del Retiro*, first performed in 1634).³⁰ In the end, however, it is the comic element that becomes the powerful detonator of the groundless nature of religious conflict. How else can it be explained why, after having derided the figure of the Jew in his comedies (to the extent of being accused of anti-Semitism),³¹ Cervantes, in one of his eight *entremeses*, uses comedic characters to unmask the ignominy

²⁸ On this topic, see J. FUCILLA, *The Ismael Episode in Tirso’s “La prudencia en la mujer”*, «Bulletin of the Comediantes», 13 (1961), pp. 5-3; K.C. GREGG, *The Probable Source for Tirso’s Jewish Doctor*, «Romance Notes», 17 1 (1977), pp. 302-304; F. DE ARMAS, *La figura del niño rey en “La prudencia en la mujer”*, «Bulletin Hispanique» 80 (1978), pp. 175-189.

²⁹ In both cases, the two wives are plotting against their husbands with the help of a corrupt doctor; similarly Ariosto’s doctor, who was bribed by the ugly Gabrina, “was better at killing with poison / than at healing the sick with syrups” («sapea meglio uccider di veneno / che risanar gli infermi di silopo», *Orlando Furioso*, XXI 59, 3-4).

³⁰ See J.C. GARROT ZAMBRANA, *Judíos y conversos en el Corpus Christi (La dramaturgia calderoniana)*, Brepols (Collection Etudes Renaissance), Turnhout 2013, pp. 278-291.

³¹ According to the opinion of Américo Castro as discussed by J. CANAVAGGIO, *La estilización del judío en “Los baños de Argel”*, in “¡Bon compañero, jura Di!”. *El encuentro de moros, judíos, cristianos en la obra cervantina*. Iberoamericana, Madrid - Vervuert Frankfurt, 1998, pp. 9-19. On the degraded reading of the Jew – in

of an entire society that was willing to deny evidence rather than admit to its own “converso” roots.³² For a society so rigid that it was unable to laugh at itself, comedy was like a deforming mirror that distorted and hid the unyielding oppressive ideology from the public of the time of Philip III and Philip IV. Lope knew this full well when, on triumphantly staging the martyrdom of La Guardia’s innocent victim, he felt the need to alternate the more macabre effects of the story with rustic vignettes, or even occasionally with compassionate touches, such as the nostalgic feelings of the God-killing Jews for their lost country. Finally, as has been noted repeatedly, we see that the anti-Semitism of *El inocente niño de la Guardia* and other similar plays, are less an expression of religious conviction and more a form of homage to the Spanish monarchy and its expansionist ambitions.³³

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SUMMARY

This paper examines different treatments of the figure of the Jew in five texts which are representative of Spanish dramatic literature of the *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Age). Lope’s *El niño inocente de La Guardia* (about 1603) recalls one of the most significant episodes of the anti-Semitic propaganda in Spain: a group of Jews were said to have kidnapped a young child during a procession, with the intention of making a martyr of him. Cervantes’ *Los Baños de Argel* (published in 1615), with its evident autobiographic connotations, reconstructs events that took place in an Algerian prison camp, staging a series of tableaux portraying the coexistence of the three monotheistic religions. Rather than just using the stereotype of the Jew derided for his physical and moral characteristics, the author of *Quijote* creates a dramatic expedient which reappears in successive comedies of the Golden Age. The stereotype of the cowardly and fearful Jew reappears in the way in which Juan Ruiz de Alarcón and Tirso de Molina respectively portray the gracioso in *La manganilla de Melilla* and the doctor in *La prudencia en la mujer*. The role of the derided Jew is an extremely comedic one in *El astrológo fingido* by Calderón de la Barca (about 1625), where an old man, who is suspected of being a Jew, begs a pretended astrologer to fly him through the air to a far-distant place where he can hoard his savings (but eventually he finds he is back exactly where he started). This short review of anti-Semitic episodes in the theatre of the *Siglo de Oro* can shed light on the progressive stylization of the figure of the Jew in these plays and on the relations between comedy and the conflict between Jews and Christians on the one hand, and the oppressive ideology of the time of Philip III and Philip IV on the other.

KEYWORDS: Spanish Theatre of the Golden Age; Lope, Cervantes, Calderón; Jewish characters.

Cervantes; dramaturgy, an isolated figure, unpopular with everybody – see J.C. GARROT ZAMBRANA, *Medrosos descendientes de deicidas: los judíos en el teatro de Cervantes*, in M.G. PROFETI e M. LOMBARDI (eds), *Lo sguardo sull’altro*, Alinea, Firenze, 2003, pp. 147-167; for a more nuanced opinion see R. FINE, *Lo hebreo, lo judío y lo converso en la obra de Cervantes*.

³² I am referring to Cervantes’ *Retablo de las maravillas*. For a great reading of this text in a folkloric and comparative key, see L. TERRACINI, *Le invarianti e le variabili dell’inganno (Don Juan Manuel, Cervantes, Andersen)*, in EAD., *I codici del silenzio*, Edizioni dell’Orso, Alessandria 1988, pp. 73-91.

³³ In particular, by A. GARCÍA REIDY, *Los hebreos en el teatro de Lope de Vega (mito, historia e imperio)*, in PEDRAZA JIMÉNEZ, GONZÁLEZ CAÑAL, MARCELLO (eds), *Judaísmo y criptojudaismo en la comedia española*, pp. 17-37; see, also, regarding the sympathy shown by Lope towards feminine figures in the Bible, A. SICROFF, *Notas equívocas en dos dramatizaciones de Lope: “El niño inocente de la Guardia” y “La hermosa Ester”*, in A.M. GORDON, E. RUGGS (eds), *Actas del Sexto Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas (Toronto 22-26 agosto de 1977)*, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Toronto, Toronto 1980, pp. 701-705.

