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# From conniving usurers to minions of the devil: the evolving representations of Jews in three thirteenth century Castilian texts

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FROM CONNIVING USURERS TO MINIONS OF THE DEVIL: THE EVOLVING  
REPRESENTATIONS OF JEWS IN THREE THIRTEENTH-CENTURY CASTILIAN TEXTS

by

James Steven Dyer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Doctor of  
Philosophy degree in Spanish  
in the Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

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Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Denise K. Filios

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Ph.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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the requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy  
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To my mother and father, Josephine M. Dyer and Robert J. Dyer, for their endless love and support, and for giving me a love of learning

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## ABSTRACT

This research consists of three separate studies, which examine these texts in the order they were written, exploring the myriad cultural, political, religious and legal forces situated in the time and place where the texts were created to determine what forces may have influenced their authors in depicting the Jews the way they did. In the first study of the epic *Poema de mio Cid*, I focus on the legal quandary about whether the Cid should have repaid the two Jewish moneylenders from Burgos who gave him a loan for his military campaign. I examine the anti-Jewish canon and secular laws from this era, particularly those dealing with usury, and explore how the Castilian kings' flouting of these laws created hostility and, in one telling instance, violent attacks against Jews from Christians who were angry about royal favoritism of the Jews. I compare the twelfth century attacks against an unpopular king and his royal property – the Jews – to the Cid's deception of Raquel and Vidas, arguing the Campeador's trick was also a way of inflicting harm on an unpopular king and his royal property, the Jews. I also examine the interrelationships between the increasingly hostile anti-Jewish laws and the Christian's anti-Jewish social stances and attitudes, exploring how both the legal context and social and cultural contexts could have informed the poet in his portrayal of the two Jews in the text.

In the second study, I focused on the various Jewish messianic prophecies detailed in the writings of twelfth century Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides that existed in Spain during the time the Toledan liturgical drama *Auto de los reyes*

*magos* was written and performed to see if they may have influenced how the unknown author negatively depicted the Jewish rabbis and members of Herod's court in the play's final two highly original scenes. The portrayals of the Jews' eschatological confusion, I show, may have been created to stop Jews, considered vital to Toledo's growth and stability, from following contemporary messianic prophecies and migrating to the Holy Land.

In the final study, I focus on Gonzalo de Berceo's caustic representations of Jews in *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* to determine if his harshly negative portrayals of Jews were a way to deflect attention from the papal-sanctioned clerical reforms that targeted heresy, including clerical abuses in the Benedictine Order, and caused Berceo's beloved "black monks" to lose substantial funding and power in the Church. By portraying Jews and their behavior as real heresy and as the biggest threats to Christianity, Berceo underscores that clerical abuses and sins of the flesh are less problematic and pardonable.



## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

This study investigates the representations of Jews in three thirteenth-century Medieval Castilian works – *Poema de mio Cid*, the *Auto de los reyes magos*, both written by unknown authors, and *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, written by Gonzalo de Berceo – and examines certain “time and place” cultural forces – canon and secular anti-usury laws coupled with perceived royal favoritism of Jews, contemporary Jewish messianic prophecies and Maimonidean rationalist thought, and finally, papal-sanctioned clerical reforms, respectively, that may have shaped each of the authors in his portrayal of the Jewish characters.

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## CHAPTER 1: EVOLVING CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS IN LATE TWELFTH TO MID-THIRTEENTH-CENTURY CASTILE

Three of the earliest medieval Spanish literary texts contain Jewish characters whose portrayal offers a rare and salient look at the rapidly evolving Christian-Jewish relations in Castile during the first half of thirteenth century when the Reconquest significantly expanded Christian territories. The emergence of these texts – *Poema de mio Cid* (hereafter PMC) and *Auto de los reyes magos* (hereafter ARM), both written by unknown authors, and *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (hereafter MNS), written by Gonzalo de Berceo – paralleled what historians consider a dramatic transformation of social and cultural values in Castile that would influence life on the Iberian peninsula for centuries, particularly with regard to how Christians defined the role of and the social boundaries between religious minorities living in their communities.<sup>1</sup> The decisive Christian victory over Muslim forces at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 became the turning point in the Reconquest and provided Christians with an environment in which they could refashion their identities and reorder their mental, spiritual and physical spaces.<sup>2</sup> It was in this transformative environment that these three texts – an epic oral narrative, a liturgical drama, and a collection of Marian miracles – were created and performed. Although all three texts were written in a span of less than fifty years, the depictions

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<sup>1</sup> Ray, Jonathan, *The Sephardic Frontier: The "Reconquista" and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), Introduction.

See also: Ruiz, Teofilo F., *From Heaven to Earth: The Reordering of Castilian Society, 1150-1350* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3-7.

<sup>2</sup> Ruiz, *From Heaven to Earth*, 4-5.

of Jews in each of them are radically different, suggesting different forces influenced the authors. What cultural, legal, social and/or religious forces shaped how the authors of these texts represented the Jewish characters is a question that animates this study.

Because the three texts are of three different genres and had different target audiences, each work represents a distinct literary case study about Christian-Jewish relations. Broadly speaking, scholars have suggested the depictions of Jews in these three works, which to some extent progressively become more negative, reflect the same gradual deterioration of Christian-Jewish relations on the Iberian peninsula during this period. Although the exact dates of the texts' compositions are subject to scholarly debate – an argument I explore in greater detail later – I rely on the dates proposed in the most recent scholarship, which dates the *PMC* to around 1200-1210, *ARM* to around 1215-1225, and *MNS* to about 1250-1260. I investigate these works in chronological order of creation, focusing on certain cultural forces that have not been explored in depth by scholars. Specifically, I examine: 1) the Cid's failure to repay the Jews in the context of three important historical currents: increasingly hostile anti-usury laws during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the flouting of these and other anti-Jewish laws by Castilian kings, and an increase in hostilities against Jews from Christians envious of the kings' perceived favoritism of the Jews. 2) the influence that contemporary Jewish messianic prophecies and controversial rationalist writings by the Jewish philosopher Maimonides may have had on the author of *Auto de los reyes magos* in his depiction of Jews in the drama's final two scenes; and 3) the effects that papal-sanctioned clerical reforms may have

had on Berceo in portraying Jews in four of his tales in his *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*.

My investigation of literary representations of Jews and Christian-Jewish relations in medieval Spain stems from encounters I had as a journalist working overseas during the 1990s, when a wave of protests and attacks by Spaniards against foreigners erupted in Barcelona, Madrid and throughout southern Spain. I had always been fascinated by Spanish culture and literature as an undergraduate student and later as a foreign correspondent, but these manifestations of xenophobia in Spain seemed incongruent with my experiences studying there. My perhaps overly idyllic image of the land of Cervantes and Lope de Vega was further shattered by a comment from a fellow journalist from Europe, who told me that Spain's past was riddled with centuries of hatred toward foreigners and non-Christians that rivaled Nazi Germany's. Although his remark was historically inaccurate and seemed to reinforce the Black Legend, in which rival colonial powers disseminated pointed and biased propaganda that demonized Spain, it remained in me for a long time. Years later, during my first semester of graduate school, it resurfaced when I read historical accounts from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that discussed both the *Decreto de la Alhambra's* expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, as well as sixteenth century historian Bartolomé de las Casas' chronicles of the massacres and atrocities committed against indigenous

people by Spanish colonizing forces in the New World.<sup>3</sup> When I took my first medieval Spanish literature course, I was introduced to Spanish anti-Judaism in both literature and in the legal statutes in early Christian Spain. Literary depictions of Jews in medieval Castilian texts were never very positive, but I was struck by how quickly portrayals of Jews in texts worsened in the first half of the thirteenth century. During these fifty years, Jewish literary characters evolved from greedy, bumbling fools to evil minions of the devil and malevolent enemies of Christ who were, per the author's characterization in one tale, justifiably slaughtered by Christian mobs. I became intrigued by this apparent sharp decline in Christian-Jewish relations, devolving from somewhat harmonious *convivencia*, or coexistence, to one riddled with strife. I wondered how Jews, many of whom served Christian kingdoms as physicians in royal courts, as translators of Muslim texts in Toledo's School of Translation, and as soldiers against Muslim forces, could so quickly fall into disfavor and, by 1260-1270, be considered "peyores ca Mouros" ("worse than the Moors"), Muslims being generally considered Christian Spain's arch-enemy since the eighth century.<sup>4</sup> What were the factors that could have played a role in influencing the authors of these texts to portray Jews in the way that they did? This is the question that I set out to answer.

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<sup>3</sup> For more about these events, see Duviols, Jean-Paul, ed., Bartolomé de la Casa's *Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Stockcero, 2006), and Pérez, Joseph, *Historia de una tragedia: La expulsión de los Judíos de España*. (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth examination of Cantiga 348, see Bagby, Albert, "The Jew in the Cantigas of Alfonso X, el Sabio," *Speculum* 46, no. 4 (1971): 686.

My investigation of Jewish representations in the three aforementioned medieval Spanish texts grew out of an examination of the representations of Jews in the *Poema de mio Cid*, the oral narrative poem considered a fine example of the the *mester de juglaría* (or “craft of minstrels”) mode of poetry. I was particularly interested in the legal quandary about whether the Cid should have repaid the two Jewish moneylenders who gave him a loan in the beginning of the text. I wondered if there were legal statutes in and around Burgos that governed business transactions in that time period and what, if anything, they said. I discovered that *fueros*, or municipal legal codes, existed in various regions of Spain during the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries and governed numerous facets of law, including usury. More importantly, *El Fuero de Burgos* from this era actually contains a law that specifically addresses the repayment of loans from Jewish moneylenders to Christians.

Intrigued by the possibility that the unknown author may have been influenced by the *fuero* in his account of the Cid’s dealings with the moneylenders, I decided to extend my research into the representations of Jews in two other literary works from the first half of the thirteenth century: the liturgical drama *Auto de los reyes magos*, and Gonzalo de Berceo’s renowned collection of Marian tales, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, to see what, if any, legal, cultural or social forces may have played a role in their author’s depictions. The *Auto*, a church drama believed to be written and performed in Toledo, retells in fairly dramatic fashion the New Testament story of the Three Magi, who deciphered the messianic implications of the Star of Bethlehem and searched for the newborn king, Christ. Particularly interesting for

me was how the author depicted the Jewish rabbis and members of Herod's court and detailed their confusion while they debated theological issues, which causes one rabbi to realize the Jews' eschatological fallacies. As I examined this highly original scene and the author's focus on Jewish messianic prophecies, I discovered the existence of bitter disputes and divisions among Jews in Toledo over Maimonides' writings as well as a series of Jewish messianic prophecies and movements that spurred Jews from Spain and other parts of Western Europe to prepare for the end of days and migrate to the Holy Land. Significantly, Christian leaders in Toledo were already working diligently to keep Jews, considered vital to the city's cultural, economic and intellectual life, from leaving. Given this historical context, I explored the possibility that the unknown author of this short play may have been influenced by the writings of Maimonides as well as contemporary Jewish eschatology.

Finally, during my investigation of representations of Jews in *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, I discovered myriad religious and political conflicts occurring at the time. Of particular interest were papal-sanctioned clerical reforms being conducted by the newly created Mendicant orders that targeted heresy, including clerical abuses in the Benedictine Order, and caused Berceo's beloved "black monks" to lose substantial funding and power in the Church. These reforms threatened the financial solvency of various Benedictine monasteries, including Berceo's monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla, forcing clerics there to take drastic measures, including falsifying documents to gain financial support. I found that within this contentious religious environment, Berceo's *Milagros*, an expanded vernacular version of earlier



Latin miracles, took on new meaning, particularly with regard to his portrayal of Jews.

These three works provide a unique opportunity in that the dates of their composition fall during the first half the thirteenth century, they come from three different regions of Christian Spain, and they represent three different literary genres. The PMC is an epic composed by a learned poet, likely from Burgos, who was versed in law and whose work exemplifies the *mester de juglaría*, sung and performed by minstrels. The ARM, Spain's earliest extant vernacular theatrical work, is a liturgical drama likely written by a cleric in Toledo to be performed for a multi-religious audience in or outside the Cathedral during religious festivals such as Christmas and the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6. MNS is a collection of Marian tales, adapted from the Latin originals and written by the Riojan cleric Berceo in the learned *mester de clerecía* poetic mode to entertain and edify pilgrims visiting the shrine of San Millán and to instruct young clerics in church doctrine. By examining these three works, I am able to compare and contrast myriad historical forces that were influenced by date of composition, authorship, geographical location and/or secular-versus-clerical issues. These forces – localized in time and place to when and where each text was produced -- shed new light on the possible motives of each author, particularly with regard to his portrayal of Jews.

In Chapter One, I conclude that the poet of PMC, considered by many scholars to be versed in both law and the geography of Burgos, was aware of the harsh anti-Semitic regulations that were promulgated in that city's legal code and was

influenced by these codes when he created the scene involving the Cid's deception of – and failure to repay – the two Jewish usurers, Rachel and Vidas. One law from the *Fuero de Burgos*, concerning a Christian's obligation to repay loans received from a Jewish usurer, sheds important light on the harsh reality for Jewish businessmen in some parts of Christian Spain, specifically on what many scholars consider to be the Cid's less-than-honorable conduct toward the moneylenders.

In my analysis of ARM in Chapter Two, I conclude that the playwright, probably a cleric who studied or lived in France, knew of the dispute among the Jews with regard to Maimonides' writings as well as the prevalence of Jewish messianic prophecies and movements in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century that caused many Iberian Jews to return to the Holy Land had the potential to create economic and intellectual hardships in the city of Toledo. These historical forces, I conclude, may have shaped his creation of the last scene, which criticizes Jewish theological discord and disunity while dismissing Jewish messianic prophecies in the last verses as "erados" (wrong).

Finally, in my analysis of MNS in Chapter Three, I conclude that Berceo's elaborated *Milagros* served as a propaganda tool to deflect attention from clerical abuses in the priesthood and his order – behavior he portrays in his tales as pardonable transgressions – in order to focus on what he considers to be the real threat to Christendom: Jews.

It is important to note that my objective in this study is neither to justify nor excuse any of the authors' negative portrayals of Jews nor their anti-Judaism.

Instead, my goal is to explore the cultural systems within which these authors worked and to examine their anti-Judaism as a strategy that they used to achieve certain political or religious ends. It is my hope that my conclusions, in no way definitive, serve to provide a fresh perspective for the continuing literary analysis of these medieval works.

I analyze these texts in order of their composition and conclude that the representations of Jews in these three texts in general became progressively more negative as the thirteenth century advanced. These harsher portrayals of Jews are congruent with a general increase in Christian intolerance, hostility and persecution of Jews during the first half of the thirteenth century. In this period, Ray argues, Christian Spain suspended the Reconquest and shifted its energies toward political, social and economic consolidation, which “drastically reduced Christian society’s need for the Jews” and caused many Christians to resent royal protection of the Jews and to attack their status and security.<sup>5</sup> These attitudes in the first half of the thirteenth century were accompanied by “increasingly more virulent pejorative representations of Muslims and Jews in literary texts, law codes, chronicles and the *cortes*’ legislation.”<sup>6</sup>

My study builds on previous scholarship – both in history and literary studies – that explores the interrelations between Jews and Christians in medieval Spain, including Heinrich Graetz’ *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die*

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Ray, ed., *The Jew in Medieval Iberia* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012) xiv-xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Ruiz, *From Heaven to Earth*, 35-36.

*Gegenwart* (*History of the Jews: From the Earliest Times to the Present day*), and Yitzhak Baer's *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. Although both authors have been criticized by some scholars for promulgating biased versions of Jewish history, including such polemic myths as an idealized interfaith utopian existence between Jews and Muslims under Islamic rule, or what Baron calls a "lachrymose conception" of Jewish life under Christian rule,<sup>7</sup> the two historians' studies provided me important insight into the political, social and economic forces that affected the Jews on the Iberian peninsula during the Middle Ages. Complementing their work was David Nirenberg's *Communities of Violence*, which details the persecution of the Jews throughout Europe and analyzes some of the most enduring negative stereotypes about Jews in Europe – from greedy, covetous usurers and minions of the devil, to sorcerers and practitioners of blood libel.

Mark Cohen's *Under Crescent and Cross. The Jews in the Middle Ages*, offered my study invaluable information on the legal, social and economic relations of minority Jews with their majority rulers, both Christian and Muslim. His comparative study of Jewish life under Muslim and Christian rule shed invaluable light on the sense of loss and anxiety suffered by many medieval Iberian Jews during the Reconquest. His study stays clear of the two aforementioned extreme perspectives, which he dubs the "myth of the Islamic-Jewish interfaith utopia" (or *convivencia*) and the "countermyth" of severe persecution of Jews by Christians or

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<sup>7</sup> Baron, Salo, *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 96

“neo-lachrymose conception” of Jewish-Christian history.<sup>8</sup>

Extremely valuable to my study is Jonathan Ray’s book, *Sephardic Frontier: The Reconquista and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia*, which explores the short-lived prosperity of frontier Jews in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the gradual erosion of the king’s protection of them. These Jews settled in isolated frontier regions between Christian and Muslim territories and, with the help of royal grants and protection, generally prospered, forging important economic identities, which, Ray argues, usually superseded their religious identities during the early years of the Reconquest. However, as he notes, this unusual freedom and prosperity for Jews began to decline during the thirteenth century, as Iberian kings tried to exert greater control over them, allowing them to live only in established Jewish quarters while displaying a great interest in regulating their potential occupations as well as their social relationships with both Christians and Muslims. These restrictions not only ended an era of prosperity for Jews but also increased tensions with and resistance against the Christians. At the same time, tensions increased between kings, who depended on Jews for money, and the Roman Church, which demanded increased persecution of Jews. Kings usually sided against the Church to maintain the Jewish population, considered indispensable for economic growth and stability.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cohen, Mark R., *Under Crescent and Cross. The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ray, *Sephardic Frontier*, 47, 93.

My study also relies on the work of Jonathan Decker<sup>10</sup>, who explores the difficult cultural transition and liminal existence of Iberian Jews who migrated from al-Andalus to Christian Spain during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to escape Almohad persecution. Decker's focus on the Jews' feeling of loss, estrangement, instability, and a desire to emigrate to the Promised Land during this tumultuous time provides important insights into Iberian Jewish thought during this time, particularly with regard to messianic hopes and movements. Decker's text dovetails with my study of Jewish representations in the *Auto de los reyes magos* and my exploration into the possibility that the playwright may have been influenced by Jewish messianic movements and a desire of Jews to return to Israel.<sup>11</sup> These scholarly works look at larger trends and issues concerning Iberian Jews during this period. My study uses their arguments, but takes a narrower look at each literary text, utilizing a more specific "time-and-place" investigative approach to unveil other more situated and contextualized cultural forces that may have shaped each author's depiction of Jews in his work.

The theoretical framework that I employ for my analysis of these three texts is best described as a form of structural historicism. By combining the tenets of traditional structuralism, which focus on interrelations between various aspects or elements of a culture, with the methodology of historicism, which concentrates on the historical character of human activity within the specific time and place it

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<sup>10</sup> Decker, Jonathan P., *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Decker, *Iberian Jewish Literature*, 1-7.

occurred, I direct attention toward specific cultural currents that may have influenced each of the aforementioned authors to shape their texts in the manner that they did. This theoretical framework is similar to the journalistic inquiry that I utilized during the past 20 years while working as a professional narrative and investigative reporter. Journalistic inquiry entails reconstructing events by investigating any and all available sources – relevant people and documents – that may shed light on any of the most salient questions about the event. Asking “who?”, “what?”, “when?” and “where?” is essential in basic journalistic inquiry, but it is “why?” and “how?” that uncover motives and point to cause-and-effect relationships. Journalists who explore the myriad cause-and-effect forces – social, legal, economic, political, cultural, religious, sexual, etc. – that may have played a role in any given event help provide the public with critical insight from which it can acquire a deeper understanding of the event. Time constraints or availability of sources can curtail journalistic inquiry, which is aimed at being objectively representative – though certainly not exhaustive – in its pursuit of the truth, or better said, possible truths. There is a common belief that the wider and deeper the journalistic inquiry, the best chance there is at arriving at the most accurate representation of an event and hence, the best version of the truth. Yet, it is important to note, that narrowly-focused investigations with fresh approaches from new angles can flesh out extraordinarily compelling information from “older” stories that had already been covered exhaustively.

I take a narrow approach to these texts in this study. All three of these works have been thoroughly examined by historians and literary scholars. Still, by

narrowly focusing my investigation on the various cultural interactions that were happening during the specific time and place that these texts were composed, I hope to uncover other possible cultural forces that may have influenced how the authors shaped their works, particularly their portrayals of Jewish characters. For each of the three texts I use this structural historicist approach, but each text and author have a unique “time and place” environment within which the text was composed. Therefore, the cultural forces that I investigate for each text will be distinctly different.

Although the progressively more negative portrayals of Jews in these three texts are congruent with the general increase in Christian hostility toward Jews during the first half of the thirteenth century, my study shows that the remarkably different representations of Jews in these three works may have more to do with specific and distinct “time and place” cultural forces that influenced each author. By utilizing the important cause-and-effect questions of “how?” and “why” and focusing my analysis on the narrower, time-and-place cultural forces that existed exclusively for each of the authors of these three works, I hope to shed new light on the diverse portrayals of Jewish characters in each of these works.



CHAPTER 2: STIFFING THE JEWISH LOANSHARKS: RECONSIDERING WHY THE CID  
FAILED TO REPAY THE JEWISH USURERS IN *POEMA DE MÍO CID*

The two Jewish characters that appear in the *Poema de mío Cid* (hereafter PMC), Spain's only surviving epic from the first quarter of the thirteenth century, play an integral part in the story of the banished *Campeador* and his quest to restore his honor and relationship with the king. Raquel and Vidas, two Jewish usurers in the city of Burgos, are mentioned early—verse 89—in the first *Cantar*, and for the next 111 verses, they play a significant role in the epic's plot development. The two agree to lend the Cid 600 *marcos* to support his military campaign against the Muslims in exchange for two large ornamented chests which the Cid and his men imply are full of gold. Raquel and Vidas reappear later in the second *Cantar*, anxious after discovering the chests were not filled with gold but sand, and beg Minaya Alvar Fáñez to discuss with the Cid their request for repayment. Fáñez says he'll bring the matter up to the Cid and the two Jews claim that, if he doesn't, they'll go in search of the *Campeador* to demand repayment in person. This is the last time Raquel and Vidas are mentioned in the epic.

The two usurers are one of several fictitious elements in the poem, according to Menéndez Pidal, and they serve as a springboard for the poet to recount Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar's military successes against the Muslims and the recovery of his lost

honor in the epic.<sup>12</sup> The episode of the Jews has strong implications not only for the epic hero but also for Spain itself, given that the text is its only national epic.

The poet's portrayal of Raquel and Vidas and their interactions with the Christian Cid have stirred heated debate among scholars as to whether their literary representations constitute medieval anti-Judaism. Unlike the Jewish representations in its contemporary text, *Auto de los reyes magos*, which depict the Jewish rabbis as bumbling fools unable to understand the theological truth of Christianity, the two Jews in PMC reflect another negative stereotype, that of greedy moneylenders whose avarice clouds – and often displaces – prudent judgment. In the case of the PMC, their greed causes them to be tricked by the shrewder Cid.

The Cid's deception of Raquel and Vidas and the ambiguity as to whether he repaid the two for the loan have also sparked considerable debate, primarily because such behavior cuts against the grain of how he is portrayed by the poet, namely, as a man of temperance and honor. "Deciding whether the episode has anti-Jewish overtones has bearing on the moral person of the Cid and on his heroic stature, as this is perhaps one of the few points in the *Poema* when the protagonist can be said to act in a less than exemplary way."<sup>13</sup>

In this study, I will investigate the historical forces that may have influenced the anonymous poet of the PMC to negatively portray these two characters as well

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<sup>12</sup> Menéndez Pidal, Ramón, *Poema de mio Cid* (Madrid: Ediciones de la lectura, 1913), 35.

<sup>13</sup> Aizenberg, Edna, "Raquel y Vidas: Myth, Stereotype, Humor," *Hispania* Vol. 63, No. 3 (Sept., 1980): 478.

as the Cid's deception of them. Scholars who have analyzed this episode have posited a wide array of theories on whether it reflects the anti-Judaism of both the poet and the Cid. Menéndez Pidal argues in his earliest editions of the PMC that the *Campeador's* behavior does not reflect medieval anti-Judaism, claiming that the urgency of the Cid's plight forced him to take extreme measures and dupe the two usurers, which he otherwise would not have done. The episode involving the Jews and the chests of sand is one of the poem's fictitious events, one meant to be comic, exploring what happens when a heroic, idealist figure comes up against the normal obstacles in the real world.<sup>14</sup> Menéndez Pidal returned to the issue of the potential anti-Judaism of the PMC in 1963 when he posited that the copyist in the surviving text, which Menéndez Pidal labels the *Cantar de Medinaceli*, forgot to include the repayment of the Jews, which had been found in an earlier, now lost version, which he calls the *Cantar de Gormaz*.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, his argument, based on a yet-to-be-discovered earlier version of PMC, is speculative and seems to be a whitewashing interpretation, attempting to salvage a nationalist view of the national hero.

Similarly, in his criticism of scholars who claim the epic is anti-Semitic, Miguel Garci-Gómez contends that Raquel and Vidas were not Jews at all, but rather, prosperous foreigners who were not subject to the law of Burgos and who were actually good friends of the Cid.<sup>16</sup> While it is true that the two characters are never identified as Jews in the text, nonetheless, his argument, reflected in the title of his

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<sup>14</sup> Menéndez Pidal, *Poema de mio Cid*, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Menendez Pidal, Ramón, *En torno al 'Poema del Cid'* (Barcelona: Edhasa, 1963), 150.

<sup>16</sup> Garci-Gómez, Miguel, *El Burgos de Mio Cid: temas socio-económicos y escolásticos, con revisión del antisemitismo* (Burgos: Disputación Provincial. 1982).

book, *El Burgos de Mio Cid: Temas socio-económicos y escolásticos, con revisión del antisemitismo*, is, I maintain, distorted. His argument is based on mere conjecture from a scholar acknowledging that, through the prism of modern-day “political correctness,” the epic’s treatment of the two Jews must be seen as anti-Semitic. By denying that the two characters are Jewish, he seeks to downplay historical forces operative in Christian Spain during the Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup> In the same vein, Sola-Solé argues that, at the time of the composition of PMC, “el sentimiento anti-Judío en España apenas si se dejaba sentir. La armonía entre las tres castas...era bastante perfecta.”<sup>18</sup> He dates the composition to 1140 – a time in which there was arguably more *convivencia* than in the early thirteenth century, but it was, I maintain, far from “nearly perfect”.

C. Colin Smith maintains that any analysis of the episode of the Jews and the Cid’s deception of them is skewed by our overly sensitive modern perception, a discomfort that did not exist among medieval audiences at the time. “My conclusion is that, however difficult it may be for us to accept it with our modern ideas of morality and our modern guilt about anti-Semitism, the Cid’s ability to cheat the Jews was (in the mind of the author and his twelfth century audience) just another facet of his heroic character. He is ingenious in devising the hoax and actor enough to carry it out; he, one of those previously bitten by Jewish moneylenders, has at last

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<sup>17</sup> Milija N. Pavlovic, “The Episode of the Jews: An Aspect of the ‘Historicity’ of the Poema de Mío Cid in the Context of ‘Political Correctness’” in *Historicism Essays on Hispano-Medieval Narrative: In Memory of Roger M. Walker*. Eds Taylor, Barry and West, Geoffrey. (London: Maney Publishing, 2005), 359-385.

<sup>18</sup> Sola- Solé, Josep M., “De nuevo sobre las arcas del Cid.” *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, No. 18 (1976), 3-15.

bitten them. The twelfth century view of this proceeding was surely 'All credit to him.'"<sup>19</sup> I consider sound Smith's argument against imposing our views on a text and society 700 years removed; however, he offers no evidence – neither historical nor textual – for his argument that the Cid had been "bitten by Jewish usurers" before; even if that were true, the very idea that he relished giving Raquel and Vidas their 'just desserts' depicts the Cid as considering all Jews the same rather than individuals who deserve to be treated differently. Moreover, Smith's stance ignores the many studies about what role, if any, the contemporary legal views may have played in the invention of the episode, which features two Jewish moneylenders deceived by the Cid.

Amador de los Ríos sees this episode in an entirely different light. He reads it demonstrating the high opinion the moneylenders had of the Cid's reliability: "Este rasgo, recibido por casi todas las crónicas vulgares, es muy celebrado en los romances, mostrando de una parte la alta idea formada por los usureros judíos sobre la probidad de Mío Cid, y descubriendo de otra la religiosidad con que acostumbraba cumplir sus palabras. Un rígido moralista condenaría el engaño; y aun el mismo héroe lo condenaba interiormente, cuando exclama: 'Fer lo he amidos, de grado no avrie nada... E amidos lo fago.'"<sup>20</sup> The scholar's argument that the Jews' relied on the Cid's good character and trustworthiness to secure the loan contradicts the textual evidence that shows that they were motivated by greed,

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<sup>19</sup> C. Colin Smith, ed., *Poema de mío Cid* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Amador de Ríos, José, *Historia crítica de la Literatura Española, Volume 3* (Madrid: Imprenta de José Rodríguez, 1863), 185.

believing the chests contained wealth that far exceeded the 600 marcos they gave the Cid. Moreover, Amador de los Ríos's theory is weakened by the fact that he uses other texts, specifically the romances, to support his argument and also misreads the Cid's proclamation that he's acting against his will as referring to his deception of the Jews.

Lacarra, who analyzes the PMC in juridical terms, convincingly argues that the Cid's remarks about acting against his will do not refer to his deception of the Jews but rather to his seeking a loan, which was prohibited by the Church. Lacarra maintains that, under ecclesiastical law, the Cid can be forgiven for seeking the loan because the Church allowed money to be solicited from Jews in the case of hunger, which the Cid could have proven; nonetheless, "no se excusa de engañar a los judíos con las arcas de arena. De lo contrario, hubiera cumplido con el contrato y pagado la deuda contraída."<sup>21</sup> The clandestine nature of the transaction demanded the Cid seek out only a Jewish moneylender who would be willing to give him the funds and also keep the operation secret, Lacarra argues. The episode indicates a prevalent anti-Jewish sentiment at the time, but one that reflects the prejudices of the poet, not of the historical Cid, whose attitudes toward Jews cannot be extrapolated from this fictive portrayal. In her analysis of the episode, Lacarra touches on canon law that allows destitute Christians to take loans from Jewish usurers, but she does not explore in depth the trajectory of increased hostilities against Jewish usurers in both secular and canon law in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – a trajectory I argue

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<sup>21</sup> Lacarra, Maria Eugenia, *El Poema de Mío Cid: Realidad Histórica e Ideológica* (Madrid, Spain: José Porrúa Turanzas, S.A., 1980), 190-191

later in the chapter that reflects strong cultural forces that could have influenced the poet of the PMC in shaping the episode.

Historian Yitzhak Baer admonishes critics who fail to see anti-Judaism in the poet's portrayals of the two Jews as well as the Cid's trickery. "Some interpreters, Jews and Christians alike, have tried in vain to gloss over the anti-Jewish bias of this representative poem, a bias revealed not merely in the accounts of the individual incidents, but also in the poet's adherence to the popular conception of the Jew as the deceitful merchant, rather than the loyal political aide, the function which he undoubtedly exercised in the circles around the historic Cid."<sup>22</sup> Baer considers such opinions mere conjectures that do little to further debate grounded in textual or historical evidence.

In this chapter, I investigate both secular and canon law from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, focusing on how and to what extent the laws governing usury developed during this time. An examination of these laws can shed important insight on the social and political climate of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Castile, particularly regarding an increase in the hostility of urban Christians toward the royally-protected "king's Jews" in Burgos and other Castilian cities during this period. By attacking the king's 'property', the Jews, Christian city dwellers used their victims as scapegoats to attack an unpopular king. In a similar fashion, I argue,

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<sup>22</sup> Baer, Yitzhak, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain, Vol. 1* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 58.

by deceiving the Jews – and never repaying them – the Cid is targeting a king who wrongfully exiled him, an indirect revenge that would delight the PMC's audience.

I divide the chapter into four sections. In the first section of this chapter, I explore the PMC, its poet and date, and its impact on medieval Castilian literature. In the second section, I examine the history of canon and secular law concerning Jews in Spain from the end of the Roman Empire until the mid-thirteenth century, exploring how various legal codes affected them socially, politically and economically. In the third section I investigate the history of Burgos and its municipal code, the *Fuero de Burgos*, and usury and usury laws, focusing on how and why usury developed and the Church and State's attitude toward the practice. In the final section, I explore the two episodes involving the Jewish moneylenders, examining in detail the textual evidence, scholarly research, and historical currents in and around Burgos that may have influenced the poet's portrayal of Raquel and Vidas, whether the Cid repays them, and whether their portrayal reflects historical anti-Judaism.

#### Structure, Poet and Dating of the PMC

The PMC, which describes the feats and tribulations of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, *El Cid*, has survived in a single incomplete manuscript that contains 3730 verses written on 74 folios. There are several folios missing, including the first, but scholars have reconstructed the missing content from later chronicle accounts that



use the PMC as a source.<sup>23</sup> The poem's meter is irregular, with lines containing between ten and twenty syllables, and with end line assonance.

Ramón Menéndez Pidal located the PMC in the *mester de juglaría* tradition, in which popular oral narratives were sung by minstrels who altered and shaped the tales for their immediate audiences and transmitted them to successive generations. He and other scholars, including P.E. Russell, consider the PMC to be a historical work, almost a chronicle of the eleventh century and "the product of a certain amount of historical investigation by its author."<sup>24</sup>

Most scholars agree the poet of the extant version was from Burgos or the region surrounding the old capital of Castile; however, there is wide disagreement as to when the *Cantar* first emerged. Menéndez Pidal claimed that popular tales about the Cid originated during the hero's life (1043-1099) or shortly thereafter. There are surviving poems about the Cid written in Latin that were composed before the Spanish hero died or shortly thereafter, including the *Carmen Campidoctoris* (Song of the Campeador), which was written sometime between 1083-90, and the *Historia Roderici*, written around 1110).<sup>25</sup> Menéndez Pidal argued that continually evolving vernacular tales were ultimately written down, including a "Cantar de Gormaz" version, which was written around 1105 but does not survive, and the surviving "Cantar de Medinaceli" version, which written around 1140, a little more than four decades after the Cid's death. The purported existence of the

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<sup>23</sup> Smith, C. Colin, "On editing the *Poema de Mío Cid*", *Iberoromania*, Vol. 23 (1986): 10-13.

<sup>24</sup> Russell, P.E., "San Pedro de Cardeña and the heroic history of the Cid", *Medium Aevum*, XXVII (1958): 57-59. See also Lacarra, *El Poema de Mío Cid*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Michael, Ian, *The Poem of the Cid* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press. 1975) 1-2.

“Cantar de Gormaz” plays a significant role in the argument Menéndez Pidal made in the later years of his life about the two Jewish moneylenders being repaid by the Cid – something I will discuss in more detail later. From the point of view of Menéndez Pidal, the short period between the Cid’s death and the proposed composition date helps explain the historical accuracy of the PMC, in contrast with French *chansons de geste*, which include many more fictional elements.

Other scholars, such as Spitzer, argue against Menéndez Pidal’s historicist approach and maintain that the goal of the poet was not to narrate historical events, but rather to produce a work of art.<sup>26</sup> Still others, such as Gicovate and Smith who date the emergence of the poem to around 1200, maintain that a “mitificación” process that lasted longer than 40 years from the Cid’s death to the composition of the PMC is necessary to account for so many fictitious elements in the poem.<sup>27</sup>

Menéndez Pidal argued that in the last line of the PMC, which contains the colophon, there had been another ‘c’ in the gap between the ‘cc’ and ‘xlv’, making the date 1307, which he posited was when the poem had been copied. Later scholars, pointing to linguistic peculiarities and social and political background in the poem, argue that the composition date was probably in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, close to the 1207 colophon at the end of the last verse.<sup>28</sup> Lacarra, who

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<sup>26</sup> Spitzer, Leo, “Sobre el carácter histórico del Cantar de Mío Cid,” *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, II, (1948): 105-117.

<sup>27</sup> Gicovate, Bernardo, “La fecha de composición del PMC,” *HBalt*, 39 (1956): 419-22.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, C. Colin, *The Making of the Poema de mío Cid* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 64-66. Smith cites numerous scholars, including Russell, Ubieto, Fradejas, Pattison and Walker, who all have argued the composition date was more likely around 1200, not 1140, as Menéndez Pidal posited.

explores the legal and historical issues surrounding the PMC, also supports this date.<sup>29</sup>

Colin Smith argues that Per Abbat, whose name is included in the colophon, was the author of PMC, and that “*escrivio*” in the last verse means “not ‘wrote out’ (as a copyist) but ‘wrote’ (as a new poetic work)”.<sup>30</sup> Smith located documents dated in 1223 referring to a Pedro Abad of Santa Eugenia, a Castilian lawyer, who he showed had an interest in the *Cid* and could have had reason and opportunity to write the poem at the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>31</sup> The dearth of documents makes it impossible to ascertain whether Pedro Abad was the original poet of the PMC – something Smith acknowledges – or simply a copyist. Because most recent scholarship places the dating of the PMC in the early thirteenth century, close to the 1207 colophon, I use this date in my current study.

Evidence suggests that the poet of the PMC was a literate, well informed, and cultured layman, who had knowledge of his literary craft as it had been used in French *chansons de geste*. Moreover, as scholars from Hinojosa to Hook have pointed out – which is important for this study – the historical events and juridical elements present in the poem point to a poet who had access to legal documents and chronicles and who was well-versed in legal procedures.<sup>32</sup> “From within the *Poema*

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<sup>29</sup> Lacarra, *El 'Poema de mio Cid*, 263-264.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *The Making of the Poema de mio Cid*, 68.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, *The Making of the Poema de mio Cid*, 67-68

<sup>32</sup> Hinojosa, Eduardo de, “El derecho en el PMC” *Homenaje a Menendez y Pelayo, I* (Madrid: Librería General de Victoriano Suarez, 1899) 541-81; and Smith, C. Colin, *Estudios cidianos* (Madrid: Cupsa Editorial, 1977), 15-34, 65-85; and Hook, David, “On certain correspondences between the PMC and

emerges all the evidence needed for the thesis that we have here a legally-trained mind and a legally-professing person at work.”<sup>33</sup>

The legal elements in the PMC have been explored in great detail during the last 45 years. Lacarra argues that Per Abbat was likely the poet who created the work, not a mere copyist, and that he was probably a lawyer motivated to create a work that defended the public rights of minor nobles and middle class citizens in the face of private rights exercised – and abused – by the higher class nobles.<sup>34</sup> Pavlovic and Walker argue that “one of the poet’s motives was perhaps to lend support to the attempts of two contemporary kings, Alfonso IX of Leon, and more especially, Alfonso VIII of Castile, to introduce the precise concepts and clear procedures of Roman law into the chaotic peninsular legal systems they had inherited.”<sup>35</sup>

For this study, I accept the scholarly consensus that places the composer of the PMC in or around Burgos. Although the extant text could either be from an oral poet or *juglar*, or the product of a literate writer, I use the more ambiguous term ‘poet’ in my study. I also agree with Lacarra that the plethora of legal issues explored in the poem points to a poet with a strong knowledge of canon and secular law. These two points, I argue, establish a strong possibility that the poet would have known that, over the course of a century, Jewish usurers had increasingly been the target of hostile laws in both secular and canon legal codes. I investigate the

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contemporary legal instruments,” *Iberoromania*, XI (1980): 31-53; and Lacarra, *El Poema de mio Cid: realidad histórica e ideología* (Madrid, 1980).

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *The Making of the Poema de mio Cid*, 75

<sup>34</sup> Lacarra, *El Poema de mio Cid*, 265-267.

<sup>35</sup> Pavlovic, Milija, N., and Walker Roger M., “Money, Marriage and the Law in the ‘Poema de mio Cid’” *Medium AEvum* 51.2 (1982): 197.

possibility that the poet of the PMC was influenced by these codes to create a legally accurate financial relationship between the Cid and the moneylenders that, while anti-Semitic, reflects the norms of the time. Later laws, especially those in the thirteenth century, are significantly more supportive of Christians conducting financial transactions with Jewish usurers while simultaneously being less sympathetic toward Jews who never receive payment from Christians. In the next section, I examine how canon and secular laws evolved in medieval Spain.

### Evolution of Canon and Secular Laws Concerning Jews

The secular and canon laws concerning Jews, or “Jewry law”<sup>36</sup>, that governed Burgos during the period from about 1100 to 1250, all have their origins in Roman Law, most notably the Theodosian Code of 438, which was compiled by Emperor Theodosius II. Because the laws concerning Jews changed considerably over the course of 800 years, in this section I investigate how and to what extent these transformations occurred.

The Theodosian Code contains a mixture of both tolerant and intolerant laws toward Jews, the former stemming from early polytheistic Rome and the latter from monotheistic Christianity.<sup>37</sup> This dichotomous stance of tolerance and intolerance toward Jews continues in the legal codes adopted by Spain during the next thousand years. Tolerance generally reflects an economic and cultural need for Jews, while

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<sup>36</sup> “Jewry law” is defined as “Christian legal material concerning the Jews”, in contrast to “Jewish law,” which is written by Jews. See Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 30.

<sup>37</sup> Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 32.

for the most part, intolerance reflects the Church's hostility toward a Jewish presence among Christians.

The Theodosian Code contains anti-Semitic language and mandates that were carried over into Visigothic laws and later adopted into canon and secular law throughout Christian Spain. In the Theodosian Code, Jews are classed with heretics and pagans, usually listed in the order of "Jews, heretics, pagans," but sometimes as "heretics, Jew, pagans", which, as Linder notes, set a precedent that "indicates a fundamental change in the Jewish policy" in the empire that ultimately affected the legal status of Jews elsewhere for nearly the next eleven centuries.<sup>38</sup> Titles 8 and 9 of Book 16, which deal with Christian-Jewish relations in religious, social and business matters, prohibit Christian interference in Jewish Sabbath rituals, assaults on Jews and their businesses, and destruction of synagogues, while simultaneously forbidding Jews to act rashly against or disrespect Christians.<sup>39</sup> Also significant is the Code's prohibiting of Jews from sending money to the Patriarch of Tiberias and ordering them instead to send money to the Roman imperial treasury, in order to keep these funds within Rome.<sup>40</sup> This law was duplicated in Spain and ultimately created a special relationship between Jews and Spanish kings, according which the "king's Jews" paid a special tax to the crown in exchange for royal protection; this arrangement increased Castilian kings' interest in protecting and maintaining the Jewish population within their domains. Under the Theodosian Code, Jewish

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<sup>38</sup> Linder, Amnon. *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 62-63

<sup>39</sup> Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 33.

<sup>40</sup> Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 33.

communities were forbidden to build new synagogues, but could repair existing ones, and they were prohibited from owning Christian slaves. The codes described Jews using harsh language such as “nefarious” and “abominable” and called Judaism “a plague ... that spreads like contagion”.<sup>41</sup> Despite these laws’ harsh language against Jews, the Theodosian Code and its earliest legal derivative in Spain, the *Lex Romana Visigothorum* of 506 (also called the *Breviarium of Alaric*), displayed a tendency toward tolerance of the Jews, particularly, as Juster notes, with regard to their worship and ceremonies as well as some of their religious customs and practices.<sup>42</sup>

That tolerance ended in 587, however, when the Visigoth king Reccared converted to Christianity and, in a measure to consolidate the realm under one religion, adopted an anti-Jewish stance, adding anti-Jewish laws to the Visigothic Code. These included laws according to which Jews were forbidden to observe the Sabbath, circumcise their children, or intermarry with Christians. Two years later, Reccared, in conjunction with the Third Council of Toledo, passed a series of new laws which mandated that Jews were forbidden to hold public office or have intercourse with Christian women, and required that children from mixed marriages be forcibly baptized.<sup>43</sup>

During the next century, each successive Visigothic king added anti-Jewish

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<sup>41</sup> Linder, *Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, 57.

<sup>42</sup> Juster, Jean, “The Religious Policy of the Visigoth Kings toward the Jews.” *In Legal Condition of Jews Under the Visigoth Kings*. Ed. A.M. Rabello. Israel Law Review No II (1976): 261

<sup>43</sup> Linder, Amnon, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997) 257-332; 484-538.

laws to the Visigothic code. By the early seventh century, the laws targeted Jewish converts to Christianity, setting in motion a series of severe anti-Jewish practices which included accusing forced converts of apostasy and imposing the death penalty for practicing or having anything to do with Jewish rites.<sup>44</sup> Jews, Shaw notes, “were despoiled of their goods, robbed of their children, compelled to apostasize. It was decreed that they must not act, or speak, or think, in any way that would offend the true faith.”<sup>45</sup> The anti-Judaism reached a peak in 613 when Sisebuth promulgated an edict of expulsion of all Jews in Iberia – a law that, fortunately for the Jews in the regions far from Toledo, was impossible to fully enact.<sup>46</sup> Throughout the last century of Visigothic rule, some Visigothic kings suspended or did not enforce laws against Jews,<sup>47</sup> but for the most part, Jews suffered a series of heightened persecutions that “set the stage for the rapid decline of Visigothic Spanish Jewry during the seventh century.”<sup>48</sup>

Following the Muslim conquest and the consolidation of Christian kingdoms in the north, Jews were often invited to settle in Christian territories, receiving protection and privileges from kings in exchange for a special tax they paid that went to the royal treasury. From the perspective of the king, Jews constituted a

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<sup>44</sup> Stocking, Rachel L., “Forced Converts, “Crypto-Judaism,” and Children: Religious Identification in Visigothic Spain.” In *Jews in Early Christian Law: Byzantium and the Latin West, 6th-11th centuries* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2014): 243.

<sup>45</sup> Shaw, R. Dykes, “The Fall of the Visigothic Power in Spain,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 21, No. 82 (1906): 213-14.

<sup>46</sup> Suárez Bilbao, Fernando, *El Fuero Judiego en la España Cristiana: Las Fuentes Jurídicas Siglos V-XV* (Madrid: Editorial Dykinson, 2000), 15.

<sup>47</sup> Bachrach, Bernard S., “A Reassessment of Visigothic Jewish Policy, 589-711,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Feb., 1973): 11-34.

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 44.



major source of income, and “when the king’s coffers were almost empty the Jews’ position generally grew stronger.”<sup>49</sup>

However, privileges were sometimes revoked if the king received pressure from Christian subjects angered over what they saw as favorable treatment toward Jews. In 1066 Fernando I, king of Castile and Leon, suspended all anti-Jewish provisions created during the Visigothic era – an act that began a period in which Christian secular laws were much more tolerant toward Jews.<sup>50</sup> Kings adopted more tolerant policies toward Jews as part of a larger project to encourage migration to their kingdoms, to increase the population and settle border territories recently conquered or annexed following the collapse of Umayyad rule in Cordoba in 1031.

This period also saw significant urban growth, which is where Jews tended to settle. During the twelfth century, royal-authored municipal charters, or *fueros*, took on more importance, appearing initially in the largest urban settlements and giving equal rights to all merchants – Christians and Jews – with a goal of promoting economic development and growth in the locality. Jews “saw the newly Christianized territories as lands of social, political and economic opportunity”<sup>51</sup> and migrated there in ever larger numbers, particularly after the Almohad invasion of al-Andalus in 1140. Many Jews chose to settle in cities, taking advantage of the royal protection of kings – a relationship that was also spelled out in detail in each municipality’s *fuero*. For example, in the *fuero de Teruel* of 1176, a municipal charter

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<sup>49</sup> Assis, Yom Tov, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry* (London, Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 10.

<sup>50</sup> Suárez Bilbao, *El Fuero Judiego*, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier*, 16

that served as a model for other cities in Aragon and Castile, it states: “Nam iudei servi Regis sunt et semper fisco regio deputati” (“Thus, the Jews are slaves of the kings and always belong to the royal treasury”).<sup>52</sup> While such language illustrates Jews’ unequal status and dependency upon the king, the arrangement also created a protected space in which to live, worship, and do business. This *fuero*, written in Latin like most *fueros* in the twelfth century, contains dozens of laws governing Jews in the city that describe procedures for lawsuits between Jews and Christians, penalties for murders between Christians and Jews, and the processes to deal with broken business contracts, ensuring the rights of Jews in conflicts with Christians. As Baer notes, the principle of equal rights, stressed in the *fueros*, applied in practice only to economic matters as governed by civil law and not to criminal matters.<sup>53</sup>

The civil Jewry laws contained in these *fueros* varied considerably from region to region with regard to how much tolerance was afforded Jews. In Catalonia, for example, Jews worked in the region’s burgeoning trades and crafts as tailors, shoemakers, gold and silver smiths, and their importance is reflected in the *Usatges de Barcelona*, a law code compiled in the late eleventh century, in which they are treated as equals to Christians in business disputes.<sup>54</sup> Also significant is that the code decrees that in cases where Jews are injured or killed, the ruling count set the

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<sup>52</sup> Suárez Bilbao, *El Fuero Judiego*, 217.

<sup>53</sup> Baer, *History of the Jews*, 87.

<sup>54</sup> Kagay, Donald J., *The Usatges of Barcelona: The Fundamental Law of Catalonia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1994) (The Library of Iberian Resources Online) Title 108. <http://libro.uca.edu/usatges/usatges.htm>

amount of money the deceased person's family received in compensation.<sup>55</sup> In Castile, by contrast, Jews were not treated as equals in business disputes with Christians, and the cases were adjudicated by Christian lords or prelates, with any fines imposed being sent to the crown. Moreover, any compensation for the injury or death of a Jew was not sent to the injured person or his family, but to the count.<sup>56</sup>

As the "personal property of the king", Jews could and often did appeal unfavorable legal decisions directly to the king, who made rulings either for or against them based on the political climate of the time and his economic need for Jewish taxes.<sup>57</sup> Some kings took significant measures to protect their Jewish subjects, such as holding an entire Christian community responsible for the murder of a Jew and imposing a collective fine on them.<sup>58</sup> In the case of moneylending and the defaulting of repayment, the king sometimes interceded on behalf of Jews and "even promised to force their debtors to pay their debts."<sup>59</sup> However, royal decisions in favor of Jews often caused hostility and occasionally rebellions against the crown, which in turn, prompted violence against Jews.<sup>60</sup> The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw several instances in which Christians, angry with the king, opted to attack 'his property' – the Jews – rather than the crown itself. Alfonso VI, who is the same king portrayed in PMC, was cautioned by Pope Gregory VII to curtail his favoritism of Jews in his kingdom and not allow them positions over

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<sup>55</sup> Kagay, *The Usatges of Barcelona*, Title 9.

<sup>56</sup> Baer, *A History of Jews*, 42-43.

<sup>57</sup> Assis, *The Golden Age*, 32-33.

<sup>58</sup> Baer, *A History of Jews*, 89.

<sup>59</sup> Assis, *The Golden Age*, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Baer, *A History of Jews*, 50-54 and 85-90.

Christians – a warning the king ignored.<sup>61</sup> In 1109 in Toledo, Burgos, Leon and surrounding areas, a general uprising broke out in which Christians, unhappy with the Alfonso VI's perceived favoritism of the Jews, revolted and destroyed royal property, murdering Jews and pillaging the Jewish quarters.<sup>62</sup> An investigation into the massacres, which ultimately led to Christians being pardoned, showed “that the Jews were targeted in a systematic assault on the royal holdings” and that “the status of the Jews as the Crown's property was evident” because Christians who assaulted them also robbed royal palaces and burned the king's hunting grounds.<sup>63</sup> This is a significant historical example of Christians using Jews as scapegoats for the unpopular actions of the king. This twelfth century cultural current of engaging in violence against Jews in order to express discontent with the king is linked, I argue, to the Cid's behavior toward the Jews in PMC – a point I explore later in this chapter.

### History of Usury and Usury Laws

Historically, usury was condemned since Antiquity. Plato and Aristotle both considered it immoral and unjust.<sup>64</sup><sup>65</sup> It was forbidden in the Old Testament (Exodus 22:25; Deuteronomy 23:19-20) and, in the third century A.D., it was denounced by St. Bernardine who wrote: “Accordingly all the saints and all the

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<sup>61</sup> Flannery, Edward H., *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-three Centuries of Antisemitism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 127-128.

<sup>62</sup> Baer, *A History of Jews*, 51.

<sup>63</sup> Soifer Irish, Maya. *Jews and Christians in Medieval Castile: Tradition, Coexistence, and Change* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 25-26.

<sup>64</sup> Jones, David Wayne, *Reforming the Morality of Usury: A Study of Differences that Separated the Protestant Reformers* (Dallas: University Press of America, 2004), 22-25.

angels of paradise cry then against [the usurer], saying, “To hell, to hell, to hell.”<sup>66</sup> In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, usurers were placed in the outermost ring of the seventh circle of hell with those who had committed murder, suicide, blasphemy and sodomy.<sup>67</sup> It was forbidden in Islam, and Jewish law prohibited practicing usury with fellow Jews, but permitted, as in the case of Raquel and Vidas, the practice with non-Jews.

The Council of Nicaea in 325 forbade usury among the clergy with the threat of demotion, and that prohibition had been extended to the laity by the councils of the ninth century. Between the ninth and eleventh centuries, the economy was almost completely agrarian throughout Europe, and loans sought due to bad harvests were often impossible to repay, leading the borrower to lose the collateral – a fact that led the Church and municipalities to create harsher laws against usury meant to protect small free farmers from being absorbed by landholders, who were usually the lenders.<sup>68</sup> During this time period, usury was attacked by both Church and State in Europe,<sup>69</sup> which set the stage for its condemnation by the papacy. In 1139, Pope Innocent II in the Second Lateran Council condemned the practice of usury, ordering clerics not to grant Christian usurers any of the sacraments, including Christian burial, and to hold them “infamous” throughout their whole lives

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<sup>66</sup> Homer, Sidney, *A History of Interest Rates* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 69-70.

<sup>67</sup> Alighieri, Dante. *Dante’s Inferno. A New Translation in Terza Rima*. Trans. Robert M. Torrance (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2011), 220-222.

<sup>68</sup> Noonan, John T., *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 12-13

<sup>69</sup> Homer, *A History of Interest Rates*, 70.

unless they repented.<sup>70</sup> Forty years later, Pope Alexander III addressed usury more harshly in the Third Lateran Council of 1179, banning it under threat of excommunication. Canon 25 of Lateran III decreed:

Quia in omnibus fere locis crimen usurarum ita inolevit , ut multi aliis negotiis prætermiffis , quasi liceat, usuras exercent, et nequaquam attendant: Ideo constituimus, quod usurarii manifesti nec ad communionem admittantur altaris, nec Christianam, si in hoc peccato decesserint, accipiant sepulturam, sed nec oblationes eorum quisquam accipiat. Qui autem acceperit, vel Christianae tradiderit sepulturae, et ea, quae acceperit, reddere compellatur, et, donec ad arbitrium episcopi sui satisfaciat, ab officii sui maneat exsecutione suspensus.<sup>71</sup>

“Nearly everywhere the crime of usury has become so firmly rooted that many, omitting other business, practice usury as if it were permitted, and in no way observe how it is forbidden in both the Old and New Testament. We therefore declare that notorious usurers should not be admitted to communion of the altar or receive Christian burial if they die in this sin. Whoever receives them or gives them Christian burial should be compelled to give back what he has received, and let him remain suspended from the performance of his office until he has made satisfaction according to the judgment of his own bishop.”<sup>72</sup>

Less than four decades later, Pope Innocent III in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 directed his attention at usury, but this time, significantly, the practice is linked solely to Jews. Canon 67 states:

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<sup>70</sup> Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, 18.

<sup>71</sup> Seitz, Eduard, *Darstellung der katholischen Kirchendisziplin in Ansehung der Verwaltung der Sacramente* (Regensburg: Staatliche Bibliothek Regensburg, 1850), 129.

<sup>72</sup> Rist, Rebecca, *Popes and Jews: 1095-1291* (Oxford, England: University Press, 2016), 142-143.

Quanto amplius christiana religio ab exactione compescitur usurarum tanto gravius super his Iudæorum perfidia inolescitur ita quod brevi tempore christianorum exhauriunt facultates. Volentes igitur in hac parte prospicere christianis ne a Iudæis immaniter aggraventur synodali decreto statuimus ut si de cætero quocumque prætextu Iudæi a christianis graves et immoderatas usuras extorserint christianorum eis participium subtrahatur donec de immoderato gravamine satisfecerint competenter. Christiani quoque si opus fuerit per censuram ecclesiasticam appellatione postposita compellantur ab eorum commerciis abstinere. Principibus autem iniungimus ut propter hoc non sint christianis infesti sed potius a tanto gravamine Iudæos studeant cohibere. Ac eadem pœna Iudæos decernimus compellendos ad satisfaciendum ecclesiis pro decimis et oblationibus debitis quas a christianis de domibus et possessionibus aliis percipere consueverant antequam ad Iudæos quocumque titulo devenissent ut sic Ecclesiæ conserventur indemnes.

The more the Christians are restrained from the practice of usury, the more they are oppressed in this matter by the treachery of the Jews, so that in a short time they exhaust the resources of the Christians. Wishing, therefore, in this matter to protect the Christians against cruel oppression by the Jews, we ordain in this decree that if in the future under any pretext Jews extort from Christians oppressive and immoderate interest, the partnership of the Christians shall be denied them till they have made suitable satisfaction for their excesses. The Christians also, every appeal being set aside, shall, if necessary, be compelled by ecclesiastical censure to abstain from all commercial intercourse with them. We command the princes not to be hostile to the Christians on this account, but rather to strive to hinder the Jews from practicing such excesses. Lastly, we decree that the Jews be compelled by the same punishment (avoidance of commercial intercourse) to make satisfaction for the tithes and offerings due to the churches, which the Christians were accustomed to supply from their houses and other possessions before these properties, under whatever title, fell into the hands of the Jews, that thus the churches may be safeguarded against loss.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Halsall, Paul. *Medieval Sourcebook: Twelfth Ecumenical Council: The Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215*. <http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp>

It is important to note that kings throughout thirteenth-century Spain understood that usury, despite being condemned by the Church, promoted business and increased revenues for the crown; therefore rulers would turn a blind eye to its practice so commerce would thrive. However, when anti-Jewish sentiment grew among the Christian populace or royal funds became depleted, some rulers arbitrarily decided to prosecute Jewish usurers and seize their assets to fatten royal coffers and placate angry Christians.<sup>74</sup> In Castile, the kings tended to protect their Jewish subjects, despite pressure from the Church. Strict, anti-Jewish papal mandates and canon laws were known among late twelfth and thirteenth-century Castilian rulers, but the monarchy displayed “an all-too-evident reluctance to risk an important source of revenue by letting churchmen meddle in the affairs of the Jews.”<sup>75</sup>

Was this the case in Burgos, the likely origin of the PMC poet as well as the setting for the episode involving the Cid and the Jewish usurers? It is difficult to document with precision the political and cultural climate in 1207 Burgos. However, from surviving documents, it is possible to get some sense of the cultural forces at work during the city’s early history. After Alfonso III, the king of Asturias, conquered Burgos from the Muslims around the middle of the ninth century, he mandated that Count Diego Porcelos repopulate the area, called “Castella” or land of castles, and

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<sup>74</sup> Assis, Yom Tov. *Jewish Economy in the Medieval Crown of Aragon, 1213-1327: Money and Power* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1997), 51-53.

<sup>75</sup> Soifer Irish, *Jews and Christians in Medieval Castile*, 84.



defend all surrounding Christian territories.<sup>76</sup> Because of its strategic location and size, the city became known as “la cabeza de Castilla” or “Head of Castile”. A substantial population of Jews lived in the city in the eleventh century, as seen in a privilege created by Alfonso VI in 1085 in which Jews are mentioned as a source of tribute.<sup>77</sup> In 1103, Alfonso extended the statutory reach of the pre-existing *fuero* to cover fifty-four towns surrounding the city.<sup>78</sup> Such *fueros* were “fundamental para la convivencia de las comunidades” like Burgos.<sup>79</sup> They also governed commerce and moneylending practices between Jews and Christians, setting maximum interest rates and regulations regarding repayment. To my knowledge, no copy of any *fuero* in Burgos before 1250 has survived. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to argue that the early *fueros* were favorable to Jews due to the increase in the city’s Jewish population between 1050 and 1250. Attracted by agricultural opportunities, urban property, and royal privileges, Jews migrated to Burgos in good numbers, and their population steadily grew to about 600-700 – or almost 10 percent of the city’s population – by 1250, exceeded only by Toledo.<sup>80</sup>

There is, to my knowledge, is no extant copy of any municipal charter from Burgos, neither in Latin nor Spanish, until 1256, when Alfonso X gave the city the *Fuero real* to serve as its municipal legal charter. The Code’s fourth book discusses criminal acts and their penalties and claim that Jews are dangerous to Christians

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<sup>76</sup> Valderón, Julio. *Burgos en la Edad Media* (Junta de Castilla y León. Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 1984), 25.

<sup>77</sup> Valderón, *Burgos en la Edad Media*, 50-51.

<sup>78</sup> Suárez Bilbao, *El Fuero Judiego*, 152.

<sup>79</sup> Suárez Bilbao, *El Fuero Judiego*, 55-56.

<sup>80</sup> Valderón, *Burgos en la Edad Media*, 57-58; 150-151.

and Christianity. The laws prohibit Jews from socializing with Christians, teaching Christian children, reading Jewish books, among other restrictions.<sup>81</sup> One section, which is noteworthy for this study, governs the activity of Jews as usurers and states:

“Iudio ninguno non faga empresto a husuras nin a otra manera sobre cuerpo de cristiano ninguno. E el lo fiziere pierda todo quanto diera sobrel e el cristiano pueda se ir libre myentre quando quisiera.”

- *Fuero Real de Burgos, Libro IV*

This law mandates that it is illegal for Jews to act as usurers to any Christian in Burgos and that if they do, they will lose all money to the Christian who will be considered “free” from repaying the Jewish moneylenders. Although the code was established *after* the PMC was written, it illustrates an increasingly hostile trajectory of Christian usury laws concerning Jews beginning in the early twelfth century. In earlier periods, the anti-Jewish papal initiatives and canon laws had little effect on how Spanish kings treated Jews and usury, but in the early thirteenth century, such laws gained traction in Castile, as clerics involved themselves more in the drafting of municipal charters and laced them with more anti-Jewish laws.<sup>82</sup> The trajectory of laws governing usury from the early twelfth century to the mid-thirteenth century follows a pattern of increasing hostility toward the practice among Christians, and eventually complete intolerance of it as an example of Jewish “treachery” and “oppression” of Christians. Nonetheless, many Spanish kings during this period

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<sup>81</sup> Corfis, Ivy A., *Fuero de Burgos, Text and Concordance. European MS. 245* (Madison, WI: Madison Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1987), 81.

<sup>82</sup> Soifer Irish, *Jews and Christians*, 84-85.

ignored canon laws, seeing Jews as revenue sources. The subsequent envy and ill will of the Christian population was a cultural current that, I argue, shaped the poet of the PMC in his negative portrayal of two Jewish usurers and the Cid's deceit of them.

### The Two Episodes Featuring Raquel and Vidas

The first episode involving the two Jewish moneylenders occurs early in the PMC, at verse 85, shortly after the Cid informs Martín Antolínez of his plan. Prior to this, the reader had learned that the Cid, falsely accused by his enemies of withholding money from tributes that he had collected for King Alfonso VI of Castile and Leon, had been exiled from the kingdom. Alfonso was in "so great a rage" ("la grand saña") [v. 22] that he sent a decree to Burgos stating that anyone who gave lodging to or helped the Cid "would lose his possessions and his eyes as well, and what is more his body and his soul." ("que perderie los averes e mas los ojos de la cara e aun demas los cuerpos e las almas.") [v. 27-28]. With a loyal band of men, the Cid camps outside the city of Burgos without food or provisions until they are given bread and wine – in violation of the king's orders – by Martín Antolínez, a wealthy nobleman from Burgos. Antolínez, defiant against the king and the royal decree, supplies the Cid and his men with bread and wine and tells the Cid to rest the night and set off before dawn "for I shall be accused of having helped you, and incur the anger of King Alfonso. If I escape with you, alive and well, sooner or later the King will want me as his friend; if not, I do not give a fig for all I leave behind." ("ca acusado sere de lo que vos he servido; en ira del rey Alfonsso yo sere metido. Si con

vusco escapo sano o bivo aun çerca o tarde el rey querer me ha por amigo; si non, quanto dexo no lo preçio un figo!”)[v. 73-77]. The comment by Antolínez is significant in two ways: First, it highlights the nobleman’s great wealth and power and, I argue, his seemingly collaborative resistance with the Cid against the king. Second, it also depicts Alfonso as someone who favors and befriends those with money, even intimating that to he can be bought by the wealthy, which also plays a role in his relationship with the Jews in the text.

At this point in the text, the Cid tells Antolínez that he is destitute and, in order to pay his company of men, he makes a proposal to Antolínez that “I shall do unwillingly” (“fer lo he amidos”) [v. 84]. It is significant that the poet twice mentions that the Cid has an “unwilling” desire/is acting “against my will” (“e amido lo fago”) (v. 95) but that the urgent nature of the situation forces him to do so. Do these passages show that the Cid recognizes the underhanded nature of the trick he is about to play on the moneylenders? Lacarra convincingly argues that the Cid’s statements do not refer to his planned trick but rather to his loan request, which was forbidden by the Church, except in extremely rare circumstances such as hunger, “que es precisamente la disculpa que usa el Cid.”<sup>83</sup> The poet, who she contends is well versed in law, goes to great pains to paint a desperate and dramatic portrayal of the *Campeador* as being wrongfully exiled and lacking money and food – a condition that not only would justify his financial pact with the Jewish usurers before the Church, but also one that would likely move the poem’s audience. The

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<sup>83</sup> Lacarra, *Poema de mío Cid*, 190.

audience probably would have understood the Cid's concern as referring to his seeking a loan due to what I mentioned earlier: usury involving Christians, except in cases of extreme need such as hunger and destitution, had been strictly prohibited by the Church for centuries. Given this historical context and the poet's knowledge of law, the portrayal of the Cid's behavior and apparent lack of remorse for his planned ruse seems to reflect the anti-Jewish current mentioned earlier that prompted the Castilian Christian population in and around Burgos to revolt and attack Jews in 1109.

Without hesitation, the Cid sets his plan in motion with the help of Antolínez. The language used clearly identifies the Cid as the mastermind behind the ploy.

[v. 85-90]      "Con vuestro consego bastir quiero dos archas;  
incamos las d'arena ca bien seran pesadas,  
cubiertas de guadalmeçi e bien enclaveadas.  
Los guadameçi vermejos e los clavos bien dorados.  
Por Rachel e Vidas vayades me privado;  
Quando en Burgos me vedaron compra y el rey me a airado,"

[English translation]

"With your help I want to prepare two chests;  
Let us fill them with sand, so they will be very heavy,  
And cover them with embossed leather, finely studded:  
Bright red leather with brightly gilded studs.  
Go quickly for me to Raquel and Vidas; tell them:  
In Burgos I am forbidden to make purchases, and the  
king has exiled me"

Antolínez sets out immediately to Burgos under the cloak of darkness, asking for Raquel and Vidas and, after entering the castle walls, he finds them: "en uno

estavan amos en cuenta de sus averes, de los que avien ganados.” (“both together, counting their money and profits”)[v. 100]. This depiction of the two moneylenders – seemingly working as one unit while counting their money late at night – certainly coincides with a stereotypical portrait of avaricious Jews, conniving stealthily at night, which would have resonated with a medieval Christian audience.<sup>84</sup> The poet’s caricature of them is meant to provide comic relief, made all the more humorous because, as Such and Hodgkinson note, “the two Jews never appear apart; they speak with one voice and are sometimes even made the subject of a singular verb.”<sup>85</sup> Their portrayal, Mirrer suggests, “appears wholly motivated by a desire to make the pair unmistakably recognizable... as Jews.”<sup>86</sup> Also significant is the location of the Jews within the fortress’ walls, in the citadel of Burgos, where the “king’s Jews” – those “owned” and protected by the crown in exchange for special taxes – had been moved in the first half of the twelfth century.<sup>87</sup> Their dependent status and special relationship with the king make their defiance of his mandate more grave. As such, the fact that they assisted the Cid financially gives them no legal recourse to appeal their case to the king – an issue I explore more later in this chapter.

Antolínez greets the Jews, calling them “los mios amigos caros” (“my dear friends”) [v. 103] and immediately sets the tone of their meeting as a covert, clandestine affair, telling them that if they keep the meeting secret, he will “por

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<sup>84</sup> Smith, C. Colin, “Did the Cid Repay the Jews?” *Romania*, No. 86 (1971): 523.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Such and John Hodgkinson, *Poem of the Cid* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1987), 33.

<sup>86</sup> Mirrer, Louise. *Women, Jews and Muslims in the Texts of Reconquest Castile* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 70.

<sup>87</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 30.

siempre vos fare ricos, que non seades menguados.” (“I shall make you rich for life, so that you will never be in need.”) [v. 108]. He then tells the two about the Cid’s exile for keeping the king’s tribute for himself and the existence of two large chests filled with gold, which the Cid cannot take with him for fear of being discovered. He informs the two that they can keep the two chests as collateral for money given to the Cid as long as the moneylenders vow not to open the chests for one year. The Jews’ response -- “Nos huebos avemos en todo de ganar algo.” (“In any case we will make something out of this”)[v. 123] – coincides with their depiction as being greedy profiteers, a negative, stereotypical depiction of Jews, which, according to Trachtenberg, was created and propagated by Christian society at that time as a way to scapegoat Jews.<sup>88</sup>

In the text, Raquel and Vidas tell Antolínez that they know the Cid acquired treasures and riches from Muslim lands and brought the great wealth back for himself, adding “non duerme sin sospecha que aver trae monedado.” (“a man who carries great treasure with him does not sleep easily.”)[v. 126]. They agree to take both chests but want to know exactly how much money the Cid wants as a loan. “Mas dezid nos del Çid: de que sera pagado, o que ganancia nos dara por todo questo año?” (“Now then, tell us what sum will satisfy the Cid, or what interest he will pay us for this whole year?”)[129-30]. When both sides agree on 600 Marcos, Antolínez asks for the money up front, only to be rebuffed by them in what appears to be another negative representation of their covetousness by the poet. “Non se faze assi

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<sup>88</sup> Trachtenberg, Joshua, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1943), 188-9.

el mercado, si non primero prendiendo e despues dando.” (“That’s not the way of business: we take first and then give.”)[139-40]. Antolínez agrees to their terms and leads the two out of the city to a tent where the Cid greets them. They obsequiously kiss his hands three times and listen to Antolínez explain the terms of the agreement, under which they promise to not open the chests for one year or the Cid won’t give them “un dinero malo”(“a miserable penny of interest”)[v. 165]. The two gleefully take the chests – the poet mentioning their delight, “veriedes gozo tanto” (“what joy you could see”)[v. 170] and “Graden se Rachel e Vidas con averes monedados” (Raquel and Vidas were delighted with their treasure”) [v. 172], and the fact that they have difficulty lifting them: “non las podien poner en somo, mager eran esforçados.” (“They found difficulty in lifting them, in spite of their strength.”)[v. 171]. This verse, coupled with the later verse in which they ask the Cid to bring them back “una piel vermeja morisca e ondrada”(“a fine red skin, in Moorish style”)[v. 178] further denigrates the two usurers. The poet paints the Jews as weak, effeminate men who count money and enjoy fine clothing. In contrast, the Cid, a Christian, is the paragon of masculinity: a virile warrior on the battlefield. As Mirrer notes:

“While the Cid and his Christian vassals earn riches in an aggressive war against the Muslims, Rachel and Vidas stay at home, passively collecting interest on their loans. Thus the Jews are excluded from participating in medieval Castile’s culturally exalted practice war against the Muslims. De facto, they are prevented, too, from the pursuit of medieval Castilian society’s chief confirmation of manhood – that is, the demonstration of “manly” qualities of daring, strength, and bravery on the battlefield. Forced to adopt a passive, domestic role in an aggressively militant environment, the CMC’s



Jews are portrayed in a manner that reinforced male Christians' sense of themselves as powerful, manly and superior."<sup>89</sup>

This "feminization" of the Jews extends to the poet's deliberate exaggeration of the pair's frequent and obsequious kissing of the Cid's hands – four times in one meeting – as well as their request for the ornate, red Moorish leather, which underscore the two Jews' subordination to the Christian *Campeador* and their unmanliness.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, in contrast to the Cid and his vassals who earn riches in a "manly" way, namely in an aggressive war against the Muslims, the poet places the two Jews within the city, where they passively collect interest on their loans while presumably being protected by the king in exchange for paying him special taxes. In these verses, Christians, particularly the Cid, are equated with masculinity, while the two Jews, Raquel and Vidas, embody the feminine, portraying Jews and by extension, their religion, as being inferior to the Christians. The poet's negative portrayal of the Jews as weak, inferior and effeminate usurers is designed to provide comic relief in the PMC. After Raquel kisses the hand of the Cid a fourth time, he asks him to bring him the leather as a gift, to which the Cid agrees, but comically adds that if he is unable to bring it back, Raquel can "contalda sobre las arcas." ("deduct its value from the chests.") [v. 181]. This line —"a biting remark, likely to produce much humour"— is a continuation of the inside joke involving the Cid's trick that a reader or the audience at a performance would readily understand.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Mirrer, *Women, Jews and Muslims*, 71.

<sup>90</sup> Mirrer, *Women, Jews and Muslims*, 71.

<sup>91</sup> Such, *Poem of the Cid*, 52.

The two Jews return to their residence with Antolínez and spread out a sheet of white cloth where they throw down 300 silver and 300 gold marks for Antolínez to give to the Cid. Then, for bringing them the business, they reward Antolínez with 30 more marks, which he takes before returning to the Cid.

The two Jews reappear in the second *Cantar*, falling at the feet of one of the Cid's men, Minaya Alvar Fáñez, and begging him to ask the Cid to repay the debt. "Desfechos nos had el Cid sabet, si no nos val; soltariemos la ganancia que nos diesse el cabdal." (v. 1432-34: "Unless he helps us now, the Cid has ruined us; we will forget about the interest, if only he give us back the capital.") Fáñez replies that he will ask the Cid about the debt and "si Dios me lieva ala; por lo que avedes fecho, buen cosiment i avra." (v. 1435-36. "if God takes me safely to him; their will be a good reward for what you have done!"). The two respond: "El Criador lo mande! Si non, dexaremos Burgos, ir lo hemos buscar." (v. 1437-38: "May the Creator be willing! If not, we shall leave Burgos and go in search of him.")

The Jews' threat is preposterously absurd on many levels and an audience would have recognized the humor in the idea that two effeminate men would seek out the hyper-masculine *Campeador* to force him to repay them. Furthermore, as Colin Smith argues, the Cid is in Valencia, which is "several hundred dangerous miles away across wild and mostly Moorish-held territory, and the Jews are not only elderly, but comfort-loving townsmen."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Smith, "Did the Cid Repay the Jews?", 527.

This is the last time that the Raquel and Vidas appear in the work. The absence in the text of any clear resolution of the Jews' demand has, as I mentioned earlier, fostered a great deal of debate among scholars. However, despite a few scholars' arguments maintaining that the Cid did, in fact, repay the two,<sup>93</sup> scholarly consensus points to the fact that the two received nothing from him.

Did the Cid act in a manner in contrary to his heroic stature? Was his trick unjust or illegal? What forces could have shaped the poet's representation of the Jews and of the Cid's deception? I argue that the historical forces in Burgos during the twelfth and early thirteenth century point to a climate in which Christians often viewed Jews as evil necessities, but often scapegoated them for being protected by kings and for being treacherous and dangerous to Christendom – a perception, legal codes suggest, that gradually became more hostile as the thirteenth century progressed. The Cid's trick, therefore, reflects an established historical current in which Christians indirectly targeted the king by injuring his property: the Jews. The historical reality of Christians attacking Alfonso VI's property – from burning his private hunting grounds to robbing his palace to assaulting and killing his “king's Jews” in 1109 – is emblematic of this strong historical current, the *ira populi*, which, I maintain, the poet of PMC was tapping into. Both Antolínez and the Jews break the law; he by lying in the business contract and they by ignoring the king's decree. It is the Jews who, despite their good faith in the words and actions of Antolínez and the

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<sup>93</sup> Besides the aforementioned scholarship (in footnote 5), also see: Boix Giovanni, Alfonso, “El Cid pagó a los judíos,” *La Corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Language and Cultures*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Fall 2006): 67-81.

Cid, get burned in the end by the poet. By creatively weaving together the Cid's unjust exile, the king's unpopularity, the royally-protected Jews living comfortably within the city, and the Jews' ability to continue their "illegal" trade<sup>94</sup>, the PMC's poet is playing to an audience's desire to see the Jews tricked. The treatment of the Jews in the PMC is certainly anti-Semitic and reinforces the dominant anti-Judaism of early thirteenth-century Castilian culture, playing it for laughs.

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<sup>94</sup> Illegal per the king's mandate (v. 23-28) that no one help the Cid, as well in canon laws of the time.

### CHAPTER 3: CRITICIZING CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MESSIANIC PROPHECIES: THE AUTO DE LOS REYES MAGOS AS MORE THAN A LITURGICAL DRAMA OF DEVOTION

The three Jewish characters in the liturgical Epiphany drama, *Auto de los Reyes Magos* (hereafter ARM)– or *Play of the Three Kings* – have a much more prominent role than the two Jewish characters in *Poema de Mío Cid*. In fact, the three characters – King Herod and two Jewish members of his court – take up almost a third of the play’s 147 verses and are given a dramatic and textured dialogue that likely would have captured the attention of Medieval Spanish audiences viewing the play in or near the cathedral in Toledo, the city where the play was probably written and performed for a multi-religious audience of Christians, Jews and Muslims in the early thirteenth century.<sup>95</sup>

While negative representations of the two Jews in PMC focus on their social and economic role, depicting them as greedy, conniving, effeminate usurers, the negative portrayals of Jews in ARM focus on religion. In the final scene, the unknown playwright of ARM negatively depicts Pilate as a tyrant angrily seeking information about the new king, Christ: “¿Rey otro sobre mí? ¡Nunca a tal non vi!” (“Another king over me? I never saw such a thing!”) [v. 111-112], and refusing to accept his existence until he sees it. “Por verdad no lo creo hasta que yo lo veo” (“In truth I don’t believe it until I see it”) [v. 115-116].

Similarly, the two rabbis are portrayed as obstinate, ignorant and blind

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<sup>95</sup> Although scholarly discussion continues over the dating and geographical origins of the ARM – something I explore more in depth later -- I have adopted the most recent work by historian Lucy Pick, who places the location in Toledo and the date in the first quarter of the thirteenth century.

(“enartado” [v. 138]; “errados” [v. 142]), denying the prophecy that Christ is the Messiah. At the end of the fragmentary play’s last scene, which consists of a highly original rabbinical debate about theology found in no other liturgical play, one rabbi acknowledges that he and his fellow Jews may have erred in their messianic prophecies and calculations.

Why the unknown playwright created the impassioned monologue by Herod and, perhaps more importantly, why he created the rabbinical debate, have been a source of bewilderment for scholars. As Pick notes, the rabbinical debate has proven to be “resistant to interpretation by scholars”.<sup>96</sup> Ronald Surtz argues that the playwright of ARM exaggerates the importance of the Jews in the Epiphany story, particularly their incapacity to understand scripture and messianic prophecy in the final scene. This emphasis on the Jews’ religious blindness, Surtz maintains, reflects the harsh anti-Jewish polemics of St. Martin of Leon (1130-1203) and the *converso* Pedro Alfonso (1062-1140) during the twelfth century.<sup>97</sup> Surtz is correct that the unknown playwright of the ARM places an inordinate amount of emphasis on the Jewish characters, particularly their depiction as blind to the Christian “truth”, but his argument connecting the ARM to anti-Jewish polemics such as Alfonso’s *Dialogue Against the Jews* fails to explain why the playwright of the ARM does not attack Muslims and Islam in the drama, like Alfonso does in his polemic. As Crawford notes, most scholars accept

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<sup>96</sup> Pick, Lucy, *Conflict and Coexistence: Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews of Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004), 18.

<sup>97</sup> Surtz, R.E., *Teatro Castellano de la Edad Media* (Madrid: Clásicos Taurus, 1992), 20-23

the argument, first proposed by the man who discovered the ARM manuscript in 1785, Felipe Fernández Vallejo, and supported by other scholars such as Menéndez Pidal, that the ARM was created to be performed by clerics to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany and edify the laity on important religious matters.<sup>98</sup> Expanding on this argument, Hermenegildo adds that the goal of the ARM playwright was not simply to illustrate a liturgical ceremony like earlier liturgical plays in France, but rather to create a didactic work to instruct the Christian community on important matters of theology and to provide a rational explanation to resolve any doubt about Christian doctrine.<sup>99</sup> These arguments that maintain the ARM was created to entertain and educate the masses about Christian theology are not, I would posit, inaccurate, particularly with regard to Christian laity. However, they neglect to consider the evidence that the audience for these annual dramatic spectacles, performed after Christmas in or around the Cathedral in Toledo, was multi-religious – Christians, Jews and Muslims. I maintain that the presence of Jewish and Muslim spectators explains why the ARM’s playwright put so much emphasis on non-Christian characters in the play, particularly in his extraordinary rabbinical debate in the final scene.

Lucy Pick convincingly argues that the ARM is a dramatic performance that reflects the principal message in *Dialogus libri uite*, the polemic written by

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<sup>98</sup> Crawford, J.P. Wickersham, *Spanish Drama Before Lope de Vega* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), 1-5. See also Fernández Vallejo, Felipe, *Memorias i disertaciones que podran servir al que escriba la historia de la iglesia de Toledo desde el año MLXXXV*, (manuscript). Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia (Folio 599).

<sup>99</sup> Hermenegildo, Alfredo, “Teatro, fantasia y catequesis en la Edad Media castellana,” *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*. Vol. XV, No. 3 (Spring 1991): 445.

the Primate of Toledo Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, which claims that Jews disagree about their own beliefs.<sup>100</sup> She maintains that Jiménez likely either wrote or sponsored the ARM as a way to promote his ideas through performance. Her argument is strong and backed by textual similarities in both works that show Jiménez's contention that Christians, Jews and Muslims can live together and prosper if the Muslims and Jews are under Christian authority. The ARM certainly underscores the disunity of Jews regarding their beliefs. Pick's exhaustive research, however, fails to consider the Jewish messianic prophecies that were emerging throughout Spain and northern Africa during this time and that, I will argue, influenced the playwright of the ARM, especially his focus on Jewish messianic prophecies in the final scene.

Because of the ARM's linguistic peculiarities and isolation in Spanish theater – two points I will examine shortly – there are wide ranging theories about this liturgical drama, which, I suggest, are akin to details added to a police composite sketch to illuminate the investigation. My current study, in no way definitive, offers a new perspective from which to view the *Auto* and the possible motives its playwright may have had.

As Stern mused, “the questions raised by the *Auto* may never be answered completely, but we need to keep an open mind” particularly with regard to “why it was composed in the vernacular in the first place... and how well this linguistically 'impure' text fits into the multicultural world that was twelfth-

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<sup>100</sup> Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 18.



century Toledo..."<sup>101</sup> In this study, I explore myriad political, economic, and theological forces that were prevalent in Toledo during the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. These include: 1) the economic and intellectual importance that Jews played in Toledo's growth and stability; 2) the protection secular and Christian leaders in Toledo gave Jews to keep them from leaving the city; 3) the storm of controversy that Moses Maimonides' rationalist writings caused in Toledo at the time; and 4) a series of Jewish messianic prophecies that surfaced during this time that encouraged Jews to leave Spain and return to the Holy Land. I attempt to show that these four forces may have influenced the playwright of the ARM in his portrayal of Jews. Because Jews and Muslims annually attended and even participated in dramatic spectacles such as the ARM during the thirteenth century, the playwright's target audience was broader and, I will argue, his didactic message was probably multi-dimensional for each religious group present. Christians could celebrate the Magi's conclusion of Christ's divinity. Muslims, who considered Jesus a prophet, could respect the learned Magi's reasoned conclusions. For Jews, the playwright's message in the ARM's final two scenes was two-fold: to criticize Jewish eschatology as rife with errors, particularly the contemporary messianic prophecies, and to persuade Jews to acknowledge their disunity and theological shortcomings, convert to Christianity, and remain in Toledo.

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<sup>101</sup> Stern, Charlotte, *The Medieval Theater in Castile* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State U of New York at Binghamton, 1996), 47.

My study consists of five sections. The first section explores the scholarship of the *Auto* with regard to the discovery, dating, structure and authorship. The second section examines the evolution of the Epiphany story from the Gospel of St. Matthew to Medieval Latin and vernacular liturgical dramas such as the ARM. In the third section, I investigate the history and status of Jews in medieval Toledo, focusing on the city's economic and intellectual dependence on Jews for growth and stability and its reaction to papal demands for harsher treatment of the Jews. In the fourth section, I will explore the emergence of messianic prophecies and movements in Spain and western Europe that caused Jews to migrate to the Holy Land. In the final section, I will examine the possibility that the unknown playwright of the ARM included the rabbinical debate in the drama to criticize Jewish eschatology and persuade Jewish spectators of the play to convert to Christianity and remain in Toledo.

#### Discovery, Dating, Structure and Authorship of the ARM

In 1785, Felipe Fernández Vallejo, a canon at the Cathedral of Toledo who later became bishop of Salamanca and archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, discovered in the Biblioteca del Cabildo de Toledo a manuscript of a play at the end of a codex containing *De Scientia Dei*, *Lamentationes Jeremiae*, *Nota sobre la Lex divina* and Latin glosses on the *Canticum Canticorum* that were written by the French canon Gilbert de la Porree (d'Auxerre).<sup>102</sup> Fernández Vallejo argued that ARM came from a Latin Epiphany play, strongly asserted that it was part of the

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<sup>102</sup> Pérez Priego, Miguel Angel, *Teatro medieval* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2009), 52.

Toledan dramatic tradition no earlier than the thirteenth century, and that “se hizo para representar en la fiesta la Epifanía.”<sup>103</sup> The untitled text consists of 147 verses in various meters and without any annotation except for a strange series of crosses, points, and circles, about which Fernández Vallejo wrote: “Si fuese de fácil reducción á la imprenta los puntos, señales, círculos, semicírculos, y cruces que tienen el original, se percibiría desde luego la diversidad de interlocutores ó personas que forman el diálogo, la diferencia de las escenas y las advertencias de inflexiones de voz y actitudes de cuerpo que señala.”<sup>104</sup>

The canon speculated that performance of the liturgical drama would have been a visually appealing spectacle, with three wise men donning “Cetros, y Coronas, saliendo cada uno de lugar diferente de la Iglesia, seguidos de criados que llevan los dones: hablando con Herodes y a este de resulta del Coloquio, airado, consultando a sus sabios en una palabra, me parece veo el tropel de gentes que con motivo de este espectáculo devoto está lleno de admiración.”<sup>105</sup>

The *Auto* was first published in 1864 by José Amador de Rios with the first critical edition published in 1900 by Ramón Menéndez Pidal, who gave it its current title. Menéndez Pidal maintained that the text was a fragment of a play with various linguistic peculiarities and “Letra de principios de siglo XIII.”<sup>106</sup> He echoed Fernández Vallejo, maintaining that the series of curious crosses in the

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<sup>103</sup> Fernández Vallejo, *Memorias i disertaciones*, (Folio 599).

<sup>104</sup> Fernández Vallejo, *Memorias i disertaciones*, (Folio 599).

<sup>105</sup> Fernández Vallejo, *Memorias i disertaciones*, (Folio 599).

<sup>106</sup> Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Ed. “Auto de los reyes magos.” In *Revista de archivos, bibliotecas, y museos* IV (1900): 454.

manuscript were used by the copyist to indicate a new interlocutor. In 1964, however, Menéndez Pidal revisited the play and redated it to “á mediados a siglo XII” due to the similar developmental stage of the “o” diphthong in both *Cantar de mio Cid* and the *Auto*.<sup>107</sup> In this second analysis, he noted how difficult it was to date the *Auto* due to the transitional nature of Medieval Spanish writing during that period:

“La mitad del siglo XII es época de transición en la escritura, y de este tiempo se halla ora escritura visigoda que parece del XI, ora cursiva francesa que parece del XIII.”<sup>108</sup>

[English translation]

“The middle of the twelfth century is a time of transition in writing, and from this time there is Visigothic writing that appears from the eleventh century, and French cursive that appears from the thirteenth century.”

In her 2004 book, *Conflict and Coexistence*, Lucy Pick convincingly argues that although current scholarly consensus has dated the *Cantar de mio Cid* to the first quarter of the thirteenth century, near or around the date of the manuscript’s 1207 colophon, most scholars have not redated the *Auto* to coincide with that change.<sup>109</sup> “There do not seem to be any linguistic grounds to prevent

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<sup>107</sup> Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Ed. *Cantar de mio Cid: Texto, gramática, y vocabulario*, 3 vols. No. 2 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1908), 144-145.

<sup>108</sup> Menéndez Pidal, *Cantar de Mio Cid: texto, gramática y vocabulario*, 144.

<sup>109</sup> Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 187-89

us from dating the *Auto* to the early thirteenth century,” she argued.<sup>110</sup> As I mentioned above, for this study I accept Pick’s dating of the ARM.

As such, the *Auto* is the earliest known liturgical Epiphany play written in the vernacular and also the earliest extant Castilian dramatic text, pre-dating other dramatic texts by more than two centuries. In comparison with earlier Latin Epiphany plays in Europe, the *Auto*’s content makes it even more unusual, with its unique dialogue, characters and scenes. The play’s stock characters, the three Magi and King Herod of Judea, are more sophisticated and multidimensional than their counterparts in earlier Epiphany plays, a fact particularly borne out in the *Auto*’s intricate and emotional discourse of Herod’s character. Most remarkable, however, is the play’s highly original final scene involving two members of Herod’s court engaged in a theological dispute. This original scene consists of two Jewish scholars arguing about Scripture and the Messiah. Unlike other medieval Epiphany plays, which end either with the massacre of the innocents or the Three Kings’ adoration of Jesus at the manger, the *Auto* abruptly ends with the theological dispute. This abrupt, unusual ending, whether intended or otherwise, drives the debate among scholars about whether the play is fragmented or not, an issue that I will explore later.

Although some scholars divide the play into four, five and seven scenes,<sup>111</sup> the most widely accepted number of scenes is five, following Menéndez Pidal’s

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<sup>110</sup> Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 189.

edition of the drama. The five scenes correspond to natural breaks in the action:

- 1) The Magi express surprise, doubt, reflection and certainty about the star's meaning;
- 2) the three Magi decide to test the divinity of the new born;
- 3) they meet and inform Herod of the birth of the 'new king';
- 4) Herod delivers an angry monologue about the new king;
- 5) Herod meets his rabbis to learn about the star and prophecy, sparking the theological debate with which the text ends.

The verses of ARM are replete with linguistic and lexical peculiarities, which include components of archaic Spanish, Mozarabic, biblical Latin, and medieval French. The varied meters, which reflect the metrical structure of Old French and Latin liturgical plays, is a mixture of verses with fourteen (Alexandrine), nine (eneasyllabic) and seven (heptasyllabic) syllables, many with abnormal rhymes. The unknown playwright uses eneasyllabic verses at the beginning and end of the extant text, and employs Alexandrine and heptasyllabic verses in the interior of the play as a nexus between the second and fourth scenes.<sup>112</sup>

These peculiarities have prompted considerable debate as to where the play was written and the origin of its unknown playwright. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Toledo, where the manuscript was found, was a city where various cultures and languages intersected. Some scholars, such as Rafael Lapesa and J.M. Sola-Solé, place the text in Toledo, but Lapesa argues the

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<sup>111</sup> Lázaro F. Carreter prefers to divide the play in four "cuadros". See Carreter, Lázaro F., *Teatro Medieval* (Madrid, Castalia, Ores Nuevos, 1976), 31-34.

<sup>112</sup> Tejeiro Fuentes, Miguel A., "El Auto de los reyes magos: Consideraciones para una lectura y edición del texto." *Anuario de Estudios Filológicos*, Universidad de Extremadura, XVIII (1995): 472.

anomalies and errors in the rhyme suggest the playwright was of French descent, perhaps a Catalán or Gascon “toledanizado,”<sup>113</sup> while Sola-Solé suggests the playwright was Mozarabic “con un fuerte impacto fonético y prosódico árabe.”<sup>114</sup> By contrast, Maxim P.A.M. Kerkhof concluded in his linguistic analysis that the playwright was “oriundo de Cataluña,”<sup>115</sup> while Gerold Hilty suggests the playwright was Riojan.<sup>116</sup> Joan Corominas explores possible French influence and argues that the playwright was likely “un poeta de Alto Aragón o Navarra que mezclaba con su lengua materna la *koiné* catalano-occitana.”<sup>117</sup> Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego compares the text with similar literary modalities in French religious literature about Christ’s infancy and suggests the playwright was likely a cleric from France or educated in France.<sup>118</sup> As mentioned above, Pick maintains that the play was written in Toledo under the direction of Archbishop Jiménez.<sup>119</sup> Despite these diverse, sometimes contradictory theories, it is clear that whomever the playwright was, he “se esforzó por escribirlo en la lengua más

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<sup>113</sup> Lapesa, Rafael, “Sobre el *Auto de los Reyes Magos*: sus rímas anómalas y el posible origen del autor”, in *Homenaje a Fritz Kruger*, Vol. 2 (Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 1952), 391-99. See also Lapesa, Rafael, “*Mozárabe y cataláno gascón en el “Auto de los Reyes Magos” en la Miscellània Aramon i Serra* (Barcelona, Curial, 1983), 277-294.

<sup>114</sup> Sola-Solé, J.M., “El Auto de los Reyes Magos: impacto gascon o mozarabe?” *Romance Philology*, 29 (1975-76): 26.

<sup>115</sup> Kerkhof, Maxim P.A.M., “Algunos datos en pro del origen catalan del autor del Auto de los Reyes Magos,” *Bulletin Hispanique*, 81 (1979): 288.

<sup>116</sup> Hilty, Gerold, “La Lengua del Auto de los Reyes Magos,” in *Logos semantikos studie linguistico in honorem Eugenio Eugenio Coseriu, (1921-1981)*. Vol. 5 (Madrid: Gredos, 1981), 289-302.

<sup>117</sup> Corominas, Joan, “Documentos Lingüísticos del Alto Aragón,” in *Nueva revista de filología hispánica*, 12 (1958): 65-75.

<sup>118</sup> Pérez Priego, Miguel Ángel, *Teatro Medieval* (Madrid: Catedra, 2009), 52-54.

<sup>119</sup> Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 185.

general a la heterogénea población toledana de entonces,” which included “mozárabes, castellanos, moros y judíos... [y una] numerosa población franca.”<sup>120</sup>

The wide spectrum of opinions about the playwright’s origins is due, in part, to the play’s isolation in Spanish dramatic history. No other medieval Castilian dramatic text appears for some 250 years, so there is nothing in Spanish from that era with which the *Auto* can be compared. The dearth of liturgical drama in Spain compared with other European countries has made it difficult for scholars to conduct in-depth comparative investigations of ARM. As Crawford notes, “Material is almost entirely lacking for a study of the liturgical drama in Spain.”<sup>121</sup> Scholars long considered the source of ARM to be a Latin Liturgical play brought from France, but Sturdevant showed in her study of the *Auto’s* unique traits that “there is no evidence of any direct link between them” and that in all likelihood the ARM’s source was a vernacular work, most probably one brought from France.<sup>122</sup> Later studies argue that Latin liturgical plays probably did not develop in Castile due to Arab domination and its isolation from the growth of liturgical dramas in France, Catalonia and other northern areas of Spain. When the *Auto* surfaced in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century –

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<sup>120</sup> Lapesa, Rafael. *De la Edad Media a nuestros días. Estudios de historia Literaria* (Madrid: Gredos, 1967), 44-47.

<sup>121</sup> Crawford, *Spanish Drama before Lope de Vega*, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Sturdevant, Winifred, *The Misterio de los Reyes Magos: Its Position in the Development of the Medieval Legend of the Three Kings* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages, X, 1927), 55.



decades after Toledo had been conquered by Christians – contemporary liturgical dramas were being written in the vernacular.<sup>123</sup>

### The Evolution of the Magi Plays: From Gospel to Stage

The story of Epiphany celebrates the Magi, or Kings from the East, who follow a star that leads them to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem, where they pay homage to the new born Christ-child. The story of the Magi and the holy family's subsequent flight to Egypt is based on 23 verses in the Gospel of Matthew, the only one of the four evangelists to include the story. Though relatively short, Matthew's account is exotic and dramatic, which may explain why the story became so popular in the early Church. The playwright of the ARM took considerable liberties in his dramatic version of the Epiphany story, in which he, according to Tejeiro, "ha introducido, alterado, omitado y revisado el episodio." Changes he made include: the creation of distinct monologues for each Magi; using the Magi's gifts to test the new born's divinity; the absence of the Magi's arrival, adoration of Christ, and return to their kingdoms; the placement of Herod's tirade before he meets with his court, unlike the gospel version, in which Herod becomes angry after meeting with his court; and finally, the creation of the rabbinical debate.<sup>124</sup>

The evolution of Epiphany from gospel story to liturgical play took several hundred years. During the first centuries of the Church, the story of the Magi

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<sup>123</sup> Donovan, Richard B., *The Liturgical Drama in Medieval Spain* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1958), 170-71.

<sup>124</sup> Tejeiro Fuentes, "El Auto de los reyes magos: Consideraciones", 474.

became well known and spawned many unsanctioned, often spurious theological traditions in pseudo-gospels and theological writings, including the idea that the Magi were sorcerers, that they numbered as many as twelve or thirteen, and that they had various names.<sup>125</sup> By the sixth century, however, Christian theologians in the West developed a more uniform account, establishing that there were three Magi – named Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar – who came from India, Persia and Arabia, respectively, and that their gifts had symbolic meaning: gold represented Christ’s kingship on earth, frankincense his divinity; and myrrh his mortality and death.<sup>126</sup> The Church had already made Epiphany an important feast day in the fourth century and that, coupled with the uniform motifs, helped spawn popular depictions of the Three Kings in drawings, statues and paintings. During the Middle Ages, the feast grew in size and scope, eventually expanding to nearly two weeks of Christmas festivities that included performances of Epiphany plays, or *Officium Stellae* (Play of the Star), in and around churches.<sup>127</sup> These dramas, performed in Latin until the twelfth century, contained elements that varied from region to region throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. Extant versions show how they were influenced by other Epiphany plays as well as by the liturgical rite of the region where the play was performed. From the fifth to the eleventh centuries, the performances of the *Officium Stellae* were relatively simple affairs. The dramas typically consisted of Matthew 2:1-23 being read or sung during processions in which either the clergy, sometimes dressed as

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<sup>125</sup> Young, Karl, *The Drama of the Medieval Church, Vol. II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 30-33.

<sup>126</sup> Sturdevant, *The Misterio de los reyes magos*, 1-45.

<sup>127</sup> Sturdevant, *The Misterio de los reyes magos*, 1-45.

three kings and following a star drawn on a cord, made offerings to Christ at the altar (*oblatio sacerdotalis*), or the congregation, called forward to partake in the drama, made offerings at the altar (*oblatio populi*).<sup>128</sup>

Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, Epiphany plays became more sophisticated in both form and content. Authors wrote in more elaborate meters and created more developed scenes, characters, dialogue and stagecraft. Some *Officium Stellae* included aspects of other Nativity plays, most notably the *Officium Pastorum*, or play of the shepherds, and included shepherds who converse with the Three Kings outside the stable.<sup>129</sup> As Young notes, some Epiphany plays (from eleventh century Freising and twelfth century Bilsen, Germany) during this period elaborated Herod's character and dialogue, portraying him as an irate and violent tyrant, while others (from thirteenth-century Fleury, France) added characters such as angels, midwives and shepherds, and added a scene in which the entire church congregation is invited forward to adore the Christ child at the altar while the three Magi arrive.<sup>130</sup> By inviting the people to participate and interact in the dramatic spectacle, the clergy not only produced a more active congregation, but raised more money for the church as the congregation was expected to offer gifts – money and valuables – at the altar that would benefit the clergy or the poor.<sup>131</sup> This idea of the

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<sup>128</sup> Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 32-37.

<sup>129</sup> Tydeman, William, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages: Western European Stage Conditions, C.800-1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 41-43.

<sup>130</sup> Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 75-89.

<sup>131</sup> Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 33

congregation's active participation in the drama reflects the festive, participatory nature of the dramatic spectacle – an event, as scholars note, that attracted Christians, Jews and Muslims alike.

To what extent did Jews and other religious minorities observe Christian liturgical plays and participate in the festivities? There is evidence that Jews not only attended Christian dramas but often participated, taking on various roles, either as actors playing rabbis<sup>132</sup> or building elaborate sets for Holy Week, particularly Good Friday Passion cycles, which sometimes included a ritualized stoning of Jews.<sup>133</sup> In some parts of Spain, Jews and Muslims were compelled to participate as actors or musicians in the general celebration of Corpus Christi and Holy Week celebrations.<sup>134</sup> Alfonso X in his legal code, *Las Siete Partidas*, compiled in 1265, prohibited Jews from attending Christian celebrations and performances during Holy Week, particularly on Good Friday, which shows they did attend such spectacles.<sup>135</sup> Alfonso's law was meant to protect Jews from being attacked during these celebrations, which included a re-creation of the Passion and often a ritualized stoning of Jews by clergy and their followers that sometimes erupted into significant acts of violence against any Jews present.<sup>136</sup> Although not officially sanctioned by the Church, Holy Week religious attacks on

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<sup>132</sup> Stern, *The Medieval Theater in Castile*, 116-117.

<sup>133</sup> Nirenberg, David, *Communities of Violence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 202-203.

<sup>134</sup> Ruiz, Teofilo, *A King Travels* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 273. See also Stern, Charlotte. *The Medieval Theater*, 117.

<sup>135</sup> Burns, Robert I., Ed., *Las Siete Partidas*, Vol. V. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 1433.

<sup>136</sup> Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 200-203.

and protests against the Jews occurred in Western Europe at least since the eleventh century and were prevalent throughout Spain in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, causing property damage in Jewish quarters, as well as injuries and death to Jews.<sup>137</sup> According to *Las Siete Partidas*, Jews who attended Christian celebrations and were injured by Christians or suffered material damages to their property could not receive compensation. In some parts of medieval Iberia, Jews and Muslims were forced to participate in Christian processions or face heavy fines.<sup>138</sup>

In my view, the presence of Jews at Christian dramas and festivals, whether as observers or participants, broadens the possible interpretations of both the playwright's message and his target audience for the ARM. It is certainly within the realm of possibility that Jews and *conversos* could have been a target audience for the playwright of the ARM. We know that clergy in the early thirteenth century performed vernacular liturgical Christmas, Epiphany and Easter plays in public in order to instruct the laity.<sup>139</sup> Given the significant population of Jews in Toledo and the prominent location of the cathedral around which performances may have taken place, it is possible that large numbers of Jews were present at these annual dramatic spectacles, particularly of a play such as the ARM in which Jewish characters are so prominent.

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<sup>137</sup> Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 200-203.

<sup>138</sup> Ruiz, *A King's Travels*, 273.

<sup>139</sup> *Siete Partidas de Rey don Alfonso el Sabio*, Ed. Real Academia de la Historia. Vol. 1 (Title VI, law 34) (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1807), 276.

What edifying message would a Christian, or potentially a *converso*, playwright of an Epiphany play create for an early thirteenth-century audience made up of a substantial number of Jews? I would argue that the message would engage with either of the two most pressing Jewish issues of the day: Jewish emigration from Spain, and Jewish conversion to Christianity. The final scene of the ARM, I suggest, addresses both issues. Before analyzing the content of the ARM, I will examine the long history of Jews in Toledo, exploring how and to what extent they were necessary to maintain the city's growth and economic stability.

### History and Status of Jews in Medieval Toledo

Jews have been inextricably linked to the city of Toledo since its origins. According to legend, a group of Hebrews escaping the Babylonian invasion of Israel helped found the city in the fifth century B.C.E.<sup>140</sup> Toledo developed significantly in population and economic importance during the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. and became the capital of the Visigoth monarchy c. 580. For most of the first two centuries of Visigothic rule, Jews in Toledo enjoyed the same relative tolerance which they had received under the Romans. In 587, however, the conversion of King Reccared to Catholicism was followed by a series of royal ecclesiastical councils that instituted canon laws with the goal of religious unity. The Third Council of Toledo in 589, the first synod under Reccared, produced legislation that prohibited Jews from having Christian wives, concubines or

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<sup>140</sup> Leon Tello, Pilar, *Judíos de Toledo*, Vol. 1 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1979), 3-5.

slaves, ordered the children of these unions to be baptized and raised as Christians, and forbade Jews from holding any public office over Christians.<sup>141</sup> Reccared's conversion is often considered a watershed moment in anti-Jewish policies in western Europe. During the next century, his Visigothic successors vacillated between persecution, which included forced conversions or exile, and tolerance of Jews, which allowed them to live and work in Spain under laws promulgated through the various Councils of Toledo.<sup>142</sup> These laws were often ignored in Toledo, sometimes drawing the ire of the popes in Rome, who reproached bishops and clergy in Toledo for not enforcing already enacted anti-Jewish laws.<sup>143</sup> Visigothic kings walked a tightrope between the harsh anti-Jewish mandates from Rome and the economic prosperity that Jewish communities often brought to cities. "Throughout the entire period, those kings who pursued anti-Jewish policies faced strong opposition from both lay and ecclesiastical magnates as well as from the population at large. Furthermore, it was difficult and often impossible to enforce anti-Jewish laws because of their general unpopularity."<sup>144</sup>

During this period of Visigothic rule, Bachrach notes, whenever anti-Jewish laws were enforced, Jews left Toledo, stunting the city's economic growth. The unpopularity of anti-Jewish measures among the Christian hierarchy and

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<sup>141</sup> Thompson, E. A, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 105-113.

<sup>142</sup> Thompson, *The Goths in Spain*, 166-7.

<sup>143</sup> Roth, Norman, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (Leiden-New York-Cologne: EJ Brill, 1994), 20-23.

<sup>144</sup> Bachrach, Bernard S., "A Reassessment of Visigothic Jewish Policy, 589-711." *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Feb. 1973): 34.

populace continued in the decades after Christian forces conquered Toledo in 1085 and through the first half of thirteenth century. Even when the papacy pushed for stricter enforcement of canon laws, the Toledo bishops generally ignored Rome. It was necessary both economically and militarily to keep the entire population strong, so enforcement of laws governing Jews and Muslims remained lax and political policy leaned toward keeping the population intact while encouraging immigration to Toledo.<sup>145</sup> Jews flourished in and around the city, working as merchants, artisans, craftsmen, moneylenders, and, as Ray notes, tax collectors, financial advisors and royal courtiers.<sup>146</sup> The Christian populace relied heavily on Jews not only for economic connections, medical care and artisan work, but also for the School of Translation, considered one of history's greatest scholarly endeavors, where Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars worked together in the cathedral's library to translate from Arabic to Latin the vast troves of Arabic medical, scientific and philosophical writings seized during the conquest.<sup>147</sup> Subsequently, the city's *arrabal de los judíos*, or Jewish District, which contained several thousand Jews under Muslim rule in the mid-eleventh century,<sup>148</sup> swelled as hundreds immigrated to Toledo from northern Spain,

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<sup>145</sup> Carrobles Santos, Jesús; Isquierdo Benito, Ricardo; et al., *Historia de Toledo* (Toledo: Libreria Universitaria de Toledo, 1997), 149-155.

<sup>146</sup> Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier*, 26, 47, and 64-68.

<sup>147</sup> Burnett, C. "The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program in Toledo in the Twelfth Century," *Science in Context*, 14 (1999): 249-288.

<sup>148</sup> Estimates of the number of Jews living in Toledo in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century range from 3,500-4,000 to 12,000. See Graetz, Heinrich, *History of the Jews: From the Earliest Time to the Present Day*, Edited and translated by Bella Loewy, Vol. 3, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1891-1898), 384.



France, Bohemia and Russia.<sup>149</sup> Jews, who suffered in northern Christian territories or in al-Andalus, found in Toledo a safe haven, particularly after the city's synagogue was repaired in 1107.<sup>150</sup>

Jewish dependence on the king became a decisive factor in their social position in the community. Joseph Ferrizuel, also known as Cidellus, was Alfonso VI's personal physician after the Christian conquest and an active and outspoken advocate for the refugee Jews in Toledo and the surrounding area during the late eleventh and early twelfth century. The poet Judah Halevi wrote an ode to him that captured the plight of Jews during that time and the safety they found in Toledo: "Through him the oppressive burden was lightened, for he strove and prevailed, and like a tower of might he stayed the people fleeing in ten directions."<sup>151</sup>

As Pilar Leon Tello notes in her study, the population of Toledo, made up of Christians, Muslims and Jews during the Muslim period, continued to grow with the arrival of Castilians and Franks under Alfonso VI, who, after observing Jews's strong knowledge of Arab language and customs, appointed them to administrative positions.<sup>152</sup> Alfonso was reproached by Pope Gregory VII in 1081 for allowing Jews to hold office over Christians, a criticism that Alfonso largely ignored. Later municipal legal codes, or *fueros*, such as one created in 1130 in

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<sup>149</sup> Melechin, Nina, *The Jews of Medieval Toledo: Their Economic and Social Contacts with Christians From 1150 to 1391* (New York: Fordham University, 1999), 43.

<sup>150</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 81-85

<sup>151</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 68-69.

<sup>152</sup> Leon Tello, *Los Judíos de Toledo*, 29-36.

Escalona, northwest of Toledo, allowed Jewish families compensation if a family member were injured or killed by a Christian. In later *fueros* instated by Archbishop Ramón of Toledo and Alfonso VIII, Jews were treated as equals of Christians when they were injured or killed, and given the same liberties. Like other Castilian kings, Sancho III donated land to Jews in Toledo in compensation for services to him and his family.<sup>153</sup>

The relatively good status of Jews in Toledo and other parts of Castile prompted Pope Innocent III to write several angry letters to admonish religious and secular leaders there for allowing Jews to acquire land and forego paying tithes, which had become an economic mainstay of the local churches, abbeys and monasteries.<sup>154</sup> Jews, formally exempt from tithes because they were not Christians, were ordered by the Church to pay tithes in the twelfth century, a requirement that Spanish councils rarely enforced, prompting Innocent III to admonish Alfonso VIII, king of Castile.<sup>155</sup> Innocent then ordered Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the Primate of Spain, to use excommunication to enforce the rule – an order sent three times by Rome and ignored three times in Toledo.<sup>156</sup> Jews in Toledo, like in cities in France, played such an important economic role that secular and ecclesiastical authorities protected them against papal attacks.

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<sup>153</sup> Leon Tello, *Los Judíos de Toledo*, 36-37.

<sup>154</sup> Grayzel, Solomon, Ed. *The Church and the Jews in the XIII Century*. Vol. 1 (New York, Hermon Press, 1966), 36-37.

<sup>155</sup> Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIII Century*, 37.

<sup>156</sup> Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIII Century*, 37.

Authorities' responses to some papal criticisms of Toledan Jewish policies reflect their concern that Jews might emigrate from the city. The anti-Semitic decrees of Third Lateran Council of 1179 and Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, the latter of which included a law that Jews wear insignias to distinguish them from Christians, were largely ignored in Toledo. In 1218, Innocent III wrote to Archbishop Jiménez that Jews in Toledo were neither paying tithes nor dressing distinctively. The archbishop as well as King Fernando III wrote separate letters to the pope petitioning him to relent on these issues, arguing that, because many Jewish immigrants had fled persecution under the Almohads, they would react strongly to the idea of being forced to wear distinctive clothing.<sup>157</sup> Jews, they explained, would rather emigrate from Toledo to live under Muslim rule than obey such regulation, and their exodus would cause great economic hardship for the king whose income depended on them. The pope was persuaded by these arguments.<sup>158</sup> "Rodrigo's public activities show he regarded the Jews as an essential component of the community he ruled," Pick writes. "Rodrigo prudently moderated Toledo's Jewish-Christian *convivencia* at the same time as the Roman curia was formulating increasingly severe strictures on Jewish life."<sup>159</sup>

The king and the archbishop acted against the pope's demands in order to prevent Jewish emigration from Toledo. They were aware that the alienation and estrangement that many Jews felt after having emigrated out of Al-Andalus. Such

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<sup>157</sup> Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier*, 161.

<sup>158</sup> Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier*, 161.

<sup>159</sup> Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 172.

alienation “might result in personal crisis or, as [poet Judah] Halevi suggests, become integral to an act of religious devotion.”<sup>160</sup> In this volatile environment, I argue, it was incumbent on the Christian rulers to do all they could to make the Jews more content in Christian Spain. In the next section I will show that it was significantly more difficult for Christians to respond to Jewish messianic beliefs that persuaded Jews to emigrate to the Holy Land. I argue that a goal of the *Auto* was to refute Jewish messianism.

### Messianic Movements in Spain

Messianic calculations, prophecies and movements were an important element of Jewish culture since Antiquity. These prophecies spurred the desire and expectation of redemption or of a fundamental change in three important areas in Jewish life: an end to their wandering and persecution under foreign powers; a return to their ancestral homeland of Israel; and the reestablishment of classic institutions of ancient Judaism, such as the Temple and Sanhedrin.<sup>161</sup> Messianic fervor, whether full-fledged movements or not, typically emerged during wars and other political upheavals – the defeat of Babylonia, the Muslim conquest of the seventh century, the Crusades, or the fall of Constantinople.<sup>162</sup> There were many Jewish messianic incidents during the Christian conquest and after the Almohad invasion of Spain during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

“The epoch-making events of those times shook the souls of the simple masses

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<sup>160</sup> Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature*, 2-3.

<sup>161</sup> Saperstein, *Marc Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 3.

<sup>162</sup> Saperstein, *Essential Papers*, 4-5.

and the communal leaders alike,” Yitzhak Baer writes. “The life-and-death struggle between Christianity and Islam reawakened the dormant messianic hopes and... revived interest in the ancient apocalyptic teachings.”<sup>163</sup> During this time, several pseudo-messiahs surfaced in Persia and Spain, prompting large groups of Jews to emigrate to the Holy Land with the belief that the messiah had appeared or that a life of prayer in the Holy Land would hasten the advent of the messiah.<sup>164</sup>

Such messianic prophecies emerged in al-Andalus in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. “Andalus had a long, continuous, and, what is most important, public tradition of messianic calculation,” wrote Gerson D. Cohen in an analysis that compares the strong messianic tendencies of Sephardic Jews with that of the Ashkenazic Jews of northern Europe during the Middle Ages.<sup>165</sup> In contrast with Franco-German Jews, according to Cohen, the date of the Jewish messiah’s arrival “was forever being discussed publicly” among the Sephardic Jews in medieval Spain.<sup>166</sup>

A look at the recorded messianic prophecies and pseudo-messiahs that surfaced in the Jewish diaspora shows their growth during the late eleventh to the early thirteenth centuries in Spain and North Africa – a tendency that reflects

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<sup>163</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 65.

<sup>164</sup> Werblowsky, R. J. Zwi, “Messianism in Jewish History.” In *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*. Ed. Saperstein, Marc. (New York, NYU Press, 1992), 46.

<sup>165</sup> Cohen, Gerson D. ,“Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim.” In *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*. Ed. Marc Saperstein. (New York University Press, 1992), 202-215.

<sup>166</sup> Cohen, *Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, 202-215.

a merging of Sephardic activism, a belief in predestination, and the recent growth of rationalism in Spain.<sup>167</sup> Between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, there were almost a dozen messianic pretenders in Spain or North Africa among Sephardic Jews, Cohen maintains.<sup>168</sup>

The following compilation illustrates the prevalence of messianic tendencies among Jews in medieval Spain and North Africa. There was a widespread belief that the messiah would come in 1069, as detailed in the poetry of Judah ha-Levi, who expressed a general anguish that the prediction was not fulfilled.<sup>169</sup> In 1125, Abraham bar Hiyya, the Jewish philosopher and astrologer born in Barcelona, wrote in his *Megillat ha-Megalleh* (Scroll of the Revealer) about signs, namely the Crusades, that predicted the messiah's arrival was imminent.<sup>170</sup> About the same time, three messianic prophecies surfaced among the Jewish population in al-Andalus, according to the writings of Moses Maimonides. In 1172, he wrote to the Jews of Yemen in crisis due to Muslims pressure to convert to Islam; this pressure encouraged many to seek redemption from Samuel ibn Abbas, a Hebrew poet and philosopher, who claimed he was the messiah.<sup>171</sup> The crisis in Yemen prompted the head rabbi of the Jewish community there, Jacob ben Netan'el al-Fayyūmi, to write to Maimonides seeking his guidance and advice. In his well-known *Epistle to Yemen*, Maimonides wrote

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<sup>167</sup> Cohen, *Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, 215-228.

<sup>168</sup> Cohen, *Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, 205.

<sup>169</sup> Cohen, *Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, 213.

<sup>170</sup> Baer, *A History of Jews*, 66-67.

<sup>171</sup> Sarachek, Joseph, "The Doctrine of Messiah" In *Eschatology in Maimonidean Thought: Messianism, Resurrection and the World to Come*, ed. Jacob Dienstag (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1983), 12-14.

about the tension growing between Jews and non-Jews and warned of the negative consequences of false messiahs and of the widespread belief that a messiah would arrive soon. Maimonides's response – written in Arabic so that “all may read it with ease, men women and children... and it be understood by every member of your community” – drew on Jewish history, scripture and his personal experience in an attempt to counsel the Yemenite Jews not to lose hope amid the forced apostasy nor to ignore the messianic pretender, whose activities could endanger them and anger the Muslim rulers.<sup>172</sup>

In his lengthy rejoinder, Maimonides discussed his family's experience in Spain and North Africa where the persecution of Jews under the Almoravids and Almohads prompted a messianic mania replete with false messianic calculations and the appearance of a series of pseudo-messiahs. Calling the messianic claimant in Yemen “demented” and suggesting that he should be placed in chains, Maimonides underscored the threat of following messianic pretenders who sow doubt and confusion among the Jewish community, and he recognized that when “the hearts of some people have turned away, uncertainty befalls them and their beliefs are weakened.”<sup>173</sup> In the letter, Maimonides severely criticized astrology, warning his readers against following messianic calculations based on the pseudo-science, for “the advent of the Messiah is in no way subject to the

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<sup>172</sup> Halkin, Abraham S., *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*. Trans. Boaz Cohen. (New York, American Academy for Jewish Research, 1952). ii.

<sup>173</sup> Halkin, *Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen*, ii.

influence of the stars.”<sup>174</sup> To emphasize his point, he wrote about several false messianic appearances that he had knowledge of, including one in Persia that reportedly caused “hundreds of thousands” of Jews to leave their homes in a mass exodus to the Holy Land.

One messianic case in Spain that Maimonides mentions occurred around 1130, when Jewish scholars in Cordoba, then the capital of al-Andalus, used astrology to choose “a pious and virtuous person by the name of Ibn Aryeh” and make predictions and miracles in his name, ultimately winning over the Jewish community with their prophecies.<sup>175</sup> Their movement was ultimately ended by Jewish communal leaders who had Ibn Aryeh and his co-claimants flogged in public, fined and banned.

That case was followed by another shortly after the Almohad invasion, around 1146, when a Jewish scholar named Moses al Dar’í came to al-Andalus from Fez. He announced that it had been revealed to him that the messiah had arrived and that the Jews should sell all their belongings and prepare for the Holy Land, which many did, despite the pleadings of Jewish leaders.<sup>176</sup> Maimonides adds that, despite al Dar’í’s predictions of the arrival of the messiah, “nothing transpired, the people were ruined as most of them disposed of their property for

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<sup>174</sup> Halkin, *Moses Maimonides’ Epistle to Yemen*, xiv.

<sup>175</sup> Halkin, *Moses Maimonides’ Epistle to Yemen*, xx.

<sup>176</sup> Baer, *A History of Jews*, 66-67.



a trifling sum, and were overwhelmed with debt.”<sup>177</sup> Fearing for his safety, al Dar’i fled to Palestine.<sup>178</sup>

The third messianic event that Maimonides relates concerns a man in “Linon, a large center in the heart of France,” possibly Lyon or Leon, Spain, which was inhabited by numerous Franks.<sup>179</sup> The man pretended to be the messiah and claimed to be able to fly from tree to tree on moonlit nights. He and his followers were ultimately put to death by French authorities.

Maimonides warns that messianic “pretenders and simulators will appear in great numbers” before the arrival of the real messiah, includes the unfortunate fate of all of the messianic pretenders – public flogging, execution or exile – and then cites instances in Jewish history when astrologers incorrectly foretold the future. Although he weaves the examples of three past messianic prophecies into his larger argument concerning astrological prophecies, forced conversions of Jews in Yemen, and messianic movements, scholarly consensus is that the three messianic incidents he recounts did, in fact, occur. Their existence amid a host of messianic movements in western Europe is also supported by extant letters and poems written by Jews who had emigrated to the Holy Land, as well as Jewish messianic and apocalyptic writings circulating in Spain and France, including

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<sup>177</sup> Halkin, *Moses Maimonides’ Epistle to Yemen*, xix

<sup>178</sup> Halkin, *Moses Maimonides’ Epistle to Yemen*, xix

<sup>179</sup> Halkin, *Moses Maimonides’ Epistle to Yemen*, xx

some by Johannes Avendenhut of Toledo, the famous astronomer and translator who worked for the archbishop of Toledo in the twelfth century.<sup>180</sup>

Despite his criticism of messianic pretenders and Jewish scholars who rashly calculated dates for the messiah to appear, Maimonides ironically included his own prediction, which his father had handed down to him, of when the messiah would come, maintaining it would be in 1210, a date that, Buchanan argues, stirred up his Jewish followers after his death in 1204.<sup>181</sup> Near the end of the letter, Maimonides asked the rabbi to disseminate the epistle to as many people in the Jewish community as possible, and although it is difficult to ascertain exactly how widely it circulated, it is known that it was translated three times into Hebrew in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. Other letters that Maimonides wrote were widely known and circulated in the Mediterranean. In 1194, for example, he wrote a letter to rabbis in Marseille, France, informing them that the messianic pretender Ibn Abbas of Yemen had been arrested, questioned and beheaded after he told the Arab king that he'd immediately be resurrected if his head were cut off.<sup>182</sup>

There are other messianic prophecies that occurred in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Another Jewish scholar, Joseph ibn Daud, one of several Jewish luminaries who received prestigious appointments from the archbishop of

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<sup>180</sup> Cuffel, Alexandra, "Call and Response: European Jewish Emigration to Egypt and Palestine in the Middle Ages," In *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 90, No. 1-2 (July-Oct. 1999): 67-70.

<sup>181</sup> Buchanan, George Wesley. *Jewish Messianic Movements, From AD 70 to AD 1300: Documents from the Fall of Jerusalem to the End of the Crusades* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1978), 81-89.

<sup>182</sup> Dienstag, Jacob, *Eschatology in Maimonidean Thought: Messianism, Resurrection and The World To Come* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1983), LXXIII-LXXV.

Toledo, published a widely circulated apocalyptic prediction that the messiah would appear around 1186.<sup>183</sup> These messianic incidents were well known by Jews and also Christians and Muslims, too. The prediction by Ibn Daud was translated into Latin and made its way into various Christian circles.<sup>184</sup> In some cases, the failure of a messianic movement caused some Jews, including luminaries such as Judah Halevi, who worked in the Christian court in Toledo as a physician, to become so disheartened that they left Spain for the Holy Land.<sup>185</sup> According to Dinur, Jews began returning in larger numbers to Palestine after Saladin defeated the Christian Crusaders and invited Jews to immigrate to Muslim-controlled Jerusalem, which they did.<sup>186</sup> In her study of letters written from Jewish families in Jerusalem in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries who had left Spain and France to reside in the Holy Land, Cuffel concludes that their desire to leave “stemmed from European Jewish messianic theology” and the belief that the wars between Christians and Muslims during the crusades were a sign the Apocalypse was near and the Holy Land would be restored to Jewish rule.<sup>187</sup>

Jewish emigration to Palestine increased in 1211, when some 300 Jewish rabbis emigrated there from France and England.<sup>188</sup> Their exodus has been attributed to many things, including messianic prophecies, an escape from economic hardship and persecution, a pursuit of the Pietist desire to follow the

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<sup>183</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 66-67.

<sup>184</sup> Cohen, *Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, 213.

<sup>185</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 67-76

<sup>186</sup> Benzion Dinur, “From Bar Kochba’s Revolt to the Turkish Conquest,” In *The Jews in their Land*. Ed. David Ben-Gurion (London: Aldus Books, 1966), 215-217.

<sup>187</sup> Cuffel, “Call and Response”, 88.

<sup>188</sup> Cuffel, “Call and Response”, 61-62

commandments, and the dispute over Maimonides' writings, which I discuss below.<sup>189</sup> This evidence of Jewish migration to Palestine provides an important context for early thirteenth-century royal and ecclesiastical concerns that, should they feel insecure, Jews might emigrate from Toledo.

Before I examine the text of ARM, I will explore some theological disputes among Jews that were becoming more pronounced in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries – divisions that intimately involved Maimonides and his followers and ones that, I believe, were utilized, even exploited, by the playwright of the ARM.

### Maimonides and Jewish Divisions

During the last half of the twelfth century, Judaism faced a crisis as once strong congregations in the west – Spain – and in the east – Persia and Yemen – began scattering or converting, by force or by choice, to Islam.<sup>190</sup> There was also a rift growing between Western and Eastern Judaism; in contrast with Western rationalism, Eastern Jews seemed more superstitious, creating myths, venerating relics and sites honoring pious men, which attracted a significant following among the unlearned masses.<sup>191</sup> Other divisions were surfacing among Western Jews. Judah he-Hasid and his Pietist followers began encouraging asceticism in the Rhineland, France and Spain as a way to address social ills and advocated a return

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<sup>189</sup> Cuffel, "Call and Response", 62

<sup>190</sup> Many of the elite Jewish scholars in Eastern congregations left Judaism for Islam because they felt their native religion had degenerated to superstitions and Islam was becoming so powerful. See Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 439-442.

<sup>191</sup> Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 439-442.

to traditional Jewish roots.<sup>192</sup> Supporters of rationalism, centered in Spain, criticized Pietism, maintaining it was excessive and that reason was a better way to connect contemporary thinking with older traditions.<sup>193</sup> A great rift surfaced between the Karaites, who believed in a literal interpretation of scripture, and the Rabbanites, cultured and sophisticated Jewish aristocrats who believed in the rabbinical exegesis based on oral tradition and codified in the *Talmud* or *Mishnah*. “The court dignitaries, orthodox and rational in their faith, regarded it as their duty to wipe out Karaite sectarianism” and allied themselves with Toledo’s Christian elite, whom they served under Alfonso VI, Alfonso VII and Alfonso VIII, to destroy the Karaite sect in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.<sup>194</sup>

In brief, Judaism in Spain during this period was quickly splitting into two factions: an aristocracy that had acquired wealth and Islamic culture under Muslim rule, and the unlearned masses.<sup>195</sup> This division became more prevalent in Toledo as the city’s population grew thanks to immigration, bringing together Jews from many countries with diverse viewpoints on Jewish law, eschatology, and the future of the Jewish diaspora. “The rift between ancestral religion and the rationalism of the prominent men of the day was becoming more pronounced... [and] broke into the open in the early part of the thirteenth century in the

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<sup>192</sup> Verman, Mark, *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources* (New York: New York State University, 1992), 20-23; see also Marcus, Ivan G. *The Jewish Pietists of Medieval German* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1981), 2-6.

<sup>193</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 98

<sup>194</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*. 65.

<sup>195</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 97-99.

Maimonist controversy, which cast a deep shadow over a long period of the history of the Jews in Spain.”<sup>196</sup>

Maimonides’ writings on faith, heavily influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, circulated widely, and his code of Jewish religious law, the *Mishneh Torah*, compiled between 1170-1180, was very popular in Spain, which became a haven for rationalist Maimonidean thought.<sup>197</sup> Some of his Aristotelian thought appeared to undermine traditional Jewish beliefs and practices, and his stance on resurrection, apostasy and forced conversion prompted divisions among the Jews in France and Spain in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

Pick notes that around 1200 these teachings became known to Rabbi Abulafia of Toledo – a likely source for the theological disputations of Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez, who, she argues, is either the playwright or patron of the *Auto*.<sup>198</sup> Abulafia became embroiled in a dispute over Maimonides’ writings on the *Mishneh Torah* concerning the Jewish belief in the resurrection of the body. In the first decade of the thirteenth century, Abulafia corresponded with Jews in southern and northern France, seeking support against what he deemed to be Maimonides’ unorthodox teachings. The controversy quickly created strife within the Jewish community, with rabbis and other scholars taking sides.

Many of these divisions in Judaism had existed for hundreds of years, but as Jewish persecution by Muslims and Christians increased and Jews moved into

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<sup>196</sup> Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 96.

<sup>197</sup> Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 470-71.

<sup>198</sup> Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 185.

different communities during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the differences became more pronounced, particularly in cities like Toledo, where Jews from various countries and cultural backgrounds emigrated. The rifts began to widen between rational Western Judaism and its mystical counterpart, Eastern Judaism; between Karaites who believed in a literal interpretation of scripture and the Rabbinate who supported interpretations based on the Talmud. Amid this confusion, Maimonides appeared, exploring the cause of these divisions and analyzing them with Aristotelian rationalism.<sup>199</sup> In his writings, he rejected literal interpretations of the Torah and the resurrection of the physical body, downplayed the importance of the Talmud, dismissed prognosticators and astrologers – stances that provoked a storm of controversy among Jewish traditionalists. In Spain and France, Jewish traditionalists burned some of his books and urged the papal inquisition to destroy others in the early thirteenth century on the grounds that they constituted heresy.<sup>200</sup> It is significant, I will note, that in this case, Jews turned to Christian inquisitors to address Jewish theological disputes.

These divisions among Jewish thinkers, brought into sharper focus by Maimonidean writings, provided Christians with an opening to criticize Jewish religious disunity. For the playwright of the ARM, Maimonides' writings and the controversy surrounding them could have served to underscore Jewish disputes

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<sup>199</sup> Drazin, Israel, *Maimonides: The Exceptional Mind* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing, 2008), 6-9.

<sup>200</sup> Rudavsky, T.M. *Maimonides* (West Sussex, UK.: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 16-18. See also O'Callaghan, Joseph F., *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 329.

while questioning the viability of Jewish prognostication. In fact, some of Maimonides' controversial rationalist ideas –his rejection of literal interpretation of the Torah, his attack on the questionable science of astrology, his comment that prognosticators and wise men were turned backward by God's will, his concerns about confusion, doubt and disputes among the masses – I will show, are also prevalent themes in the *Auto de los reyes magos*.

### Jewish Representations in ARM

An examination of the final two scenes of the play, which contain only Jewish characters – Herod, a majordomo, and two rabbis – show that these characters' search for answers about the reported appearance of a new king, a messiah of sorts, has left them angry, confused, divided and in doubt.

#### [Escena IV]

Herodes: ¡Quín vio numcas tal mal,  
sobre rey otro tal!  
Aún non só yo morto,  
ni so la terra pusto!  
¿Rey otro sobre mí?  
¡Numcas atal non vi!  
El siglo va a çaga,  
ya non sé qué me faga;  
por vertad no lo creo  
ata que yo lo veo.  
Venga mío maiordoma  
qui míos haveres toma.



[English translation<sup>201</sup>]      [Scene IV]

Herod:      Whoever saw such a thing,  
                 over a king, such another?  
                 I am not yet dead  
                 nor put under the ground!  
                 Another king over me?  
                 I have never seen such a thing!  
                 The world is going backward,  
                 now I do not know what to do;  
                 In truth, I do not believe it  
                 until I see it.  
                 Come my majordomo  
                 who receives my possessions.

Herod's soliloquy, a reflection-turned-tirade that according to Crawford portends the great soliloquies of Renaissance theatre,<sup>202</sup> dramatically represents the fury of the Jewish king being usurped and the crisis caused by a new world with a new law. We see in the first lines, before he calls his mayordomo, that his fury at being replaced by another king before his own death manifests itself as doubt and confusion about contemporary society (Verses 111-114, "¿Rey otro sobre mí? ¡Numcas atal non vi! El siglo va a çaga, ya non sé qué me faga." ("Another king over me? I have never seen such a thing! The world is going backward, now I do not know what to do"). Every aspect of Herod's depiction in the ARM is negative. He initially appears smug, then paranoid, essentially displaying the personality of a untrustworthy, volatile and violent tyrant, one

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<sup>201</sup> Stebbens, Charles E., "The Auto de los reyes magos: An Old Spanish Mystery Play of the Twelfth Century" *Allegorica* 2 (1977): 118-143.

<sup>202</sup> Crawford, *Spanish Drama Before Lope de Vega*, 2.

who deceptively asks the Magi to return with the new king's whereabouts so he can honor him, too. (Verses 114-119, "Pus andad i buscad i a el adorad i por aqui tornad. lo ala ire i adoralo e.") Those verses would carry an ominous overtone for anyone in the audience familiar with the Epiphany story and Herod's massacre of the young children.

Herod then summons his majordomo and, in what seems to be a panic, orders him to summon everyone in the court. The majordomo enters and, in verses 119-124, the dramatist spells out each person sought by Herod.

[Herodes] Idme por míos abades  
y por míos podestades  
y por míos scribanos  
y por míos gramatgos  
y por míos streleros  
y por míos retóricos;  
Dezir m'an la vertad, si yace in escripto  
o si lo saben elos o si lo han sabido.

[Herod] "Go for my abbots,  
and for my magistrates,  
and for my scribes,  
and for my grammarians,  
and for my astrologers,  
and for my rhetoricians.  
They will tell me the truth, whether it is in Scripture,  
or whether they know it, or whether they have learned it.

These verses suggest that the *Auto's* dramatist was well versed in the controversies and religious divisions in Judaism. Herod summons all his scholars, each one representing one of the divisions in Judaism mentioned by Maimonides. In verse 119 of the *Auto*, Herod calls for his "abades", or abbots, who represent

Jewish isolation and asceticism, a practice promoted by Bahya Ben Joseph ibn Pakuda, a philosopher and rabbi in Spain in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, with the support of some Jewish scholars, but not Maimonides.<sup>203</sup> In verses 120-122 and 124, Herod asks for his magistrates, who, I suggest, represent the Rabbanites, the sect of Judaism whose interpretations rely on codified oral tradition and the legal rulings of the Sanhedrin, and endorse the enforcement of these divine laws by magistrates.<sup>204</sup> Herod's request for "streleros" or astrologers in verse 123 represents the mysticism of Eastern Judaism, to which Maimonides held a strong aversion.<sup>205</sup>

In verses 125-127, Herod says of his scholars: "They will tell me the truth, whether it is in scripture, whether they know it, or whether they have learned it." The passage, I argue, represents the rift between the Karaites, who believed in a literal interpretation of scripture ("whether it is in Scripture") and who were vehemently against the Rabbanites, who supported rabbinical exegesis ("whether they have learned it" [verse 126]). By listing these Jewish divisions in such succinct form – which would have allowed the performer playing Herod to dramatically emphasize them in his performance – the dramatist has

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<sup>203</sup> Bahya wrote *The Duties of the Heart*, a code of Jewish ethics encouraging an ascetic lifestyle in Zaragoza, Spain, in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. It was translated from Arabic into Hebrew in 1161. Asceticism in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was favored by some Jewish scholars such as Abraham ben Hiyya but criticized by others such as Maimonides, who felt it to be excessive. See Bahya Ben Joseph ibn Pakuda, *Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*, Ed. and Trans. by Mansoor, Menahem (London: Routledge and Kegan, Paul, 1973)

<sup>204</sup> Saebo, Magne, Ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2013), 322.

<sup>205</sup> Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 445-465.

underscores the aforementioned infighting among Jewish thinkers at the time. That message is highlighted even more in the final scene when Herod asks his rabbis if they brought the scriptures. A rabbi answers in verses 129-30: “Rei, si traemos, los mejores que nos avemos.” By stating that they have brought “the best that we have,” the rabbi may refer to the fact that there are divisions in Judaism based on the authority and reliability of various texts and as Maimonides noted, disagreements as to their interpretations, ranging from good to better to “best”.<sup>206</sup>

The final dispute between the two Jewish scholars before Herod highlights this disagreement. It is important to note that the annotations and stage directions are not found in the extant manuscript but were added by editors, most notably Menéndez Pidal. The theological persuasions of the two scholars is not a given, but it is immaterial at this point which two scholars from Herod’s court – an ascetic, a Rabbanite, an Eastern mystic, a Karaite – are speaking. What the playwright underscores is the division and disunity among all of the Jewish scholars and, by extension, he intimates there is discord among all of the Jews.

After the first rabbi states he cannot find in his books any reference to the birth of the king referred to by the three Magi, he is chastised by the other scholar, who asks him why he’s called a rabbi when it is clear he doesn’t understand scripture, particularly the prophecies of Jeremiah:

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<sup>206</sup> Halbertal, Moshe, *Maimonides: Life and Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 185-188.

[Otro Rabí] Hamihala, ¡cómo eres enartado!  
¿Por qué eres rabí clamado?  
Non entendes las profecías,  
las que nos dixo Jeremías.  
¡Par mi ley, nos somos erados!  
¿Por qué non somos acordados?  
¿Por qué non dezimos vertad?

[Rabí 1.] Yo non la sé, por caridad

[Rabí 2.] Porque no la havemos usada.  
ni en nostras vocas es falada.

[English translation]

[Other rabbi] Hamihala, how you are deceived!  
Why are you called a rabbi?  
You do not understand the prophecies,  
those which Jeremiah said.  
By my faith, we are astray!  
Why are we not in agreement?  
Why are we not saying the truth?

[1st Rabbi] For the love of God, I do not know it.

[2<sup>nd</sup> Rabbi] Wherefore we have not practiced it,  
nor is it found in our mouths.

The play abruptly ends here. Many scholars, including Sturdevant and Menéndez Pidal,<sup>207</sup> have concluded the play is fragmentary or incomplete due to this abrupt end rather than a traditional dramatic ending congruent with other medieval Epiphany plays, which conclude with the murder of the Holy Innocents

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<sup>207</sup> Menéndez Pidal, *Auto de los reyes magos*, 454. See also Sturdevant, *The Misterio de los reyes magos*, 46.

or the three kings' arrival in Bethlehem and bestowal of gifts to Christ.<sup>208</sup> Other scholars, however, maintain that the ARM's ending was intended by the unknown playwright, some believing that the debate among the Jewish scholars serves as a natural segue in which the action would "merge into the church ceremonial at this point, with the three Kings making their offerings without further dialogue. That this may have been so is suggested by the existence and use of Magi plays outside Spain, to introduce, or dramatize, the oblation preceding Epiphany Mass."<sup>209</sup> Hook and Deyermond point to paleographic evidence that there was room on the folio to continue any unfinished work and that the final words and punctuation – large letters followed by an unusually large period – were emphatically written to underscore that the piece was finished. "Había acabado; no le quedaba nada por escribir."<sup>210</sup> Either the scribe revised the piece, leaving out the final scene of the original, or the usual final scene was not in the original. In either case, the scholars conclude the *Auto* should be viewed as the complete text of an anonymous scribe of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.

The theological dispute between Herod's courtiers is one of two original sections – the other being the Three King's proposed test of the new born king's divinity – that, in contrast with other prior or contemporary medieval plays, are

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<sup>208</sup> Hook, David, and Deyermond, Alan, "El problema de la terminación del 'Auto de los Reyes Magos'", *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 13 (1983), 269-271.

<sup>209</sup> Shergold, N.D., *A History of the Spanish Stage from Medieval Times until the End of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 6.

<sup>210</sup> Hook & Deyermond, "El problema de la terminación", 273. "La grafía de las últimas palabras viene haciéndose cada vez más grande... [y] el texto termina en media de una línea con un enorme punto... Todo esto nos sugiere que el copista había terminado de copiar y no tenía ninguna intención de añadir nada más."

found only in the Spanish *Auto* and can be ascribed to “the exigencies of dramatization, a natural effort toward dramatic effect.”<sup>211</sup> The originality of this dispute – coupled with the preceding tirade by Herod – and its location at the end of the play have received much attention from literary scholars. Some have argued the scene underscores the *Auto*’s place in medieval drama as a tool for converting Jews to Christianity. Deyermond argues the final scene is a dramatic example of the *Auto*’s representation of truth, proof and knowledge in twelfth century renaissance.<sup>212</sup> In contrast, Pick maintains the Jewish courtiers’ dispute highlights the thirteenth-century concepts of *ecclesia* versus *synagoga* – a united and steadfast Christianity versus a varying and disunited Judaism – concepts that were prevalent in Christian polemics of that period.<sup>213</sup>

It is my contention that that originality of this scene and the fact that it ends the play all point to the dramatist’s intent, namely, to highlight the two Jewish character’s confusion and discord concerning messianic interpretation. The dispute between the two Jewish scholars, can, and I suggest should, be re-examined from the possibility that the two represent two different schools of thought among Jewish scholars whose views are incongruent with not only the Christian teachings but also with each other.<sup>214</sup> In verses 139-140, we see a

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<sup>211</sup> Sturdevant, *The Misterio de los reyes magos*, 65, 73, and 78.

<sup>212</sup> Deyermond, Alan, “El Auto de los reyes magos y el renacimiento del siglo XII” in *Actas del IX Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas: 18-23 Agosto, Vol. 1*. Berlin, (1986): 190-191.

<sup>213</sup> Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, 191-193.

<sup>214</sup> Karaites used the word “Hakham” (wise or skilled man who serves in advisory role) instead of “rabbi” to distinguish themselves from their Rabbinic counterparts (Rabbanites), whose use of “rabbi” denotes a teacher who instructs using Oral tradition and rabbinic literature.

personal attack on the previous speaker: “Why are you called a rabbi? You do not understand the prophecies, those which Jeremiah said.” This appears to point to incompatibility and friction that were present in the various sects of Judaism, particularly between the Karaites and Rabbanites – something borne out in verse 143: “Why are we not in agreement?” The playwright may be calling attention to not only the Jews’ inability to see Christian ‘truth’, but also their inability to agree among themselves about their own messianic prophecies. In verses 142-143, the second speaker says: “Par mi lei, nos somos erados! Por que non somos acordados?” (“By my faith, we are astray! Why are we not in agreement?”) Unlike the other verses in this final scene, these, I suggest, do not criticize Jews for being unwilling to accept Christianity. The playwright of the *Auto* ridicules the two Jews’ confusion, discord and doubt as to their own religion and derides their feeble attempts to determine the arrival of the messiah despite using their “meiores” books and consulting scripture, astrological computations and Jewish law. His criticism may be directed at the ubiquitous messianic prophecies and movements surfacing throughout Spain and the Mediterranean during that time. Moreover, neither the final verses nor the *Auto* in general appear to be theological propaganda with the simple goal of converting Jews to Christianity. It is clear from the historical evidence presented that the Christian hierarchy and the secular rulers of Toledo between 1150 and 1220 needed – and wanted – the Jews to remain in the city for economic, cultural, intellectual and military reasons, despite the anti-Jewish laws promulgated from Rome.



The playwright's negative representation of Herod as a smug, paranoid, volatile tyrant who lies to the Magi in order to murder the newborn king is a much more amplified version of Herod's portrayal in the Gospel of Matthew. The playwright gave the character psychological depth, providing ample latitude for an actor – Christian or Jewish – to delve into the mood swings and engage the audience. The real Herod was not well liked by Jews so it is probable Jewish spectators of the ARM were enjoyed the negative representation of him as a volatile tyrant. The Jewish spectators' reaction to the negative portrayals of the rabbis in ARM – two bumbling Jewish scholars incapable of finding scriptural references to the Magi's king – was probably less enthusiastic as it underscored one aspect of traditional Christian anti-Judaism which claimed Jews were divided and obstinately ignorant in religious matters. How could Jews in Toledo receive the message I see in the *Auto*, urging them not to rashly follow the messianic prophecies of the time, particularly if the performance took place in a church among a Christian congregation? We know that such dramatic plays eventually moved from the church interior outside to the churchyard or to the marketplace where members of the Jewish community easily could have seen them.<sup>215</sup> Jews, Christians and Muslims – despite living in separate quarters – encountered each other daily during business transactions, as buyers and sellers of normal

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<sup>215</sup> In 1210, Pope Innocent III, angry over the popularity of publicly performed miracle plays, issued a papal edict that forbade clergy from acting on a public stage and from the plays being performed inside churches. See Macgowan, Kenneth and William Melnitz, *The Living Stage: A History of World Theatre* (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1955), 67.

commodities and as providers and consumers of services.<sup>216</sup> “The Jews, Christians, and Muslims of Toledo tended to work in different branches of the same industries, creating a complex web of competition and cooperation.”<sup>217</sup> Such interactions could create close, emotional bonds between members of the different religions, which I believe could support the exchange of cultural and political ideas as well as those concerning religion. Jews who converted to Christianity and who had contact with members of their former religious community could have seen the performance. Thus, it seems likely that members of the Jewish community could have had ample opportunity to see the play or hear about it from those who had.

For these Jews of Toledo, I argue, the *Auto* could serve as a reminder about Maimonides’ teachings in his *Epistle to Yemen*, when he warned that the “prophets have predicted and instructed us, as I have told you, that pretenders and simulators will appear in great numbers at the time when the advent of the true Messiah will draw nigh, but they will not be able to make good their claim. They will perish with many of their partisans.”<sup>218</sup> He cautioned the Jews that messianic prophecies and movements based on superstition and spurious calculations end badly, with the messianic pretender and his followers being flogged, killed or exiled and desperately trying to return to their communities to

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<sup>216</sup> Melechin, *The Jews of Medieval Toledo*, 32-34.

<sup>217</sup> Melechin, *The Jews of Medieval Toledo*, 32.

<sup>218</sup> Halkin, *Moses Maimonides’ Epistle to Yemen*, xx.

reclaim their former lives. Far better to stay put, remain patient, and find the truth, which the final rabbi in the ARM intimates is a conversion to Christianity.

CHAPTER 4: WHITEWASHING MEDIEVAL CLERICAL ABUSES: A STUDY OF  
GONZALO DE BERCEO'S NEGATIVE PORTRAYALS OF JEWS IN *MILAGROS DE  
NUESTRA SEÑORA*

Jewish characters appear in four of the twenty-five miracles of *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (hereafter MNS). This collection of Marian tales, based on twelfth century Latin versions, was written in the Spanish vernacular around 1250 A.D. by the Benedictine poet-cleric, Gonzalo de Berceo, the first Spanish poet known to us by name. In this chapter, I will explore why the negative representations of Jews in MNS are significantly more caustic than those found in *El Poema del Cid* or *Auto de los Reyes Magos*, despite less than fifty years separating the creation of these three works. As discussed in the earlier chapters, the Jewish characters in PMC and ARM are depicted as greedy, bumbling fools or blindly ignorant theologians. By contrast, the Jews represented in MNS are characterized as evil, greedy minions of the devil as well as heretical enemies of Christians who eagerly partake in subversive actions which include nefarious recreations of Christ's crucifixion. In the four miracles involving Jews, Berceo laces his poetic verses with harsh invectives for the Jewish characters such as "can traïdor" [treacherous dog] (362a), "loco pecador" [mad sinner] (362c) and "falsos e traïdores" [false ones and traitors] (419a) – insults that are not found in the original Latin tales. The dialogue of the Jews as well as their descriptions is also expanded in MNS, making the characters more three-dimensional but with a more sinister air.

Scholars have long debated Berceo's motive in creating such negative images of Jews in MNS. Some such as Gariano and Garrosa Resina have posited that

Berceo's caustic descriptions of Jews – and the fact that almost all the Jewish characters have a bad end, usually death – reflect a prevalent anti-Judaism among thirteenth-century clergy that the Benedictine monk clearly embraced.<sup>219</sup> This reading, however, neglects to consider that the Jews' fate in MNS is no different than their fate in the original Latin versions. Other scholars, such as Keller and Saugnieux, argue that Berceo's negative depictions of Jews were merely part of the Riojan poet's literary style that helped capture an audience's attention when it was recited, sung or performed in public. Saugnieux argues that the anti-Judaism of Berceo simply echoes the official position of the church and reflects his novelistic goals to create atmosphere in the tales and to analyze the psychology of the characters.<sup>220</sup> Stylistically, the negative invectives against Jews complement the other verses in MNS, which Keller posits "are salted with" colorful idioms, proverbial expressions, and coarse descriptions that entertained clergy and laity alike while simultaneously delivering a didactic message about the Virgin Mary's role in the Church – a reflection of the two-fold aim of medieval moralistic literature: enseñar y deleitar.<sup>221</sup>

These readings downplay – or in the case of Keller, ignore – the harsh anti-Semitic tone in MNS while embracing the widely accepted theory posited by scholars such as Dutton, Gerli and de la Maza that MNS was a devotional and

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<sup>219</sup> Gariano, Carmelo, *Análisis estilístico de los "Milagros de Nuestra Señora" de Berceo* (Madrid: Gredos, 1965), 59-60. ("Otro punto a tener en cuenta es el mal fin que Berceo depara a cuantos judíos aparecen en sus milagros, quienes suelen encontrar una muerte violenta a manos de los justamente enfurecidos cristianos.") See also Garrosa Resina, Antonio. *Magia y superstición en la literatura castellana medieval* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1987), 128.

<sup>220</sup> Saugnieux, Joel, *Berceo y las culturas del siglo XIII* (Logroño, Spain: University de Lyon, 1982), 100.

<sup>221</sup> Keller, John, and Kathleen Kulp-Hill, "Introduction" in *The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation*. Trans. By Jeannie K. Bartha et al. (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), xv-xvi.

propaganda piece that Berceo wrote to attract pilgrims to the Marian shrine at San Millán de la Cogolla for economic gain.<sup>222</sup> De la Maza suggests that Berceo embraced an anti-Jewish tone in MNS to cater to an audience that would have mostly consisted of French pilgrims with less tolerance toward Jews than Spanish Christians living in convivencia.<sup>223</sup> These readings explore important economic factors that may have influenced Berceo but ignore the fact that not one single miracle in MNS takes place in or mentions the monastery of San Millán, whose presence could have easily been included in the text by Berceo.

Other scholars, such as Flory and Timmons, argue Berceo wrote MNS to instruct laity and would-be clerics about the reality of temptation and the importance of grace and forgiveness in achieving redemption.<sup>224</sup> Timmons theorizes the instruction in MNS pertains to Church dogmas from the Fourth Lateran Council and the popes' attempt to establish hegemony on both religious and secular fronts while uneasily confronting the increased presence of Jews in Spanish royal courts. She argues that Berceo's attack on Jews in MNS, particularly pertaining

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<sup>222</sup> Gerli, Michael, "La mariología, la literatura mariana y los Milagros de Nuestra Señora" in *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (Madrid: Catedra, 1999). 23-24. "Obra de devoción y de propaganda, los *Milagros* de Berceo sirvieron para atraer, instruir y entretener la masa devota que pasaba por el Camino de Santiago. See also Brian Dutton, ed., *La vida de San Millán de Gonzalo de Berceo: Estudio y edición crítica* (London: Tamesis, 1967) (Obras Completas I) and also Brian Dutton, ed., *Los milagros de Nuestra Señora de Gonzalo de Berceo: Estudio y edición crítica* (London: Tamesis, 1971) (Obras Completas II).

<sup>223</sup> De la Maza, Carlos Sainz, "Los judíos de Berceo y los de Alfonso X en la España de "las tres religiones" *Cuadernos de Filología Hispánica*, No. 6 (1987): 209-215. "Estos peregrinos, para los que juglares probablemente a sueldo del monasterio interpretarían las historietas de Berceo en una de las primeras etapas castellanas del camino jacobeo, eran en buena parte extranjeros, francos en cuyos países los judíos se encontraban en muchos casos en una situación bastante incómoda, cuando no peligrosa, salpicada de prohibiciones —la más sonada, la francesa del Talmud en 1240— y pogroms populares provocados por cruzados y milenaristas franceses y alemanes."

<sup>224</sup> Flory, David A., *Marian Representations in the Miracle Tales of Thirteenth Century Spain and France* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 46.

to their usual bad end in the tales, becomes an instructional model for how Spanish kingdoms should operate: with less dependence on Jews in fiscal and courtly matters and more dependence on the Church. These readings address the ubiquity of temptation and sin among clerics and laity during this period as well as the likely influence of the Fourth Lateran Council on Berceo, but they fail to thoroughly investigate other important historical forces that I believe played a significant role in shaping Berceo in the creation of MNS.

In this study, I explore the thirteenth-century papal-sanctioned clerical reforms rooted in the Fourth Lateran Council and the redefinition of heresy that, to a significant degree, targeted widespread clerical abuse among Benedictines and gave immense power and influence to the newly founded rival Mendicant Orders, particularly the Dominicans. The rise of the Dominicans and simultaneous decline of Berceo's once-powerful Benedictine Order provide an important historical context for the creation of MNS – one that I believe reflects the playwright's resentment over Rome's support that allowed the Dominicans to become the papacy's preferred monastic order. I shall attempt to show that this power struggle served as the backdrop for the poet's negative depictions of the Jews in MNS. By demonizing the Jews in Miracles 16, 18, 23 and 25, Berceo exaggerates the threat they pose to Christendom, portraying them as menacing and dangerous – and paragons of Christian heresy – who either should be converted or killed in order to create a stable, Christian Spain. For Berceo, Jews were the perfect scapegoat. His portrayal of their egregious crimes against Christianity in MNS was a strategy to make his depictions of the Christian clergy's sins in other tales appear benign. I shall analyze

textual evidence from Miracles 9, 21 and 25 to support my contention that Berceo composed this collection of Marian tales as a challenge to Rome's clerical reforms, many of which caused financial hardships for the Benedictine Order. In the miracles involving clerics, Berceo downplays clerical abuses and malfeasance, including drunken debauchery, ignorance and even a cleric's selling of his soul to the devil, portraying them as pardonable offenses. I will argue that, by portraying such clerical abuses as minor sins, Berceo implied that they were not significant threats to the Church while he ridiculed the efforts of both clerical reformers and bishops who were charged with enforcing clerical discipline. I argue that Berceo's overall message in MNS is that the efforts of clerical reformers would be better spent targeting the real threat to the Church: the Jews.

Before examining Berceo and his response to the crises in his Benedictine Order, I will explore historical events that occurred prior to and during his lifetime and which likely influenced his literary works, particularly MNS. These crises were not the first time that the Benedictine Order was rocked by clerical improprieties and calls for monastic reform, but the new challenges facing the Black Monks in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries set into motion what Francisco Rico calls a general decline in the cultural hegemony once held by traditional monasteries, which quickly were supplanted by a new type of scholarly cleric: the urban Mendicants.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Rico, Francisco, "La clerecía del mester," *Hispanic Review* 53, no. 1 (1985): 8-9. "en torno al 1200, los monjes han perdido o estan perdiendo la hegemonia cultural que por tanto tiempo les ha



## Benedictine Decline and Tension with the Mendicants

By the late twelfth century, the once-powerful Benedictine Order, which had survived reform movements in the eighth and ninth centuries, again experienced a series of moral, vocational and economic crises.<sup>226</sup> The growth of universities and the birth of cities pushed Benedictine abbeys, once the focal point of European education and culture, to the background, and Benedictine monks were displaced as scholars of Europe.<sup>227</sup> Benedictine moral problems mirrored widespread abuses among the secular clergy in Western Europe – materialism, fornication, and simony – and these, in turn, contributed to attempts to reform the “decadence and wealth” of the Benedictine Order.<sup>228</sup> Many monks, concerned with the secularization of the monasteries and the absence of solitude and private prayer, left the order and formed their separate, more ascetic orders.<sup>229</sup>

It was the economic crisis, however, that more gravely threatened the continued existence of the Black Monks. By the early thirteenth century they were struggling to preserve their monasteries, which suffered from abbots siphoning away money for themselves, a significant drop in donations and monastic recruits,

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correspondido, y el arquetipo del intelectual pasan a darlo los "scolares . . . clerici," abiertos a la nueva sociedad progresivamente urbana, con economía de cambio y circulación de pobladores, curiosos de toda disciplina y ansiosos de lucirla..."

<sup>226</sup> Clark, James G., *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2011), 39-51.

<sup>227</sup> Kardong, Terrence, *The Benedictines* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 147.

<sup>228</sup> Justice, Phyllis G., *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1997), 2-4.

<sup>229</sup> Kardong, *The Benedictines*, 150-152.

and a general loss of the traditional pioneering spirit.<sup>230</sup> In the first quarter of the century a series of serious political challenges for Benedictine monasteries began emerging from both the clerical and secular arenas. First, their monastic privileges were constantly challenged, restricted or revoked by lay rulers who wanted the funds diverted to serve the Crown's interests. These challenges were coupled with multiple crusades to the eastern Mediterranean, Church-sanctioned attacks on heretics and other papal enemies, and, for Spanish Benedictines like Berceo, the Reconquest of the peninsula, all of which diverted substantial funding from the Church in general and from monasteries in particular.<sup>231</sup> "Even when there was no fighting to speak of, as in Emperor Frederick II's crusade of 1228, vast sums of money that might otherwise have gone to abbeys, convents, and other ecclesiastical institutions in Europe were spent on weapons, horses, ships, and wages for the fighting men, who traveled to the East."<sup>232</sup> Benedictines also faced significantly more competition for donations from pious laity who gave to orders established in the twelfth century like the Cistercians, Premonstratensians, and Carthusians, and also to charitable institutions such as leprosaria.<sup>233</sup> A new set of secular initiatives that restricted the monasteries' appropriation of lands from wealthy aristocrats caused significant problems for the Benedictine Order, which had grown accustomed to the funds these appropriations brought. Finally, the Benedictines were persistently attacked by bishops who felt the monasteries should not be exempted from

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<sup>230</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1979), 235-267.

<sup>231</sup> Jordan, William Chester, "The Anger of the Abbots in the Thirteenth Century", *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 2 (April, 2010): 222-23.

<sup>232</sup> Jordan, "The Anger of the Abbots", 223.

<sup>233</sup> Jordan, "The Anger of the Abbots", 222-23.

episcopal supervision and the payment of diocesan taxes.<sup>234</sup> The bishops argued the exemption prevented them from fulfilling their task of keeping the Church pure in doctrine and prevent scandals from surfacing in monasteries. The forceful response from the Benedictine abbots is telling. They argued that it was the bishops and priests who were greedy and scandalous and who polluted rather than enhanced the Church by employing nepotism to place unqualified relatives into Church positions.<sup>235</sup>

Despite their attack on the bishops, the Benedictines could not hide their problems. Most, Bennett argues, became immersed in temporal activities and began ignoring the Rule of Benedict, their vow of prayer, fasting and service. They became wealthy, lazy and gluttonous, and suffered from “a general decay” that made it impossible for them to provide a model of virtue to the masses<sup>236</sup> – as is reflected in various anti-monastic poems from the early thirteenth century.

Monachi sunt nigri  
Et in regula sunt pigri<sup>237</sup>

There are Black Monks  
who are lazy at fulfilling their rule.

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<sup>234</sup> Jordan, “The Anger of the Abbots”, 227.

<sup>235</sup> Jordan, “The Anger of the Abbots”, 229. [Jordan notes that later, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Abbot Jacques de Thérines raged against bishops as “avaricious creatures” who placed in church positions their ignorant, dumb, and degraded relatives (“nepotes et cognatos nescios et idiotas et dissolutos”).

<sup>236</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 10-11.

<sup>237</sup> Schmeller, J. A., *Carmina burana: Lateinische und deutsche Lieder und Gedichte einer Handschrift des XIII Jahrhunderts aus Benedictbeurn* (Breslau: M & H Marcus, 1883), 15.

Similarly, many clergy were undisciplined, greedy, lustful – many had concubines – and ignorant of both scripture and preaching. Many, as Bennett points out, could barely read. The lay masses grew to distrust clergy – monastic and secular alike – and turned to sects they respected such as the Cathars for education and spiritual guidance.<sup>238</sup> Despite repeated attempts to address the situation, the popes during the twelfth century were unable to repair the badly damaged state of the Church nor rid Europe of increasingly popular heretical groups.<sup>239</sup>

Such was the strife-filled political landscape for the Black Monks when Berceo became a deacon in 1221. He and his Benedictine brethren would have quickly realized that a great challenge had already significantly altered the political and religious landscape in Spain and Western Europe: the arrival of the newly-established mendicant order, *Ordo Praedicatorum* (Order of Preachers), also known as the Dominicans after the founder Dominic de Guzmán, a former Benedictine canon from the kingdom of León, Spain.<sup>240</sup> Established in 1216 by Pope Honorius III, the Dominican Order consisted of itinerant, ascetic monks who focused on preaching and evangelization, creating schools to educate the masses, and carrying out rigorous reform among the ranks of the clergy. Within a few decades, their numbers significantly grew in Europe, especially urban centers, where “they believed thousands of souls were threatened by sin” and where friars could more

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<sup>238</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 13-14.

<sup>239</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 14-15.

<sup>240</sup> Jordan, “The Anger of the Abbots”, 222. See also Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 20-21.

easily live off alms and, later, legacies from wills and pious foundations.<sup>241</sup> Their rapid rise in Europe created fierce competition for the secular clergy as well as the older, contemplative monastic orders such as the Benedictines, who grew to disdain the Dominican “White Monks”. The tension between these groups only worsened as the thirteenth century progressed.

The Dominicans first arrived in Spain in 1217 and established themselves in several cities, including Burgos, where, within a quarter of a century, they wrested a significant amount of power, money and control from the secular clergy, who had up until then fully controlled the local politics and economy.<sup>242</sup> The secular clergy, who initially assisted the mendicant friars, gradually opposed them. The reasons, according to Bennett, were that the mendicant friars were more learned, had a more ascetic lifestyle, and were able to attract crowds as they preached about religious reform and the gospels.<sup>243</sup> Additionally, the White Monks gave little deference to secular priests, often attacking them in their sermons for clerical abuse and rampant greed.<sup>244</sup> Another source of enmity was the fact that the friars received privilege after privilege from the pope, “freeing them from all obligation to the seculars in whose parishes and dioceses they were squatting.”<sup>245</sup> Among the secular clergy and traditional monks, there was “a deep-rooted feeling that they were being “shown

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<sup>241</sup> Vauchez, André, “The Religious Orders” In *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume 5, c.1198-c.1300*, Ed. David Abulafia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 248.

<sup>242</sup> García-Serrano, Francisco, *Preachers of the City: The Expansion of the Dominican Order in Castile (1217 – 1348)* (New Orleans, LA: University Press, South, Inc., 1997), 81-83.

<sup>243</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 136-37.

<sup>244</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 136-37.

<sup>245</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 137.

up” in some way by the Dominicans.”<sup>246</sup> The mendicants’ vibrant and articulate sermons prompted the laity to choose the friars to oversee burials for monetary tributes – traditionally a significant source of income for secular and Benedictine clergy. Before long, many city residents around Europe preferred sending their children to the newly-established Dominican schools instead of those run by Benedictines, causing a surge in Dominican vocations. Spanish prelates, angered by the rapid rise of the friars, enacted sanctions against the White Monks around 1240, but were shut down by a papal bull in 1245 that ordered the friars to be left alone.<sup>247</sup> The White Monks, the bull decreed, only had to answer to the pope. Stifled by Rome’s favoritism, Spanish prelates issued religious sanctions, including excommunication, against the Dominicans, but a papal bull in 1259 reversed these excommunications and prohibited such tactics in the future.<sup>248</sup> With the unequivocal support of Rome, the Dominicans continued assailing nepotism, concubinage, spiritual ignorance, greed and other immoral acts among the priests, bishops and monks, in both their literature and their sermons, and they requested a simpler and shorter procedure in deposing unsatisfactory prelates.<sup>249</sup> Despite the denunciations from the secular clergy throughout Spain, the Dominicans’ work was greatly favored in Rome. This was a period when the popes ordered clerical reforms, particularly in Spain, where Spanish clergy, accustomed to independence and a frontier spirit,

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<sup>246</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 128

<sup>247</sup> García-Serrano, *Preachers of the City*, 82-83.

<sup>248</sup> García-Serrano, *Preachers of the City*, 83.

<sup>249</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 141-142

fought or ignored papal regulations that imposed celibacy.<sup>250</sup> Attempts “to separate the clergy from their women produced not a reformation of clerical morals, but widespread clerical revolt” and even the clerical reform legislation in the Fourth Lateran Council made little impression in Spain, providing fertile ground for clerical reform imposed by the Mendicants.<sup>251</sup>

Over the course of the thirteenth century, the Dominicans and their Mendicant brothers, the Franciscans, became vital to the pope’s mission to re-establish and revitalize the Church’s power throughout Europe. In 1233, Pope Honorius III added to the Mendicants’ tasks of evangelizing, educating and imposing clerical reform by giving them the power to investigate and adjudicate acts of heresy as outlined by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. The Dominicans unsuccessfully tried to relinquish this power in 1243 because they thought it left them with little time to preach, but they soon realized it gave them great collateral in Rome.<sup>252</sup>

It is important to note that, as the Dominicans added heresy investigations to their work of evangelizing and denouncing clerical abuse, lines were blurring as to what constituted heresy and what did not. <sup>253</sup> The term was once considered a departure from orthodox Christian belief adamantly held even after censure. However, after the Gregorian reforms in the eleventh century, the general

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<sup>250</sup> Linehan, Peter, *The Spanish Church and the Papacy in the Thirteenth Century*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 2-3.

<sup>251</sup> Linehan, *The Spanish Church*, 3-4.

<sup>252</sup> Bennett, *The Early Dominicans*, 129-131. (Bennett notes the striking number of Dominicans who eventually became bishops and archbishops in Europe within a few decades of the Order being established – a promotion Dominic refused several times.)

<sup>253</sup> Christie-Murray, David, *A History of Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 31-36.

population considered heresy to include clerical abuses such as simony and clerical marriage because reformers, through preaching and pamphlets, trained the laity to identify violators among the clergy.<sup>254</sup> Similarly, in the Fourth Lateran Council, the laity were encouraged to “gird themselves up for the expulsion of heretics” (Canon 3), who included clerics engaged in the “heretical wickedness” of simony and avarice (Canon 66). Also condemned were clerical transgressions involving a lack of morality (Canons 14-17), such as lust, gluttony, drunkenness and gambling, and clerical ignorance from lack of schooling (Canon 11). Although the first canons were formally directed toward heresy and heretical sects, namely the Almaricians and Joachimites, other canons (Canons 67-69) targeted the “blasphemers of Christ”, namely Jews. It is noteworthy that there is a significant departure in Fourth Lateran canons from more tolerant views toward Jews like those of St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>255</sup> The Council’s canons use a more severe anti-Jewish rhetoric found in earlier writings of polemic Christian figures such as Pope Gregory and St. John Chrysostom who called Jews heretics and “enemies of Christ.”<sup>256</sup> Therefore, heresy, as understood by lay population during that period, included a wide range of beliefs and actions, and the Dominicans’ inquisitorial power to combat it, coupled with their work against abuse and ignorance among the clergy, created a formidable challenge for clergy under investigation.

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<sup>254</sup> Pierce, Jerry B., *Poverty, Heresy and the Apocalypse: The Order of Apostles and Social Change in Medieval Italy, 1260–1307* (London: Continuum, 2012), 73.

<sup>255</sup> Hood, John Y.B., *Aquinas and the Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), xi. “[Aquinas’] teaching was innovative largely in the direction of tolerance, not persecution” of the Jews.

<sup>256</sup> Robert, Michael, *A History of Catholic Anti-Semitism: The Dark Side of the Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 29-30.



For the Benedictines, once one of the most powerful forces in the Church, the thirteenth century became a time of struggle for relevance in a changing world. The Mendicants' rapid rise in Europe during the thirteenth century provoked jealousy, tension and what F. Donald Logan calls "inter-order rivalry" from traditional monastic orders as well as from bishops and secular priests as each group vied for power in different parts of Europe.<sup>257</sup> Such rivalries could become intense, particularly when clerics left one order to join another, and often involved accusations of apostasy that could demand Rome's intervention.<sup>258</sup> Anti-mendicant pressure prompted Pope Innocent IV to issue a bull in 1254 that severely restricted the mendicants' freedom to preach and hear confessions, but Innocent died shortly thereafter and the new pope restored the mendicants' privileges.<sup>259</sup>

In Spain and other countries on the fringe of Christian Europe, "the Black Monks were soon eclipsed by the reformed orders not only as custodians of principal churches and shrines but also the presiding influence in popular religion."<sup>260</sup> This was difficult situation for the Benedictines – and Berceo. By 1250, the Benedictines and secular priests in Spain were rocked by clerical improprieties, economic sanctions and papal disfavor. Clerical ignorance and abuse became a dominant theme in Marian tales, both in the Latin originals and in MNS. Berceo,

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<sup>257</sup> Logan, F. Donald, *Runaway Religious in Medieval England, C.1240-1540* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 45-50.

<sup>258</sup> Logan, *Runaway Religious*, 44-49.

<sup>259</sup> Tugwell, Simon, *Miracula Sancti Dominici Mandato Magistri Berengarii Collecta*. (Rome: Apud Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, 1997), 31.

<sup>260</sup> Clark, James G., *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2011), 263.

however, significantly enhances his vernacular tales involving clerical ignorance and abuses. I will show in the following sections, he uses the powerful voice of the Virgin Mary to challenge and criticize the popular conception that clerical abuse constituted heresy. By invoking the Virgin Mary, Berceo creates a formidable ally to challenge Rome's push for clerical reforms against his scandal-plagued Benedictine Order.

### Berceo: The Practical Poet and his Benedictine Order

A look at Gonzalo de Berceo's life would help shed light on his works, his literary goals and his intended audiences. Unfortunately, scholars have discovered only a few monastic documents from the Monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla that give little insight about him, other than various clerical positions he held and where those were located. In 1221, he became a deacon, which required him to be at least 23 years old – a fact that has led several scholars to suggest he was born in 1197 or 1198.<sup>261</sup> He is listed as a cleric in the town of Fonzaleche, a cleric or priest in the village of Berceo between 1240 and 1246, and his signature is on a document dated 1228 found in the cathedral archives of Calahorra.<sup>262</sup> He wrote eleven literary texts that are extant. These include three works of Marian devotion (*Milagros de Nuestra Señora*; *El duelo que Fizo la Virgen*; and *Loores de Nuestra Señora*), two doctrinal poems (*El sacrificio de la Misa*; *Los signos del Juicio Final*), four hagiographic works (*Vida de San Millán*; *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*; *Vida de Santa Oria*; and *Los*

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<sup>261</sup> Solalinde, Antonio Garcia, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958), ix. See also and Dutton, Brian, *La Vida de San Millán de Cogolla de Gonzalo de Berceo* (London: Tamesis, 1967), iii-xiii.

<sup>262</sup> Solalinde, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, ix.

*signos del Juicio Final*), and three hymns translated from Latin. The four hagiographies, it should be noted, are all linked to San Millán de la Cogolla, the Benedictine monastery that Berceo associated himself with for most of his life. In his written works, Berceo left a few clues about his childhood (“en San Millán de Suso fue de ninnez criado” in *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*, [489b]) and his education in the monastery (“clamado de Verceo, de Sant Millan criado” from *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, [757ab]). Some scholars believe the presence of legal elements in Berceo’s poetry point to the possibility that he may have been educated at the Estudio General de Palencia, the same city where Dominic Guzmán had been educated shortly before Berceo’s birth.<sup>263</sup>

During his lifetime Berceo would have witnessed his Benedictine Order rocked by the aforementioned clerical abuse scandals and papal disfavor. Once important educational centers for youth and social meeting centers for a fragmented and isolated rural society, Benedictine monasteries lost their monastic ideals by becoming engrossed in secular affairs, often being undermined by kings and popes who attempted to control the monasteries’ wealth by appointing *commendam abbots* who often were not monks or clerics.<sup>264</sup> Noble families, whose donations the monasteries relied on, attempted to restrict admission to nobles alone, many of whom were superplus sons, set the duties of the clergy inside, and reject new recruits so revenues would not have to be shared with a greater number of monks.

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<sup>263</sup> Dutton, Brian, “The Profession of Gonzalo de Berceo and the Paris Manuscript of the Libro de Alexandre.” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 37 (1960): 144.

<sup>264</sup> Kardong, *The Benedictines*, 147-150.

Spirituality suffered during this “Feudalization of the Church”, and morale fell among traditional monks who felt the new policies were against the original goals of their order, particularly the observance of Benedict’s Rule.<sup>265</sup>

In order to survive, monasteries, including San Millán de la Cogolla, had to resort to practical innovations through the creation of hagiographies and monetary concessions, or *privilegios*. Like other clerics throughout Europe, Berceo wrote hagiographic works as a propaganda enterprise to promote the saints and their eponymic monasteries in order to increase donations. Many monasteries were forced to prove through historical documents the existence of their *privilegios* from which they garnered significant funds from regional towns.

The monastery at San Millán began suffering economically by the end of the twelfth century as more and more pilgrimage routes and destinations were siphoning away travelers and potential donations.<sup>266</sup> Between 1210 and 1240, the monks at San Millán falsified a series of documents due to financial battles between their monastery and the near bankrupt bishopric of Calahorra, and, perhaps more revealing, created a false privilege that was allegedly granted by Fernán González in the tenth century.<sup>267</sup> According to the privilege, the monastery should have received an annual sum of money from towns in Castile and parts of Navarre – funding that provided some financial assistance for the monastery during Berceo’s lifetime. In *Poema de la vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*, Berceo – knowingly or innocently –

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<sup>265</sup> Smith, L.M., *The Early History of the Monastery of Cluny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), 7-8.

<sup>266</sup> Dutton, *La vida de San Millán de Cogolla*, 120.

<sup>267</sup> Dutton, *La vida de San Millán de Cogolla*, 31-35 and 55-60.

falsely claims that “El Rei de los Cielos, al so siervo leal, dióli grand privilegio, un dono special” (“The King of Heaven gave a great privilege, a special gift”)[483ab]. This “special gift” was something that Fernán González purportedly established, guaranteeing that the monastery would receive future donations from towns in the region in honor of its patron saint.<sup>268</sup> Most scholars believe Berceo was aware of the falsification – a common practice among monks during the time, according to Rico.<sup>269</sup> Ironically, Berceo himself writes about the practice in Miracle 10, *The Two Brothers*, seemingly criticizing the act of Estevan, a senator who “falsava los judizios por gana de aver” (“he falsified judgments out of desire for property”)[239b] and deceptively acquires “tres casares” (“three properties”)[240ab]. If Berceo was aware of the monastery’s falsification, it underscores his duplicitous nature: on one side, practical, realistic and loyal to San Millán and the Benedictine Order; on the other side, a hypocritically self-righteous priest who didn’t practice what he preached. According to Rico, Berceo embodied a dichotomy present in clerical scholars of that era: simple, humble and devotional on one side, but on the other side, shrewd, sagacious and practical to “intervenir eficazmente en las incidencias de una sociedad en transformación.”<sup>270</sup>

I believe an analysis of the verses in *La Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla* that deal with the supposed establishment of the privilege by Fernán Gonzalez reveals that Berceo had three main goals in writing this text: to give literary credence to the

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<sup>268</sup> Dutton, *La vida de San Millán de Cogolla*, 174-75.

<sup>269</sup> Rico, Francisco, “La Clerecia del mester,” *Hispanic Review*, 53, No. 1 (1985): 139-40.

<sup>270</sup> Rico, “La Clerecia del mester,” 146-7.

falsified privilege created by the monks at San Millán; to persuade the Christian population of the importance of making the tribute each year; and to attract more pilgrims with donations to the monastery. He utilized “materias épico-legendarias” in the poem and elevated San Millán to the same level as Spain’s patron saint, Santiago, the apostle of Christ whose remains, according to Spanish legend, were brought to Compostela, Spain, after he had been martyred by King Herod.<sup>271</sup> In the poem’s later verses, Berceo chronicles events after San Millán’s death, particularly those leading to the creation of tributes made in the saint’s honor. Berceo utilizes a fall-and-redemption theme akin to that used in MNS, emphasizing how Christians had fallen into sin and drifted away from God, who allowed them to be conquered by Muslims and placed into servitude. Their plight included a tribute of 60 Christian women – 30 nobles and 30 commoners – who were given each year to the Muslim king. Although Berceo is not the first to mention this legendary tribute,<sup>272</sup> the Riojan poet creates a parallel between the tribute to the Muslim king versus the tribute to San Millán. Under Fernán González, the Christians see their sinful ways and decide to rebel against the Muslims, despite being greatly outnumbered by Muslim troops. In the following verses, the Christian troops agree to pay tribute to Santiago so the saint would assist them in battle.

[422] “Pero en una cosa era yo acordado,  
si a vos semejasse consejo aguisado,

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<sup>271</sup> Dutton, *La vida de San Millán de Cogolla*, 198.

<sup>272</sup> For more details on the earlier renditions of this tribute of women, please see Barton, Simon. *Conquerors, brides, and concubines : interfaith relations and social power in medieval Iberia*.

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 93-96. or

Sanchez, D. T. A., *Colección de Poesías Castellanas anteriores al Siglo XV* (Paris: Baudry, 1842), 125.

prometer al apóstolo un voto mesurado,  
al que yaz' en Gallizia, de España primado

[423] Si a todos ploguiesse yo esto comedia,  
de darli cada casa tres meajas valía,  
por siempre e cadaño, en destajado día,  
si nos esto fiziésemos, veriemos alegría.

[English translation]<sup>273</sup>

[422] “However, I have decided on something,  
if it seems a just plan to you,  
to promise the apostle a reasonable tribute,  
the one who lives in Galicia, primate of Spain.

[423] We could win his protection for all times,  
He would always be disposed to us in our difficulties and  
God would give us help for our prayers.  
Our three coins would take care of all this.”

It is here in the poem where Berceo raises the stature of San Millán through the words of Fernán González, who agrees with the tribute to Santiago, but tells his men that he wants to make another vow, namely “mandar a Sant Millán nos atal furción qual manda al apóstol el rei de León.” (“send to San Millán such a tribute as the king of Leon sent to the apostle” [429 cd]). Berceo then lauds the saint, calling him “padron de españoles, el apóstol sacado” (“patron saint of Spaniards, excepting the apostle” [431b]). Then, before the battle starts, the count orders that the tribute to San Millán be created: “sea bien afirmado, metudo en escripto e privilegiado” (“may it be affirmed, placed in writing, and the prerogatives given” [432cd]).

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<sup>273</sup> All English translations taken from *The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation*. Trans. By Jeannie K. Bartha et al. (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008)

Despite being greatly outnumbered in the battle of Hacinas, the Christian troops are rallied to victory when both San Millán and Santiago – colorfully depicted by the poet – descend from the sky on horses to fight the Muslim troops.

[437] Mientras en estas dubda sedíen las buenas yentes,  
asuso control çielo fueron parando mientes:  
Vieron dues personas, fermosas e lucientes.  
Mucho eran más blancas que las nieves recientes.

[438] Vinien en dos cavallos plus blancos que cristal...  
Armas quales non vío nunca ome mortal:  
El uno tenie croza, mitra pontifical,  
El otro una cruz, ome non vío tal.

[439] Avien caras angélicas, celestial figura,  
descendíen por el aer a una grant pressura,  
catando a los moros con torva catadura,  
espadas sobre mano, un signo de pavura.

[English Translation]

[437] While the good people were in this doubt,  
They were looking up, paying attention to the sky,  
They saw two beautiful and shining people,  
Who were whiter than new-fallen snow.

[438] They came on two horses whiter than crystal  
With arms that no mortal had ever seen.  
One had a staff and a pontifical miter;  
The other a cross; no one had ever seen such.

[439] They had angelic faces and celestial figures, and  
They descended through the air at great speed, while  
Looking at the Moors with a fierce look,  
Swords in hand, a sign to fear.

With Berceo's portrayal of the Christian defeat of the Muslims with the aid of San Millán, the Riojan poet depicts Muslims as the greatest threat to Christian Spain. By highlighting the saint's supernatural power to assist those in dire situations,



Berceo attempts to show the importance of the tribute for all Christians, because without the saint's help, the poet claims, all would be lost.

After the battle, Berceo writes that the Christian soldiers “Non quisieron en baldi la soldada levar” (“They did not want to take the tribute in vain” [448a]) and divided the booty, giving “las iglesias sagradas” a good portion. Perhaps most noteworthy is that here, Berceo dedicates 21 stanzas – 84 verses – to describe the promise of the count, his men, and all of Castile to give a tribute in “todas sazones” (461c) to the monastery of San Millán and how each village donated something so “estos santos preciosos serien nuestros pagados.” (these excellent saints would be pleased”) [479b]. The poet painstakingly spends 40 verses to detail what village after village and household after household in Castile gave as tribute – wine, money, grain, goats, cloth – and adds that he cannot list all the names of towns because it would be difficult to make rhymes in verse. This extensive list of good donors underscores the importance of charity and the repaying of debt to “estos dos santos” [480b]. To further highlight the importance of such donations, Berceo emphasizes what happened to those who refused to pay the tribute: they were “perjuradas” (cursed) [477d] or “ovieronse por ello en cueta al veer, tanto qe lo ovieron doblado a render” (“were to find themselves in difficulty for it, so much so that they had to pay twofold” [478cd]).

Counting himself among those receiving benefits, Berceo makes it clear that if the tributes to both San Millán and Santiago were paid, “avriemos pan e vino, temporales temprados, non seriemos com' somos de tristicia menguados.” (“we

would have bread and wine, temperate weather, and we would not be grieved with sadness.”) [479cd] He then addresses the readers directly, “Amigos e senores”, in one last attempt to emphasize how good their lives will be “si bien lis enviáredes esto qe lis devedes” (“if you send them what you owe them” [480d]. It is noteworthy that, like Berceo, the unknown author of *Poema de Fernán González*, whom scholars believe was a contemporary of Berceo, knew the Riojan poet’s works and drew on them in the epic,<sup>274</sup> also included the supernatural appearance of San Millán and Santiago before the Battle of Hacinas.

Here is ample evidence that Berceo used his literary talents to write a saint’s life with three goals in mind: to elevate the status of his monastery’s patron saint, San Millán, to a heroic, patron saint of Castile on par with Santiago; to propagate an established, albeit apocryphal, tribute to the monastery in the saint’s name; and to market the monastery and shrine of the saint to attract pilgrims and increase donations. I would argue that these three measures were likely not sufficient to relieve the considerable economic and political problems that affected the monastery, his order and the secular priesthood during this period. As mentioned earlier, the crusades against Muslims both in the Eastern Mediterranean and Spain were siphoning money away from monasteries. Given this historical context, it is plausible that Berceo recognized that writing texts that invoked San Millán and Santiago, two “matamoros” saints connected with the re-conquest of Muslim Spain, would spur support for more crusades which, in turn, might siphon even more

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<sup>274</sup> Marden, C. Carroll, *Poema de Fernán González: Texto Crítico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1904), XXXI.

money away from his monastery and Benedictine Order. It is noteworthy that Berceo wrote MNS without mentioning Muslims in a single verse. In fact, only one of his 25 tales, *The Jews of Toledo*, contains an oblique reference to the Muslim presence: a mention of the Mozarabs, or Christians living in Muslim-controlled Spain. “Udieron esta voz toda la clerecía, e muchos de los legos de la mozaravía.” (“All the clergy heard this voice and many of the laymen in the Mozarab congregation”)[421ab]. I will discuss the significance of this label when I analyze this miracle below.

Instead of focusing on Muslims as the obvious enemies of Christian Spain, Berceo targets a different enemy, the heretics with money: Jews. His decision to write a vernacular version of the Latin Marian miracles allowed him to use the most powerful anti-Jewish religious figure available at that time, the Virgin Mary. By the sixth century, Mary had already developed into a force against Jews in narratives about her miraculous death. These texts invariably described in detail her sorrows during the crucifixion coupled with her great hatred of Jews, which eventually spawned harsh anti-Jewish polemics. “The emergent traditions on Mary’s end display the thrust of polemic that animated early discussions of her. The telling of her death attracted a persistent anti-Jewish emphasis...”<sup>275</sup> In a Sahidic Coptic homily from the mid-sixth century, for example, the writer, Pseudo-Evodius of Rome, tenderly describes the Virgin Mary’s Dormition, in which she doesn’t die but

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<sup>275</sup> Rubin, Mary, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 57.

falls asleep, and then, after praising her during the prologue, he begins an acerbic attack on the Jews.

“Where are you now, O ignorant Jew, the murderer of his Lord? This one who does evil to those who do good to him, let him come here today and be ashamed of himself, hearing all of these testimonies, which those of his own people have previously prophesied concerning this Virgin and her blessed birthing.”<sup>276</sup>

Throughout the Middle Ages, Mary became a virulent anti-Jewish icon in literature, painting and sculpture. In the thirteenth century, authors such as Berceo and the French Benedictine monk, Gautier de Coinci, wrote vernacular versions of the miracle tales that depicted Jews much more negatively than the original Latin versions – a trend that was congruent with a growing perception in Christian Europe that Jews were a threat to Christian communities.<sup>277</sup> By refashioning the miracle tales to target Jews, Berceo deflected attention from the Dominican-led reform measures plaguing the Benedictines and simultaneously underscored the idea that the Christian kingdoms in Spain would be better served if they focused their attention on the Jews, who were more dangerous heretics than lax clergy, and ones with a great deal of money. In this way, MNS, particularly viewed in light of Berceo’s two aforementioned anti-Muslim texts, becomes more of a proto-national text than either ARM or PMC. Berceo gives excessive devotion to the rising Christian nation-state, and he imagines that nation-state as devoid of all Jews and Muslims

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<sup>276</sup> Shoemaker, Stephen J., *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 400.

<sup>277</sup> Rubin, *Mother of God*, 228-235.

and consequently of Jewish and Islamic threats.

*Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora*

MNS was one of many versions of Marian miracle tales that surfaced in Europe during the thirteenth century, or the “Century of Mary,”<sup>278</sup> and placed Berceo within the context of the Cult of the Virgin, a Mariological movement of devotion and veneration. The movement reached its height in the thirteenth century and was used to educate the masses about Mary’s elevated role in the Church as the Virgin Mother of God and the revered Queen of heaven.<sup>279</sup> Besides MNS, there are many miracle tales from this era including Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and from France, the aristocrat Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Notre Dame*, the Church reformer Jacques de Vitry's *Sermones vulgares*, and the minstrel Rutebeuf’s poetic Marian tales, *Le sacristain et la femme au chevalier* and *Le miracle de Théophile*. Each author used Latin versions from the prior two centuries and adapted these versions to suit his intended audience.<sup>280</sup> Determining what Latin source Berceo used is important in order to analyze how and to what extent he altered his tales in MNS.

There were dozens of Marian tales in Latin that were produced for a monastic audience and circulated throughout Europe at this time. Two versions very similar to MNS have survived: a Latin manuscript (MS Thott 128), *Miraculæ*

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<sup>278</sup> Others versions include the *Miracles de Nostre Dame* by Gautier de Coincy and *Cantigas de Santa María*, by Alfonso X.

<sup>279</sup> Mount, Richard Terry and Annette Grant Cash, Trans., *Miracles of Our Lady* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 9.

<sup>280</sup> For a comparative study, see Flory, *Marian Representations in the Miracle Tales of Thirteenth Century Spain and France*.

*Beate Marie Virginia*, found in the Royal Library of Copenhagen by Richard Becker in 1910 which contains 53 Marian miracles and all but one of Berceo's miracles; and the Latin MS 110 discovered in 1971 by Richard Kinkade in the Spanish National Library, which has a similar writing style as Berceo's in certain miracles, most notably *The Pregnant Abbess*.<sup>281</sup> The fact that Berceo's MNS contains twenty-four of the first twenty-eight miracles of Thott 128 in the same order has led most scholars to believe Thott 128, or a copy of it, was Berceo's likely source. Thott miracles 16, 22, 25, and 26 do not appear in MNS.<sup>282</sup> Berceo's twenty-fifth miracle, "La iglesia despojada/The Robbed Church," is not found in Thott nor in any other extant miracle collection, leading scholars to believe that it is an original creation of Berceo.

Berceo wrote MNS between 1246 and 1252. In his writing he creates more than a simple translation into Spanish. He takes the concise and plain Latin prose and transforms it into *cuaderna via*, a sophisticated, learned verse form of the *mester de clerecia*, or "craft of the clergy" poetic mode, that consists of four-line stanzas, 14 syllables to each line, and each one broken by a caesura. He uses colorful, rustic and sometimes coarse vernacular to describe the trials and tribulations of the faithful yet sinful Christians – most of whom are clergy – in his Marian tales, and amplifies and dramatizes the original tales, infusing his poetry with lively characters as well as more detailed descriptions of places. In the next section, I will compare and contrast the Latin versions, using Thott, with MNS, in an attempt to establish

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<sup>281</sup> Timmons, Patricia and Boenig, Robert. *Gonzalo de Berceo and the Latin Miracles of the Virgin* (Farnham, GB: Ashgate, 2013), 5.

<sup>282</sup> Timmons and Boenig, *Gonzalo de Berceo and the Latin Miracles*, 5-6.

both what Berceo changed and why he did so. First, I will explore the differences between the Latin version<sup>283</sup> and Berceo's version in the four miracles that contain Jewish characters: Miracles XVI *El Judiezno*/The Jewish Boy, XVIII *Los Judíos de Toledo*/The Jews of Toledo, XXIII *La Deuda Pagada*/The Paid Debt, and XXV, *Milagro de Teófilo*/Miracle of Theophilus. Then I will investigate these differences in three other miracles.

### Miracles XVI (*El Judiezno*/The Jewish Boy)

*El Judiezno* is a tale that describes how a young Jewish boy attends Church on Easter with his Christian friends, receives Holy Communion and is transfixed by an image of the Virgin Mary above the altar. When he returns home, he tells his father what he's done, and the father becomes angry and throws the boy in a furnace. Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the boy remains safe from the flames. The neighbors, hearing the wailing of the boy's mother, arrive at the house and are astonished the boy remains unharmed. They pull him out of the furnace and throw his father in the oven. The father dies and all the villagers, apparently both Christians and Jews, praise the Virgin Mary.

In the Latin version, the text states in the beginning that the child was "a certain boy from the race of the Hebrews who was being instructed in his letters with them (the Christian boys)" whereas in Berceo's version, the Jewish boy wanders into the school with the sense of longing to join the Christian boys at play.

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<sup>283</sup> For my study of the Latin version and for all translations from the original Latin, I use Timmons and Boenig's book.

[354] Tenié en essa villa, ca era menester,  
Un clérigo escuela de cantar e leer;  
Tenié muchos criados a letras aprender,  
Fijos de bonos omnes que querién más valer.

Venié un judiezno, natural del logar,  
Por sabor de los niños, por con ellos jogar;  
acogiénlo los otros, no li fazién pesar,  
avién con elli todos sabor de deportar.

[English translation]

[354] “In that city, since it was necessary,  
a cleric has a school of singing and reading;  
he had many pupils learning letters,  
sons of good men who wanted to rise in esteem.”

A little Jewish boy, native of the town, came  
for the pleasure of playing with the children.  
The others welcomed him, they caused him no grief;  
They all took delight in playing with him.

Berceo removes the idea of “convivencia” in the Latin version, which has Christian and Jewish children learning together, and adjusts his version with a school only for Christian boys “to create an impression of two separate Jewish and Christian worlds through the longing of the Jewish child who is accepted by the Christian children.”<sup>284</sup>

The school portrayed by Berceo reflects the Church’s growing concern in the thirteenth century to instruct both the poor youth and illiterate clerics – a concern which was manifest in the eleventh canon of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 which mandated that every church in a city or village create a school run by a cleric

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<sup>284</sup> Timmons, Patricia, “Convivencia and Conversion in Gonzalo de Berceo’s ‘El Judiezno’” In *Marginal voices: Studies in Converso Literature of Medieval and Golden Age Spain*. Edited by Amy Aronson-Friedman, Gregory B. Kaplan (Boston: Brill, 2012), 97.



for the *curam animarum* or care of the souls of poor boys and illiterate clergy.<sup>285</sup>

The fact that the Jewish boy in MNS does not officially attend the school but joined in innocently and of his own free will was, I maintain, a calculated change by Berceo to increase both the father's rage and the boy's innocence in taking the host, described by Berceo as "comulgó con los otros el cordero sin lana" ("the woolless lamb took Communion with the others") [356d]. As Dutton points out, Berceo removes from the Latin version the role of the "ignorante presbytero" who unwittingly gives the host to the boy, in order to emphasize the Jewish boy's natural and unplanned yearning and also his free will and innocence.<sup>286</sup> "The child's spontaneous desire adds both ingenuousness and volition to his character, making the act of receiving Holy Communion, and thus converting to Christianity, appear natural and sincere."<sup>287</sup>

When the boy is asked by his father why he returned home late, Berceo transforms the innocent "woolless lamb" into a more mature boy who is proud of his actions in the Christian church and, amazingly, is also aware of and seemingly versed in Christian doctrine.

[360] "Padre," dixo el nino, "non vos negare nada,  
ca con los christianiellos fui grand madurgada;

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<sup>285</sup> Fourth Lateran Council of 1215; ([http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1215-1215,\\_Concilium\\_Lateranense\\_III,\\_Documenta\\_LT.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1215-1215,_Concilium_Lateranense_III,_Documenta_LT.pdf))

11<sup>th</sup> Canon ("De magistris scholasticis") "Sane metropolitana Ecclesia theologum nihilominus habeat qui sacerdotes et alios in sacra pagina doceat et in his præsertim informet quæ ad curam animarum spectare noscuntur."

<sup>286</sup> Dutton, *Gonzalo de Berceo. Obras completas II*, 129.

<sup>287</sup> Timmons, "Convivencia and Conversion", 98.

con ellos odi missa ricamientre cantada,  
e colmulgue con ellos de la ostia sagrada.”

[English translation]

“Father,” said the boy, “I will not deny anything,  
for I was with the little Christians early this morning;  
with them I heard Mass splendidly sung,  
and with them I partook of the Sacred Host.”

The boy’s use of “ostia sagrada” is in line with the Fourth Lateran Council’s First Canon, which defines and promulgates the idea of sacred “transubstantiation” or the actual changing of the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood, a doctrine that ultimately became dogma in 1264.<sup>288</sup> Many Christians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries refused to accept the dogma that the host and wine were something more than symbols of Christ’s body and blood – a refusal that the Church branded an act of heresy.<sup>289</sup> It is noteworthy that Berceo also discusses the doctrine in his *Del Sacrificio de la Misa*.

[185] “Dízeli: “Hostia pura, sancta, non manzellada”  
ca fue tal Jhesu Christo: nol falleció nada,  
puro fue sin pecado, sancto, cosa provada,  
nin tacha nin manziella non fue en Él fallada.

La natura primera toda es demudada,  
Ya non es pan nin vino, nin de lo que fue nada;  
Cuerpo de Dios es todo, cosa deificada,  
En Christo cae todo, esta bendición dada.”

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<sup>288</sup> Timmons, Patricia, *Law, Sex and Anti-Semitism in Gonzalo de Berceo's Milagros de Nuestra Senora*. University of Texas at Austin. Dissertation (2004): 135.

<sup>289</sup> Dooley, John, *History of Romanism: From the Earliest Corruptions of Christianity to the Present* (New York: E. Walker, 1845), 337-8.

[English Translation]

He says, "Pure, holy and unblemished host,"  
for such was Jesus Christ, in every way perfect;  
he was proven to be sinless, pure and holy  
with never a blemish or stain found upon Him.

Its primary nature is totally changed:  
it is nothing like it was, neither bread nor wine;  
it is fully the body of God, a substance deified,  
a blessing that is given entirely through Christ.

Berceo increases the anti-Semitic tone by lacing this tale with negative descriptions of the Jewish father, which are not found in the Latin version. These include "diablado/bedeviled man" (361), "fazie figuras malas como demoniado/made evil faces like someone demon-possessed" (361), "can traidor/traacherous dog" (362), "loco peccador/mad sinner" (362), and "Mal venga a tal padre que tal faze a fijo!" (Ill come to such a father who does this to his son!). Saugnieux suggests the father's angry reaction to his son receiving communion at a Christian church is based purely on religion and underscores a longstanding Christian prejudice against Jews, namely that they are ignorant, obstinate to change, intolerant toward Christianity, and ultimately receive their just punishment: insulted and condemned to hell.<sup>290</sup>

Berceo paints a picture of the father who embodies, according to Dutton, "un sadismo frío" ("a cold sadism") which prompts him to not think twice about tossing his son into the fiery furnace.<sup>291</sup> In the Latin version, the father throws the boy in

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<sup>290</sup> Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas*, 85.

<sup>291</sup> Dutton, *Los Milagros*, 130.

the furnace, whereas in MNS, Berceo amplifies his negative portrayal of the father by having him first prepare the fire and stoke it up before throwing the boy into the flames. This premeditation portrays the father as more diabolical and adds suspense to the tale for audiences, who would have likely recognized the stereotype of the Jew as child killers.<sup>292</sup> After the boy is thrown into the furnace, his mother begins to scream, drawing a large crowd of people to the house. In the Latin version, Christians seize the Jewish father and punish him by throwing him in the fire. In MNS, however, Berceo describes the crowd as “judíos e christianos” who arrive and ask the boy how he survived the fire. When he explains that the lady in the golden chair with her son in her arms, sitting at the altar, defended him, Berceo writes:

[370– 371] Entendieron qe era sancta María ésta,  
que lo defendió ella de tan fiera tempesta;  
cantaron grandes laudes, fizieron rica festa,  
metieron est miraclo entre la otra gesta.

Prisieron al judío, al falsso desleal,  
al que a su fijuelo fiziera tan grand mal,  
legáronli las manos con un fuerte dogal,  
dieron con elli entro en el fuego cabdal.

[English translation]

They understood that this was Saint Mary,  
that She defended him from such a fierce storm;  
they sang great lauds, they had a lavish celebration,  
they placed this miracle among the other deeds.

They seized the Jew, the false disloyal one,  
the one who had done such great wrong to his little son;  
they tied his hands with a strong rope  
and they cast him into the great fire.

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<sup>292</sup> Timmons, “Convivencia and Conversion”, 104.

After he labels the group as including both Jews and Christians, Berceo then uses “they”, leaving it unclear if the Jews in the crowd recognize Mary’s miracle and participate in punishing the boy’s father.

Timmons argues that Berceo wanted a mixed crowd to draw more attention to the unifying power of the Virgin Mary. “The consensus and unity of Jews and Christians is a compelling event. The Jewish witnesses’ identification of the Virgin Mary from the child’s description serves to bolster her renown and validate the miracle, as if to say that even the Jews acknowledge the (Jewish) mother of Christ. This recognition might even imply that they convert at this moment.” In the Latin version, the miracle of the boy uninjured by the flames is not enough to convert the Jews to Christianity. Not until they see the flames consume and kill the father do they realize the power of the Virgin Mary and convert to Christianity “et ex illa die in Dei fide ferventes permaserunt” (“and from that day on remained fervently in the faith of God.”<sup>293</sup> Timmons persuasively argues that the Jews’ conversion in the Latin stems more from fear of the Christian mob killing one of their own, whereas in MNS, Berceo paints a picture of the Jews being moved by the Virgin’s mercy toward the boy. “Thus, in Berceo’s version of this miracle, the recognition of the Virgin Mary by Jews and Christians alike fuses them and they act as one to celebrate the miracle and punish the father.”<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Timmons and Boenig, *Gonzalo de Berceo and the Latin Miracles*, 156.

<sup>294</sup> Timmons, “Convivencia and Conversion”, 109.

While in this tale, the villain may seem to deserve his fate due to his cruel treatment of his son, nonetheless, an analysis of his other tales will show that for Berceo, the solution to the 'Jewish problem' is simple: conversion or death. Jews should be shown the path to salvation and, if they are not obstinate in their beliefs, they will convert and live peacefully in Christian Spain. The young Jewish boy converts by taking the host. Berceo does not detail the fate of the boy's mother, but he describes her great sorrow after the boy is thrown into the oven that she symbolizes the Virgin Mary herself. In this way, there's an understanding that she likely would convert like her son had. For those Jews like the father, who ignore the true path to salvation, their fate is death, which Berceo illustrates at the end of his tale. The poet describes in detail how the crowd seizes "al falso desleal/the false disloyal one" and ties his hands with a strong rope before casting him into the fires of the furnace and he is burnt to ashes and embers while the crowd yells insults and curses at him. Instead of "Pater Noster", their final offering to him was vile, Berceo notes (373a), and the poet adds that the man's final payment will be with the devil, intimating the eternal punishment for the Jewish man's action. The funeral scene is original to Berceo and on the surface seems to underscore, as Saignieux contends, the author's sharply anti-Jewish stance. "(E)s expresión de violento odio antisemita. Berceo no muestra ninguna tolerancia, no tiene ninguna piedad; para él, los judíos son hombres falsos que niegan la verdad de la venida de Cristo y deben ser condenados y hasta insultados; es inútil rezar por la salvación de su alma, ya que no

quieren salvarse; el buen cristiano tiene que evitar su contacto porque son seres diabólicos.”<sup>295</sup>

Significant for this study is the fact that Berceo creates strong parallels between the young Jewish boy and Christ. The action in *El niño Judío* in MNS occurs during the Easter season, when, like Christ, the Jewish boy partakes in the Eucharist (based on the Last Supper), is killed by Jews (or a Jew), is visited by the Virgin Mary, and is “resurrected” from death to preach Christianity and to lead lost souls, in this case, the Jews in the village, to salvation through conversion. In the case of the boy’s father, his death is punishment for not only throwing his son in the fire but, more importantly, for being a heretic and rejecting Christianity. It is telling that Berceo ends the piece with the murder of the Jewish boy’s father followed by verses that endorse his punishment while underscoring the Virgin Mary’s retribution toward anyone who rejects her or her son.

[374] Tal es Sancta María, que es de gracia plena,  
Por servicio de . . . Gloria, por deservicio pena;  
a los bonos da trigo, a los malos avena,  
los unos van en Gloria, los otros en cadena.

[English translation]

[374] Such is Holy Mary, who is full of grace  
For service she gives glory, for disservice punishment;  
To the good she gives wheat, to the evil oats;  
The good go to glory, the others go in chains.

Why did Berceo eliminate the passage from the Latin miracle referring to the

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<sup>295</sup> Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas*, 85-86.

conversion of the Jews? By removing that passage, Berceo keeps a sharp focus on the father, whom he has demonized as a heretic and threat to Christianity. In the tale, the father is confronted with the possibility of embracing Christianity just as his son had done. He not only rejects it, but attempts to destroy it by killing his son. Therefore, he, as a “falso desleal” (false, disloyal one), is punished severely. His punishment is in line with secular and religious laws in Medieval Spain, including the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which mandated that authorities “excommunicate and anathematize every heresy that raises against the holy, orthodox and Catholic faith” and that all heretics – and those who sheltered or defended them – should be handed over to secular rulers who will punish them and confiscate their property. It is important to note that heresy in Medieval Iberia often was linked to Jews and Judaism. Often both religious and secular laws addressed heretics and Jews in the same section. For example, Title II of the Twelfth Book of laws in the seventh century Visigothic Code, or *Liber iudiciorum*, is titled: *Concerning the Eradication of the Errors of all Heretics and Jews.*<sup>296</sup> These laws employed harsh, anti-Semitic language against Jews, calling them “evil” and “wicked,” and prohibiting them from participating in a host of activities, including Jewish customs and religious rituals such as Passover and circumcision. Jews found guilty of not adhering to these codes were condemned to be stoned to death or, like the Jewish father in *el Judiezno*, burned to death.<sup>297</sup> For the next six centuries, many of the anti-Semitic laws in the Visigothic Code were adopted to municipal codes, or

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<sup>296</sup> Samuel Parsons Scott, Trans and Ed., *The Visigothic Code: (Forum judicum)*. The Library of Iberian Resources Online. ([libro.uca.edu/vcode/visigoths.htm](http://libro.uca.edu/vcode/visigoths.htm))

<sup>297</sup> Parsons Scott, *ibid.*



*fueros*, and promulgated throughout Christian Spain, until 1241, when Fernando III of Castile created a general code of laws, the *Fuero Juzgo*, which was essentially a vernacular translation of the Visigothic Code, including its section dealing with heresy and Jews, “Titul de los Hereges, e de los Judios, y de las sectas”.<sup>298</sup> These secular laws were preceded by a series of Papal bulls and other secular legislations during the eleventh and twelfth centuries directed at a growing number of heresies perceived to be grave threats to Christianity in Europe.<sup>299</sup> In 1197, a decree by Pedro II of Aragon ordered convicted heretics be burned to death, making him “the latest to display a tradition of ferocity on the part of secular rulers towards those accused of heresy.”<sup>300</sup> His decree harkened back to the burnings and other executions of heretics at Orléans in 1022, at Milan in 1028 and at Goslar in 1052 – all of which were reinforced by Innocent III’s decree in 1199 which held heretics liable to the same penalties as people convicted of treason under Roman law.<sup>301</sup> Heresy investigations became wider in scope and resulted in the investigation of lapsed Jewish converts and the burning of works by Maimonides in Paris and Montpellier in 1234 and the Talmud in Paris six years later.<sup>302</sup>

Like the secular codes, the Church often used “Jews” and “heretics” interchangeably during the eleventh and twelfth centuries: heretics were Jews, and

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<sup>298</sup> *Fuero Juzgo en latín y castellano, cotejado con los más antiguos y preciosos codices: (Madrid, 1815)*  
Online:

<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/80272752878794052754491/ima0001.htm>

<sup>299</sup> Moore, R.I., *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 8-10.

<sup>300</sup> Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 8-9.

<sup>301</sup> Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 8-9.

<sup>302</sup> Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 8-9.

Jews were guilty of promoting heresy and producing heretical works.<sup>303</sup> “Jews were accused of harboring heretics, encouraging them, and even of leading orthodox Christians into heresy.”<sup>304</sup> Such crimes, as detailed in both the secular and religious laws, generally carried a penalty of death, unless the king interceded on behalf of Jews, which was common in Medieval Spain. Most kings claimed to the clergy, the nobles and the towns that they alone had jurisdiction over Jews, whom they spoke of with a sense of ownership.<sup>305</sup> In theory, “Jews were to be tried in the royal courts, whatever the charge, whether the plaintiff be cleric, noble or burgher.”<sup>306</sup> In practice, however, many Jews endured trials and sentencing by authorities outside the royal court, either seigniorial or clerical, in both civil and criminal matters.<sup>307</sup> Berceo embraced the concept of “extra-royal authority” over the Jews and placed it in both Miracle XVI, *el Judiezno*, and Miracle XVIII, *Los Judíos de Toledo*, where he details the mob action of townspeople who kill Jews for what Berceo deems are unpardonable acts of heresy.

#### Miracle XVIII: *Los Judíos de Toledo*/The Jews of Toledo

In the miracle of *Los Judíos de Toledo*, Berceo invokes a ritual murder in which a group of Jews crucify a wax replica of Jesus. The voice of the Virgin Mary announces deed to a group of Christian parishioners celebrating the Feast of the

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<sup>303</sup> Berger, David, “Christian Heresy and Jewish Polemic in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.” In *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct., 1975): 287-303.

<sup>304</sup> Berger, Christian Heresy, 287.

<sup>305</sup> Neuman, Abraham A., *The Jews in Spain: Their Social, Political and Cultural Life During the Middle Ages* (London: Octagon Books, 1969), 15.

<sup>306</sup> Neuman, *The Jews in Spain*, 15.

<sup>307</sup> Neuman, *The Jews in Spain*, 16.

Assumption. Spurred on by her words, the congregation marches into the Jewish quarter and, guided by both Mary and Jesus, find in the home of a rabbi a wax image of Christ crucified with nails and with a great wound in its side. Outraged, the Christians execute all the Jews they can catch.

The story reflects common accusations made against Jews during the Middle Ages: ritual murder of Christians or defilement of Christian icons in secret ceremonies. The accusations, which became more prevalent during the Middle Ages, were a political myth propagated in order to justify the rampant persecution of Jews.<sup>308</sup> In the thirteenth century Alfonso X prohibited Jews from making waxen images of the crucifixion in his *Siete Partidas*.<sup>309</sup> These claims against the Jews, made as early as the first century, were part of a larger series of allegations that claimed Jews stole consecrated hosts for witchcraft, sacrificed young Christian children and took their hearts for sorcery or their blood to make unleavened bread for Passover.<sup>310</sup> According to Trachtenberg, such claims became more prominent in Europe during and after the second Crusade (1145-1149 AD) when rumors of ritual Jewish crimes spread among Christian communities who persecuted and killed

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<sup>308</sup> Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas*, 87.

<sup>309</sup> Burns, Robert I. Editor. *Las Siete Partidas*. Vol. I-V. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), VII, 24, Law 2 "Et porque oyemos decir que en algunos lugares los judíos ficieron et facen el día del Viernes Santo remembranza de la pasión de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo en manera de escarnio, furtando los niños et poniéndolos en la cruz, o haciendo imágenes de cera et crucificándolas quando los niños non pueden haber, mandamos que, si fama fuere daquí adelante que en algún lugar de nuestro señorío tal cosa sea fecha, si se pudiere averiguar, que todos aquellos que se acercaren en aquel fecho, que sean presos et recabdados et aduchos ante el rey; et después que el sopiera la verdad, débelos matar muy haviltadamente, quantos quier que sean."

<sup>310</sup> Feldman, Louis H. *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, N.J.:Princeton University Press, 1993), 126-7.

Jews.<sup>311</sup> From 1145 to 1200, blood libel allegations lead to dozens of Jews being massacred in England, France and Germany. Stories of ritual Jewish crimes are found in Spain as well, including Saint Dominguito del Val, a choirboy from Zaragoza who allegedly was murdered by Jews around 1250. Another Christian boy was allegedly crucified by Jews in Sepulveda in 1468, resulting in the execution of 16 Jews and a general attack on the city's Jewish quarter, which killed dozens more.<sup>312</sup>

This Marian tale of ritual murder is found in Latin, but as we've seen with other miracles in MNS, Berceo significantly altered his vernacular version, particularly with regard to his negative depiction of the Jews. For example, in the Latin version, the Virgin Mary's voice in the Church says "esse iudaice gentis perfidia!" ("the treachery of the race of the Jews") and "ovilia manet et regnat insania iudaice gentis! Que meum unicum Filium, lumen et salutem fidelium, iam secundo conviciatur et crucis supplicio mortificare conatur." ("The insanity of the Jewish race reigns and now once more mocks my only Son, the light and salvation of the faithful, and endeavors to kill him [again] by the torment of the cross!")<sup>313</sup> By contrast, in Berceo's version, the Virgin Mary says, "la gent de judaísmo, sorda e cegajosa, nuncua contra don Christo no fo más porfidiosa" ("The Jewish people, deaf and blind, have never been so wicked to Lord Jesus!") [416bc], "Pueblo tan descosido, que tal mal comedie, qui al tal li fiziesse nul tuerto non farie" ("A people so vile, who would do such evil to such a one as they did, would commit any

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<sup>311</sup> Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 124-131.

<sup>312</sup> Soyer, Francois. *Popularizing Anti-Semitism in Early Modern Spain and its Empire: Francisco de Torrejoncillo, Centinela contra Judíos (1674)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 229.

<sup>313</sup> Timmons and Boenig, *Gonzalo de Berceo and the Latin Miracles*, 44.

offense”) [418cd], and “Los que mala nazieron, falsos e traidores” (“Those in a bad hour were born, false and treacherous”) [419a]. Berceo expands on the Latin original, adding more negative descriptors such as “vile” and “wicked” and includes theologically-based accusations against Jews for being religiously obstinate, or “deaf and blind,” refusing to accept the Christian faith.

It is noteworthy that in the Latin version, the Christians discover a wax image that had not yet been crucified, “quasi viventem ad christiane promissionis et fidei deductam sputis, colaphis ac morte crucis perimi desiderabant.” (“as if it were alive. It had been knocked down with spittle and punches on account of the Christian promise and faith, and they were intending to crucify it”), prompting the law-abiding Christians to conform to legal statutes and hand over “those same Jews to be executed.”<sup>314</sup> In Berceo’s version, however, the waxen image “sedié crucificado, con grandes clavos preso, grand plaga al costado” (“was crucified, held with large nails, and had a great wound in its side” [427cd]). Moreover, the Christians did not follow the existing laws and hand the Jews over to the proper authorities to be punished. Instead, “recabdáronlos luego” (“They executed them then”) [428c], delivering an extra-royal authority, mob punishment that Berceo claims was just: “cual fazién tal prisieron,” (they got what they deserved”) [428d]. Unlike the Latin version, in which the scene of the ritual murder occurs in a secret synagogue used by many Jews, Berceo places the scene of the crucifixion “enna casa del raví más onrado” (“in a house of a most honorable rabbi”) (427) to show the incident was not an anomaly

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<sup>314</sup> Timmons and Boenig, *Gonzalo de Berceo and the Latin Miracles*, 45.

conducted by wayward Jews but rather was led by a respected Jewish religious leader who guided his followers. In this way, Berceo's tale, like the Latin version, implicates not just a few Jews but all Jews. "El Milagro XVII no ataca ya a un judío aislado, sino a la religión mosaica. La escena se desarrolla en casa del "rabí más honrado", de modo que el crimen ritual aparece como algo organizado por el clero judaico."<sup>315</sup>

It is also noteworthy that in comparison to the Latin version, Berceo significantly elaborates Mary's pleas. In the Latin miracle, the voice of Mary appears in the church and briefly laments his death on the cross, killed by "the treacherous Jewish people," and then adds that "the Jewish race reigns and now once more mocks my only Son, the light and salvation of the faithful, and endeavors to kill him [again]."<sup>316</sup> Berceo, in contrast, has the Virgin Mary deliver a longer, more emotional plea to the congregation that underscores her sorrow both for the passion and death of her Son at the hands of the Jews as well as for the current actions of the Jews in Toledo. Berceo goes into great detail describing her pain: "tajava essa cuita a mí las assaduras" ("That sorrow cut to my heart") [417c]; "Ni se dolién del Fijo, que mal non merecié, nin de la Madre suya, que tal cuita vidié" ("They felt nothing for the Son who deserved no harm nor for His mother who saw such affliction") [418ab]; and "Otra vez crucifigan al mi caro Fijuelo. Non entendrié ninguno cuánd grand es mi duelo" ("They are again crucifying my son. Nobody could know how great is my sorrow") [420ab]. Berceo appears to use Mary's grief-stricken words in a calculated

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<sup>315</sup> Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas*, 87.

<sup>316</sup> Timmons and Boenig, *Gonzalo de Berceo and the Latin Miracles*, 44.

appeal to the emotional side of the Christians in his tale, as well as that of the Christian audience reading or listening to a the miracle, with the goal to “provocar el odio de los cristianos, suscitar, mediante la evocación de un hecho histórico pasado, reacciones sentimentales en el pueblo que justifiquen el antisemitismo presente.”<sup>317</sup> He ratchets up the fury of the archbishop who orders his parishioners to seek out the Jews and “de esta malfetría derecho tomaredes” (“exact justice for this offense”) [424d]. After they execute the Jews for the ritual murder, Berceo condones the mob action: “qual fazién al prisieron, grado al Criador!” [They got what they deserve, thanks be to the Creator!] [428d]. It is significant that Berceo shows no pity for the indiscriminate slaughter of the Jews in the final verses, as if he “considera la venganza del pueblo como expresión de la justicia divina.”<sup>318</sup>

429    Fueron bien recabdados    los que prender podieron,  
           Dieronlis yantar mala,    cual ellos merecieron  
           Y fizieron “Tu autem”,    mala muerte prisieron,  
           Despues lo entendieron    que mal seso ficieron.

430    Qui a Sancta Maria    quisiere afrontar,  
           como estos ganaron    assin deve ganar;

[English translation]

429    Those who could be caught were executed.  
           They were given a bad meal, which they deserved.  
           There they said “Tu autem”, they received a vile death.  
           Afterwards they understood they had committed madness!

430    He who would affront Holy Mary  
           Should be rewarded as these were rewarded.

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<sup>317</sup> Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas*, 87.

<sup>318</sup> Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas*, 88.

Here, there is no mercy. No intercession by the Virgin Mary to save any lost souls who may have erred. Mary's mediation carries only startling quick and violent retribution against a group. Berceo depicts the Jews as not just temporarily lost but as interminably lost, corrupt enemies of Christ. It is significant that Berceo refers to the Christian congregation as Mozarabs ("muchos de los legos de la mozaravia"[421b]), Christians who had lived under Muslim rule and did not convert to Islam. These Christians were able to identify the Virgin's voice and understand the meaning of her sorrowful words, in contrast with the Jews, of whom not one understood "cuánd grand es el mi duelo" (420b). In these verses, Berceo claims that Christians, even those who had lived under Muslim rule, were not blind to the Christian truth, unlike Jews.

Berceo's adaptation of this miracle from the Latin version, including the caustic descriptions of Jews and the way in which the Christians use religious, not secular, law to judge and slaughter Jews, highlights the poet's anti-Jewish stance: "para él son herejes, infieles, endemoniados. Se combinan aquí del antisemitismo popular con los mitos de antisemitismo clerical." Berceo deploys a rabid anti-Judaism to insist on a sharp distinction between Christians and Jews, whom he argues should receive completely different treatment by both secular and religious authorities.

#### Miracle XXIII *La Deuda Pagada*/The Paid Debt

In the miracle of *La Deuda Pagada*, The Paid Debt, Berceo describes a Christian merchant whose spendthrift ways send him into debt. He accepts a loan



from a Jewish businessman and guarantees it with an image of the Virgin Mary and Jesus. After making money overseas, he is unable to repay the loan on the appointed day, so he put the money in a chest, threw it into the sea, and prayed to the Virgin to guide the chest to the moneylender. The next day the chest arrives, and the moneylender hides it under his bed. When the merchant returns months later, the moneylender demands repayment but is rebuked by a voice coming from a crucifix which reveals where he had hidden the money. Humiliated and terrified, the moneylender and his friends convert and the merchant and his fellow Christians celebrate.

The stereotypical Jewish usurer, as discussed in the chapter on PMC, was simultaneously loathed and loved, as he was a necessary evil in society, according to Trachtenberg. "Here was a vicious circle from which there was no escape for the Jew. Society conspired to make him a usurer – and usury exposed him to the cupidity of feudal overlords and to the embittered hatred of the people."<sup>319</sup> Usury was classified as a crime along with sorcery, homicide, and fornication and Pope Alexander III prohibited it in 1179 under threat of excommunication. More relevant to MNS is Canon 67 of the Fourth Lateran Council which prohibited exploitative usury by Jews against Christians because it oppressed Christians and benefitted greedy Jews. Jewish usurers guilty of charging excessive interest were to be removed from contact with Christians until they repaid the interest and paid to the

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<sup>319</sup> Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 188-9.

Church the Christian's tithes. It is noteworthy that Canon 67 also prohibits the Christian merchant in MNS from conducting business with the Jewish moneylender.

Berceo's depiction of the Christian merchant and the moneylender differ significantly from their portrayals in the Latin version. In the Latin version, the Christian merchant spends money lavishly for fame and prestige before losing all of his money. In MNS, Berceo makes the Christian merchant a more sympathetic figure, painting him as generous ("de muy grand corazón") and charitable with his money, loaning it without interest ("dávalos en baldón"), as Diz points out.<sup>320</sup> Another interesting aspect, which Dutton and Saugnieux mention, is that at the beginning of the miracle Berceo shows less anti-Jewish sentiment than the author of the Latin version, although he later paints the Jewish character more negatively. In the earlier stanzas of Berceo's version – 637-641 verses original to the Benedictine author - the moneylender is portrayed as friendly and polite, receiving the merchant, asking him how he is, agreeing to loan whatever the merchant needs as long as there is surety on the loan.

In contrast, there is no warm greeting in the Latin version, which simply states:

*Sed cum omnino, quod mutuo acceperat, iam et ipsum ei deficeret nec iam, a quo mutuaretur amicu immo christianum invenire valeret, iudeum quondam perdivitem adiit, et, ut ei aliqua mutuo daret, obnixè oravit. At ille: "Faciám – inquit – quod petis, si mihi vadem condignum attuleris." (p. 166)*

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<sup>320</sup> Diz, M. Ana, *Historias de certidumbre: los Milagros de Berceo* (Delaware, Juan de la Cuesta, 1995), 144-5.

But when what he had accepted in a loan had entirely failed him, and now he could not find a Christian friend, from whom he might borrow, he approached a certain rich Jew, and, so he might somehow gain a loan from him, he forcefully pleaded. But that one said, "I will do what you request if you convey to me appropriate surety." (p. 54)

Shortly thereafter, we can see a distinct difference in the depiction of the Jew when the Christian proposes using Christ as a guarantee for the loan. In the Latin version, the Jew replies:

"At ille: "Ihesum – ait – Christum deum esse non credo, sed quia hominem eum justum et prophetam fuisse non dubito, hunc mihi si pro vade dederis, indubitanter accipio." (p. 166)

[and he said, "I do not believe Jesus Christ to be God, but I do not doubt him to be a just man and prophet. If you give this fellow to me for surety, I will doubtless accept him." ] (p. 55)

In contrast, the Jew in Berceo's version praises Christ's character considerably more and, surprisingly, says he will agree to the loan out of his love for Christ (643 and 644ab).

[643] Díssoli el judío: "Yo creer no podría  
que éssi qu tú dizes que nació de María  
que Dios es; mas fo omne cuerdo e sin follía,  
profeta verdadero; y ál non creería.

[644] Si él te enfiare, yo por la su amor  
Acreer't he lo mío sin otro fiador;

[English translation]

[643] The Jew said to him, "I could not believe  
that He of whom you speak, born of Mary,

is God, but that He was a wise man and not foolish,  
a true prophet; I would not believe anything else.

[644] If he will back you, I, for His love,  
Will give you a loan without any other guarantor;

It is not clear why Berceo paints the Jewish usurer in such a positive light in this section. Berceo does not initially criticize the fact that the Jew works as a usurer – something looked down upon by both the Christian and Jewish faith. Saugnieux maintains that despite being a usurer, his character would have likely garnered empathy and approval from a Christian audience because of his kindness and respect for the Christian merchant and his religion.<sup>321</sup> Biglieri accurately points out, however, that Berceo seems to underscore the moneylender's way of doing business, one that seemingly employs the money-making credo of "compliment the potential debtor in any way to seal the deal" or what Biglieri considers the duplicity of the Jew – a message that would have been quickly understood by a contemporary audience.<sup>322</sup> As Canon 67 of Fourth Lateran Council claimed, Jews embodied perfidy and, therefore, were not to be trusted.

At this point in the poem, there is an abrupt change in the Jew's attitude and his dialogue becomes more insulting of Christ as a viable guarantor.

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<sup>321</sup> Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas*, 99.

<sup>322</sup> Biglieri, Anibal A., *Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora de Gonzalo de Berceo y la elaboración artística de las fuentes latinas*. Dissertation, Syracuse. 1982), 101-2. "Los detalles "gentiles" agregados por Berceo, más que mejorar al personaje lo empeoran, si se interpretan como un índice de la duplicidad del usurero: ya vimos como el comportamiento a que se refiere la copla 637 constituía más bien el comienzo de la estrategia de captación que el judío ha de poner en práctica para asegurarse una víctima que le permitirá –no perdamos de vista que de avaricia y codicia se trata– satisfacer sus deseos de riqueza."

[644c] “Mas seméjame cosa esquivá, sin color,  
E seméjame hascas omne escarnidor.

[645] Yo no sé de cuál guisa lo podiesse aver,  
Ca non es en est mundo, secund el mi creer,  
Non esperes que venga por a ti accorrer,  
Onde otro consejo te conviene prender.”

[English Translation]

[644c] “but it seems a despicable, vile thing,  
and you seem to me almost a mocking man.

[645] I do not now how He could do it,  
Because He is not in this world, as I believe;  
do not hope that He is coming to help you,  
whence it behooves you to get other aid.”

If we compare the Jews’ earlier depiction of Christ, “omne cuerdo” and “profeta verdadero” (643cd) with his description of him here, we see that he not only denigrates Christ, calling him “un gran galeador” (“a great trickster”)[687a], but insults the Virgin Mary saying she is “poco mejor” (“scarcely better”) [687b]. Unsurprisingly, Berceo reacts to his own character’s change by insulting him. The poet calls him “trufan renegado” (“renegade rogue”) [648a], “trufan descreido” (“infidel rogue”)[672d], “trufan alevoso” (“treacherous rogue”)[679a], and “goloso y logrero” (“greedy and usurious”) [681a], and his fellow Jews as “companuela baldera” (“a useless lot”)[674b]. It is important to note that there are no pejorative descriptions in the Latin version, which ends the tale by describing the Jew as dumbfounded and ashamed when his trick is revealed by the talking image of Christ, and he and his family convert.

In MNS, Berceo similarly describes how the Jew becomes sad and afraid, but adds that he and all of his Jewish friends convert to Christianity. The moneylender, Berceo adds, dies “enna fe buena, de la mala tollido.” (696d). Berceo mentions that the miraculous intercession by the Virgin Mary which prompted the Jews’ conversion to the “good faith” was commemorated each year in a town celebration (“muy alta festa”(697c)) with food, wine and dances. It is significant to compare the harsh language used by Berceo to describe the Jew before conversion with the positive language used to describe the festivities after he and his fellow Jews convert. Utilizing his fall-and-redemption theme, Berceo again conveys the message that Jews, who he considers the paragons of heresy, can be saved if they renounce their religion and embrace Christianity. Finally, it is also important to note that the Jewish merchant does not meet the same grim fate as the Jews in the other tales because, I argue, he acknowledged before making the loan, that he respected Christ as an “omne cuerdo” (“wise man” [643c]) and “profeta verdadero” (“true prophet” [643d]) – a deferential stance that is similar to that of Muslims.

Miracle XXV, *Milagro de Teófilo*/Miracle of Theophilus.

In Miracle XXIV, The Miracle of Theophilus, Berceo retells an already well-known tale involving a Christian priest who, after refusing an opportunity to become bishop, becomes jealous of the man who accepted the appointment. With the help of a Jewish intermediary, Theophilus meets the devil and agrees to sell his soul to become bishop. He gains esteem within the church but eventually regrets selling his soul and pleads to the Virgin, begging her to save him. The Jewish

intermediary plays a prominent role in the Latin version and even more so in MNS, appearing in 20 consecutive stanzas. As in the other miracles, Berceo significantly amplifies the story, creating more dialogue and describing the characters, particularly the intermediary, with more color. A comparison of the Latin original with Berceo's version shows just how negatively Berceo portrays the Jewish character.

[Latin original]

Erat denique in eadem civitate hebreus quidam nefandissimus et diabolice artis operator nequissimus, qui iam multos in infidelitatis argumentum et in foveam perdicionis immerserat. Ad quem Theophilus inani gloria succensus, cum ingenti ambicionis desiderio ureretur, noctu accessit eiusque pulsans aditum precabatur. Videns igitur eum Deo odibilis ille hebreus ita mente contritum vocavit eum intra domum dixitque ei: "Cuius rei cause ad me venisti?" At ille pedibus eius provolutus dicebat: "Queso te, adiuva me, quoniam episcopus meus ad obprobrium me adduxit et hec atque hec operatus est in me."

Respondit ei ille execrabilis iudeus: "Proxima nocte hora hac veni ad me et ducam te ad patronum meum et subveniet tibi in quo volueris." Ille autem hec audiens gratulatus ita fecit et sequenti nocte venit ad eum. Nefandus vero hebreus duxit eum ad circum civitatis et dixit ei: "Quodcumque videris aut quemcumque sonum audieris, minime terrearis, signum quoque crucis nullo modo tibi imponas." Illo autem hec ita spondente subito ostendit albos clamidatos cum multitudine candelabrorum clamantes, immedio principem sedentem. Erat enim diabolus et ministri eius. Tenens autem ille infelix hebreus manum Theophili duxit eum ad flagiciosum illud concilium. Et ait ad eum diabolus: "Ut quid nobis hominem hunc adduxisti?"

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<sup>323</sup> Timmons and Boenig, *Gonzalo de Berceo and the Latin Miracles*, 169.

[English translation]

In the end there was in that city a certain Hebrew, most impious and a practitioner of diabolic art, who besides had immersed himself in many things— in deception of faithlessness and in the pitfall of perdition. Kindled with foolish glory, Theophilus was burned up with unnatural desire of ambition. He approached by night and asked to be let in. Therefore, seeing him, that Hebrew hateful to God summoned the one troubled in mind inside the house and said to him, “Why have you come to me?”

And he fell before his feet and said, “I beseech you, help me, because my bishop has brought me to shame and has done such and such to me.” That detestable Jew answered him, “Come to me tomorrow night at this hour, and I will lead you to my patron, and he will help you in what you will desire.” And hearing these things, he was grateful and came to him on the following night.

Truly, the wicked Jew led him to the town’s wall and said to him, “Whatever you are about to see or whatever sound you are about to hear, be little afraid. By no means should you make the sign of the cross.” With him thus promising this, he suddenly revealed figures clothed in white with a multitude of candlesticks crying out and a prince seated in their midst. Indeed, it was the devil and his ministers. Holding Theophilus by his hand, that wretched Hebrew led him to that disgraceful assembly. And the devil said to him, “Why have you led this man to us?”

In the MNS, Berceo places the intermediary inside the city’s Jewish quarter, a point I will discuss later. The poet then employs his usual tactic of insulting him with acerbic monikers that we have seen in the earlier miracles, calling the Jewish intermediary “falso traïdor” (768b) and “trufán traïdor” (780a). More significant is how Berceo greatly elaborates the character’s black magic and sorcery, underscoring early in the tale his nefarious practices that characterize him as a minion of the devil, saying that the Jew had, “con la uest Antigua avié su cofradía” (“brotherhood with the Old Enemy” [721d]).



[721] Do morava Teofilo, en es sa bispalía,  
avié y un judío, en es sa judería;  
sabié él cosa mala, tosa alevosia,  
ca con la uest Antigua avié su cofradía.

[722] Era el trufán falsso pleno de malos vicios  
savié encantamientos e muchos maleficios;  
fazié el malo cercos e otros artificios  
Belzebu lo guïava en todos sus oficios.

[723] En dar consejos malos era muy sabidor  
Matava muchas almas el falsso traïdor;  
Como era basallo de mucho mal señor  
Si él mal lo mandava, él faziélo peor.

[721] In that bishopric where Theophilus lived  
there was a Jew in that Jewish quarter.  
He knew evil things, every treachery,  
For he had his brotherhood with the Old Enemy.

[722] The false trickster was full of evil vices;  
he knew enchantments and many curses.  
The evil one drew circles and did other tricks;  
Beelzebub guided him in all his work.

[723] He was very knowledgeable in giving bad advice.  
The false traitor destroyed many souls,  
as he was a vassal of a very evil lord;  
If ordered to do evil, he did even worse.

After detailing the Jew's sorcery, Berceo augments the Latin version by discussing his reputation in town among the afflicted who "todos corrién a elli como puercos a landes" ("all ran to him like pigs to acorns" [771b]), another typical insult Christians applied to Jews. He then adds that Theophilus is conquered by his madness and the devil's temptations and approaches the Jew to ask advice on how he can become bishop. Although Theophilus responds to temptation, nonetheless from the point of view of Christian doctrine his decision to seek out the sorcerer is

made voluntarily, by his own free will, which is an important fact that I will discuss later.

Berceo's stanzas on the Jew's longstanding intimate relationship with the devil are his own. In the Latin version, the intermediary simply leads Theophilus to the Devil, introduces him, and describes the priest's problem. In contrast, Berceo significantly expands his version, creating a frightening milieu filled with all the stereotypical elements of Jewish magic, sorcery and subversive activities – stereotypes that harken back to Hellenistic traditions.<sup>324</sup> In the seven stanzas that begin with the priest's late night visit to the sorcerer's home, Berceo paints a detailed scene– from the bewitching crossroads to the late night denizens carrying candelabras and lit candles – that places the Jewish intermediary squarely in league with the devil. His relationship with the devil is so strong that Satan welcomes him with great honor and greets him by name. Then he asks him three questions, including: “Qué present me traedes” (781b) which, according to Gamberoni, is a “petición típica del homenaje vasallático.”<sup>325</sup>

[732] Luego la otra nochi, la gente aquedada,  
furtóse de sus omnes, issió de su posada,  
fo tastar a la puerta ca sabié la entrada;  
el trufán sovo presto, abrióli sin soldada.

[733] Prísolo por la mano, la noche bien mediada,  
sacólo de la villa a una cruzejada;

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<sup>324</sup> Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 57-59 and 67-8. It is noteworthy that, according to the author, in the thirteenth-century attacks occurred in Europe against the Talmud, which Christians believed held the secrets to Jewish magic and sorcery in addition to anti-Christian teachings.

<sup>325</sup> Gamberoni, Paola Francesca, “El pacto con el demonio en la literatura ibérica.” *Moenia. Revista lucense de lingüística e literatura*. vol. 8 (2002): 187-208.

dísso'l: "Non te sanctigües nin te temas de nada  
ca toda tu fazienda será cras mejorada."

[734] Vio a poca de ora venir muy grandes gentes  
con ciriales en manos e con cirios ardientes,  
con su rei en medio, feos ca non luzientes  
¡Ya querrié don Teófilo seer con sus parientes

[735] Prísolo por la mano el trufán traïdor,  
levólo a la tienda do sedié el señor;  
recibiólo el rey asaz a grand onor,  
sí fizieron los príncipes que'l sedién derredor.

[736] Díssolo luego el rey: "Don fulán, ¿Qué buscades?  
Qué present me traedes quiero que lo digades  
o qué omne es ésti que vós me presentades;  
saberlo quiero luego, esto bien lo creades."

[737] Díssoli el judío: "Señor rey Coronado,  
ésti solié seer vicario del bispado;  
queriénlo todos mucho, era omne onrado,  
toliéronlo agora, ond es menoscavado.

[738] Por esso es venido a tos pïedes caer,  
que li fagas cobrar a todo so poder,  
él fágate servicio a todo so poder  
avrás en él bassallo bueno, a mi creer."

[English Translation]

[732] Then, the next evening, with everyone asleep,  
He stole away from his men; he went out of his house.  
He went to knock at the door, for he knew the entrance.  
The trickster was ready; he opened for him without delay.

[733] He took him by the hand, in the middle of the night;  
He led him out of town to a crossroads.  
He told him, "Do not cross yourself or fear anything,  
For your whole situation will be improved tomorrow."

[734] In a short time, he saw many great people come,  
with candalabra and burning candles in their hands;  
ugly and not radiant, with their king in their midst.  
Now Sir Theophilus wished he were with his kin!

[735] The treacherous trickster to him by the hand;  
he led him to the tent where the master was.

The king received him with sufficient great honor,  
As did the princes who were around him.

[736] Then the king said to him, “Don Fulano, what do you seek?  
I want you to say what present you bring me  
or what man is this that you present to me?  
I want to know right away, this you can indeed believe?”

[737] The Jew said to him, “Lord, crowned king,  
this used to be the vicar of the bishopric.  
Everyone loved him very much; he was an honored man.  
Now they have taken it away, whence his standing is reduced.

[738] Therefore he comes to fall at your feet,  
So that you may recover from him what he used to have.  
If he does do you service with all his might,  
you will have a good vassal in him, in my opinion.”

Theophilus agrees to make the pact with the devil and eventually becomes bishop and highly esteemed in public. However, he loses his shadow, which is a reference to a general belief that those who sold their souls to the devil also lost their shadow.<sup>326</sup> Theophilus enjoys his new life as bishop and begins to become boastful and proud. Berceo has God, in an attempt to save the bishop’s soul, inflict a mortal illness on him, “decibido de malos traïdores” (“deceived by evil traitors”) [748d]. Shortly thereafter, Theophilus contemplates his situation and realizes he’s been “mal tañido” (badly manipulated”) [752b]. These verses, in which others, specifically the Jewish intermediary, are blamed for Theophilus’s situation, are not found in the Latin version. Berceo downplays the fact that Theophilus freely sought out the Jew’s advice and voluntarily agreed to the pact with the devil. In dramatic form, the Riojan monk aggressively embraces the politics of scapegoating, holding

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<sup>326</sup> Dutton, *Obras Completas*, 234.

the Jew accountable for every reprehensible thing Theophilus does. The poet reinforces the blame of the Jew later when Theophilus laments his pact with the devil: “matóme el trufán, el de la judería, que mató otros muchos con mal maestría” (“The trickster, the one of the Jewish quarter, that destroyed me, the one who destroyed many others with bad advice” [803cd]), and he adds “fui engañado por un falso judío” (“I was deceived by a false Jew”) [811b]. Similarly, after Theophilus is saved by the Virgin, he confesses the whole affair to the archbishop, describing how he sought out to the Jewish intermediary, who Berceo describes as “un trufán renegado, cómo li dió consejo suzio e desguisado” (“the renegade rogue who had given him dirty and unsound advice” [835ab]). Repeatedly Berceo portrays Jews in this negative light, depicting them as being false and in league with the devil. This is congruent with the earlier representation of the Jew, when Theophilus initially seeks the advice of the “trufán diablado” (“diabolical trickster”) [727c]. Like the Latin version, Berceo never mentions the fate of the Jew in MNS, but by repeatedly calling him a “trickster” and “false traitor” and comparing him to Judas, he intimates the Jew went to hell when he died, just as “un alma pecador, que yazrié en infierno con Judas el traidor” (“a sinful soul that would like in hell with Judas the traitor.” [860cd]).

Berceo’s repetitive emphasis on the Jews’ deception and treachery represents, I argue, his claim that the Jews are a far greater danger to the Church than incontinent clergy. In essence, these literary depictions of unpardonable, heretical Jews serve as a strong counterpoint to the representations of the pardonable clerical sinners portrayed in MNS, including Theophilus. In this tale, the

longest the miracles in MNS, Berceo goes into painstaking detail to juxtapose two portraits of sinners: a fallen cleric and a Jew. The former, theologically speaking, commits the gravest of all sins when he renounces Christ, Mary and Christianity in a pact with the devil and yet is saved by the Virgin after he pleads, weeps and grovels before her statue for forty days and then mortifies his flesh for three days. In contrast, the Jew is denigrated, blamed and condemned. Berceo's message is clear: sinful clerics should be pardoned, while Jews, because they are Jewish, should be mercilessly punished. Although he never mentions the fate of the Jew, the audience would be able to recognize that he, like other traitors such as Judas, would be sent to hell. In the next section, I will examine other miracles in MNS to show that Berceo's gentle depictions of clerical sinners indirectly present a challenge to inquisitorial attacks on clerical abuse.

### Challenges to Clerical Inquisitions and the Rise of Mendicants

How aware was Berceo of the threats posed to his Order and his monastery by the investigation of clerical abuses? Berceo's role of *notario* in the monastery during the 1240s would have exposed him to the financial and discipline problems facing San Millán, and the fact that 18 of the 25 tales in MNS involve clerical protagonists seems to emphasize the poet's preoccupation with moral improprieties among the clergy.<sup>327</sup> Perhaps more significant, however, are Berceo's negative depictions of some of the clerical reformers, usually prelates who admonish the

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<sup>327</sup> Sánchez Jiménez, Antonio, "Milagros Fronterizos: ignorancia y libertinaje clericales y el público de los Milagros de Nuestra Señora," *Neophilologus* 85 (4), (2001): 541-43.

sinful clergy, depictions that given the historical context appear to be references to clerical reforms sanctioned in Rome and enacted by the Mendicant orders.

For example, in the ninth miracle, *El clérigo ignorante*, a bishop rebukes an unlettered priest for his inability to sing any version of the Mass other than the “Missa de la Sancta Maria” (Mass of Holy Mary), calling the priest “fijo de la mala putanna” (“son of the evil whore”)[222c] and ultimately dismissing him from his position. The Virgin Mary appears in a dream to the bishop, denouncing him for dismissing the priest and demanding that he be allowed to say her Mass. She threatens the bishop, saying he’ll die in 30 days if he does not restore the priest to his former position, which the bishop immediately does. Berceo expanded the Latin version of the miracle, adding the bishop’s denigrating and inquisitorial dialogue, the priest’s simple, honest responses, and the Virgin Mary’s threatening speech to the bishop. Historically, it is important to note two points: 1) the bishop’s questions to the priest about the latter’s clerical ignorance reflect the inquisitorial reforms that stem from the Fourth Lateran Council, specifically Canon 11, which underscores the importance of all clerics being educated in grammar, theology, the Sacred Scriptures and anything pertaining to *cura animarum* (care of souls);<sup>328</sup> and 2) in 1227, Pope Gregory IX, who instituted the Papal Inquisition, sent his legate, John Halgren of Abbeville, to compel the Spanish clergy to abide by the reforms regarding clerical celibacy and ignorance – an imposition that mostly failed among the fiercely

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<sup>328</sup> Halsall, *Medieval Sourcebook: Lateran IV of 1215*, Canon 11.

independent Spanish clergy.<sup>329</sup> In this context, Berceo's highly expanded and dramatized speech of the Virgin Mary suggests that the poet is targeting the Church hierarchy for the recent inquisitorial reforms against the Spanish clergy.

In Berceo's text, the Virgin sharply rebukes the bishop for accusing the cleric of committing "ierro de erezía" (an act of heresy) (230b) and expelling him. She scolds him in what Timmons calls a tone of "Don't judge lest ye be judged."

[229] Díxoli brabamientre: "Don Obispo Lozano,  
¿contra mí por qué fuste tan fuert e tan villano?  
Yo nunca te tollí valía de un grano  
E tú asme tollido a mí un capellano.

[230] El que a mí cantava la missa cada día,  
tú tovis que facié ierro de erezía;  
judguésti lo por bestia e por casa radía,  
tollísteli la orden dela cappellanía."

[231] Si tú no li mandares decir la missa mía  
Como solié decirla, grand querella avría,  
e tú serás finado hasta el trenteno día:  
Desend verás que vale la sanna de María!

[English translation]

[229] She said to him irately, "Imperious bishop,  
why were you so harsh and villainous to me?  
I never took a grain's-worth from you,  
And you have taken a chaplain from me!

[230] The one who sang Mass to me each day,  
you held that he was committing an act of heresy;  
you judged him a beast and a thing astray;  
you took from him the order of chaplaincy.

[231] If you do not order him to say my Mass  
as he was accustomed to say it, there will be a great quarrel,

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<sup>329</sup> Linehan, *The Spanish Church and the Papacy*, 28-29.



and you will be dead on the thirtieth day.  
Then you will see what the wrath of Holy Mary is worth!"

If we compare Berceo's version of this miracle with the original Latin, we see several significant changes, the most salient being that in the Latin, the priest's inability to say any Mass other than Holy Mary's Mass is not considered a sin nor heresy but merely an act of malfeasance from "a misleader of men."

Sacerdos quidam erat parrochie cuiusdam ecclesie serviens, honeste vite et optimis studiis peditus, sed litterarum sciencia non plene imbutus; etenim unam tantum missam sciebat, quam devotissime in honorem Dei et sanctissime genitricis eius omnibus diebus decantabat, et hic est eius introitus: "Salve sancta parens." Ob hoc a clericis apud episcopum accusatus confestim arcersitus ad eum est perductus. Quem corripens episcopus interrogabat si verum esset quod de eo audierat. Qui respondit ei verum esse et se aliam missam nec scire nec cantare solebat. Ad hec episcopus commotus furore, dicens eum seductorem hominum, officio misse privavit eum. Reversus vero presbyter ad suam domum, tristabatur propter misse privacionem. Nocte vero sequenti apparuit sancta Maria in visione episcopo, dicens ei aliquantulum severa voce: "Ut quid ita meum concellarium tractasti, ut prohiberes Dei et meum servicium ab eo fieri? Pro certo igitur scias quia, nisi cicius ut agat divinum servicium sicuti solet iusseris, die tricesima morieris."

[English Translation]:

"There was a certain priest serving a certain parish who was of honest life and blessed with the best devotion, but he was not fully educated in the knowledge of his letters. Indeed, he knew only one mass, which he would chant every day most devoutly in the honor of God and his most holy Mother, and its introit is *Salve, sancta parens*. On account of this he soon was accused by the clerics, summoned, and brought before the bishop. The bishop rebuked him and enquired if what he had heard about him were true. He responded that it was true and that he had accustomed himself neither to know nor sing another mass. At this, the bishop was stirred up by anger, calling him a misleader of men, and he relieved him of the duty of the mass. To be sure, when the priest returned to his own home he was sad on

account of the loss of the mass. But indeed, the following night St. Mary appeared in a vision to the bishop, saying some things to him in a stern voice: "For what reason have you withdrawn my chancellor, so that you have barred from him God's and my service? Know for certain that, unless you quickly command that he perform the divine service just as he was accustomed to, you will die in thirty days!"

As we can see in the Latin version, the Virgin admonishes the bishop for removing the priest – an act which she says "barred from him God's and my service." Berceo's expansion of Mary's rebuke is telling. She angrily reproaches the bishop for claiming the priest's ability to say only one Mass constituted heresy, an act worthy of dismissal. She admonishes the bishop for his rapid interrogation, adjudication and sentencing: "judguésti lo por bestia e por casa radía, tollísteli la orden dela cappellanía" ("you judged him a beast and a thing astray; you took from him the order of chaplaincy")(230cd). Given her status as "Queen of Heaven" and "Intercessor for salvation for mankind," her threats against the bishop underscore her power of divine retribution as the protagonist battling evil.<sup>330</sup>

Similarly, in Miracle 21, *La abadesa preñada* (The pregnant abbess), an otherwise good abbess becomes pregnant and is harshly judged by her fellow nuns, who ask the bishop to immediately visit the abbey. The abbess appeals to the Virgin, who helps her deliver the baby, which is taken by two angels to be raised by a hermit. The bishop arrives and rebukes the abbess. When she denies the charges, he has her examined and, finding her not pregnant, chastises the nuns for falsely

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<sup>330</sup> Wilkins, Heanon, "Dramatic Design in Berceo's Milagros de Nuestra Senora." In *Hispanic Studies in Honor of Alan D. Deyermond: A North American Tribute*. (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1986), 310.

accusing her. The abbess then tells the bishop about giving birth with the help of the Virgin and the bishop, after finding the baby with the hermit, begs the abbess for forgiveness. Berceo suggests that clergy accused of sexual impropriety, which was strictly prohibited by Canon 14 of the Fourth Lateran Council, should receive forgiveness and not severe punishment from Church hierarchy and inquisitors. His message in this miracle and several others that deal with clerical celibacy is that sexual impurity, though a sin, did not constitute heresy and should not be the target of what he feels are too restrictive reforms. According to Berceo, traditional clergy, despite sometimes being simple, unlettered and unchaste, nonetheless remain committed to their faith and deserve compassion, not punishment.

### Conclusion

Given the historical context in which Berceo wrote his text, specifically the severe decline of the Benedictine Order coupled with clerical reforms, the alterations that Berceo makes to the Latin originals in MNS point to a clear literary strategy: he uses his versions as a defense of traditional cloistered clergy like himself, and he deploys harsh anti-Judaism to attack what he argues is the real threat to the well-being and stability of the Christian community. Berceo criticizes what he feels is overly strict clerical discipline imposed by Rome that unduly targeted the clergy for mere sins of the flesh or, worse, simple ignorance. The miracles involving incontinent clerics underscore Berceo's deployment of the Virgin Mary to achieve his goal of pushing back against Rome's inflexible hierarchy and its

established Mendicant inquisitors. As Flory argues, the twenty-five of the miracles in MNS:

“...make the same point over and over, essentially, that the Virgin is a powerful intercessor against arbitrary authority and established power structures...”<sup>331</sup>

This marked challenge to ecclesiastical authority in MNS is evident, Flory contends, in the fact that most of the preaching conducted during this era was *divisio intra* preaching aimed at fellow clergy, particularly new and unlearned monks or clerics:

“and the celebration of Mary as an all-powerful intercessor who never failed to hear the pleas of a sinner was a particularly useful tool for elevating the vision of religious above the fears aroused by severe orthodoxy (doctrinal stringencies) on the one hand and often extreme and seemingly arbitrary authoritarianism (life in religious order) on the other.”<sup>332</sup>

Flory’s conclusion is persuasive, but he doesn’t take his argument far enough. I would add that, by adding certain elements to the Latin originals in his versions, particularly his demonization of Jews, Berceo is attempting to divert attention from his scandal-plagued order while focusing on Jews, whom he portrays as a deadly enemy living within the Christian community. Their proximity to Christians, he argues, allows unwary Christians to be “decibido de malos traïdores”. In MNS, Berceo insists that Jews should either convert to Christianity or be murdered so as to eliminate their presence from Christian Spain. Given that crusades against

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<sup>331</sup> Flory, David, “The Social Uses of Religious Literature: Challenging Authority in the Thirteenth Century Marian Miracle Tale,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 13 (1996): 67.

<sup>332</sup> Flory, “Challenging”, 67-8.

Muslims siphoned scarce funds away from needy monasteries, in MNS, Berceo ignores Islam and aims his sights at the other religious group he feels is a threat, Jews. His hostility toward the Jews in MNS is, as Saugnieux argues, congruent with the general anti-Semitic currents that existed in thirteenth-century Spain.<sup>333</sup> However, as I've shown in this chapter, it was also informed by the grave concerns Berceo had regarding the plight of his Benedictine Order due to the rise of the mendicant orders and the papal-sanctioned clerical reforms. By scapegoating the Jews and highlighting their "malos vicios" in his anti-Semitic verses, Berceo diverts attention from his order's own offenses and shows himself to be, as Gerli says, "perhaps thirteenth-century Spain's most skilled and effective propagandist."<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas*, 101.

<sup>334</sup> Gerli, E. Michael, "Poet and Pilgrim: Discourse, Language, Imagery and Audience in Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*," *Hispanic Medieval Studies in Honor of Samuel G. Armistead*, ed. E. Michael Gerli and Harvey L. Sharrer (Madison, WI: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1992): 140.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In the course of this study, I have attempted to show how and to what degree certain cultural forces could have influenced the representation of Jewish characters in three medieval Castilian texts. These cultural forces, localized in both time and place, played a critical role in how Christian-Jewish relations in a particular region formed and changed, and by doing so, I believe, they also contributed to how the authors portrayed the Jews – whether with ridicule or with open contempt and hostility.

For the unknown author of PMC, who composed the poem's verses through a prism of jurisprudence, Raquel and Vidas, the two Jewish moneylenders in Burgos, were probably like historical Jewish usurers as portrayed in Christian law codes: a necessary albeit unpopular part of the kingdom's economy. They are depicted as conniving, greedy, nocturnal denizens – all stereotypical depictions of Jews from the early thirteenth century – who are spurred by avarice into making an unsound contract with the Cid and, due to their misunderstanding of the situation, come out on the losing end. Whether the poet of PMC was a legal expert or simply well versed in the Castilian juridical process, he would have seen Raquel and Vidas as Jews in a Christian territory whose actions were subject to legal constraints, including Jewish codes, Papal Bulls, canon laws, and municipal charters. The poet would have seen the Cid's failure to repay the two, seen by some literary scholars as a black spot on the hero's character, was consistent with the Papal Bulls and canon laws of the early thirteenth century. Arguably, the Cid's behavior also falls within the norms of

municipal laws that by at least the mid-thirteenth century were completely hostile to Jewish usurers. For many Spanish nationalists, it is incongruent that the Cid, the heroic *Campeador* who embodies the cardinal virtue of temperance or *mesura* and an unequivocal loyalty to the king, would not repay the Jews. This seemingly inconsistent act from the hero takes on a new dimension when examined within the context of the three important historical currents: the increasingly hostile anti-usury laws established between the early twelfth and mid-thirteenth centuries; the flouting by Castilian kings of these and other anti-Jewish laws by extending royal protection to the Jews to compensate their paying special taxes to the Crown; the increase in hostilities from Christians envious of the kings' perceived favoritism of Jews. Significantly, in 1109 these hostilities turned violent throughout Castile as Christians murdered Jews – the 'king's property' – as a form of protest and attack against King Alfonso VI. It may not be mere coincidence that Alfonso VI is the same king portrayed in PMC. I suggest and that the Cid's failure to repay the Jewish moneylenders may be his form of protest and attack against the king who unjustly exiled him.

In this political climate, Raquel and Vidas would probably be viewed by a thirteenth-century Christian audience as overly protected *burgalés* "King's Jews" such that the Cid's trickery was a justifiable – and comic – revenge against a bad king. Finally, under the anti-usury laws of the time, the Cid was not culpable for his deception of Raquel and Vidas. They, however, violated anti-usury laws as well as the king's order prohibiting anyone to help the Cid. The *Campeador*'s actions here, as later in the court of Toledo at the end of the poem, are congruent with and

governed by the established laws of the thirteenth century. As Anthony Zahareas points out, the Cid's greatness comes not only from his fighting ability, but also from his ability to defeat his enemies in the legal arena. "He demands justice and brings it about himself through legal and rational means which are not very common in epic poetry."<sup>335</sup>

For the unknown author of ARM, one of the most relevant cultural events at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century in Christian Spain that may have played a role in the representations of Jews in the liturgical drama was the surge in Jewish Messianic prophecies and movements as well as the schisms occurring in the Jewish faith at that time. I argue that the author would have likely been exposed to the uncertainty that many Jews in Toledo and other parts of Castile felt during the war between Christian and Muslim Spain and the emergence of Messianic prophecies that prompted many to emigrate from Spain to the Holy Land. I present textual evidence in the ARM that points to the poet being cognizant of disagreements among Jewish religious scholars. Particularly interesting are the verses of Herod when he summons various members of his court. I argue that each one seems to represent a faction of Judaism, from Rabbanites and Karaites to ascetics and Eastern Jewish mystics, groups that were not unified during the time the ARM was written. By underscoring these divisions in the Jewish religion, the author calls attention to the contemporary confusion in Judaism. The portrayals of

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<sup>335</sup> Zahareas, Anthony, "The Cid's Legal Action at the Court of Toledo", *Romanic Review* 55.3 (Oct 1, 1964): 161.



the rabbis in the final scene of ARM – an original part of the drama – perfectly captures the uncertainty that pervaded Jewish communities in Spain during this period. It is my contention that the originality of this scene and the fact that it ends the liturgical play point to the dramatist’s intent, namely, to highlight the two Jewish characters’ confusion and discord concerning messianic interpretations.

The life of Gonzalo de Berceo, the priest and author of MNS, was intimately connected to the Benedictine Order, especially the monastery of San Millan de la Cogolla in La Rioja, where he was raised. The Riojan poet was acutely aware of his monastery’s economic struggles and, as scholars have argued, wrote hagiographies as propaganda to draw pilgrims and their donations to the monastery. I argue textual evidence shows that, as Berceo wrote MNS, he was influenced by the decline of the Benedictine Order due to papal-sanctioned clerical reforms that targeted the Black Monks and the rise of the mendicant orders, who investigated clerical abuses and heresy. I’ve shown that in Berceo’s vernacular version of the Marian tales, the Virgin Mary takes an extremely lenient stance on clerical abuse, even rebuking bishops for their harsh treatment of clerical ‘heretics’, while she takes a hostile stance against Jews, painting them as minions of the devil and enemies of Christianity. A salient example of Berceo’s scapegoating of Jews is the tale of Theophilus, the cleric who sells his soul to the devil but is saved by the Virgin Mary while he blames his sins on “the trickster, the one of the Jewish quarter.” Particularly interesting in MNS is that Berceo’s negative depictions of Jews are coupled with the message that they must convert to Christianity or be killed. This is seen in *El Judiezno*, when the Jewish boy and his mother are portrayed

sympathetically while the boy's father – “the false one” – is burned to death in his oven. It is also present in “Los judíos de Toledo”, where an entire Jewish quarter in which a waxen image of Christ is found is attacked and killed by a Christian mob incited by the Virgin Mary. I point to textual evidence that the increased economic, social and political pressures faced by the Benedictine Order during the thirteenth century influenced Berceo's verses. It is my contention that the Benedictine cleric shaped his vernacular versions of the Marian tales with two main goals: to recast his beloved Benedictine Order as good Christian clerics with forgivable lapses and to vilify Jews as the real threat to Christendom.

In summary, these three thirteenth-century medieval Castilian works utilize negative representations of Jewish characters as a means to achieve three different ends. The PMC exposes Raquel and Vidas to ridicule in order to express popular discontent with the king's financial and political policies; the closing theological debate in the ARM both mocks Jewish messianic beliefs and also attempts to make a space for Jews within multicultural Toledo; and Berceo's violent Marian tales channel his theological and economic concerns as an apologist for the Benedictine Order. The fact that these writers use Jewish characters as scapegoats and instruments to enable them to pursue another objective does not excuse their anti-Judaism. However, the different ends to which each text puts its anti-Judaism show how these three writers reacted to demographic, economic and political change during a watershed moment in Castilian history.

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