

**The Recycling of an Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory into an anti-*Morisco* one in
Early Modern Spain:
The Myth of *El Vengador*, the Serial-Killer Doctor.**

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Faced by a major crisis – a looming bankruptcy and the need to keep financing its onerous military and naval operations against the Protestant Dutch rebels – King Philip III of Spain and his favourite the Duke of Lerma summoned representatives (*procuradores*) from the towns of Castile to gather in Madrid for a parliament (*cortes*) in 1607. As was usual when the Crown asked its subjects to give their approval to extraordinary increases in fiscal revenue, the *procuradores* sent by the towns aired grievances and petitioned for their redress in exchange for the supply of more taxes. Financial turmoil and foreign wars were nevertheless not the only concern on the minds of the *procuradores*. Their petitions reveal concerns with domestic problems, including the status of the large population of *Moriscos* – the descendants of Muslims forced to convert to Christianity in the early sixteenth century. Suspicions about the religious sincerity of the large population of *Moriscos* and fears about their political loyalty to the Spanish Crown were reaching fever pitch in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Long-standing cultural differences, the revolt of the *Moriscos* of Granada in 1568-1571, the arrest and conviction by the Inquisition of many *Moriscos* for the crime of apostasy (the secret practice of Islam), and fears about their allegedly exponential demographic growth combined to create a poisonous atmosphere in which the *Morisco* population as a whole, much like the *conversos* of Jewish ancestry, fell under a pall of suspicion.¹

One of the *procuradores* who stood before his colleagues and the royal officials to make a petition for redress was Pedro de Vesga, a councillor of the city of Toledo. His petition starts with a provocative rhetorical question: why, if the *Moriscos* were prohibited from bearing arms by royal decree, were they not also banned from exercising medical professions? What greater weapon, Vesga pondered, was there than the ability to cure illnesses since such knowledge could also be used to kill? For the *procurador*, it was an outrageous scandal that many professions, of which he gave the example of dyers (*tintoreros*), embraced regulations excluding fraudsters but this was not the case of the medical professions, “where any fraud committed is all the more serious given the honourable status of the office of doctor”. Vesga makes it clear that he has in mind the *Moriscos*, whose previous rebellion was evidence of their “hatred” (*odio*) for Old Christians, and he asks “who would want to be the patient of one’s enemy?”. Many *Morisco* doctors, Vesga notes, had been convicted by the Inquisition. Moreover, these doctors had made confessions admitting that they used their profession to murder Old Christians and administered potions to pregnant Old Christian women in order to cause them to abort their fetuses. Vesga goes on to deplore the fact that *Moriscos* doctors wore silk clothes and rode mules despite the laws banning them from enjoying such privileges. As medical professionals, they had access to patients on their deathbeds and also to young nuns in convents. Many *Morisco* doctors, he feared, would seek to dissuade terminally-ill patients from seeking to receive the last rites and would corrupt the nuns who, “being curious and novices in their vocation”, might well be

¹ There is now a vast bibliography on the *Moriscos* in sixteenth-century Spain. See, in particular, L. P. Harvey.

vulnerable to “being taught things that are prejudicial to the Christian Faith” (Muñoz Garrido and Muñiz Fernández 195-7).

For Vesga, the real cause for concern was that *Moriscos* had access to medical training in the first place. He bemoans the presence of “many” *Moriscos* at public lectures of medicine delivered by the University of Toledo “and in others”. Lessons in medicine offered nothing less than a sensitive knowledge “by means of which one can murder others secretly and discreetly and we must presume that the *Moriscos* have killed more people in this kingdom than the Turks, Englishmen and others”. Since few Old Christians wanted their sons to receive medical training, “within eighty years all apothecaries and doctors in the kingdom will be *Moriscos*, they will hold the keys to the lives of everyone and no one will be safe”. To illustrate the danger, Vesga offers some exemplary stories. He states that a *Morisco* doctor nicknamed “the Avenger” (*el vengador*) had murdered 3,048 of his patients by placing poison on one of his fingernails according to the confession he had supposedly made to the Inquisition. Vesga claims that this *Morisco* mass murderer’s penitential cloak (or *sambenito*) was still visible in the Church of Santo Tomé in Toledo. Vesga also alleges that the inquisitors of the town of Valencia had punished a “Morisco surgeon” who maliciously made a habit of crippling the hands of his Christian patients so that they could no longer wield weapons. These horror stories were related to add urgency to the main aim of Vesga’s petition: to demand that the Crown issue a decree banning *Moriscos* from being examined and receiving medical degrees at universities. Since *Moriscos*, even if they did not intend to graduate, might still acquire medical knowledge by attending public lectures, Vesga also pleaded that the Crown order universities to ensure that *Moriscos* were not allowed to attend any lectures on medicine. Vesga concluded his speech with a detailed list of measures to ensure that the exclusion of the *Moriscos* would be successfully implemented (Muñoz Garrido and Muñiz Fernández 196-7).

The claims made by Pedro de Vesga have been noted by some historians studying the history of the *Morisco* minority or the history of medicine in early modern Spain and have been held up as evidence of the mounting hysteria gripping Spain in the years immediately preceding the expulsion of the *Moriscos* in 1609 (Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent 123; Granjel 20-1; Clouse 121). This article nevertheless seeks to point to a fact that has been entirely overlooked by these historians: that the conspiracy theory of *el vengador*, the murderous *Morisco* doctor, has its origins not in long-standing anti-Muslim traditions but rather in anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. The first section of this article examines the myth of *el vengador* and its history as an anti-Semitic libel both before and after 1607. It will be argued that the myth of *el vengador* was originally an anti-*converso* canard that was clumsily recast into an anti-*Morisco* legend to suit the specific agenda of Pedro de la Vesga. The second section then focuses on the historical significance of the 1607 incident. The fact that the legend of *el vengador*, and the conspiracy theory of medical murder, could be so effortlessly recycled to feature the *conversos* or *Moriscos* has wider implications. It offers a fascinating insight into the versatility of conspiracy theories and evidence that their origins can also be partly found in other social fears that sometimes have, *in fine*, little to do with the targeted minority.

1. *El Vengador*: The Transformation from *Converso* Killer to *Morisco* Murderer.

For those familiar with anti-*converso* polemics produced in early modern Spain, the claims made by Pedro de Vesga in 1607 might well sound familiar. The story of a vengeful doctor covertly murdering Old Christian patients appears in a number of works. In fact, over three decades before Vesga made his speech, the entire story features in the highly influential Latin work entitled *Defensio Statuti Toletani*, which was authored by a certain Diego Velázquez and printed in Antwerp (Flanders) in 1573 and 1575. The *Defensio Statuti Toletani* was not an anti-*Morisco* polemic but rather, as its name makes clear, a robust defense of the legitimacy of the statutes of *limpieza de sangre* that were controversially adopted by the cathedral chapter of Toledo at the behest of archbishop Juan Martínez Silíceo, in the middle of the sixteenth century to exclude *conversos* of Jewish ancestry (Sicroff 135-191). Its author was actually writing under a pseudonym and his real identity was by Diego Simancas (?–1583), successively bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo (1565–9), Badajoz (1569–79) and Zamora (1579–83).

In a short passage, Bishop Diego Simancas relates the tale of a judaizing *converso* doctor “burnt [by the Inquisition] many years ago in Valencia” for having murdered many Old Christians. It is claimed by Simancas that this *converso* doctor’s children ritually greeted him upon his return home with the phrase “welcome avenger”, to which he would in turn respond: “come to the avenger”. Simancas adds the explanation that the doctor’s reply was the equivalent of saying “I am the avenger”. In addition to this peculiar story, Simancas claims that in Toledo another *converso* murdered his Old Christian patients by dipping one of his fingernails into poison and then secretly contaminating the remedies that he prescribed to his patients. Unlike Vesga, Simancas presents the cases of *el vengador* and the ‘fingernail poisoner’ as separate and taking place in two different locations (Valencia and Toledo). Beyond vaguely stating that *el vengador* was arrested and burned at the stake “many years ago” (*superioribus annis*), Simancas does not name any sources or offer identifying names so that it is impossible to know whether the two cases of mass medical murder are supposed to have taken place in the same period.²

Diego Simancas was not the only Spanish author to refer to *el vengador* in the late sixteenth century. The jurist and lawyer Ignacio del Villar Maldonado also refers to it in his two-volume treatise *Sylua responsorum iuris*, printed in Madrid in 1614. Despite the Latin title of the work, it contains sections in vernacular Spanish and the section describing the story of *el vengador* is one of these sections. The version of the story that Villar Maldonado relates in his work is an expanded one:

We know it for certain, and it has been confirmed, that a doctor who was descended from Jews was condemned as a heretic by the inquisitors of a certain district of Spain. It was established that the man, whilst residing in a certain village whose name has not been revealed in order to avoid offending anyone, murdered more than three hundred people through his false and adulterated medicine as well as with his poisons. Every time that he returned home from visiting the sick, or perhaps it should be said after procuring their death, his wife who was also one of that race of Jews would say: “our avenger is welcome”. To this, her Jewish husband would lift and wave his right arm whilst clenching his fist as a sign of victory and utter “he is come and will wreak his revenge”.³

It is worth pointing out that there is no mention in Villar Maldonado’s version of the

² See document 2 in the appendix.

³ See document 3 in the appendix.

use of a fingernail to secretly add poison to remedies and the home welcoming ritual for *el vengador* takes place between the doctor and his wife rather than with his children. The reference to a large but still relatively vague number of victims (“more than three hundred”) is also a new addition to the narrative compared to the version offered by Simancas.

A third version of the legend of *el vengador* appears to have circulated in the neighbouring kingdom of Portugal during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Over a decade after Vesga’s speech, the Portuguese anti-Semitic polemicist Vicente da Costa Mattos not only refers to Villar Maldonado’s version of the libel but also points to another similar case of a serial killer *converso* doctor operating in Portugal. According to Mattos, a certain Master Rodrigo, a judaizing *converso* doctor burnt at the stake in Lisbon by the Inquisition, also habitually murdered his Old Christian patients but he only killed one out of every twelve patients in order to avoid detection. It is alleged that his sisters, when he paid them a visit, would greet him by stating “may our defender come soon and preserve the Law of Moses from harm” to which Master Rodrigo would reply “and also the avenger”. Outwardly, this version of the medical murder libel story appears to have been founded upon real events as a *converso* doctor named *Mestre* (“Master”) Rodrigo was indeed prosecuted by the Portuguese Inquisition between 1541 and 1543 and his trial dossier still exists in the Torre do Tombo archives in Lisbon.⁴ Nevertheless, the modern historian José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim has examined this trial dossier and found absolutely no evidence that Mestre Rodrigo was ever accused of anything more than secretly practicing Judaism and the accusation of medical murder (and vengeful rituals associated with it) did not feature in his trial (Tavim 89-91). Thanks to the survival of the inquisitorial documentation the entire story of Mestre Rodrigo’s ritual murder of Old Christian patients, therefore, can confidently be dismissed as an outright fabrication.

In some cases, the narrative lost its explicit reference to *el vengador* and the rituals that supposedly accompanied his murders but perpetuated the notion of a serial killer doctor using a poisoned fingernail to achieve his nefarious ends. This is the case in an anonymous manuscript list of murderous *converso* doctors that circulated in Portugal during the 1630s with the prolix title *Treatise in which it is proven that the New Christians of the [Hebrew] Nation who dwell in Portugal are secret Jews and in which the evils that they inflict upon Old Christians are pointed out*. One of the doctors featured on the list and identified as practicing medicine in the Spanish town of Ciudad Real is accused of dipping one of his fingernails into poison and then into his remedies to kill his Old Christian patients (Azevedo 465-8).

Finally, another version of the ‘fingernail killer’ appears in an obscure satirical work printed in Valencia in 1670 with the title *El Nigromantico de Svplicio Severo* and written by Gerónimo Pérez de Castro. The work is an attack on medical charlatans and, unsurprisingly, includes an attack on *converso* doctors, especially those whom are “Portuguese, which is to say Jews [...] who inflict greater sufferings upon Christians than even Demons would dare to inflict”. Their objective, it is claimed, was to injure Christ by targeting Catholic priests in a form of ritualized Blood Libel and Pérez de Castro relates two stories to support his statement. In the first story, a *converso* doctor, recognizable by means of his “elongated face and nose as well as [his] thin faced”, allegedly murdered thirteen priests each year to symbolize Christ and his apostles and had killed “innumerable regular and secular members of the clergy [...] out of hatred

⁴ *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* (Lisbon), *Inquisição de Coimbra, processo* no. 10,714.

for Christendom and the Spanish people". For these murderous exploits, the author of the *Nigromantico* explains, he was "venerated as a Saint" by "the Jews his brothers" residing in the port city of Livorno in Italy. The second story is that of the *converso* doctor who covered one of his fingernails with poison to murder his Christian patients. Pérez de Castro goes into much further detail than any other text. The man, he claims, was executed for his crimes during the reign of Philip II (1556–1598). He would persuade perfectly healthy Old Christians to allow him to examine their tongues and kill them by touching it with the fingernail coated with a poison that would dispatch the victim within six hours. His ability to diagnose terminal illnesses made him famous but his killing spree came to an end when he murdered a friend of the famous court physician Pedro García and his deception was exposed (Pérez de Castro 28r-29v).

Overall, it is difficult to know whether Pérez de Castro's satirical work should be taken seriously as evidence of anti-Semitism or whether the story is offered merely as a joke. The book itself was, for reasons not connected with the libel of *el vengador*, investigated by the Inquisition in 1673 on suspicion of unorthodoxy (Pinta Llorente 134). He does not cite his sources and his account lacks important details such as precise place names and dates. Moreover, it contains what appears to be a glaring chronological error: Pedro García Carrero (1555–1628) was the personal physician of Philip III and Philip IV but not Philip II. Pérez de Castro may well have conjured up this elaborate tale from his fertile imagination to suit his satirical purposes, using the original narrative as its base, but it is also possible that he is conveying a different version that was being transmitted orally in seventeenth-century Spain. Whatever the truth of its origins, no other Iberian text with this expanded version of the myth has yet been discovered. The only source to cite the *Nigromantico*'s version is not Spanish but French. Jean Bernier, a personal physician of the Duchess of Orleans, mentions the tale in 1689 but makes his skepticism very clear; judging the possibility of a doctor murdering patients with a poison-coated fingernail as "less credible" than other tales of Jewish medical murder (Bernier ciii).

Although they may differ in terms of their details, the first three versions of the legend of *el vengador* related by Simancas, Villar Maldonado and Vicente da Costa Mattos are broadly similar. They make it clear that the legend has its origins in sixteenth-century Spain and targeted the *conversos* rather than the *Moriscos*. In the works of Simancas and Villar Maldonado the story is presented as evidence to support the authenticity of the infamous *Carta de los Judíos de Constantinopla*. This was a forgery originating in the controversy surrounding the adoption of statutes of purity of blood by the chapter of the Cathedral of Toledo. The *carta* purported to be a missive sent around 1492 by the Jews of Constantinople in response to a plea for assistance and advising Iberian Jews to falsely convert to Christianity. This false conversion, the Jews of Constantinople supposedly claimed, would allow the Iberian Jews to effectively destroy the Church in Spain by covertly securing positions of power, including the medical professions, in order to injure or even kill Old Christians (Loeb; Beusterien). Used in combination with the *Carta de los Judíos de Constantinopla*, the story of *el vengador* became a pillar of the anti-*converso* conspiracy theory in early modern Spain and Portugal. They were both reproduced verbatim in polemics printed or re-printed in both Iberian kingdoms, including the popular seventeenth-century works of Vicente da Costa Mattos and Fray Francisco de Torrejoncillo and the manuscript work of Francisco de Quevedo (Quevedo 58-9).⁵ In his 1682 defense of statutes of purity of blood discriminating against *conversos*, the jurist Antonio Fernández de Otero went so far as

⁵ For Mattos and Torrejoncillo see documents 4 and 5 in the appendix.

to insert not only the letter purporting to come from the Jews of Constantinople but also the tale of *el vengador* and the accompanying comments of Villar Maldonado, in their original Spanish, in his own work *Tractatus de officialibus reipublicæ* (Fernández de Otero 15-6). In the first half of the eighteenth century, *el vengador* features in the works of the anti-Semitic polemicists Fray Félix Alamín and Antonio de Contreras as well as the 1746 defence of the exclusion of *conversos* from the medical professions, written by Sebastian de Acuña (Acuña 48-9).⁶

2. Unraveling the Intricacies and Significance of a Conspiracy Theory

When the passage from Vesga's speech and the texts of Simancas and Villar Maldonado are compared, their similarities are so striking that there can be no doubt that Vesgas' story is merely a reworking of the legend of *el vengador*. Instead of a judaizing *converso*, *el vengador* becomes a crypto-Islamizing *Morisco*. Moreover, two separate legends libelling *conversos*, the one of *el vengador* and the story of the *converso* doctor who coated one of his fingernails with poison are clearly coalesced into a single narrative and the death toll is increased ten-fold from "over three hundred" patients to just over three thousand, presumably rendering the story even more shocking and frightening to those who heard it.

It is not possible to tell whether Pedro de Vesga personally adapted the story he related or whether he was merely repeating a tale circulating in Spain and which he had heard in discussions with some of his peers. The latter explanation seems, on balance, to be more plausible as it would have been an extremely risky gamble to voice his belief in such a plot in such a public forum as the *cortes* without being able to call upon other witnesses to confirm the existence of such a tale. Little is known about Pedro de Vesga beyond the facts that he was a municipal councilor in Toledo, a representative of the town in 1607 and a member of the royal council in charge of financial affairs and the treasury (the *consejo de la hacienda*). Later in 1616 a man with the same name was acting as an overseer of the Crown finances and collector of customs duties in Seville (Vila Vilar 286, n. 31). At the same parliament of 1607, Pedro de Vesga also expressed his hatred of the gypsies who peregrinated around Spain, branding them "a bad people... incomparably worse than the *Moriscos*, because while they resemble the latter in not being Christians, they eclipse them as thieves". Vesga demanded that Spain must be rid "of the gypsy name and language" and that gypsies who refused sedentarization and acculturation should be eliminated by being expelled or put to death (Pym 58).

There is nothing specifically Iberian or anti-Semitic about the conspiracy theory of medical murder. Similar claims were voiced by the Roman moralist and statesman Cato the Elder (234–149 BCE) about Greek doctors nearly two millennia before and against Jewish and Christian medical practitioners by the Islamic jurist Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Abdun in twelfth-century Seville (Pliny the Elder, XXIX, chapter 7; Lévi-Provençal 91). In medieval Western Christendom, however, religious suspicion of the Jews and their disproportionate representation amongst medical practitioners combined to forge a powerful anti-Jewish narrative of Jewish medical murder. The influential compendium of Canon Law created in the twelfth century by Gratian, the *Decretum Gratiani*, prohibited Christian patients from seeking medical care from Jews but was obviously rarely enforced in practice. In the Iberian Peninsula, the notion of murderous Jewish doctors was promoted by individual churchmen, church councils and even some *converso* doctors like Alfonso Chirino, the personal physician of King Juan II of Castile

⁶ For Alamín and Contreras see documents 6 and 7 in the appendix.

(1405–1454) (Amasuno 92-118). In the early fifteenth century, the Dominican preacher (and later saint) Vincent Ferrer (1350–1419) warned his listeners to steer clear of Jewish doctors, surgeons and apothecaries by explicitly referring to the conspiracy theory of medical murder:

They desire a greater evil upon us Christians than we wish upon the Devil [...]. A certain Jewish doctor who was about to die said [the following] to those who were present and weeping: “Do not cry, for it does not pain me to die. This is because I have caused the deaths of over five hundred Christians thanks to my medicine”. (Diago 134-5)

In the middle of the fifteenth century, the conspiracy theory of Jewish medical murder was provided with a pseudo-historical foundation in the Iberian Peninsula by the highly influential polemicist Alonso de Espina. Espina is the first author known to refer to the alleged murder of King Enrique III (1390–1406) by his physician Rabbi Meir Alguadex in 1406 but this story, either fabricated by Espina or a rumour picked related by his informants, became an integral part of the historical narrative of early modern Spain (Espina III, 172v-173r; Netanyahu 177-182).

As James Amelang has recently pointed out in a major study, there exist strong parallels between the persecution experienced by the *converso* and *Morisco* minorities in early modern Spain. Both groups were collectively suspected (rightly or wrongly) of apostasy and heresy by secretly remaining faithful to Judaism and Islam despite their official status as baptized Christians and they were also accused of political disloyalty and sympathy for the outside enemies of the Church and Crown. Yet, Amelang, argues that we should beware of letting these ‘parallel experiences’ conceal the significant socio-cultural differences that existed between the two minorities (Amelang 173-9). There was certainly no similarly well-established conspiracy theory of medical murder affecting Muslims or *Moriscos*. The reasons why this was the case are, as yet, not entirely clear and this is especially puzzling since, as Luis García Ballester has demonstrated in his research, *Morisco* medical practitioners, often operating without a license, did have Old Christian patients (García Ballester 99-118). One tentative explanation may be that, ironically, fear of the *Moriscos* was lessened by the visible cultural differences that distinguished them from many Old Christians. These differences meant that *Morisco* doctors could be avoided, unlike the undistinguishable *converso* doctors. When the Dominican theologian, and advocate of the expulsion of the *Moriscos* from Spain, Jaime Bleda argued in the early seventeenth century that Muslim/*Morisco* doctors or healers should be considered a deadly threat to Old Christians, he was forced to rely upon the crude syllogism that because they were a minority like Jews/*conversos* and because the Jews/*conversos* sought to murder Old Christian patients then they must also have the same objective. Rather than referring his readers to cases of murderous *Morisco* doctors, he was instead forced to fall back upon the claims made by Vincent Ferrer against Jews and the story of the murder of King Enrique III by Rabbi Alguadex to justify his claims (Bleda 1610, 371 and 1618, 546-8).

It would be easy to interpret Vesga’s anti-*Morisco* outburst in 1607 as another instance in which blind hatred or prejudice led to a confusion of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim themes. Historians of the Middle Ages have pointed to the manner in which Christian perceptions of the Muslim ‘other’ in Europe were informed by their dialectical relationship for the Jewish ‘other’ from the twelfth/thirteenth centuries (Cohen 141–62 and Kruger 185-203). In Spain, the Jews were accused from the

thirteenth century onwards of having assisted the Muslim invasion of 711 and, in the fifteenth century, Alfonso de Espina warned his readers that “wretched Spain” (*misera hispania*) was besieged by a coalition of enemies amongst whom Jews and Muslims were on a level pegging. He neatly summed up his perspective as follows: “the enemy is the heretic; the enemy is the Jew, the enemy is the Muslim; the enemy is the Devil” (Espina I, 2r). For many Christian polemicists, it must have been easy to assume that what they perceived as the common aims of Jews and Muslims against Christianity meant that their schemes and plots must be similar. It is certainly the case that analogous rhetoric and themes appear in polemical attacks on both groups. Exaggerated conspiracist fantasies about an exponential demographic growth and takeover of the kingdom, for instance, affected the two groups equally. By way of illustration, the prolific fertility of the Hebrews in Pharaoh’s Egypt described in the Old Testament Book of Exodus (Exodus 1:8-10) provided an analogy that was used in the early seventeenth-century against both the *Moriscos* by Miguel de Cervantes in the exemplary story *The Colloquy of the Dogs* and against the *conversos* by an anonymous pamphleteer (Cervantes 242-3).⁷

Neither was it the case that only anti-Semitic tropes were adapted for anti-Muslim purposes. The rhetoric of hate could easily be employed in the reverse direction. A perfect example of this can be seen when Juan de Ribera, the Archbishop of Valencia, complained to King Philip II of Spain in the 1580s that the supposedly high birth rate of the *Moriscos* was a threat to both the kingdom and the Church in Valencia. Ribera warns his monarch that the *Moriscos* would “seize the best land in Spain” and that they had “become the sponges of all the wealth in Spain”, especially precious silver and gold (Ehlers 130-1). Circa fifty years later, the famous man of letters and polemicist Francisco de Quevedo unwittingly put the same metaphor to use, but against the Portuguese *converso* merchants upon whom the Spanish Crown relied to finance its overseas military commitments. For Quevedo the Portuguese *conversos*, whom he accuses of being secret judaizers, are “sponges that the Turk and all the [Protestant] heretics use to absorb the wealth of Spain in order to wring [this wealth] in their synagogues and [use it] against her” (Quevedo 79). Polemicists were certainly aware of how the parallel situations of *conversos* and *Moriscos* could be exploited, deliberately overlooking the differences between both groups. In the years after the expulsion of the *Moriscos* from Spain in 1609-1614, numerous Portuguese and Spanish authors pointed to it as an example to follow in dealing with the ‘*converso* problem’ (Pulido Serrano).

The ease with which a conspiracy theory can be altered to target one minority group rather than another – in this case Muslims rather than Jews – raises important questions. Is there an element to all conspiracy theories, not just that of medical murder, that means that they can easily be applied to libel one minority group or another? The historian Geoffrey Cubitt and social psychologist Jovan Byford have noted the three recurrent elements in all conspiracy theories that provide them with their narrative framework. Firstly, there is the existence of a group of conspirators acting secretly (but known to the conspiracy theorist), secondly the evil secret objective that is attributed to the conspirators and, thirdly, the elaborate and covert plan by which the conspirators supposedly seek to achieve their secret objective(s) (Cubitt 13-8 and Byford 4).

The 1607 incident offers an interesting example of the dynamics by which emotions can work to align members of a society against an imagined other. In her influential work on emotion and critical race theory, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*,

⁷ A.N.T.T., *Inquisição, Códice* 1,506: 144r-v.

Sara Ahmed has posited that narratives seeking to demonize others systematically resort to the “affective politics of fear” in which a subject endangered by imagined others is generated. Moreover, Ahmed argues, “the proximity of the others threatens not only to take something away from the subject [...], but to take the place of the subject”. Ahmed’s research theorizes that fear not only gives form to the “others” as objects of fear and disgust but also constitutes those who are threatened into a clearly defined and idealized collective or community. The collective “self” thus becomes separated from the fear and disgust inducing “others” that are perceived as threatening it (Ahmed 43). The role played by conspiracy theories in creating a divisive culture of fear in which the secretive ‘others’ want to supplant the ‘self’ must not be overlooked. Conspiracy theories always present the ‘subject’ with well defined ‘others’ and governments and ruling elites use conspiracy theories to organize hatred into a “culture of fear” in which disgust toward the threatening “others” serves to promote and shape an idealized collective identity. The notion that people find conspiracy theories appealing because they eschew randomness from the course of human events has even led some researchers in the psychology of conspiracy theories to tentatively suggest that humans are predisposed to believe in conspiracy theories by the possession of an inherent cognitive bias or “intentionality bias” (Brotherton and French). The political scientist Michael Barkun, however, has persuasively argued that the appeal of conspiracy theories is intrinsically tied to both their intentionalism and their Manichean dualism (Barkun). The conspiracy theory certainly becomes a prism through which the believer rationalises the world by dividing it between the forces of good and evil and by assigning a single identifiable source for all the fearful evils of the world.

Sara Ahmed’s theory was formulated in reference to ethnic and xenophobic tensions within the modern nation state but is just as relevant in an early modern European context. Fears about the religious and ethnic “others” was just as much of an issue in early modern European kingdoms concerned about the political and religious loyalties of minorities and the presence of deviant (and therefore dangerous) groups within the body politic. The conscious manipulation of fear to provoke the exclusion of “others” and the formation of a sense of collective identity was as much of a reality in early modern Europe as it is in the present world. To cite but one example, in his 1578 commentary on the original fourteenth-century *Manual for Inquisitors*, the sixteenth-century Spanish theologian Francisco Peña noted that the main objective of the spectacular public sentencing of heretics by the Inquisition (the infamous *auto-de-fé*) was not to save the soul of the accused but to edify the population and “put fear into others” (*ut alii terreantur*) (Kamen 261).

Fear of the “other”, whether the figure of the secret Jew or secret Muslim, does not, however, suffice to explain why the former could be so easily substituted by the latter. The malleability of the conspiracy theory of medical murder in early modern Spain cannot simply be explained by the ambient anti-Semitism or Islamophobia. Instead we need to examine another factor: a widespread and culturally constructed anxiety in early modern Spanish society regarding the efficacy of medical treatment and the competency of medical practitioners. It is certainly important not to overlook this crucial factor. The figure of the medical practitioner was, even when he was not of Jewish or Muslim ancestry, treated with extreme ambivalence in early modern Spain. The incompetent or negligent doctor is a regular character and object of satire in Spanish Golden Age theatre (Chevalier; Maire Bobes). Furthermore, in his definition of the term “physician” (*físico*), which he describes as a synonym for doctor (*medico*), the lexicographer Sebastián de Covarrubias (1539–1613) points out the perils associated with medical treatment.

They are called doctors because they have to be very learned (*doctos*), even more so than graduates in theology or law; because if the former commit errors then the Church and the Inquisition can rectify them and if the latter err then a judge can correct them. Errors committed by doctors, however, cannot be corrected. (Covarrubias 406r-406v and 544r)

Covarrubias also refers in his definition of “doctor” (*medico*) to the existence of a popular saying “Piss clear and a fig for the doctor” (*Mear claro, y una higa para el medico*). The fact that *higa* was also a term used to refer to an insulting hand gesture, makes it clear that many in the populace felt that doctors and medical treatment were better avoided if at all possible. Even works written specifically by members of the medical profession in late medieval and early modern Spain did little to dispel the atmosphere of distrust. As early as the fifteenth century, the royal physician Alfonso Chirino (c.1365–1429), himself a *converso*, offers clear evidence of this. In his work *Espejo de Medicina* (c.1414–8), Chirino not only fulminates against the perils presented by Jewish medical practitioners but also warns his readers not only against untrained charlatans but also against being too trustful even of trained doctors:

We must come to the following conclusion; ignorant physicians should be completely thrown out, and the learned physicians should be doubted, and a great part of what they do should come under suspicion. This art [of medicine] is dubious, and people must necessarily choose with great deliberation such people for physicians for their great science, charity, and wisdom to administer this science in which so many dangerous uncertainties are near their words. (Solomon 47 and 113, n. 14)

In the following century, Enrique Jorge Enríquez, a doctor of Portuguese origin who taught medicine at the University of Salamanca and wrote a treatise entitled *Retrato del Perfecto Medico* (completed by 1582 but only printed in 1595) offers clear evidence of the suspicions that his profession provoked. His criticism principally focuses on charlatans but in the dedication to his patron, Enríquez warns his readers against corruption in the profession and greedy medical fraudsters “who are doctors only in their dress and who wish to look like doctors more than actually be doctors” (Enríquez).⁸ It is little wonder that so many could have felt ambivalent about doctors when even medical professionals contributed to the negative image of their profession.

There is clearly a startling superimposition of two separate fears or anxieties: the existence of vengeful Jews/Muslims masquerading as caring Christian doctors and that of the incompetent/negligent charlatans masquerading as qualified doctors. Pre-existing anxieties surrounding medical practitioners and medical treatment in early modern Spain acted as a solid foundation for conspiracy theories targeting the two minority groups. Arguably, other themes in anti-*converso* or anti-*Morisco* conspiracy theories followed the same pattern. It could similarly be argued that the conspiracist accusations that *Moriscos* and *conversos* were undermining the Spanish economy or collaborating with external Muslim or Protestant enemies were both superimposed upon more generalized existing anxieties about economic decline and military vulnerability.

⁸ Statement made in the dedication of Enríquez’s work to Don Antonio Álvarez de Toledo y Beaumont, s.n.

To gauge the emotional appeal of the conspiracy theory of medical murder it is important to discuss the problematic distinction between ‘fear’ and ‘anxiety’. Indeed, was this conspiracy theory dependent upon exploiting ‘fears’ of the ‘other’ (Jew/Muslim/charlatan) or did it play upon less acute anxieties instead? The conceptualization of fear and anxiety in early modern Spain was relatively unambiguous, stressing the role played by the threat (real or imaged) as a trigger. Thus, the lexicographer Sebastián de Covarrubias defined fear (*miedo*) in 1611 without going into too much detail as the response of an individual to a present or future threat whilst he defines anxiety (*ansia*) as a physical response (literally heartache) that is not necessarily linked to fear but that can also, for instance, be produced by a state of melancholy (Covarrubias 73r and 549r). A more detailed definition of fear is offered in the first half of the seventeenth-century by the Spanish jurist Antonio Cabreros Avendaño in a Latin treatise on *metus* (fearfulness), drawing upon classical authors such as Cicero and Servius. For Cabreros Avendaño, fear was the physical response(s) prompted in an individual by either an immediate or future threat. Interestingly, he preferred *terror* as the term used to describe fear that was imparted to others (Cabreros Avendaño 8-11).

In more recent times, there is still considerable debate about the differences between these two emotions whilst the fact that they are used interchangeably in everyday language has tended to obscure the distinction between them. Modern scientific research in affective neuroscience and psychology is not conclusive although there is still an emphasis on fear being defined as an immediate physical response to a threat. The author of one neuroscience study published in 2002 posited that there exists “overlap in underlying brain and behavioral mechanisms” and that “anxiety may just be a more elaborate form of fear, which provides the individual with an increased capacity to adapt and plan for the future” (Steimer). In contrast, a more recent study has found that “emotional states are experienced as aversive and motivate behavior, they push behaviors in opposite directions”, so that fear pushes the subject to avoid the object of fear whilst anxiety provokes the subject to seek out the object of fear through “sustained hypervigilance and hyperarousal” (Sylvers, Lilienfeld and LaPrairie). The position of philosophers and historians of emotions on the question has been emphatically in favour of differentiating the two emotions. For the philosopher Heidegger, fear and anxiety (or angst) are not the same. Whilst fear is an emotion with a particular focus – the object that threatens the subject and causes fear – anxiety should be understood as a diffuse sense of apprehension triggered by an unknown or ill-defined threat. Anxiety is fear felt when there is nothing to be feared (Heidegger). More recently, the historian Joanna Bourke has drawn a sharper distinction between these emotions in term of the nature of their stimulus (the threat). For Bourke, the threat in fear is experienced as “immediate and objective” whilst in anxiety is instead “anticipated and subjective” (Bourke 189).

By superimposing two distinct threats with a well-defined focus – the secret and vengeful Jew/Muslim or the dissembling medical quack in whose hands patients placed their lives – the conspiracy theory of *el vengador* offered two well-defined threats to the subject/believer and clearly sought to promote fear (in accordance with Heidegger conception of fear). Yet, for the subject/believer, the danger of medical murder has no definite timing. Whilst the conspiracy theory has a sense of immediacy in its claim that murders have taken place in the past and are ongoing, the actual threat to the subject/believer is a future one (when he/she will require treatment at an unknown future date). To use Bourke’s distinction, the threat in the medical murder libel was clearly an anticipated and subjective one rather than an immediate and objective one

and thus the conspiracy clearly sought to provoke anxieties. Moreover, the conspiracist narrative of medical murder encouraged the subject/believer to assimilate the idea that this was a threat that could befall the subject/believer if no action was taken. The threat could only be avoided through the imposition of stricter regulation of the medical profession, stricter discriminatory laws against the *conversos* or *Moriscos* or even their complete elimination (by means of their expulsion from the kingdom). As such, the conspiracy theory of medical murder obviously sought to provoke exactly the sustained suspicion (“sustained hypervigilance and hyperarousal”) that some neuroscientists identify a marker of anxiety rather than fear. It would appear, therefore, that the power of the conspiracy of medical murder (and probably all conspiracy theories) lies in its ability to provoke a combination of fear (of a well-defined lethal threat) with anxiety (since the danger is anticipated and arouses constant suspicion in the subject/believer).

Another problematic aspect of the conspiracy theory of medical murder is that whilst fear is an emotion associated with physiological changes in the body (such as flight, paralysis, an increased heart rate), it is very difficult to know from the extant sources how believers in the conspiracy of Jewish/Muslim medical murder responded physically. Unfortunately, the authors of the polemical texts that mention the legend of *el vengador* seem content to relate the tale without providing any clues about its popular reception. Likewise, the existing documentary sources offer only sparse, but nevertheless tantalizing, evidence suggesting that myths such as that of *el vengador* were powerful enough to elicit emotional responses from their target audience. A Portuguese bishop was sufficiently moved by the tale of Jewish medical murder to send an alarmed letter to the Spanish crown in the 1580s, petitioning for the introduction of measures to ensure that *conversos* were excluded from the medical professions (see Soyer). More evocative are the accusations of judaizing made against a *converso* surgeon Manuel Duarte, exiled to Brazil, during an inquisitorial visit to the colony in 1612. Amongst the thirty-two witnesses who testified against him, some gave positive assessments of his medical skills but others explicitly refer to the libel of ritualized medical murder. One witness alleged that Manuel Duarte administered medicine to his patients in order “to kill them, in accordance with his [Jewish] Law” whilst others stated their belief that he vengefully murdered ten Old Christian patients for each *converso* burned at the stake by the Inquisition. The document do not, unfortunately, convey the emotional responses of the witnesses, possibly because neither the inquisitors and/or their notaries believed that such information was worth recording for the Inquisition’s immediate purpose of collecting evidence.⁹

In her analysis of fear, Joanna Bourke has described fear as an emotion “fundamentally about the body” and “felt” yet at the same time “fundamentally constituted” and shaped by social and cultural discourses (Bourke 8). This is significant because whilst we cannot know with certainty how individuals responded to the conspiracy theory of medical murder, there can be no doubt that fear was one of the emotions, alongside anger and hatred, to which early modern Iberian preachers appealed when they evoked the ‘Jewish conspiracy’ in the sermons they preached to large crowds. They played on emotional triggers that were specific to their cultural, religious and social context. By way of illustration, metaphors assimilating the religious minority to a malignant cancer or even a plague afflicting society and the body politic are abundant and obviously designed to provoke fear amongst a population that still faced the devastation caused by regular epidemics. In 1616, the preacher Francisco de

⁹ A.N.T.T., *Inquisição de Lisboa, livro 223*: 219v-220r, 221v, 229r-230r, 236r and 237v-238v.

Mendonça compares crypto-Judaism with the plague to emphasise the danger it represented by *converso* heretics:

Tell me, if a man infected by the plague entered this city without the knowledge of the public authorities, and if he walked through the squares, the streets, our churches, our houses, speaking and dealing with everybody, what would happen to us? In two days the city would be ravaged by the plague. Well, this Jewish blindness is a plague if it moves among us without being detected. Portugal, I fear for you! (Glaser 378)

Another preacher, the Augustinian friar Felipe Moreira drew the same comparison in a sermon delivered in 1630:

The company of Jews [i.e. *judaizing conversos*] is contagious like the plague. One would be safer living in the desert than residing alongside them in towns. Flee! Flee! Flee to the hills! (Moreira 11v)

Conclusion

When historians are confronted by conspiracy theories like the libel of medical murder, it is tempting for them to focus on their immediate historical context. It would certainly be easy to rationalize the facility with which the figure of the Muslim could be substituted for that of the Jew in the conspiracy theory of medical murder by dismissing it as a straightforward consequence of the dialectical relationship between Jews and Muslims in Iberian polemical thought and propaganda. Such an analysis would seem to imply that the conspiracy theory of medical murder (and probably many others) is at its roots a cultural phenomenon, tied to prejudice and suspicion about the feared ‘other’ (Jew/Muslim) and internalized by populations over centuries. This assumption, however, is not entirely satisfactory. The medical murder libel was not just a prejudiced popular fantasy periodically voiced in polemical propaganda or public forums such as the parliament of 1607.

A widespread fearful ambivalence towards medicine and medical practitioners predisposed medieval and early modern Iberians to believe that all medical practitioners were suspect, not just those with Jewish or Muslim ancestry. There is thus an extra dimension to the conspiracy theory that goes beyond prejudice against Jews or Muslims and the belief that they could be secretly operating to ritually murder genuine Christians. Far more important, however, is the role that the libel of medical murder played in early modern Iberian society. By amplifying fears and anxieties about the ‘other’, the conspiracy theory of medical murder was used to justify the exclusion and persecution of that ‘other’. In this respect, it was not unique but must be considered alongside other conspiracy theories affecting *conversos* and *Moriscos*, such as the claims that they were deliberately undermining the Spanish economy, which also performed much the same function.¹⁰

Sara Ahmed’s research on modern British society has demonstrated the role played by hate and fear in the creation of collective identities by creating boundaries with ‘others’ who are constituted as a ‘threat’ to their existence. Likewise, the libel of medical murder was part of an “affective economy” in which the discourse of hate was

¹⁰ These other conspiracy theories are studied in a monograph that I am currently completing, entitled: *Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theories in the Early Modern Iberian World: Religious, Identity and the Politics of Fear*.

instrumentalized by sections of the ruling hierarchy to mobilize early modern Iberians against certain groups designated as a threat. The *conversos* and *Moriscos* became negative reference groups, equal objects of fear and anxiety whose role was interchangeable, who could be used to formulate a normative collective identity. It was a powerful propaganda tool deliberately deployed by polemicists hostile to the *conversos* and *Moriscos* who were serving the interests of groups within the dominant ecclesiastical and secular hierarchy.

The collapse of a unified Church in Western Europe, with the advent of the Reformation and the bitter struggles waged against the resurgent Ottoman/Islamic world in the Mediterranean and Central Europe, led secular and religious leaders to seek to secure their power and legitimacy by imposing homogeneity of religious belief upon their subjects. This process, now generally described as the ‘confessionalization’ of Europe, had dramatic consequences for religious/ethnic minorities throughout the continent: not just for the *conversos* and *Moriscos* in Spain but also for Jewish, Catholic and Protestant minorities in England, France, the Low Countries and the Holy Roman Empire. In the Iberian Peninsula, belief in the vital necessity of religious homogeneity was not the preserve of rabid anti-Semitic polemicists like Vicente da Costa Mattos. Theologians and political theorists like the Jesuit Juan de Mariana, for whom it was the unique “social bond” (*societatis vinculum*) steering society and the kingdom away from anarchy, also loudly advocated in its favour (Mattos 162v and Mariana III, 421-6). Whilst the Church sought to inspire ‘love’ of Christ and the faith, early modern Iberian theologians like Francisco Peña, as we have seen above, were perfectly aware of the power of fear and its potential as a tool to create a sense of the collective “self” defined by a fear and disgust of threatening “others”. The identity of the “others” could change in response to the circumstances and context, as it did in 1607, but the narrative and discourse of the affective politics of fear remained the same and served the same purpose.

This article has argued that we cannot fully understand the working of conspiracy theories such as that of medical murder – in the early modern period just as much as in the twenty-first century – without analyzing their wider role as a tool of propaganda. The printed or unpublished texts in which the libel of medical murder is related and repeated were not written by loners on the fringes of society but rather by men who were pillars of the Catholic establishment in Spain and Portugal, including jurists (Villar Maldonado), an educated aristocrat (Francisco de Quevedo) as well as churchmen (Diego de Simancas, Francisco de Torrejoncillo, Félix Alamín). In the case of the printed polemics by Simancas, Torrejoncillo and Costa Mattos there can be little doubt that they were produced with the support of the Inquisition, perhaps even at its behest, since the printing of vernacular religious polemics was normally forbidden by the rules of censorship that regulated book printing in the early modern Iberian Peninsula.¹¹ With the support of the secular and ecclesiastical establishment, the myth endured over centuries and it is only in the second half of the eighteenth century, just as the Inquisition’s power began to wane, that we find firm evidence that the libel of ritualized medical murder came to be openly criticized. Indeed the first writer to do is the author of a compilation of portraits of the rulers of Spain accompanied by brief biographies in which he mentions the notion that King Henry III had been murdered by his Jewish physician but does not conceal his scorn:

¹¹ See rule VIII of the Inquisitorial Index of prohibited books in Bujanda 71.

The strange illness of King Enrique III led many to believe that his death was caused by a Jewish doctor. As if a long-term illness, contracted normally, would not be sufficient to end his life and [his prolonged suffering] did not contradict the use of poisons, which are always active and rapid in their effects! (Rodríguez III, 208-9)

Anexos

Doc. 1: Rafael Muñoz Garrido y Carmen Muñiz Fernández, *Fuentes legales de la medicina española (siglos XIII-XIX)*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1969, 195-6.

En Madrid, y en otras partes han cogido moriscos que de noche andaban a matar christianos viejos solo por odio, y de un medico llamado el Vengador, cuyo sambenito

esta en Santo Tomé de Toledo, se sabe por su confesion que con una uña venenosa mató a 3.048 personas.

Doc. 2: Diego Velázquez, *Defensio Statuti Toletani*. Antwerp: Christophe Plantin, 1575, 19.

Medicus quidam ex illis ficte conuersis combustus fuit superioribus annis in ciuitate Valentiae; qui cum domu[m] redirect, occisis egris Christianis, filij eius doceba[n]t: Bene veniat at vindex. ille verò respondebat: Veniat at vindex. ac si diceret, veniat bene, & vindex sit. Alter vero in ea, qua[m] Ciuitatem Regalem vocant, in vngue vnus digiti occulabat venenum, & cum illo tangens pharmaca, interficiebat ægros.

Doc. 3: Ignacio del Villar Maldonado, *Sylva responsorum iuris* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1614, I, 133r.

tantinopla. Y especialmente sabemos por cosa muy cierta y aueriguada, que vn Medico descendiente de Iudios fue declarado por herege por los Inquisidores de cierto distrito de España, al qual se le aueriguò, que viuendo en cierto pueblo, cuyo nombre no declaro, por no ofender a nadie (que cierto esta es mi intencion) auer muerto con medicinas falsas y adulterinas, y venenosas, mas de trezientas personas: y cada vez que (viniendo de visitar, o por mejor dezir, buscar la muerte a los enfermos) entraua en su casa, la muger q̄ tenia, que tambien era de generacion de Iudios, le dezia: Bien venga el vengador. Y a esto el marido Iudio le respondia alçando y meneando el brazo derecho, y cerrando el puño, significando vitoria de los enemigos: Venga, y vengará.

Doc. 4: Vicente da Costa Mattos, *Breve Discurso contra a heretica perfidia do judaísmo*. Lisbon: Pedro Craesbeeck, 1623, 56v.

vingará. Outro tanto se proua a outro nascido neste Reyno, & queimado em Lisboa, o qual confessado por elle todas as vezes que vinha de visitar, o aguardauão à porta hũas irmãs q̄ tinha & lhe dizião, venha embora o defensor, & guardador da ley de Moyses, & elle respõdia & tãbẽ vingador, alem do q̄ na mesma cidade, & em ou

Doc. 5: Francisco de Torrejoncillo, *Centinela contra Judíos*. Madrid: José Fernández de Buendía, 1676, 87-8.

Ellos lo cumplieron tan bien desde entonces, que Medicos, Cirujanos, Boticarios, &c. casi todos han sido conuencidos deste delito. Assi lo cuenta Ignacio Maldonado del Villar, de donde saque esta carta; y dice mas en particular, que en cierto Lugar de España, siendo preso vn Medico, confesò, que auia muerto en èl con ponçoña mas de trecentas personas: y de otro, que era casado con otra de la misma casta, siempre que venia de las visitas le aguardaua la muger, y quitandole la capa, le dezia: Venga en buen hora nuestro vengador; y èl leuantando la mano en alto dezia, venga, y vengará. Otro tanto se dice de otro que fue quemado en Lisboa, que auia muerto muchos Religiosos, Clerigos, y hidalgos; porque de cada doze mataua vno, y le dezian vnas hermanas suyas, quando venia de visitar: Venga en buen hora nuestro defensor, y guardador de la ley de Moyses. Y èl respondia: Y tambien vengador.

Doc. 6: Fray Félix Alamín, *Impugnacion contra el Talmud de los judios, al Coran de Mahoma, y contra los hereges*. Madrid: Lorenzo Francisco Mojados, 1727, 57-8.

la carta. Y añade: Que supo por cosa cierta, que los Señores Inquisidores de España cogieron à vn Medico Judio, que era Herege, y que avia muerto con medicinas falsas, adulterinas, y venenosas, mas de trecientas personas Catholicas; y cada vez que venia de visitar (ò por mejor decir de matar) y entraba en su casa, la muger, que era Judia, le decia: *Venga en hora buena el Vengador.* Y el marido respondia: *Venga, y vengará.*

Doc. 7: Antonio de Contreras, *Mayor Fiscal contra Judíos*. Madrid: Gabriel del Barrio, 1736, 132-3:

Afsi lo trae Ignacio Maldonado del Villar, quien trae esta Carta, diciendo mas en particular, que en cierto Lugar de España, siendo preso un Medico, confesò, que havia muerto en èl, con ponzoña, mas de trecientas personas. Y de otro, que era casado con otra de la misma casta, siempre que venia de las visitas, le aguardaba la muger, y quitandole la capa, le decia: *Ven-*

Venga en buen hora nuestro vengador ; y
èl levantando la mano en alto , decia : Ven-
ga , y vengará. Lo mismo se dice de otro,
que fue quemado en Lisboa , que havia
muerto muchos Religiosos , Clerigos , è Hi-
dalgos , matando de cada diez , uno , à
quien decian unas hermanas suyas , quan-
do venia de visitar : Venga en buen ho-
ra nuestro defensor , y guardador de la
ley de Moysès ; y èl respondia , y tambien
vengador ; con que habiendo experimentado

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