

**TOWSON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**

“BY SOME KIND OF JEWISH PRACTICE”:

**A CASE STUDY OF DOCTOR RODERIGO LOPEZ AND THE EARLY MODERN
NEW CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE**

by

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ABSTRACT

The Early Modern period saw dramatic changes in European society. The New Christian phenomenon, which began in 1492 with the expulsion of Jews from Spain, coincided with the beginning of this period and has long been identified as a catalyst in the modernization of Western culture. Occupying a unique place within European society, New Christians straddled pre-existing boundaries between religious and social groups; they were ideally placed to take advantage of the social, political, and economic shifts then taking place. The lives of some New Christians like Roderigo Lopez support the notion that, in certain cases, potential economic and political gain often outweighed the taboo of utilizing the services of Jews and those of Jewish descent. The intersection of core “Jewish” values, combined with the unique societal position of New Christians, allowed Lopez and those like him to succeed, where pre-existing notions said they “should not.”

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*“The problem with Marranos, of course, is that they are very difficult to trace: secrecy was their stock-in-trade. Their appearance in the records is a sort of historical mishap.”*¹

PREFACE

Before venturing into the unique circumstances of New Christians in Early Modern Europe, it is necessary to define and explain several of the ideas and terms that will be used throughout this thesis. The medieval period is generally defined by scholars as starting with the fall of Rome in 476CE and ending circa 1500CE. This endpoint for the Middle Ages precisely marks the beginning of the New Christian phenomenon, and New Christians were often seen as catalysts of the Early Modern period. The Early Modern period, which is sometimes still referred to as the Renaissance by those in non-academic circles, took place from circa 1500CE to circa 1800CE and was the period in which virtually all of European society shook off the remnants of feudal societal organization, gained a centralized system of government, and began to enter the world of large-scale global exploration and capitalism. The modern era, for the purposes of this thesis, began circa 1800CE and continues until today.

Current scholarship within the field of Iberian Jewish history provides the researcher with several options regarding the terminology of those who converted from Judaism to Christianity. While each term carries its own nuances, which can change

1. David S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England: 1485 - 1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 10.

depending on which author one is reading, New Christians, Marranos, Crypto-Jews, and judaizers are all used fairly interchangeably. For the sake of consistency, the term “New Christian” will be used in this thesis unless it is within a direct quote.²

Finally, a word on Doctor Roderigo Lopez himself. Lopez was a man of Iberian origins who immigrated to England in the latter half of the sixteenth century. He quickly became associated with the College of Physicians and was well-known in the English court. His career culminated in his appointment to the position of personal physician to the Queen herself, but the end of his life was overshadowed by charges of conspiracy against her life. Very little primary source information remains regarding the details of his life. He destroyed his own personal papers, and the College of Physicians, which would have held records of his professional life, burned in 1666. What does remain in the British State Papers and personal letters of those close to the monarchy focuses primarily on his trial and subsequent execution. Despite the paucity of available sources, the fact remains that as a New Christian in the Early Modern period, when Jews and those of Jewish heritage were so frequently reviled in Christian society, Lopez probably should not have been able to rise to such a high position within the English court. This is especially the case if one takes into account his Iberian heritage, which should have had an additional negative impact on his position within English society during the sixteenth century. Therefore, his story deserves to be investigated, and it is my contention that he

2. “New Christian” can be applied to converts to Christianity from both Judaism and Islam and is probably the most neutral term available. “Marrano” is a pejorative term applied to Jewish converts to Christianity and is generally translated as “pig” or “swine.” “Crypto-Jews” is applied to those converts who did not accept their conversion to Christianity and continued to practice a hidden version of Judaism, which usually became increasingly corrupted throughout subsequent generations. “Judaizer” is applied to converts from Judaism who exhibit, intentionally or unintentionally, Jewish socio-religious habits.

should join the ranks of those, like Doña Gracia Nasi, who used their Jewish identity and those values esteemed by Jewish society in order to succeed within Christian society.³

Ultimately, Lopez can and should be viewed as a straddler of socio-religious boundaries. His own personal faith aside, he was a man of Jewish heritage living in Christian society. He was, in fact, living and working in the very heart of Protestantism and was accepted by its residents - at least until the end of his life. He was also a man of Iberian descent serving as the personal physician of the English monarch during a time when England and Spain were frequently engaged in open hostility. He was a physician, merchant, and sometimes statesman who was privy to the most intimate details of the court's life and would have been able to use those details for his own advantage. The inherent incongruities of the New Christian existence, and the ways in which Lopez and those like him were often able to use those incongruities to their advantage, will be outlined in the following chapters.

3. It is not my intention to imply that these values are strictly Jewish. In fact, the values of which I speak could be found within several different societies, especially those which were highly mobile or held somewhat fluid positions within their host societies.

“[..L]et us remember that Marranos were not only restless, but cosmopolitan in attitude; they came into contact with diverse circles of European society, especially the literate and influential. The more dissenting among them found their way into the underground intellectual sphere, where subversive pre-Enlightenment attitudes were stirring, and from where, at times, a greater mind emerged to give these attitudes constructive shape. Even by merely being there, present among other Europeans, and equipped with their peculiar mental and cultural baggage, the Marranos set an example of something yet unclear but different, partly alarming, perhaps also enticing, that became possible and was taking shape.”⁴

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Salo Baron and the “Lachrymose Conception” of Jewish History

In order to understand why social, religious, and political boundary-crossers like Roderigo Lopez are important to Jewish history, one must first grasp what Salo Baron referred to as the “lachrymose conception” of Jewish history. Part of the problem with Jewish historiography in the past has been that the whole of Jewish existence has been treated as a singular instance, without close examination of the unique qualities of specific times and places. In addition, there has been a tendency to focus on the tragic periods rather than the fairly peaceful, if not necessarily pleasant, aspects of everyday life. Although Baron was referring solely to the Middle Ages in his anti-lachrymose appraisal of this form of Jewish historiography, “Neo-Baronists” have applied the theory to the entirety of Jewish history. Beyond accurately portraying the extreme highs and

4. Yirmiyahu Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 338.

lows, they strive to present a true representation of “business as usual” for Jews throughout history.⁵ Similarly, it is my hope that this examination of the life of Roderigo Lopez will help us to better understand the whole of Jewish existence as it was actually experienced. In reading Baron’s works, one begins to understand that “the Jew is above all a tremendous achiever,” especially in economic and financial matters.⁶ Baron did not ignore the tragic aspects of Jewish history, but he chose to focus primarily on the normal and sometimes even positive aspects of *galut*.⁷ He also advocated studying all aspects of a particular history, including demography, politics, economics, and social customs, before making a decision as to whether or not it was a “tragic” or “successful” one.⁸ By closely examining the upper levels of New Christian society and how these particular individuals were able to use their often ambiguous social, political, and religious positions to succeed in Christian society, a fuller picture of Jewish history will begin to emerge. Granted, “[t]he enrichment of a small minority of Jews cannot by itself be sufficient reason for revising the concept of the Jewish reality.”⁹ Nevertheless, the fact that not *every* Jew or person of Jewish descent endured the same tragic experiences, and that some did succeed and excel when they “should not” have done so, begs a reassessment of the historical narrative before drawing positive or negative conclusions

5. David Engel, “Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 20, no. 3/4 (2006): 243 - 252.

6. Isaac E. Barzilay, “Yiṣḥaq (Fritz) Baer and Shalom (Salo Wittmayer) Baron: Two Contemporary Interpreters of Jewish History,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 60 (1994): 52.

7. State of Jewish life outside the Land of Israel, from the root גלה “to be exiled.”

8. Barzilay, “Yiṣḥaq (Fritz) Baer and Shalom (Salo Wittmayer) Baron: Two Contemporary Interpreters of Jewish History,” 11 - 16, 58.

9. *Ibid.*, 68.

for the whole. New Christians played an especially interesting and vital role in propelling the Jewish religion and culture from the “dark ages” into modernity. To my mind, their part has frequently been overlooked by scholars of traditional Jewish historiography.

The Move Toward Modernity

The New Christian phenomenon has long been identified as a catalyst in the modernization of Western culture.¹⁰ Baron himself believed that New Christians played a disproportionately large role in Early Modern society. Despite their small numbers, their importance in the realms of trade and politics meant that they were major contributors to the move toward the secularization and commercialization of European society.¹¹ Jews had frequently been an integral part of international relations in earlier time periods and frequently acted as “neutral” parties between rival rulers (even across religious boundaries). However, once New Christians arrived on the international scene, they were generally able to fulfill the roles of merchants or money lenders but were not subject to the same restrictions as their Jewish counterparts.¹² The expansion of capitalism allowed New Christians to spread ideas and be seen as a people of worth in their own right rather than exclusively as representatives of a particular group.¹³ Even when anti-semitism

10. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 338.

11. Barzilay, “Yiṣḥaq (Fritz) Baer and Shalom (Salo Wittmayer) Baron: Two Contemporary Interpreters of Jewish History,” 24.

12. Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, vol. XIII. Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion (1200 - 1650): Inquisition, Renaissance, and Reformation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 57 - 58.

13. *Ibid.*, 160.

sought to undermine the position of the New Christians,¹⁴ it was understood that the losses represented by their absence would be too great for the decrees to have much real meaning. Since ports were hubs of socio-cultural interaction and would have offered virtually endless opportunities for New Christians to mingle with those of other cultural and religious groups, the assimilation of foreign values and beliefs into what had already become a somewhat malleable belief structure was probably common. Many New Christians were totally cut off from the rabbinic core of Jewish religious practice and so had to create new modes of thinking and living which often incorporated Christian or Muslim ideas. It was perhaps this piecemeal belief system that allowed them to more readily accept Early Modern values,¹⁵ such as intellectualism, self-entitlement, and humanism.

Due to the intersection of particular factors in Lopez's time, Jewish identity or heritage was not always considered the negative trait that the Church generally considered it to be. First, core "Jewish" cultural values such as education and industriousness were paramount to one's success. Second, the unusual nature of New Christian social circumstances allowed Lopez and those of his ilk to anticipate modernity, while others struggled to come to terms with the new socio-political ideology. It was because of Lopez's heritage, at least in part, that he was so successful in his career. Lopez and his fellow New Christians were able to weave many aspects of their lives, both

14. For example, in 1550, a decree was issued in Venice calling the New Christian settlers "an infidel people, without religion, and wholly inimical to our Lord God" and threatened expulsion within two months. Salo Whittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, vol. XIV. Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion (1200 - 1650): Catholic Restoration and Wars of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 132 - 133.

15. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, vol. XIII. Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion (1200 - 1650): Inquisition, Renaissance, and Reformation*, 147 - 148.

interior and exterior, into a more versatile whole, which made them better equipped to adapt to the social, economic, and religious changes that were taking place around them as the world transitioned from pre-modernity to modernity.

It is this tendency toward greater individualism that is seen by many historians as marking the border between the medieval and Early Modern time periods. “Individualism was linked to capitalism, liberalism, and an incipient industrial revolution,”¹⁶ which served to help those “early adopters” of the newly emerging socio-economic practices move away from purely religious self-identification. As the gap between external and internal identities was given the chance to expand, people in the Early Modern period were essentially forced in the direction of self-examination. For the first time, they may have seen the possibility of personally belonging to more than one socio-politico-religious group, while simultaneously recognizing the same possibility in others.¹⁷

Prior to the Early Modern period, people were not necessarily identified in terms of the individual “Self” as we understand the word, “but mostly [by] the external parameters that defined [their] social existence. People’s identities were derived from their immersion in a solid tradition and the social body that embodied it.”¹⁸ As European populations progressed toward modernity, with Jews and New Christians often at the forefront of change, the idea of “self” became more personal and inwardly focused in

16. Geoff Baldwin, “Individual and Self in the late Renaissance,” *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 2 (June 2001): 341.

17. *Ibid.*, 347.

18. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 344.

contrast to the previous outward or superficial focus that was prevalent in the Middle Ages.¹⁹ In part, this was because of society's move toward secularism.

Whereas previously, especially in the Middle Ages, the most important aspects of one's existence were religious affiliation and social class, by the dawn of the Early Modern era, other factors were added to the mix. Profession, nationality (which was still in somewhat nascent stages of recognition), or level of education began to move to the forefront of people's perceptions of themselves and one another, and vie with religion in terms of importance. Although New Christians may have wanted to be Catholic in outward appearances only, in reality, Christianity permeated every aspect of their lives and forced them to acknowledge their own internal dichotomy.²⁰ New Christians did not easily fit into any of the pre-established religious or social categories; religion, somewhat by necessity for some of the converts, became more of an internal conviction, as opposed to the general outward expression of faith found among the "true" Jews and Christians.

Therefore, as society became more secularized and more economically pragmatic, New Christians, due to their own personal experiences, were again among those able to take advantage of the new situation through valuing people for what they could do, not only for the social position they held or the faith they professed.²¹ New Christians could simply not be defined by pre-existing categories. They lived publicly as Christians but were often seen as outsiders by Christian society. They may have lived privately as Jews,

19. Ibid., 344.

20. Yirmiyahu Yovel, *The New Otherness: Marrano Dualities in the First Generation*, Swig lecture (San Francisco: Swig Judaic Studies Program, University of San Francisco, 1999), 6.

21. Despite the implications of the previous statement, this does not mean that social position and religious affiliation were no longer important cultural factors. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 352 - 357.

but would also have been seen as outsiders to Jewish society. And frequently, they saw themselves as outsiders from both religious groups. Once again, it was these inherent contradictions that likely pushed New Christians to the forefront of those looking to break out of the pre-existing social, religious, and political categories no longer easily applicable to Early Modern life. “This [was] a drive toward Selfhood, toward the accession of values and achievements related to the Self, which [were] to be attained in this life rather than the next.”²²

In short, the events that occurred during the macro-processes of modernization and secularization in Europe were often foreshadowed as a series of micro-processes within the New Christian community. The latter were then transmitted to society at large through the social and economic relationships between New Christians and more traditional societies. New Christians like Lopez may not have generated the shift from pre-modern to modern society, but they most certainly acted as catalysts and deserve to be studied as such.²³ Their ability to flourish within traditional society despite the Church-defined “negative” character trait of Jewish heritage, and their willingness to embrace a more modern idea of Self and self-worth, necessitate a closer examination of their role within Early Modern society.

22. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 357.

23. *Ibid.*, 339.

“For many centuries, the Jews had followed established survival strategies. They learned how to manage the rulers under whose unstable protection they lived, how to bend during a storm, cut their losses, and go on. But now [in 1391] the ruling Spanish elite had lost control over the country, and quasi-revolutionary popular forces erupted from the underground. In the face of these new forces, the Jews had no proven strategy of survival; they had no experience in coping with such a radical and widespread revolt which, legitimized by mutinous religious clerics, took almost unbridled control of the situation.”²⁴

CHAPTER 2

THE IBERIAN PENINSULA AND THE CREATION OF THE NEW CHRISTIAN PHENOMENON, 1391 - 1497

In order to understand the process whereby New Christians were, somewhat as a result of their unique circumstances, pushed to the forefront of modernization, one must first examine their past. During the thirteenth century, all of Spain, save for Grenada which did not fall to the Christians until 1492, was brought under Christian control through the Reconquista. For a time, the Spanish rulers still valued Jewish involvement in their newly re-Christianized land; experienced, non-Muslim workers were needed to smooth the transition process and ensure the proper level of infrastructure within the changing society. However, as they became more comfortable governing their newly acquired territories, the Christian rulers became familiar with the necessary processes to maintain stable rule, and the Jews' services were no longer truly needed.

24. Ibid., 45.

The provinces of Spain had once been a welcoming haven to Jews fleeing invasions of orthodox Muslim Almohades, but after the almost total completion of the Reconquista, open hostility toward Jews began to spread throughout the Iberian Peninsula.²⁵ Beginning as early as 1285 with the French capture of Navarre, the anti-semitic practices of the rest of Europe, manifest in the Crusades and several mass expulsions during the previous three centuries, began to permeate the Iberian kingdoms.²⁶ Beginning in 1350, Castile, the last reasonably tolerant province in Spain, endured the rule of Pedro the Cruel, a corrupt ruler who often used the Jewish and Muslim populations to carry out his less-than-favorable practices, such as tax collection. In 1369, when he was finally removed from power by his brother, Henry, the fate of the Jews in the Iberian Peninsula was effectively sealed. They became the scapegoats for socio-political unrest virtually across the whole of Europe.²⁷

Amid the increasing hostility toward the Jews, civic authorities attempted to offer some protections from anti-semitic crowds. However, the authorities' harsh punishment of those who harmed Jews, and their refusal to hand the Jews over to public chastisement, caused unrest to break into actual violence. In June 1391, rioting began in Seville and spread through Cordoba, Toledo, and seventy other cities in Old Castile. From Castile,

25. Abram Leon Sachar, "Four Bloody Centuries," in *A History of the Jews*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 187, 206.

26. "Anti-semitic" is a relatively new term and would not have been used during this time period. It does, however, denote the general anti-Jewish sentiment of the time and has become familiar enough to most modern readers that even historians whose works focus on this time period often use it in their scholarly works.

27. Sachar, "Four Bloody Centuries," 204.

the violence spread throughout Spain, and after three months of violence and bloodshed, thousands of Jews had been killed and thousands more forcibly converted.²⁸

In turn, these mass conversions created one of the first large communities of New Christians in Spain. This first wave of converts was assimilated fairly easily into Old Christian society, often assuming economic and social roles of high standing. This process of assimilation was at least partially aided by the Jewish experience of fostering skills that would enable them to remain useful, despite their socio-religious stigma, to the dominant culture. Once they were given the opportunity to utilize those skills as legitimate members of the dominant culture, it is unsurprising that they were able to quickly rise in status equal to, or surpassing, that of their Old Christian counterparts. Between the conversions of 1391 and the establishment of the Inquisition in Castile in 1481, New Christians existed fairly well within Old Christian society and could move up the socio-political ladder, often surpassing the positions they would have been able to hold had they remained Jewish.²⁹

Take, for example, Geronimo de Santa Fé (d. c. 1419) and Luis de Torres (c. 15th - 16th centuries). De Santa Fé was a Spanish physician and writer. He converted to Christianity in 1412 and went on to initiate the Disputation of Tortosa against his former coreligionists and also became the personal physician of anti-Pope Benedict XIII.³⁰ De Torres was a Spanish explorer who converted to Christianity before 1492 and went on to

28. Ibid., 206.

29. Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 8 - 9.

30. Dan Cohn-Sherbock, "Lorki [de Lorca], Joshua [Geronimo de Santa Fé (d. c. 1419)]," in *The Dictionary of Jewish Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 184.

travel to the New World as Christopher Columbus's interpreter.³¹ Although Jews had certainly held positions such as these, it is unlikely that either of these men would have been provided the opportunity to rise to such positions of such notoriety had they remained Jewish. It is possible to look at examples like these as foreshadowing what would be possible for some New Christians in post-1492 Europe.

Although a second wave of pseudo-voluntary conversions of as many as fifty thousand Jews took place in 1412 - 1415, it was not until 1478 that Pope Sixtus IV issued a bull which laid the foundation for the Spanish Inquisition, essentially placing a veneer of religiosity over the consolidation of royal power under Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Kings of Spain.³² Ostensibly, the Inquisition was to be used to ensure religious orthodoxy, but in reality, it gave the monarchs almost total political control as well. The fear of being brought before the Inquisition and the subsequent punishment and confiscation of goods would have been enough to quell all but the most outspoken critics of the monarchy. By May of 1480, Ferdinand and Isabella formulated laws in order to separate the New Christians from the Jews and officially launched the Inquisition three months later.³³ When Granada, the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, fell in 1492, a third wave of mass conversions took place at the behest of the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella in their effort to create a purely Christian kingdom, and the resentment

31. Dan Cohn-Sherbock. "Torres, Luis d (fl. 15th-16th cent.)," in *The Dictionary of Jewish Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 284.

32. By calling these conversions "pseudo-voluntary," one should not think that the Jews were not forced into the conversion process. However, the Church's official definition of "forced conversions" happened on a more individual level where the convert, being given the choice between conversion or extreme bodily harm or death, attempted to choose death and was still forced to convert. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 53.

33. *Ibid.*, 157 - 158.

engendered by the comparatively easy assimilations of 1391 was brought to the forefront. This time, New Christians were seen as definitively “Other” and therefore, suspicious.³⁴

The New Christians’ inability to fit into any one mold was one of the many reasons behind Ferdinand and Isabella’s issuance of the Edict of Expulsion. By the mid-fifteenth century, the sincerity of the New Christians’ faith was frequently called into question by the Spanish clergy. Their outward conformity to Christianity was thought to be an act, and the Jews were suspected of encouraging the crypto-Judaism of the converts by supplying them with Jewish books, praying with them, and instructing their children in matters of Jewish faith.³⁵ The converts continued to live alongside outwardly practicing Jews, which led to retention of Jewish social and religious customs, and those judaizing tendencies could then “infect” Old Christian society.³⁶ In reality, by the time the Inquisition was established in Spain, many New Christians had assimilated into Catholic life, but the Inquisition tended to brand all New Christians as secret judaizers and created an aura of fear and paranoia surrounding the converts.³⁷ Solving the “New Christian problem” provided Ferdinand and Isabella with an excuse to expel the Jews, and while the spiritual purity of their kingdom was probably a concern, one cannot fail to take into account the economic and political impact of the expulsion. The Jews were forbidden

34. In general, the “Other” provides contrast needed to define the identifying features or characteristics of one’s own group. In some cases, it can be as simple as black versus white or right versus left, but in this instance, the idea of Other that arose had more ominous undertones of race and blood purity - ideas which were later codified and enforced under the rules of *limpieza de sangre*, which defined Jewish identity by family lineage rather than religion.

35. Abram Leon Sachar, “The Decline and Fall of Jewish Life in Spain,” in *A History of the Jews*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 209, 213.

36. Yovel, *The New Otherness: Marrano Dualities in the First Generation*, 1.

37. Miriam Bodian, “‘Men of the Nation.’ The Shaping of *Converso* Identity in Early Modern Europe,” *Past & Present*, No. 143 (May 1994), 55.

from taking silver, gold, or jewels with them when they left Spain, and communal property was forfeited to the Crown. This in turn would have allowed Ferdinand and Isabella to exert further control over the Spanish nobles and consolidate political power within the monarchy.³⁸ Although expulsion was seen as a solution to the “New Christian problem” of backsliding to Judaism, in reality, it only compounded the problem by creating a new wave of semi-forced converts from those Jews who did not wish to leave their homeland.³⁹

Frequently, family divisions occurred along generational lines. Elders tended to flee Spain and retain their Judaism while young men and those of the cultural elite, who ostensibly had the most to lose by leaving, chose to convert and remain in their homeland.⁴⁰ Those who did choose to leave were given only a few months to do so. Although exact figures are unknown, if eighty thousand to one hundred sixty thousand Jews retained their religion and left Spain, approximately one hundred twenty thousand refugees can be assumed. From this one hundred twenty thousand, it is probable that only forty thousand would have been able to leave Spain by sea, leaving approximately eighty thousand to enter Portugal and take King João II’s offer of temporary asylum.⁴¹

38. Sachar, “The Decline and Fall of Jewish Life in Spain,” 211, 214.

39. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 184.

40. Mark D. Meyerson, “Aragonese and Catalan Jewish Converts at the Time of the Expulsion” *Jewish History* 6, no. 1/2, The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume (1992): 131 - 140.

41. For references to the number eighty thousand, please see Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 189. The Jews leaving Spain were given permission to enter Portugal on the condition that they did so at official checkpoints and that they would pay a special entry tax for which they would be given a certificate that would effectively act as a Portuguese passport. Any Spanish Jew found in Portugal without his certificate would be subject to harsh punishment. Andr e Aelion Brooks, *The Woman Who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Doña Gracia Nasi - A Jewish Leader During the Renaissance* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2003, paperback edition), 14.

Only five years later in 1497, the Jews of Portugal were ordered to leave, and once again, Ferdinand and Isabella were pulling the strings. They would not allow their daughter, who was also named Isabella, to marry Manuel I of Portugal until he solved his country's Jewish problem. His solution was to give the Jews ten months to leave the country - but before they left, he seized and forcibly baptized the Jewish children so that their parents would be forced to choose between retaining their religion or retaining their children. He also trapped many Jews at the Lisbon harbor and deprived them of food, water, and sleep until they agreed to conversion.

This new cycle of forced conversions in Portugal created yet another wave of socially and religiously ambiguous New Christians.⁴² Significantly, this wave of New Christians was probably the most tenacious in the retention of their original faith. They had survived multiple waves of mass conversions in Spain with their Jewish identity intact, avoided the Spanish Inquisition, and chose expulsion from Spain in 1492 over conversion. They still saw themselves as Jewish and were called so by many of their neighbors. As such, they tried to retain as much of their religious life as possible without use of synagogues or any works in Hebrew, save medical texts.⁴³ It is probably at this point that one can truly refer to a crypto-Jewish community in the Iberian Peninsula. Those Jews whose aim was to remain true to their ancestral faith had to do so from group memory and force of will, because they were allowed little to no contact with

42. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 191 - 193.

43. *Ibid.*, 196.

practitioners of rabbinic Judaism and were not permitted to leave the Peninsula (though this restriction was difficult to enforce).⁴⁴

Those New Christians who did remain in Portugal were generally more organized and resilient than their Spanish counterparts due in large part to their more peaceful existence within Portuguese society prior to 1497.⁴⁵ In fact, their community was so strong and cohesive that all Iberian New Christians became known as “Portuguese.”⁴⁶ By the 1530s, the Portuguese New Christians were in a difficult position. On one hand, they were quite successful in the economic, religious, and political realms, but on the other, their dubious religious allegiance fostered mistrust among their Old Christian neighbors.⁴⁷ The Portuguese Inquisition began in 1536. According to Yirmiyahu Yovel:

[W]hen it finally worked in full steam, the Portuguese Inquisition became even harsher and more inhuman than the Spanish. Gathering wealth and power, it grew to become a state within a state. It reigned supreme over all other courts, civil and ecclesiastical, and answered to the king alone. And since Portugal was much smaller than Spain, its Inquisition was also more efficient, capable of exercising tighter control over the country.⁴⁸

Due to the nature of the Portuguese Inquisition, New Christians were no longer able to live with split loyalties between economic and religious concerns. By the 1530s, it

44. For references to rabbinic Judaism, see Bodian, “‘Men of the Nation:’ The Shaping of *Converso* Identity in Early Modern Europe,” 55 - 56. For references to leaving the Iberian Peninsula, see Cecil Roth, “The Middle Period: 1290 - 1609,” in *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941), 135.

45. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 196.

46. *Ibid.*, 212 - 213.

47. *Ibid.*, 209.

48. *Ibid.*, 216.

had become necessary to either embrace their Christian identity or flee the Iberian Peninsula to practice Judaism openly. The failure of many Jews and New Christians to flee the Iberian Peninsula prior to this watershed moment completed the division within Jewish society that was created by the mass conversions of 1391. Before this point, those who still lived in the “Lands of Idolatry” were still seen, at least by most, as *anusim*, or forced converts. However, as more time passed and they still failed to seek asylum where they could openly practice Judaism, the label of “forced” convert ceased to be applicable. The rabbis believed that those who remained under Christianity were doing so for material gain, and any judaizing tendencies they may have espoused were more symbolic than actual. The resulting split between rabbinic Judaism and New Christianity, which probably began with the first wave of conversions in 1391 and only grew wider with time, resulted in two separate socio-religious groups, one which valued external, ceremonial practice and one which valued (by necessity) private practice.⁴⁹ However, the Jews and New Christians were still tied by the bonds of family and the memory of shared tradition, if not necessarily the practice thereof. Many Jews were still willing to recognize the New Christians as coreligionists, though perhaps branding them as the “black sheep” of the family due to their unwillingness or inability to fully embrace Judaism.⁵⁰ This situation was described as early as 1391 by R. Isaac B. Shesheth Perfect, who

49. *Ibid.*, 203 - 204.

50. Yosef Kaplan, “From Crypto-Judaism to Judaism,” in *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orbio De Castro*, trans. Raphael Loewe (Oxford: Published for The Littman Library by Oxford University Press, 1989), 332.

differentiated between forced converts and those who “[threw] off all traditional links with the Torah and [...repudiated] the sovereignty of God.”⁵¹

Although “Judaizing [New Christians] were still Jews by aspiration,” their failure to leave Catholic lands when presented with any opportunity to do so, despite whatever sacrifices it would have required, meant that their desire for Judaism was more theoretical than real.⁵² Despite having rejected the opportunity to leave the Iberian Peninsula in order to practice Judaism openly, many New Christians had not totally abandoned the social traditions and values of Judaism. Although the Jews had valued many character traits which we could consider proto-modern, they were not able to use those traits in such a way to catapult themselves into higher positions within Christian society. However, once given the opportunity, New Christians were able to utilize the proto-modern character traits that had been encouraged by Jewish society in order to create a place for themselves within the larger framework of Early Modern European society. The New Christians’ valuation of hard work, education, and extended family connections belied the popularly held Iberian belief that blood was the only true signifier of worth. Somewhat ironically, due to the cultural belief in the superiority of their Iberian blood, New Christians,

51. Ibid., 326 - 327.

52. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 204 - 205.

especially those who settled in Amsterdam, tended to see Ashkenazi Jews as a less cultured and refined group.⁵³

It was this emphasis on the value of Self that placed New Christians in the ideal position to succeed in business.⁵⁴ Theoretically, once the stigma of their Jewish heritage was eliminated through baptism, they were free to engage fully in the economic process, although they generally gravitated toward commerce.⁵⁵ Under Ferdinand and Isabella, New Christians had, consciously or unconsciously, usurped and subsequently surpassed the positions of former court Jews.⁵⁶ The New Christians retained their former knowledge, and their outward profession of Christianity made them more socially, religiously, and politically acceptable court retainers. They also were employed in “racially stigmatized professions” in which Old Christians did not wish to engage, such as banking, medicine, and commerce.⁵⁷ The impure blood that barred them from high

53. Interestingly, by the time that the Jewish community in Amsterdam was established, it was the commingling of the Iberian cultural heritage and practice of Jewish law and religion that finally created a socio-religious category into which these former New Christians could be placed. The return to open Judaism also effectively mandated standardized religious and cultural practices, further defining the Iberian “re-converts” as a distinct group. It was also at this point that the cultural superiority of their Iberian heritage over the Eastern European heritage of their Ashkenazi coreligionists created an “East-West” rift in the Amsterdam Jewish community, leading, for example, to the creation of separate synagogues for the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 18. For information regarding the interactions between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews, see Bodian, “‘Men of the Nation:’ The Shaping of *Converso* Identity in Early Modern Europe,” 66 - 67.

54. This is not to say that other societies and nationalities were not also successful in business, but they are not the focus of this thesis. For example, when one mentions merchants, one cannot help but think of the Venetians and their great success in international trade.

55. By the mid-sixteenth century, in some locations (e.g. Castile), Judaism was seen as an inherited trait. “The ethnic definition served, among other things, to provide an explanation for the rapid socio-economic rise of a *converso* elite. According to this view, Jewish blood had endowed the *conversos* with certain traits - cunning, a lust for wealth and power, arrogance, and a readiness to exploit the vulnerable - that had facilitated their rise to power.” Bodian, “‘Men of the Nation:’ The Shaping of *Converso* Identity in Early Modern Europe,” 56 - 57.

56. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, 154.

57. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 14.

socio-political standing was their “trump card” in international commerce. New Christians were linked by secular, social experience, not religion or home country, which allowed merchants to create webs of contacts spanning not only the globe but socio-religious groups as well.

By the second half of the sixteenth century, Henry II of France invited Portuguese New Christians to settle “wherever they desired,” though they congregated primarily in Bordeaux and Saint-Esprit.⁵⁸ At the same time, Italian ports, such as Venice, Nice, and Livorno, were trying to attract more Portuguese merchants because of Portugal’s rapidly expanding economic importance.⁵⁹ We are perpetually reminded of the importance of webs of acquaintanceship within the Sephardi Diaspora for both personal and professional reasons.⁶⁰ In the case of Lopez, as will be discussed later, his international ties probably played a major role in both his near meteoric rise to success in the English court, and his catastrophic downfall to imprisonment and death on the accusation of high treason.

58. Bernhard Blumenkranz, “From the Expulsion from Provence to the Eve of the Revolution,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Encyclopedia Judaica, 1972), 154.

59. Daniel M. Swetschinski, “From the Middle Ages to the Golden Age, 1516 - 1621,” in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, edited by J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and I. Schöffner (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007 edition), 55.

60. For the purposes of this thesis, “Sephardi” refers only to Jews of Iberian descent. From the root ספרד, which has been used since the second century CE to refer to the Iberian Peninsula.

*“The many people who have written about the image of the Jew in Elizabethan literature have concentrated, on the whole, on social questions about real Jews, like ‘what knowledge could the Elizabethans have had of genuine Jewish life’; and, in respect of *The Jew of Malta* [and *The Merchant of Venice*], have looked for source materials or impulses among the exploits of contemporary Jews[...]but this has had an unfortunate effect on scholarship, for it has tended to push modern reactions to modern anti-Semitism into a past where they do not apply.”⁶¹*

CHAPTER 3

JEWISH HISTORY AND THE NEW CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IN ENGLAND AND THE NETHERLANDS IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Sephardi Diaspora had begun to develop into an organized network of smaller communities, generally port cities centered around commerce, including Amsterdam, Venice, Leghorn, Hamburg, and London, which made it possible (if not always probable) for scattered Jews and New Christians to see themselves as part of a larger community with a shared heritage.⁶² Despite this shared heritage, it was not always practical or preferable for the two communities to live together; if nothing else, New Christians ran the risk of social stigmatization and religious persecution if they were too closely associated with Jews. The Jews and New Christians who migrated from the Iberian Peninsula were met with varying degrees of success in

61. G. K. Hunter, “The Theology of Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964): 214 - 215.

62. While New Christians were frequently willing to claim their Jewish cultural (if not always religious) heritage, Jews were not always willing to return the favor. Please refer to the discussion beginning on page 19 regarding the split between rabbinic Judaism and New Christians. Josef Kaplan, “Wayward New Christians and Stubborn New Jews: The shaping of a Jewish Identity,” *Jewish History* 8, no. 1/2, The Robert Cohen Memorial Volume (1994): 27.

their lives. Some so-called “Jewish” character traits, such as accumulation of wealth, were viewed favorably in Early Modern Christian society, partially because society was moving toward a more commercialized form of existence and also because Calvinism, one of the primary forms of Protestantism, saw wealth as a sign of divine favor.⁶³ However, as the idea of *limpieza de sangre* spread, whether or not one was considered by Christians to be “Jewish” was no longer merely a question of one’s religion.⁶⁴ Along with the creation of large numbers of New Christians and their subsequent intermingling with those of Jewish *and* Old Christian stock, Christian European society became even more inclined to associate virtue with Christian values and mores. Building on pre-existing sentiments, “Jewishness,” in addition to being defined by religious practice and blood heritage, also came to be defined as a set of generally negative characteristics, such as malice, greed, and treachery that were transmitted from generation to generation through the family bloodline.⁶⁵

Ultimately, whether or not New Christians were truly accepted by Christian society was still usually dependent upon what they could provide for the larger society.⁶⁶ According to Cecil Roth, New Christians could be found in every sector of the economy, “from playwrights to pastry cooks, from pedlars [*sic*] to physicians, from soldiers to monks.”⁶⁷ Despite these new opportunities, however, they remained primarily employed

63. Lara Bovilsky, “Exemplary Jews and the Logic of Gentility,” in *Barbarous Play Race on the English Renaissance Stage* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 80.

64. Please refer to footnote 39 for a brief definition of this term.

65. Bovilsky, “Exemplary Jews and the Logic of Gentility,” 81.

66. *Ibid.*, 79 - 80.

67. Roth, “The Middle Period: 1290 - 1609,” 135.

in “Jewish” jobs, such as merchants, bankers, or physicians.⁶⁸ The New Christians probably worked very hard to fit in and so would have achieved a high degree of social, political, and economic assimilation, which had the negative result of garnering resentment from the Old Christian population, even as the latter intermarried with, and benefitted from, the services of the New Christians.⁶⁹

Although there is some evidence that Jews were present in England before 1066,⁷⁰ it is not until the 1115 *Terrier of St. Paul's* that “London Jews,” are mentioned in English documentation.⁷¹ Nevertheless, it is widely believed that William the Conqueror most likely imported Jews from France to England in 1066 for financial purposes. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, England probably had the most centralized government in Europe, especially in terms of financial and administrative institutions. It was also one of the most religiously orthodox countries, which, as Gavin Langmuir has suggested, could have been a cause for the Jews’ rapid movement to “quasi-servile status” and greater social isolation. Religious orthodoxy lent itself to the exclusion of anyone stigmatized as “Other.” Although documents from the period before the expulsion do not seem to hint at an overt feeling of anti-Jewishness, those feelings must be assumed from

68. Frederic D. Zeman, “The Amazing Career of Doctor Rodrigo Lopez (? - 1594),” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 39 (1965): 305.

69. Bodian, “‘Men of the Nation:’ The Shaping of *Converso* Identity in Early Modern Europe,” 53 - 54.

70. According to the works of Pseudo-Josephus, there was a treaty between Augustus and the Jews under Hyrcanus that mentions Jews being present in the English territory significantly prior to 1066. Elkan Nathan Adler, *London, The Jewish Communities Series* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1930), 1 - 2.

71. *Ibid.*, 8.

the populace's general reaction to, and willingness to believe in, charges such as ritual murder.⁷²

At the time of the expulsion, there were approximately two thousand Jews in England. Earlier in the century, however, there may have been as many as four to five thousand. Mounting persecution, including arbitrary arrests and executions, exorbitant fiscal exactions, pressure to convert, confiscations of property, and general civil unrest, had already caused the community to shrink before the Edict of Expulsion was issued in 1290. It is likely that a few Jews probably converted, and that some loss of life resulted from dangers encountered while fleeing the country or through the actions of vicious boat crews. Most, however, probably fled to France “where they assimilated completely into the main body of Jews living there, losing all trace of their prior residence in England.”⁷³

Until 1310, there is no “certain evidence” of Jews outside the *Domus Conversorum*, a sort of halfway house established by Henry III in 1232 for Jews who had converted to Christianity.⁷⁴ In that year, six Jews came to London in an attempt to repeal the Edict. No record of their names or the outcome has been preserved, save that one

72. Zefira Entin Rokéah, “The State, the Church, and the Jews in Medieval England,” in *Antisemitism Through the Ages* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988), 101 - 103.

73. Todd M. Endelman, “The Resettlement,” in *Jews of Modern Britain, 1656 - 2000* (Ewing, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 15 - 16.

74. In 1232, Henry III, who made the conversion of the Jews one of his primary concerns, founded the *Domus Conversorum* (House of Converts) for Jews who converted to Christianity. “[..M]id-century poverty amongst England's Jews, along with the inevitable decline in the Jewish community's ability to meet the financial needs of its more desperate members, may have persuaded many of them to convert.” In fact, the number of converts to Christianity reached its peak during Henry III's reign. Converts were given a place to live, meals, and an allowance, but their property was confiscated by the Crown. Richard Huscroft, *Expulsion: England's Jewish Solution* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), 86 – 87.

was a doctor of medicine.⁷⁵ One should not assume, however, that Jews were wholly absent from England during the Middle Period, especially after the Iberian expulsions of 1492 and 1497.⁷⁶ Most of the Jews who were in England post-1497 were most likely visiting doctors or merchants, though some people of Jewish descent, even practicing Jews, were probably settled in the country as well.⁷⁷

It was not, however, until the reign of Henry VIII (r. 1509 - 1547) that Jews and New Christians truly had a visible, if not necessarily openly acknowledged, role in English society. It was Henry's rule that set the stage for later integration and acceptance of Jewish repopulation of England. The birth of English Hebraism was brought about by Henry's desire for a divorce, which combined both a political and spiritual incentive for the study of Hebrew.⁷⁸ Although England at this point was still a Catholic country, the stirrings of the Reformation then present on the continent, and its emphasis on private devotions over priestly mediation, would not have been unknown. By 1524, Robert Wakefield, who would later become the Regius Chair in Hebrew at Oxford, published *Oratio de laudibus & utilitate trium linguarum* and "inaugurated Hebrew printing in

75. Lucien Wolf, "Anglo-Jewish History, 1290 - 1656," in *Papers Read at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, Royal Albert Hall, London, 1887* (Publications of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, no. 1. London: Office of the "Jewish Chronicle," 1888), 56.

76. Cecil Roth defined "The Middle Period" as the span of time between 1290 and 1656 in which Jews were forbidden from living in England. Although the Edict was never officially repealed, Jewish settlement was once again allowed under the rule of Oliver Cromwell.

77. Endelman, "The Resettlement," 16.

78. The Italian Renaissance cultivated an interest in examining artifacts, languages, and texts from antiquity, including Hebrew, which spread throughout the Early Modern world. The interest in Hebrew was bolstered by the Protestant doctrine of communing directly with God without the necessity of an intermediary, leading many Early Modern theologians to pursue the mastery of the Hebrew language in order to access the scriptures for themselves. Frequently, Christians would learn Hebrew from practicing Jews, and this combined exposure to their Jewish contemporaries plus a deeper knowledge of Jewish religious texts often softened the general opinion of Jews, at least in academic circles. Dean Phillip Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 227 - 229.

England.”⁷⁹ The pursuit of humanistic Hebraism was thought to give scholars fuel to better counter Jewish arguments against Christianity. At the same time, it fostered a limited degree of understanding between the two opposing cultures. Christian Hebraic scholars like Wakefield were instructed in Hebrew by Jews or recent converts so that they would be better able to understand biblical texts.⁸⁰

In 1518, Henry VIII wanted to improve the quality of medicine in England and so founded the Royal College of Physicians in order to license doctors for London. A lack of physicians in England necessitated their immigration from mainland Europe, and it is quite likely that several of them were of Jewish descent, given the propensity for medicine to be considered a “Jewish” profession.⁸¹

But Henry’s most audacious “flirtation” with the Jews came in 1529 - 1530, at the height of his scandalous divorce from Catherine of Aragon, who was the widow of his deceased older brother, Arthur. Henry, who had wanted the divorce since 1527, had been advised by his counselors to seek a civil route and have the English court dissolve his marriage, but both his lawyers and his clergy recommended a religious dissolution instead.⁸² The Church, which staunchly advocated for the legitimacy of his levirate marriage, seized upon the fact that Jews in Mantua had recently taken part in a levirate marriage within their own community as proof that such a marriage was, in fact, valid. In

79. David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603 - 1655* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 10.

80. The earliest of these teachers was John Immanuel Tremellius, a native of Ferrara, who immigrated to England in 1547 in order to escape the wars of religion in Germany. Roth, “The Middle Period: 1290 - 1609,” 148. Swetschinski, “From the Middle Ages to the Golden Age, 1516 - 1621,” 56.

81. Zeman, “The Amazing Career of Doctor Rodrigo Lopez (? - 1594),” 297.

82. Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 105 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

retaliation, Henry engaged Christian and Jewish scholars, often using bribery to achieve a result in his favor, to translate and “explain away the inconvenient text in Deuteronomy” in order to justify his divorce. Ultimately, the King utilized the opinion⁸³ of Mark Raphael, or Gabriel, of Venice, who stated that the living brother (Henry VIII, in this case) had to willingly take the widow of his deceased brother with the intent to provide the deceased brother with offspring and “without such marked intention the marriage [was] forbidden by divine law.” Otherwise, according to Raphael, there would be no lasting result (surviving male children) of the union. Since the male children born to Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon had quickly died, this was, in Raphael’s opinion, a sign that Henry did not have the proper intention and that the marriage was invalid.⁸⁴

During Henry’s reign, approximately seventy New Christians lived in London and were said to attend a secret synagogue in the home of Luis Lopes.⁸⁵ They were denounced on the basis of their religious practice by the Spanish Ambassador, and in February 1542, the Privy Council arrested a number of them on suspicion of being Jews

83. For reference to the “inconvenient text” see Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603 - 1655*, 10. Interestingly, this was not Mark Raphael’s first opinion. Originally, he stated that the levirate marriage was valid, but that due to the necessity of the king siring his own children to carry on his royal line, he could also take another wife. This is because the first male child of a levirate marriage is considered to be of the deceased brother’s line. Wolf, “Anglo-Jewish History, 1290 - 1656,” 61 - 63.

84. *Ibid.*, 61 - 63.

85. This is confirmed by the Spanish Inquisition records from Zeeland, Antwerp, and Milan, which state that sixty-nine New Christians lived in London in the 1540s, including thirty-seven men, sixteen women, and sixteen children. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England: 1485 - 1850*, 5.

and seized their property.⁸⁶ However, their arrest disrupted Portuguese trade, so the queen of Portugal wrote to her sister, Queen Mary of Hungary,⁸⁷ regent of the Netherlands, and the Spanish ambassador worked to free several of the men and their property, though some fled the country.⁸⁸

The New Christian community in London under Henry's rule was "ephemeral and mobile," comprised primarily of merchants who had to follow their markets.⁸⁹ According to Katz, the New Christian community in London in the 1530s and 1540s utilized a secret synagogue and a sort of New Christian "underground railroad" that would assist New Christians fleeing from the Iberian Peninsula to Antwerp. This community was ideally placed in this system due to its members' strong commercial ties with the community in Antwerp.⁹⁰

After leaving the Iberian Peninsula, Jews and New Christians tended to congregate in port cities, such as London, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, Venice, and Antwerp. Port cities were commercial hubs that also acted as cultural melting pots, meaning that

86. The incident was described thusly by the Acts of Privy Council (1542 - 7): "Dispute between the King and certeyne marchawntes strawngers probably suspected to be juis." Later in same: "Portugalles suspected of Judaisme." Adler, *London*, 80. It was around this time that Henry VIII was seeking closer diplomatic ties with the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Charles had a strong dislike of New Christians, even going so far as to ban them from some of his territories, so this was probably a gesture of good faith on Henry's part to show Charles that he was willing to make concessions to gain favor in the Emperor's eyes. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Doña Gracia Nasi - A Jewish Leader During the Renaissance*, 157.

87. For another example of this sort of royal intervention, refer to the story of Diogo Mendes on page 59.

88. Edgar Samuel, "Portuguese Jews in Jacobean London," in *At the End of the Earth: Essays on the History of the Jews of England and Portugal* (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 2004), 130 - 131.

89. Cecil Roth, "The Mystery of the Resettlement," in *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), 87.

90. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 6.

men (and occasionally women) of commerce from almost every social, political, and religious group were put into close physical (though not necessarily social) contact. Antwerp was one of Europe's most important commercial centers during the sixteenth century. The New Christians' close ties to Portugal meant that they were ideally suited to facilitate the spice, sugar, and slave trades - all Portuguese "specialities."⁹¹ Family members or business associates would have been stationed all along the various trade routes, fostering ties with the local communities and rulers while at the same time ensuring that cargo (and frequently information) reached its intended destination.

By the reign of Henry's daughter, Elizabeth I, the New Christian community had grown to approximately one hundred members,⁹² including two physicians, Samuel Nunes and Roderigo Lopez.⁹³ During Elizabeth's reign, records of all aliens were kept, and name, duration of stay, and place of worship were all included in said records. The records from 1571 and 1573 mention some Spanish and Portuguese with names that were probably Jewish, though the men were not listed as Jews (for example, Carvaly who lived for twelve years in Creechurch as a hat maker was probably Carvajal or Carvalho).⁹⁴

91. Wim Klooster, "Communities of Port Jews and Their Contacts in the Dutch Atlantic World," *Jewish History* 20, no. 2 (2006): 130 - 131.

92. Although I was unable to find an explicitly stated reason for this increase, I feel that it would be safe to assume first that conditions in the Iberian Peninsula were increasingly difficult for New Christians due to the harshness of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, which led any person who was able to flee the area for more hospitable lands to do so. Secondly, Elizabeth's own misgivings regarding Spain and the Church would probably have made her more willing to accept New Christians, who were effectively refugees from both, as residents or visitors in her country.

93. Samuel, "Portuguese Jews in Jacobean London," 131 - 132.

94. Adler, *London*, 80.

However, people of known Jewish origin had to “[become] invisible” by hiding their Jewish tendencies and assimilating, at least on the surface, into English society.⁹⁵

It was not until 1609 that the writers of England’s official records had enough information to describe the London New Christian community. In 1605, Vincente Furtado, a Lisbon merchant with a Jewish background, traveled to London and Amsterdam on his way to Hamburg. He was arrested three years later by the Inquisition, and his confession from 1609 gives the first real glimpse of the New Christian community in London:

[It] was very much in the Portuguese crypto-Jewish tradition, with its emphasis on Passover, [Yom] Kippur, a three-day Fast of Esther and on the wearing of clean shirts on the Sabbath, but with only the most basic dietary laws and no mention of the other Jewish festivals. On the face of it, the regular mutual confessions of belief in the Law of Moses and of its power to save souls seem to owe more to the Inquisitors’ need to convict the prisoner of heresy in accordance with canon law than to known Jewish practices. But it is possible that the Portuguese crypto-Jews with their Catholic education might have put such an emphasis on reciting the creed.⁹⁶

In essence, the “Jewish” community of London was but a shadow of true traditional Jewish communities that existed concurrently on the Continent. Its members were seemingly unaware of traditional observance and instead focused on a mere handful of practices and holidays that would have been easy to remember and transmit to future

95. Mary Janell Metzger, “‘Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew:’ Jessica, The Merchant of Venice, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 113, no. 1 (1998): 54.

96. Edgar Samuel, “Passover in Shakespeare’s London,” in *At the End of the Earth: Essays on the History of the Jews of England and Portugal* (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 2004), 171 - 172.

generations, with special attention given to those that could have made sense within the New Christian context. Passover celebrates the Jews' escape from Egyptian bondage, a situation that would have been familiar to the New Christians' own existence within, and desire to escape from, the "Lands of Idolatry." The three-day Fast of Esther was especially relevant to the crypto-Jewish mindset. Esther herself was a "crypto-Jew" in the court of Ahashverosh and was credited with saving the Jewish community from massacre at the hand of Haman. In her, the New Christians would have seen both a hero and a "patron saint" worthy of veneration.

Still, as long as New Christians, and perhaps a few itinerant merchants and doctors, were content to keep their true religious affiliation out of the public eye, they were permitted to live peacefully within English society.⁹⁷ So long as they behaved outwardly as Christians, they would have blended fairly seamlessly into their surroundings, especially since London was a port city and major hub of English commerce.⁹⁸ Possibly the most troubling aspect of their assumed religious proclivities would be that being of Iberian descent, they would most likely have been living as Catholics at a time when Henry VIII was in the process of severing ties with the Church in Rome. This would be further exacerbated when Elizabeth I, who was a Protestant from birth, took the throne.

97. Metzger, "'Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew:': Jessica, The Merchant of Venice, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity," 55.

98. During the Early Modern period, the port city was the node that connected land and sea, local and global. It was a meeting place of cultures and a locale practically designed for the exchange of ideas as well as goods. It is no wonder that those with pre-existing international connections - like the New Christian merchants - were able to acculturate into the fabric of the city and to add their ideas and values to the mix. David Cesarani, "The Forgotten Port Jews of London: Court Jews Who Were Also Port Jews," in *Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime trading Centres, 1590 - 1950*, edited by David Cesarani (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 2002), 114.

During the reign of Henry VIII, the most prominent member of the New Christian community was Antonio de Loronha (or della Rogna), who was the representative of the Mendes family in England.⁹⁹ This is supported by the fact that the number of New Christians present in London declined in the 1540s when the London operations of the House of Mendes came to an end.¹⁰⁰ Hector Nuñez, who had a career similar to that of Roderigo Lopez, was, according to the Lay Subsidy List, living in London as of 1549. He became a member of College of Physicians, where he was elected Censor in 1563 and oversaw the licensing of new physicians. It was rumored that he used to send the correct dates of Jewish festivals to his uncle in Bristol and that he married a woman from a New Christian family, revealing his own New Christian tendencies.¹⁰¹ He was also a merchant who dealt in English cloth, imported dye stuffs, wine, figs, almonds, oil, sugar, Spanish wool, jewels, and spices. He was involved in insurance, where he primarily prosecuted claims for Portuguese and Flemish associates in English courts. Perhaps most important for the purpose of this thesis was his close association with Elizabeth's court, which defended him in legal matters, specifically for insolvency due to mishaps of trading. Also,

99. Samuel, "Portuguese Jews in Jacobean London," 130.

100. For reference to the decline of the New Christian community in the 1540s, see Harold Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England* (East Brunswick: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1982), 24. As mentioned in footnote 98, it was during this time period that Henry VIII was courting favor with the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Additionally, the Mendes family was in the process of moving their base of operations from Antwerp to Venice, which would have made direct contact with England more problematic. Finally, Diogo Mendes, who had close ties with Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's chancellor and chief financial advisor, died in 1543, which was probably the final nail in the coffin, both literally and figuratively, for the ties between England and the House of Mendes. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Doña Gracia Nasi - A Jewish Leader During the Renaissance*, 153 - 157.

101. If a New Christian truly harbored judaizing tendencies, it is most likely that s/he would have chosen a spouse from a family with similar beliefs rather than risk marrying into an Old Christian family.

it was probably due to his close relationship to the court that he was granted a monopoly on Spanish wool in 1573 for fifteen years, and was granted endenization in 1579.¹⁰²

Of course, the worry regarding even the possible existence of Jews in England was present throughout the Early Modern period. Jews were perceived as dangerous, predatory, and in league with the Devil, which frequently led to anti-Jewish sentiment in the realms of art and literature, perhaps the most famous example of which is “The Prioress’s Tale” in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*.¹⁰³ “[..T]he problem of the Jew in Christian England intersected with an emerging ideology of race to affirm a notion of English identity in which color, religion, and class converged.”¹⁰⁴ Even so, “the Jew” was an easily identifiable character within Christian society; New Christians, on the other hand, had a mixed set of traits. They looked like Protestant Englishmen on the outside, while supposedly harboring both Iberian Catholic loyalties *and* Jewish religious tendencies internally. Once again, it was the New Christians’ ambiguous social, religious, and political identity that would have been the most potentially threatening to the emerging English national identity.¹⁰⁵

This problem was further compounded by the war against Spain; the New Christians’ Iberian heritage made their loyalty to England even more suspect, and the double damnation of both potential Catholicism and Iberian loyalties could have made

102. C. Meyers, "Debt in Elizabethan England: the Adventures of Dr. Hector Nunez, Physician and Merchant," *Transactions - Jewish Historical Society of England* no. 34 (1996): 125 - 129.

103. Gloria Cigman, *The Jew as an Absent-Presence in Late Medieval England. Delivered on 29th May 1991*, Sacks Lecture, 17 (Yarnton: The Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1991), 6.

104. Metzger, “‘Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew:’ Jessica, The Merchant of Venice, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity,” 53.

105. Bovilsky, “Exemplary Jews and the Logic of Gentility,” 82.

the New Christians unwelcome interlocutors in whatever situation they entered.¹⁰⁶ The political problems of late-sixteenth century England identified in *Leicester's Commonwealth* included: "the problem of the loyalty or disloyalty of religious minorities, the problem of religious toleration for those minorities, and the problem of the succession to the crown of England."¹⁰⁷ John Foxe, a prominent sixteenth century English Protestant theologian, felt that Jews were more tolerable than Catholics but were at the same time dangerous to Christians because of their rejection of God and tendency to murder Christian children.¹⁰⁸

Obviously, despite his official expulsion in 1290, "the Jew" was a prominent player in the imagination of Early Modern England, and the idea of his presence lingered despite his (supposed) physical absence.¹⁰⁹ The collective medieval mind was prone to dichotomous extremes, such as good and evil and right and wrong, so it is understandable that in this mental atmosphere, "the Jew" was transformed into a monster of often epic proportions - the obvious foil to the saintly Christian.¹¹⁰ Jews were accused of willful spread of the Plague via well poisoning and distribution of clothing rubbed with a "potion made from the swollen glands of plague victims."¹¹¹ In *Mystery* and other religious plays,

106. Edmund Valentine Campos, "Jews, Spaniards, and Portugales: Ambiguous Identities of Portuguese Marranos in Elizabethan England," *ELH* 69, no. 3 (2002): 603.

107. A polemical work written in 1584 and directed against Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. D. C. Peck, *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), 32.

108. Metzger, "'Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew:' Jessica, The Merchant of Venice, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity," 54.

109. Cigman, *The Jew as an Absent-Presence in Late Medieval England. Delivered on 29th May 1991*, 2.

110. *Ibid.*, 6 - 7.

111. *Ibid.*, 8.

Jews were frequently directly associated with the Devil, especially through the use of the color red. There was also no distinction made between biblical and contemporaneous Jews; Jews in the plays were dressed in contemporary clothes, but Jesus and the apostles, with the exception of Judas, were *not* dressed as Jews. Judas's betrayal of Christ for money was associated with the Jews' usury; and the Patriarchs, when present, were rarely depicted as Jewish.¹¹²

By the mid-sixteenth century, "the Jew," through his perceived rampant hostility toward Christianity and the Church, was seen as "the very antithesis of Englishness.' The alien status of Jews serve[d] as both explanation and motivation for the characters' villainous impulses; such circular logics are intensified when either alien status or villainy needs clarification."¹¹³ No description of "the Jew" in English literature can exist without reference to Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* or Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. If we were to base Early Modern England's notion of "Jewishness" solely on these two works, we would be left assuming that Jews were avaricious, spiteful, vindictive merchants so focused on their own prosperity that they were willing to sacrifice family members to the cause.

Set on the Mediterranean island of Malta with the power struggle between Spain and the Ottoman Empire as a backdrop, *The Jew of Malta* focuses on the story of Barabas, a wealthy merchant who ultimately loses both his fortune and his family through his own covetous and vengeful actions. In contrast to much of the drama written in England which mentioned Jews, *The Jew of Malta* made an effort to endow the Jewish

112. Ibid., 8 - 10.

113. Bovilsky, "Exemplary Jews and the Logic of Gentility," 72.

character with a full range of emotions rather than leave him as a shadow intended to act as a foil for the other characters.¹¹⁴ Admittedly, it did not portray Barabas in a favorable light, but it did depict him as a person imbued with the vices, emotions, and overreactions that could easily have marked him as a man of his time.

Very similar in general plot line to *The Jew of Malta*, *The Merchant of Venice* focuses on the story of Shylock, another wealthy Jewish merchant, who ultimately loses both his fortune and his family. Venice, with its focus on commerce, would have been an ideal place to find Christians and Jews intermingling, at least on a professional level - something that would have been unheard of in England during the same time period. Shylock is an iconographic representation of Early Modern Jewishness, yet he presents only one facet of England's perception of what it meant to be Jewish, and even he himself is probably not as one-dimensional as he initially appears. Shakespeare, much like Marlowe, made an effort to endow both his Christian and Jewish characters with complete personalities, resulting in a more vivid and accurate portrayal of the religious conflict that was taking place in Early Modern mentality. Neither Shylock nor Antonio were entirely likable, and neither man was totally "right" in his worldview or treatment of others.¹¹⁵ According to Mary Janell Metzger, Shylock and his daughter, Jessica, represented "competing notions of Judaism circulating in [E]arly [M]odern England," frequently based on gender differences. Females were generally considered able to

114. Many of the works written before the sixteenth century would have centered around mystery plays, so in addition to not bestowing the Jewish characters with the same complexity of character as the Christians, the works did not attempt to describe contemporary Jewish life at all. Charles B. Mabon, "The Jew in English Poetry and Drama," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 11, no. 3 (April 1899): 412 - 413.

115. John Klause, "Catholic and Protestant, Jesuit and Jew: Historical Religion in *The Merchant of Venice*," in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, edited by Dennis Taylor and David Beauregard (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 183.

assimilate (in a patriarchal society), while males were not, at least partially because they would always be identifiable through the mark of circumcision.¹¹⁶ Perhaps most interestingly, when Shylock stated that he desired “the stock of Barabas” to provide a husband for his daughter, he was, in effect, linking his representation of Jewishness with Barabas’s somewhat less sympathetic representation, creating a kinship both of blood and character traits.

His reference works by implying that Jews are an extended family, that their supposed shared identity and resemblance results in part from actual consanguinity, from something like shared genetic stock. The implications of consanguinity are twofold: according to this definition, Jews represent a closed bloodline and are (1) all related to one another, and (2) never related to the Venetians (or the Maltese, or the English, or to Christians in aggregate).¹¹⁷

Under the above definition of Jewishness, Jews could be and often were seen as a race apart. While Catholics were seen as members of an erroneous Christian denomination or even as political traitors, they were still seen as Christians and members of Christian society at large. Once they relinquished their belief in Catholicism and embraced Protestantism, they were welcomed as brothers in Christ.¹¹⁸

New Christians, on the other hand, whose cultural and religious backgrounds linked them with Catholics, Spain, and Jews, could not be easily explained away through

116. Bovilsky, “Exemplary Jews and the Logic of Gentility,” 68.

117. *Ibid.*, 71 - 72.

118. David S. Katz, “Shylock’s Gender: Jewish Male Menstruation in Early Modern England,” *Review of English Studies* 50, no. 200 (1999): 440 - 441.

Protestant tenets, and this combination of factors made them even more feared than Catholics. Once again, the inability to fit New Christians into pre-existing social, political, or religious groups was the most troubling aspect of their presence in Early Modern society.

In the case of New Christians, one must not focus exclusively on the religious aspect of their existence. Nationality was a very important issue in Early Modern England, especially where Spain was involved. Due to the highly charged political climate between England and Spain, national origin often played a larger role in anti-New Christian sentiments than did religion.¹¹⁹ Most of the prominent New Christians in England were of Iberian origin, and were often seen as Roman Catholic citizens of Spain or Portugal in the eyes of English law.¹²⁰ Again, the inability to easily classify New Christians was problematic and led to questions regarding their treatment under the law, even regarding the extent to which political or religious laws should be used to govern their existence. Of course, these same Iberian connections that resulted in the resentment of fellow Englishmen often also greatly benefited the Crown by allowing the New Christians to serve as both commercial and informational links to Spanish-controlled areas of Europe.

The multiple trajectories of the Iberian diaspora had strung a network of trade and information lines linking diasporic Jewish communities in London, Antwerp, Constantinople, and Lisbon for the distribution of

119. Campos, "Jews, Spaniards, and Portugales: Ambiguous Identities of Portuguese Marranos in Elizabethan England," 600 - 602.

120. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England: 1603 - 1655*, 2 - 3.

products from the Levant and the East and West Indies that accumulated in the entrepots of Iberian ports.”¹²¹

Commercially, family ties allowed the New Christians to circumvent established blockades; informationally, the effect was the same. By provided monetary and diplomatic benefits to the Crown, the New Christians’ ambiguous social position and supposedly dubious political allegiances could often be overlooked.

In contrast to the semi-hidden Jewish community of Elizabethan England, the Jewish community of Amsterdam was to become a vibrant, flourishing community that by 1614 was recognized by both the government of the city and kingdom.¹²² By the late sixteenth century, England was not considered to be a commercial center, and its hostile attitude toward foreigners meant that it was no longer a suitable place for New Christians to settle. In 1603, the same year that Queen Elizabeth I died, Uri Halevi confessed to practicing Judaism in Amsterdam, which is one of the first records of Jewish life in the city.¹²³ This relatively late settlement by New Christians probably had much to do with the state of trade in Amsterdam; until the sixteenth century, trade was centered around low-value products such as timber and salt - items with which New Christians were not involved economically. Additionally, in 1609, the Spanish trade embargo on Dutch commerce ended, freeing Amsterdam to trade with Portugal.¹²⁴ Although Portuguese New

121. Campos, "Jews, Spaniards, and Portugales: Ambiguous Identities of Portuguese Marranos in Elizabethan England," 608.

122. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 22.

123. Swetschinski, "From the Middle Ages to the Golden Age, 1516 - 1621," 65 - 66.

124. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 1, 28.

Christians settled in Holland around 1593-4, there is no obvious sign that they were looking for religious freedom, for there are no petitions asking for such until 1604.¹²⁵

During the first half of the sixteenth century, Charles V was Holy Roman Emperor, and as he worked to centralize his power over the Low Countries, he continued to hold individual titles over each area, which meant that laws often varied somewhat among his territories. Although Charles V was fairly tolerant of Jews, due to the fact that he was the king of Spain, he was deeply suspicious of New Christians and expelled them from several of his territories, including Antwerp in 1549 and Venice in 1550.¹²⁶ The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw very high levels of immigration into the Dutch Republic, with many of the immigrants drawn by economic interests, so at least the Iberian aspect of New Christians' existence would not have been unsettling.¹²⁷ Furthermore, by the sixteenth century, the Dutch Republic had become an important player in international business, making it an ideal location for merchants, especially those with pre-existing trade networks.¹²⁸ The Dutch Republic, and especially the city of Amsterdam, also became a haven to those seeking to return to open practice of Judaism.

[M]ost of the Jewish immigrants arriving [in the first half of the seventeenth century] fell into the category of 'New Jews' - both because institutional Judaism was a complete novelty to them and also because the Jewish life they were about to create exhibited new characteristics, which

125. Swetschinski, "From the Middle Ages to the Golden Age, 1516 - 1621," 64 - 65.

126. *Ibid.*, 44 - 46.

127. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 1.

128. Jonathan I. Israel, "The Republic of the United Netherlands Until About 1750: Demography and Economic Activity," in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, edited by J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and I. Schöffner (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007 edition), 86 - 87.

may be considered as harbingers of modern European Judaism.¹²⁹

The Amsterdam Jewish community embraced both its Iberian cultural heritage and newly recovered Judaism, resulting in an amalgamation of values that surpassed any one pre-existing socio-religious category. By embracing seemingly opposing cultural and religious values, the “New Jews” of Amsterdam created what had been lacking within the New Christian phenomenon - a socially identifiable category to which they implicitly belonged.

Although the Jews were never given actual authorization to practice Judaism openly, with only tacit permission granted in 1614, by 1606, the emerging Jewish community had received the donation of a Torah scroll by Uri Halevi. In 1612, a synagogue was built for the Neve Shalom congregation, and in 1614, a Jewish cemetery was created just outside the Amsterdam city limits.¹³⁰ In the first half of the seventeenth century, several other Jewish communal organizations were founded, including *Bikur Holim* (society for visiting the sick) in 1609, the *Dotar* (charity providing dowries for poor and/or orphaned girls) in 1615, and *Talmud Torah* (yeshiva) in 1616.¹³¹

By all accounts, this former merchant colony quickly gained ground as a prominent location in the Sephardi Jewish Diaspora. Sephardi New Christians from

129. Josef Kaplan, “The Jews in the Republic Until About 1750: Religious, Cultural, and Social Life,” in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, edited by J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and I. Schöffner (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007 edition), 116.

130. Effectively, as long as the Jews maintained a fairly low profile, they were allowed to practice their religion. The Catholic-Protestant divide was seen as much more of a problem in Calvinist Amsterdam than was the presence of Jews. Furthermore, the town burghers knew that the Jews were major contributors to the city’s economy, so it behooved them to allow the Jews to stay. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 22, 44 - 47.

131. Kaplan, “The Jews in the Republic Until About 1750: Religious, Cultural, and Social Life,” 118.

throughout the Diaspora arrived and reverted to the religion of their ancestors. Despite its relatively stable system of infrastructure, the Amsterdam community was frequently in a state of flux - many members had come from other locations to settle in Amsterdam and were in need of “rejudaization,” and others used the city as a “pit stop” before moving on to other locations where they could openly revert to their ancestral faith. Almost all members of the community had relatives elsewhere in the Diaspora, which in turn fostered the maintenance of the web of communications and economic connections throughout the Sephardi world.¹³²

Since the Jews of Amsterdam were not involved in the inter-religious struggles between Catholics and Protestants, they were not immersed in the main religious conflicts taking place in the city. Although some strict clergy members often objected to the open practice of Judaism, the burgomasters generally ignored them or only restricted the Jews’ activities enough to keep the clergy mollified. Furthermore, the Jews were not singled out by their involvement in commerce, because it did not carry the stigma in the Netherlands that it had carried in Iberia. In fact, Jews were just one group among many who engaged in commerce, including the burgomasters themselves. Legally, very few restrictions were placed on the Jews: They were not to disparage Christianity in any way; they were not to convert Christians to Judaism, and they were not to have sexual relations with Christian women.¹³³

132. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 5.

133. *Ibid.*, 55 - 65.

Although the Jewish population of Amsterdam was not the most important or the largest in terms of demographics, it was very influential in realms of international trade, finance, culture, and politics, especially in Northern Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³⁴ Additionally, due primarily to their direct involvement in Iberian culture and European commerce, Sephardi Jews were much more cosmopolitan than their Ashkenazi coreligionists and so were better able to embrace trends toward modernization in European society.¹³⁵ Interestingly, Amsterdam became the parent community of the newly emerging openly Jewish community of London (in addition to several other locations in northwestern Europe) in the second half of the seventeenth century.¹³⁶

Despite the fact that Amsterdam's commercial ties provided the framework for this "parenthood," it was really the community's Iberian cultural ties that linked it to the emerging Jewish communities of northwestern Europe. Upon their arrival in Amsterdam, the community's founders were not grafted onto a larger Jewish community, and as such, they maintained close emotional ties with their fellow former-Iberians, and as the Amsterdam community grew and became an increasingly important hub in the Iberian diaspora, they became an example to the Jewish communities working to establish

134. Israel, "The Republic of the United Netherlands Until About 1750: Demography and Economic Activity," 85 - 86.

135. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 116.

136. Adam Sutcliffe, "The Boundaries of Community: Urban Space and Intercultural Interaction in Early Modern, Sephardi Amsterdam, and London," in *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History*, edited by Yosef Kaplan (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 19.

themselves in the mid- to late-seventeenth century, including London.¹³⁷ Unfortunately for Lopez, there was no such “parent” to guide him through the labyrinth of the shifting political and religious loyalties involved in English-Spanish relations during the sixteenth century. Had he been able to establish a relationship with openly practicing Jews of Iberian descent, he might not have come to such a tragic end.

137. This emotional tie can be seen especially in the institution of the *Dotar*, which provided dowries for orphaned and poor girls of the “Portuguese Nation” (a term for New Christians of Iberian descent). The Amsterdam community was willing to provide support for “Portuguese” girls whose father *or* mother was a member of the Nation, including girls who lived in the “Lands of Idolatry” as crypto-Jews provided they were willing to move to a location where they could practice Judaism freely before receiving the financial aid, and it excluded Jews of non-“Portuguese” descent. In this sense, the community embraced cultural rather than religious ties to the wider Jewish community. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, 132 - 151.

*“He is none of the learnedst or expertest physitions in the court, but one that maketh a great account of himself as the best, & by a kind of Jewish practic hath growen to much wealth, & sum reputation as well as with ye queen herself as with sum of ye greatest Lordes & Laydes.”*¹³⁸

CHAPTER 4

DOCTOR RODERIGO LOPEZ, A CASE STUDY

Although little is known of Lopez before his immigration to England, it is generally believed that he came directly from Antwerp’s community of New Christians. It has also been speculated that he was captured by Sir Francis Drake and brought to England as a prisoner of war, though it is possible that he became an associate of Drake later in life through his father-in-law, Dunstan Anes, who was a well-known London merchant.¹³⁹ Although the reasons for his immigration to England remain hazy, a census of foreigners in London from 1571 listed Lopez “as a resident in the parish of St. Peter Le Poer and describe[d] him as ‘Doctor Lopus, apostingale, householder, denizen, who came into this realm about twelve years past [around 1559] to get his living by physic.’”¹⁴⁰ Lopez was a physician by profession and most likely would have received his medical training in Italy, Spain, or Portugal before immigrating to England.¹⁴¹ Unfortunately, the

138. Comment by Gabriel Harvey. Ro. Cecyll and Arthur Dimock, “The Conspiracy of Dr. Lopez,” *English Historical Review* (July 1894): 441.

139. Zeman, “The Amazing Career of Doctor Rodrigo Lopez (? - 1594),” 297.

140. *Ibid.*, 299.

141. *Ibid.*, 297.

College of Physicians, of which he became a member in 1569 and would have held records of his life and career, was destroyed by a fire in 1666, which probably accounts for much of the scarcity of information regarding Lopez's early life.¹⁴²

By the 1570s, Lopez was one of the chief doctors in London and was well-known in court life.¹⁴³ In addition to his medical practice, he was granted monopolies on aniseed and sumach by Queen Elizabeth for a short time. Through his two income sources, many were led to believe that he was wealthier than he truly was.¹⁴⁴ In 1584, a polemical work entitled *Leicester's Commonwealth* mentioned Lopez in connection with the Earl and stated that he was employed, along with another Jew named Julio, for the purposes of "poisoning and for the art of destroying children in women's bellies."¹⁴⁵ Despite this accusation and the frequent association of Jews with poisoning, Lopez was appointed Chief Physician of the Queen herself around 1586.¹⁴⁶ According to one of his contemporaries, Gabriel Harvey, Lopez was "[n]one of the learnedest, or expertest physitians in y^e court: but one, that maketh as great account of himself, as the best: & sum reputation: as with sum of y^e greatest Lordes & Laydes."¹⁴⁷ Despite knowledge or suspicion of his religious heritage, Lopez was able to achieve an amazingly powerful

142. For reference to Lopez's membership in the College of Physicians, see Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 50. Zeman, "The Amazing Career of Doctor Rodrigo Lopez (? - 1594)," 299.

143. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 50.

144. This monopoly was later mentioned by one Robert Zinzan in the process stating why he should be granted his own monopoly on the refining of sugar. Mary Anne Everett Green, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, ... Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office 3, 1591-1594* (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 359. Cecyll, "The Conspiracy of Dr. Lopez," 440 - 441.

145. Peck, *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, 116.

146. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 57.

147. Gabriel Harvey's notes on his copy of [Georg Meier], *In Ivdaeorvm Medicastrorum* (1570): BL Shelfmark C.60.h.18.

position within the English court - a place where no Iberian, suspected Catholic, or suspected Jew should have been found in Early Modern England given the religious and political turmoil that was then enveloping the country.¹⁴⁸

Due to his medical expertise, Lopez would have been provided with ample opportunities to see and be seen by the most important members of the English court, and at least in this stage of his life, his Iberian New Christian heritage was of no major concern.¹⁴⁹ In fact, his Jewish origins may well have been the crucial factor in both his startling success and tragic downfall. Lopez would have been in an ideal position to act as an “intelligence gatherer” due to his mastery of several languages and connections on the European continent.¹⁵⁰ Lopez and his New Christian connections proved to be highly valuable in terms of transmitting information regarding Spain’s attempt to invade England in 1588, which led to improvement in the status of New Christians in England.¹⁵¹ One need only look to examples like Hasdai ibn Shaprut, who combined the roles of physician, diplomat, merchant, and spy in the service of the Muslim courts

148. Interestingly, some of this turmoil probably could have been avoided if Elizabeth had been willing to lay out an official plan of succession. Had the Catholic factions known to expect a Protestant successor, there would not have been much point in doing away with the current Protestant monarch. The Calendar of State Papers lists many plots against the Queen’s life; the Lopez case is simply the most sensational since it focused on her personal physician. Green, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, ... Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office 3, 1591-1594*, xi - xii. Cecyll, “The Conspiracy of Dr. Lopez,” 440 - 441.

149. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 56.

150. Zeman, “The Amazing Career of Doctor Rodrigo Lopez (? - 1594),” 302.

151. In addition to his own contacts throughout the Sephardi Diaspora, his brother, Lewis, became an agent of the Mendes family in Antwerp, which would have greatly expanded Lopez’s web of political and commercial contacts. *Ibid.*, 299. Regarding the improvement of the New Christian’s status in England, see Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 65.

during the Golden Age of Spain, to see how a man such as Lopez would have been exceptionally valuable to any pre-modern monarch.¹⁵²

Lopez became involved in international politics when he decided to support Don Antonio, Prior of Crato, for succession to the Portuguese throne against Philip II of Spain, despite the fact that Don Antonio's father was the illegitimate son of the former King Emmanuel, while Philip's mother was a legitimate daughter. Don Antonio tried to work with both England and France, who were enemies of Spain, to gain the throne of Portugal, but while he was at least initially well-received in England, Elizabeth would not officially back his claim to the throne for fear that the simmering hostilities would erupt into full-scale war with Spain. Interestingly, Don Antonio was also backed by Solomon Abenaes, also known as Alvaro Mendes, who was the successor of Joseph Nasi in the Ottoman court and was related to Lopez by marriage.¹⁵³ At this time, some Portuguese refugees belonging to the court of Don Antonio kept up correspondences with their contacts in Spain and Portugal with the full knowledge and permission of the English court. Though reluctant at first, Lopez also began passing information to the Crown at the behest of Elizabeth herself.¹⁵⁴

While the plot to seat Don Antonio ultimately failed, it did bring Lopez to the attention of the Spanish Crown, and by 1587, Spanish agents were trying to convince Lopez to poison Don Antonio.¹⁵⁵ By March of 1591, Lopez was mentioned in the

152. Walter P. Zenner, "Jewish Retainers as Power Brokers," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series 81, no. 1/2 (July - October 1990): 131.

153. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 52 - 54.

154. Cecyll, "The Conspiracy of Dr. Lopez," 443.

155. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 50 - 51.

Calendar of English State Papers in connection to Manuel de Andrada, a captured Spanish spy, who was receiving information regarding England's "warlike preparations," and background on Don Antonio from Lopez's own cousin. In July of 1591, de Andrada offered to become a double agent himself and work for Elizabeth in return for his freedom, which was apparently granted, because in August of the same year, he was again imprisoned on suspicions that he was plotting against the Queen.¹⁵⁶ In other words, Lopez was in effect acting as a triple agent for Elizabeth of England, Philip II of Spain, and Don Antonio, pretender to the Portuguese throne, and it was this three-way division of loyalty, real or imagined, that would ultimately cause his downfall.¹⁵⁷

Unfortunately for Lopez, those in positions of power and notoriety are also capable of making enemies out of other powerful people. Once Lopez was firmly ensconced in court life, he used his position to garner wealth and favors for his personal associates and may have openly acted as Alvaro Mendes's representative to the English court.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, after the machinations to seat Don Antonio on the throne of Portugal failed, he and Lopez had a falling out, which may have resulted in Don Antonio accusing Lopez of treason in revenge for not trying harder to help him attain the throne.¹⁵⁹ Finally, as a physician, Lopez was privy to some of the most embarrassing and intimate details of court life. According to the records of Bishop Goodman, who wrote

156. Green, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, ... Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office 3, 1591-1594*, 16 - 83.

157. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 77.

158. Zeman, "The Amazing Career of Doctor Rodrigo Lopez (? - 1594)." 305.

159. A letter from 31 January 1593/4 from Faunt to Bacon mentions that Don Antonio may have been Lopez's accuser. Thomas Birch, *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth From the Year 1581 till her Death, In Which the Secret Intrigues of her Court and the Conduct of her Favourite, Robert, Earl of Essex, both at Home and Abroad, are particularly Illustrated*, vol. 1 (London: A. Millar, 1754), 151.

about the Lopez affair a generation after the events occurred, Lopez may have gossiped about his patients' medical conditions, which certainly would not have endeared him to his superiors.¹⁶⁰

By January of 1594, the men accused of being Lopez's coconspirators in the plot to poison Elizabeth were in turn directly accusing Lopez of serving the Spanish Crown, recruiting them to the service of Spain, and accepting a large jewel as a down payment on his services.¹⁶¹ Lopez was officially arrested on 21 January 1594,¹⁶² but before he could be taken away for interrogation on the charge of plotting to murder the Queen at the behest of Philip II of Spain, Lopez burned all of his personal papers regarding business transactions and intelligence activities.¹⁶³ While these could have simply been the overreactions of a frightened man, it is not likely that they were viewed as such by his accusers. A record in the State Papers from 15 January 1594 states that Philip II had been trying to extract a written promise from Lopez regarding the conspiracy.¹⁶⁴

On 30 January 1594, Lopez was listed in the State Papers as being held in the Tower of London on charges of plotting against the Queen's life.¹⁶⁵ On 18 February 1594, Stephen Ferrera de Gama, one of Lopez's accused coconspirators, stated that ten months prior to his arrest, Lopez dictated an "obscurely worded" letter to be delivered to the King

160. Margaret Hotine, "The Politics of Anti-Semitism: 'The Jew of Malta' and 'The Merchant of Venice,'" *Notes and Queries* 38, no. 1 (1991): 35.

161. Green, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, ... Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office 3, 1591-1594*, 411 - 416.

162. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 86.

163. Zeman, "The Amazing Career of Doctor Rodrigo Lopez (? - 1594)," 306.

164. Green, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, ... Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office 3, 1591-1594*, 411 - 414.

165. *Ibid.*, 419 - 420.

of Spain confirming his role in the plot to poison the Queen.¹⁶⁶ As the testimony against him continued to grow, Lopez staunchly maintained his innocence. The Queen felt that Lopez was being singled out due to jealousy of his high position and proximity to the Crown, and she made efforts throughout the trial process to protect her physician, stating that to accuse him was to dishonor her.¹⁶⁷ When Lopez was brought to trial, over a month after his arrest, he was not called a Jew but a “Portingale” in the official trial record.¹⁶⁸ This term was used both because he had purportedly been baptized and was a member of the Church of England,¹⁶⁹ and because it would have been more beneficial for the purposes of propaganda to emphasize the political angle of his accusation, rather than his religious background. A Jewish conspiracy to poison the Queen would have been laughable. A Catholic Spanish conspiracy, however, played perfectly into both religious and political fears then present within English society.

To state the obvious, the Lopez plot was not perceived as a Jewish conspiracy. Instead, it was proof of Spanish treachery. That Lopez was a member of a stigmatized religious group certainly had some bearing in the case against him. However, his Jewishness was only important insofar as

166. *Ibid.*, 434.

167. For reference to Elizabeth’s efforts to protect Lopez, see Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 86. For references to dishonoring Elizabeth, see Birch, *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth From the Year 1581 till her Death, In Which the Secret Intrigues of her Court and the Conduct of her Favourite, Robert, Earl of Essex, both at Home and Abroad, are particularly Illustrated*, 150.

168. “Portingale” is derived from Portuguese, which was used as a blanket term covering New Christians of Iberian origin. In a personal letter from Standen to Bacon, dated 30 January 1593/4, he was called “Dr. Lopez, the Portuguefe, who had been detected of a defign to poifon the queen to whome he was phyfician.” For reference to the trial timeline, see *Ibid.*, 149, 159. For the actual use of the term “Portingale,” see William Cecil Burghley, *A True Report of Sundry Horrible Conspiracies of Late Time Detected to Haue (by Barbarous Murders) Taken Away the Life of the Queenes Most Excellent Maiestie Whom Almighty God Hath Miraculously Conserued against the Trecheries of Her Rebelles, and the Violences of Her Most Puissant Enemies*, Nouember (London: Charles Yetsweirt Esq, 1594).

169. Cecyll, “The Conspiracy of Dr. Lopez,” 440.

he was an *Iberian Jew* - a distinction which allowed perceived Jewish traits to be elided with Spanish ones.¹⁷⁰

The inability to adequately categorize New Christians was clearly exemplified by the accusation against Lopez and his subsequent trial. As a potential member of all socio-religious groups and none, it was possible for Lopez's accusers to portray him and his supposed subterfuge in the most unflattering light possible by using his ambiguous group identity against him.

For his part, Lopez claimed that he was double-crossing Philip II in order to "steal" the fifty thousand crown payment he would have received for agreeing to poison Elizabeth.¹⁷¹ Ultimately, however, his claim was not believed by the court, and he was sentenced to death. The charges against him read as follows:

31 Jan. 1590, he conspired the death of the Queen, and to stir up rebellion and a war within the realm, and overthrow the commonwealth.

7 May 1590, he adhered to Philip, King of Spain, and divers other aliens, the Queen's public enemies.

31 Aug. 1591, he yielded his service to the King of Spain, and sent secret messages and intelligences to him and his ministers, of things done for preservation of the realm, that they might prepare their forces and direct their purposes accordingly.

1 Oct. 1591, the King of Spain sent him a jewel by Emanuel Andrada, as a token of favour for services against the Queen and realm, which jewel, Nov. 1591, he traitorously accepted.

170. Campos, "Jews, Spaniards, and Portugales: Ambiguous Identities of Portuguese Marranos in Elizabethan England," 600 - 606.

171. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 91.

12 Sept. 1593, he conferred with Stephen Ferrera de Gama, as to how his traitorous purposes might be effected.

20 Jan. 1593, Em. Andrada conferred with him for poisoning the Queen, which he undertook to do 20 Feb. 1593, through Andrada; Lopez also treated and Stephen Ferrera de Gama corresponded with Count Fuentes and Stephen de Ibarra, concerning his traitorous purposes; and 17 Sept. 1593, procured a sum of money to be given to Gomes d'Avila to deliver the letters.

30 Sept. 1593, he undertook through them to kill the Queen by poison for 50,000 crowns, to be paid by the King of Spain.

30 Oct. 1593, he had often enquired whether any answers had been received, and said that after he had performed the same, he would go to Antwerp and thence to Constantinople, where he would dwell.¹⁷²

There is no mention of Lopez's Jewish heritage or New Christian status until the very end of the list of accusations, leading one to believe that those aspects of his identity were of little to no consequence in this matter. Instead, it was his Iberian connection which ultimately led to his undoing. Again, without the unresolved nature of New Christian identity, it probably would not have been possible for his accusers to make such a decisive case against him.

On 14 April 1594, Lopez was included in a list of prisoners held in the Tower, and after that, he ceases to be mentioned in the State Papers.¹⁷³ He was executed on 7 June 1594¹⁷⁴ “[...]under the same Statues as were applied to English Catholics or Protestants

172. Presumably, if Lopez immigrated to Constantinople, he would be able openly embrace Judaism. Green, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, ... Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office 3, 1591-1594*, 445.

173. *Ibid.*, 484.

174. Dominic Green, *The Double Life of Doctor Lopez. Spies, Shakespeare and the Plot to Poison Elizabeth I*, (London: Arrow Books, 2004), 1.

convicted of being ‘adherent to the Queen’s enemies,’ a capital offence [*sic*] under the law.”¹⁷⁵ When he stood for his execution at Tyburn, he said he loved the Queen more than he loved Christ Jesus¹⁷⁶ or possibly as well as he loved “Our Lord,”¹⁷⁷ depending on the account which one is reading. While neither sentiment would have been terribly well accepted by a typical English Protestant or Catholic, the latter at least would have been fitting had Lopez truly been living privately as a Jew.¹⁷⁸

After Lopez’s death, his position and former favor with the Queen still carried weight. His widow petitioned Elizabeth for property and a pension, and in return, she received at least some property, including her former residence.¹⁷⁹ The Lopez trial must have also left a strong impression on the popular culture of his time. Although it is no longer a serious consideration within academic studies of Early Modern English literature that Lopez was the basis for Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* or Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, it is undeniable that *Merchant* was performed shortly after his death and that *The Jew of Malta* was also revived at the same time. It is certain, even from the scant records we have of his life, that Lopez received a distinct boost in position and influence at court through the unique circumstances of his New Christian existence, despite the fact that it

175. *Error Versus Fact; a Study in Contrasts, 1880 and 1594* (Royal Leamington Spa: Printed for private circulation at the Sign of the Dove with the Griffin, 1953), 7.

176. Cecyll, “The Conspiracy of Dr. Lopez,” 469.

177. Edgar Samuel, “Dr. Rodrigo Lopes’ Last Speech From the Scaffold at Tyburn,” in *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, vol. XXX (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 1989), 52.

178. Judaizing New Christians often went to great lengths to avoid directly expressing Christian religious sentiments. The phrase “Our Lord” could refer to Jesus, but it could also be used to refer to the non-Trinitarian Jewish God. It was through vagaries such as this that New Christians were able to navigate through Christian society without feeling like they were betraying their true Jewish beliefs.

179. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England*, 100.

was his ambiguous place within society that ultimately played a major role in his downfall.

*“There is irony in the fact that, at the very moment that the European sense of the world became global, it also became national. Early [M]odern Europe arose out of the fragmentation of Christendom precipitated by the Reformation and the struggle between Catholic Spain and its many, mostly Protestant opponents. It was a Europe composed of states demanding increasingly exclusive religious, economic, linguistic, and political loyalties. It was also an age of hardening frontiers, of passports and embargoes, of new theories about citizenship and international law, and escalating war. In this new world, Jews and converts from Judaism became both more problematic and more useful.”*¹⁸⁰

CHAPTER 5

COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Given the social, political, and religious climate of his times, especially in England, Lopez should not have been able to rise to such an esteemed position. His story, however, is not an isolated one. There were others like him - Jews and New Christians who rose to surprising levels of power and influence, both in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Cases like Lopez point to an inherent disconnect between policy and practice. When a person of known or suspected Jewish descent provided a valuable service to the larger Christian or Muslim society - and especially to the Crown, their Judaism, real or imagined, could be overlooked in order to further the goals of the host society. Much as members of Early Modern society began to see themselves in terms of public and private selves and as potential members of more than one socio-political group, so too did they become more willing to view New Christians in terms of their potential functionality,

180. David Nirenberg and Richard Kagan, “Forward,” in *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe*, Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, translated by Martin Beagles (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), viii.

rather than merely by their religio-cultural heritage. This chapter will briefly examine some of the more interesting and relevant details of the lives of Doña Gracia Nasi, who led one of the most powerful banking families in Early Modern times and slightly predated Lopez, and Samuel Pallache, an Ottoman Jew who served the Sultan and slightly postdated Lopez.¹⁸¹ Before proceeding, it should be noted that while Doña Gracia was not above seeking personal gain, unlike Lopez and Pallache, it was not her primary objective. However, her life and the political machinations she went endured do mirror their experiences very closely.

Doña Gracia Nasi, who was also known by her Christian name of Beatrice de Luna, was the wife of Francisco Mendes and sister-in-law of Diogo Mendes. The brothers were responsible for creating one of the most powerful, well-known banking houses in the Early Modern world. They began their careers as jewel dealers, but after Vasco da Gama rounded the tip of Africa in the late fifteenth century and brought Portugal to the forefront of international trade and exploration, they expanded into the spice trade and opened the first branch of their banking house in Lisbon. Eventually, the family would have contacts scattered throughout the Iberian Peninsula, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and all points in between.¹⁸² This widespread net of family and trading connections allowed the Mendes family (and many other New Christian families) to gather information and goods that were demanded by the various European and Ottoman

181. These sketches will be by no means full biographies. It is not the focus of this thesis to rewrite the many excellent articles and books written on these two subjects but to point out the similarities between their experiences and those of Roderigo Lopez.

182. Grace Stageberg Swenson, "Gracia Nasi Mendes (c. 1510 - 1569): Jewish Philanthropist Who Aided the Spanish and Portuguese Marranos Escape the Inquisition," in *Women of Faith: Portraits of Twelve Spirit-Filled Women* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 1991), 36, 44.

leaders, thereby insulating themselves, at least somewhat, from the prevalent anti-Jewish sentiments of the day. The more favors, information, goods, and money they were able to supply, the safer they were. Much as in medieval times, it was primarily when they outlived their usefulness that their lives were truly in danger.¹⁸³ However, unlike most other New Christian merchants, the Mendes family was powerful and well-connected enough to extract promises and concessions even from Popes and Kings.

The Mendes family was one of the major lenders to King João III of Portugal, and the success of their business was so important to him that in 1530, he granted them the same rights as the German merchants in Portugal, meaning that they were given some level of diplomatic immunity, permission to arm themselves, and protection from arrest unless it was ordered by the King himself.¹⁸⁴ In 1532, when Diogo was arrested in Antwerp on charges of judaizing, both the King and his wife, Catherine,¹⁸⁵ wrote to Charles V requesting Diogo's release.¹⁸⁶ Their request was bolstered by requests from the city of Antwerp itself, which was then under Charles's rule, Henry VIII of England, and the consuls of Spain, Genoa, and Florence. Ultimately, as would happen time and time again where the Mendes family was concerned, economic concerns trumped all else.

183. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings: The life and times of Doña Gracia Nasi - Jewish leader during the Renaissance*, 325, 453.

184. *Ibid.*, 69 - 70.

185. Catherine was Charles V's sister, so one can assume that a personal request, signed by her own hand, probably would have carried significant weight with Charles, especially when coupled with all of the other requests he received for Diogo's release.

186. Both of these letters point to the fact that Diogo was not only an important merchant in and of himself but that he was also an important piece of the larger economic puzzle that was providing Portugal with much of its capital. The King and Queen both mention the other merchants dependent on him and that he and his family had lived in Portugal for many years as respectable businessmen. Letters dated 26 and 28 August 1532, reprinted in Herman Prins Salomon and Aron di Leone Leoni, "Mendes, Benveniste, de Luna, Micas, Naschi: The State of the Art (1532 - 1558)," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series 88, no. 3/4 (January - April 1998): 182 - 184.

Diogo was released on the condition that the family provide Charles with a fifty thousand ducat loan.¹⁸⁷

By 1535, Francisco Mendes had died, and João III was already plotting to marry Doña Gracia's infant daughter off to one of the members of the royal household in order to gain access to the Mendes family's wealth. In 1537, he bluntly stated that "with the fortune left by her father," the baby would be married off to someone of his choosing, thereby giving him access to at least part of the Mendes fortune and the significant dowry that would be paid for such a choice bride.¹⁸⁸ This occurred in spite of the fact that some Mendes family members, if not the entire family, were suspected of judaizing tendencies. Clearly, the economic and political concerns of the State outweighed any concern over the family's heritage or their religious proclivities.

In 1543, Diogo passed away, leaving Doña Gracia as the head of the vast Mendes enterprise. It was at this time that a letter was secured from Pope Paul III, granting the family safe transport to any location within the papal states or territories. The letter also included an exemption from persecution on the charges of "heresy or Judaism."¹⁸⁹ When the family finally left Portugal, the King was effectively unable to stop them, despite the fact that he probably knew they were leaving permanently. Doña Gracia had claimed that she was simply going abroad to settle financial matters in person, and had she been arrested or otherwise detained, the King would have risked losing the goodwill of the

187. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings: The life and times of Doña Gracia Nasi - Jewish leader during the Renaissance*, 74, 128.

188. Salomon and Leoni, "Mendes, Benveniste, de Luna, Micas, Nasi: The State of the Art (1532 - 1558)," 148.

189. *Ibid.*, 153.

other merchants in Portugal, further endangering the state of his treasury.¹⁹⁰ So, in yet another instance of economics outweighing other concerns, Doña Gracia successfully extricated her family from the grip of a grasping monarch and started them on their long journey to the Ottoman Empire, where they would eventually revert openly to Judaism.¹⁹¹

In contrast to both Lopez and Doña Gracia, Samuel Pallache was able to live openly as a Jew in his home country. However, his experience is still similar to theirs in that he utilized his economic and political affiliations to offer his skills and services to the highest bidder.¹⁹² Also, much like Lopez, little seems to be known about Pallache, save for his political and economic exploits. He deserves to be mentioned not so much for what he actually accomplished but for the lengths to which he was willing to go in order to achieve his goal, which presumably, was to be wealthy. It is not so much the specifics that matter but the fact that he exhibited the same “Jewish” character traits as Lopez and always seemed to be involved in political and economic intrigue. In his lifetime, he officially worked as a translator, a businessman, a diplomat, and a pirate.¹⁹³ Less officially, he frequently worked as a spy, and his masters usually knew about his double

190. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings: The life and times of Doña Gracia Nasi - Jewish leader during the Renaissance*, 84, 90 - 91.

191. While women during this time period were still generally subject to the men in their lives (first their fathers, then their husbands), it was not unheard of for a woman to take over the family business and act as the head of the household after her husband had passed away. Provided she remained unmarried, it was socially acceptable for the widow to remain in such a position of power. In this way, Doña Gracia was no different from any other widow who took over the family business - the difference lies primarily in the size of the business over which she gained control.

192. Nirenberg & Kagan, “Forward,” vii.

193. *Ibid.*, viii.

loyalties and were either willing to overlook them or hopeful of using them to their own advantage.¹⁹⁴

Pallache was a Moroccan of Iberian descent, and throughout his many travels, he never fully cut his ties with his home country. For most of his career, he was ostensibly employed by Sultan Muley Zaydan, though due to Pallache's side ventures, they were not always on the best of terms. Perhaps most notably, he worked in Amsterdam, where he lived as a practicing Jew, and the Hague as the Sultan's representative.¹⁹⁵ When he worked for the King of Spain, he was willing to convert to Catholicism in order to remain in the country. Presumably, he would also have been willing to live as a Protestant had he seen any chance of settling in a Protestant area of Europe. As can be seen from even these brief descriptions of his character, Pallache was able to create the persona that would best enable him to work within his current host society. "His most outstanding personal qualities were perhaps flexibility and adaptability. He combined these traits with the risk-taking, enterprising spirit of a man who was constantly being forced to negotiate and to improvise ad hoc survival strategies."¹⁹⁶ While these traits were not exclusively Jewish, Jews and New Christians were certainly in an ideal position to make use of their tenuous position within the larger framework of Christian and Muslim societies, especially during this time period, to reinvent themselves or live different lives and espouse different allegiances as their situation demanded.

194. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe*, trans. Martin Beagles (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), xx.

195. *Ibid.*, xix - xx.

196. *Ibid.*, xx.

*"[..]n a world that defines all Jews as changeable and duplicitous, it becomes impossible to establish the Jews' true identity. [Many] Jews and converts from Judaism [...] benefitted from this paradoxical status: it made possible their movement across cultures and frontiers. But they also paid a high price for it. Defined as chameleons, they were never allowed the possibility of choosing their own allegiances, whether of nation or of cult. Their conversions and political commitments were by definition expedient and insincere. If they converted to Islam, Catholicism, or Protestantism, it could only be for convenience, not out of conviction."*¹⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the lives of Roderigo Lopez and his counterparts support the notion that, in certain cases, potential economic and political gain almost always outweighed the taboo of violating societal conventions. This was the case for the New Christians (and sometimes Jews) themselves and for the monarchs who benefitted from their abilities. True religious affiliations aside, Jews and those of Jewish descent had been molded by centuries of adaptability and flexibility required to maintain their very existence within their Christian and Muslim host societies. Furthermore, they were descended from a culture that had, almost from its very inception, placed a high value on education, hard work, and assisting coreligionists and family members. It is little wonder that when the more ambitious among them were given the opportunity to utilize those skills and learned values to their own advantage, they were able to catapult themselves into positions which traditional society said they should not have been able to occupy.

197. Nirenberg & Kagan, "Forward," ix - x.

It is not my primary purpose to use the example of Lopez or those like him in an attempt to rewrite the whole of Jewish history in a rosier hue. If nothing else, his ultimate imprisonment and execution would prevent him from providing that particular service to Jewish history. However, we must look at his story and use it as a launching pad to consider the often surprising roles that New Christians were able to occupy in the Early Modern period. Given their ambiguous social, religious, and political identities, New Christians should not have had access to seats of religious and political power. However, it seems that these ambiguities were often what made them such strong contenders for high-ranking positions. If they were already considered untrustworthy on some level, the primary factor in utilizing their services would have been the amount of potential gain. By their very existence, New Christians forced Old Christian society¹⁹⁸ to take note of the ways in which economic and political concerns were causing European civilization to change, and to realize that it would continue to do so with or without their willing participation.

Not only were New Christians harbingers of the impending Enlightenment and its recognition of the Self as we know it today: they were frequently major social, economic, and political players in their own historical contexts. By the time of the mass Spanish conversions in 1391, the Jews were already skilled in maintaining their socio-religious existence in the face of nearly overwhelming odds. Once they converted and embraced at least an external expression of Christianity, voluntarily or otherwise, they were truly in a position to make use of all of their skills, and monarchs were almost always willing to

198. More than likely, most Old Christians involved in commerce and exploration were, much like the New Christians, part of the change and would have had a much easier time in embracing the important economic, social, and political roles that New Christians often played.

overlook the matter of a New Christian's Jewish heritage when the Crown stood to gain significant advantage. It was this intersection of the "Jewish" values of self-preservation, education, and family connections, combined with the unique social position of New Christians, that allowed Lopez and those like him to succeed and move society at large toward modernity.

Furthermore, their dubious socio-political status could occasionally work in the New Christians' favor. As the world became more rigidly divided by national, social, religious, and political boundaries, it also became vastly more connected through economic ties. New Christians, again, were in an ideal position to take advantage of this polarity. When combined with their family and commercial ties, their ability to shift political (and sometimes religious) allegiances made them ideal candidates to act as information gatherers and advisors to rulers who were willing to gamble on the New Christians' ultimate loyalties in return for immediate benefit. In this sense, it was almost easier to trust someone who was known to be untrustworthy rather than risk betrayal by a supposedly close advisor.

The so-called "converso phenomenon" effectively split families and communities into separate camps: rabbinic Jews who had not converted and were not exposed to the ideological shifts then taking place, and New Christians whose families (or they themselves) had converted, been accepted - however nominally - by Christian society, and experienced the benefits of a more open and privileged society. The members of the latter group were frequently hesitant to return to Judaism and leave behind the

possibilities afforded to them by living as Christians.¹⁹⁹ This, in effect, could be seen as both a continuation and inverse application of the phenomenon of the “court Jew,” who provided useful services to the Crown and was in turn exposed to non-Jewish culture, enabling him to bring those new ideas home and apply them to his own Jewish culture.²⁰⁰ Unlike court Jews who brought new ideas into the fold of traditional Judaism, New Christians brought their Jewish values and mores with them as they moved into Christian society. These proto-modern ideas, so prevalent in Jewish society but only newly emerging within the larger Christian context, enabled many New Christians to create a place for themselves where pre-existing socio-religious categories dictated one should not be able to exist.

In this sense, Lopez truly can help us to rewrite a small piece of Jewish history. A man of Iberian origins with dubious religious and political loyalties was given intimate access to the Queen of England at a time when all of those factors should have barred him from England, let alone the Queen. His medical skills aside, Elizabeth I must have believed that his services as a linguist, spy, and merchant were more important than the detrimental aspects of his religion and geographic origin. Had Lopez not been able to combine his “Jewish” values of family connections, strong work ethic, and emphasis on education with the opportunities provided to him through his unique New Christian circumstances, I am quite certain that he would not have been able to attain such a high position within Early Modern European society.

199. Brian Pullan, “‘A Ship with Two Rudders’: ‘Righetto Marrano’ and the Inquisition in Venice,” *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 1 (March 1977): 38.

200. Cesarani, “The Forgotten Port Jews of London: Court Jews Who Were Also Port Jews,” 1.

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